

UEA Creative Writing Anthology 2011

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Getting On

Lights up on bare stage with three plain chairs. WOMAN (smartly dressed) sits on the far stage right chair. MAN (wearing a big overcoat) glances at her and smiles. She smiles back. She takes out her phone and moves it around, trying to find signal. MAN wraps his coat tightly around himself. WOMAN looks puzzled.

MAN:

Been waiting long?

WOMAN:

Half an hour.

MAN:

Half an hour?

WOMAN:

I know.

MAN rubs his hands together.

WOMAN:

Nervous?

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MAN:

What?

WOMAN:

I mean, I'm ... sorry, are you –

MAN:

Running late.

WOMAN:

Oh.

MAN:

Third time this week. Not my fault,
but the boss doesn't see it that way.

WOMAN:

Oh ... So ... You're not –

MAN:

What?

WOMAN:

I just assumed ... You work here,
don't you? Sorry, I didn't mean to –

MAN:

I don't ... work here.

WOMAN:

You don't?

MAN:

Why'd you think that?

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WOMAN:

I'm not sure. Sorry.

MAN gets out a Metro. He punches the air when he gets a hard clue, then looks at WOMAN, embarrassed.

MAN:

What is it with this line?

WOMAN:

Excuse me?

MAN:

I used to be Piccadilly, thought that was bad, but this is just taking the piss. I mean, I know we're bloody Zone 5, end of the earth ... or the Bakerloo ... but –

WOMAN:

I'm sorry, I don't ...

MAN:

Never mind.

Beat.

WOMAN:

Why are you ... what are you doing here, exactly?

MAN:

Waiting for a train, what's it look like?

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WOMAN:

(PAUSE, PUZZLED, THEN SMILES)
Oh, you're being sarcastic.

MAN:

(LAUGHS)
Yeah.
(PAUSE. REALISES)
No. What?

WOMAN:

So you are here for the job.

MAN:

What job am I going to get here?
Train driver?

WOMAN:

Um ... why do you keep talking
about trains?

MAN:

Well, I'm standing on a platform
waiting for a train.

WOMAN:

Very funny.

MAN:

How is that –

WOMAN:

It's fine, if you don't want to –

MAN:

What?

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WOMAN:

Never mind. I just want to be prepared, all right?

MAN:

For what?

WOMAN:

My interview.

MAN:

Interview?

WOMAN:

Yes. For Executive PA.

MAN:

PA? Who for?

WOMAN:

Christopher Hart.

MAN:

Who?

WOMAN:

Christopher Hart? CEO? (BEAT) Just through there?

(GESTURES STAGE RIGHT)

Where Ms HR disappeared ...

(CHECKS WATCH)

... God, 25 minutes ago.

MAN:

You don't really think you're in an office?

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WOMAN:

Um, yes. Why do you –

MAN:

Great. Fucking great. Not only do I have to stand in the bloody cold, yet again, I get stuck with a mental.

WOMAN:

You're cold?

MAN:

Well, yeah, (MIMICS HER) what with that lovely chill wind and temperature of minus three, yeah I'm feeling a bit cold.

WOMAN:

But the radiator's on.

MAN:

Right ...

WOMAN:

God, what's wrong with you?

MAN:

Me? What about you? Aren't you freezing your ... you know ... off in that top?

WOMAN:

No!

MAN:

What, you a vampire or something?

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(LAUGHS. STOPS)
You're not, are you?

WOMAN:
Please. Would you just ... stop it. I
really want this job, and I want to
be ready, so just ... just leave me
alone.

MAN:
OK ...

MAN lights a cigarette.

WOMAN:
It's no smoking.

MAN:
What?

WOMAN:
(POINTING TO THE WALL)
No. Smoking.

MAN:
Oh, is that what it says?

WOMAN:
Yes.

MAN stares at her. WOMAN gets up and points.

WOMAN:
See? No. Smoking! (BEAT) What, are
you blind
(MUTTERING)
or just retarded ... NO! SMOKING!

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MAN:

Quit pointing at graffiti, you nutter!

WOMAN:

But ... The sign!

MAN:

Next to the coffee machine, is it?

WOMAN:

No, it's next to the front desk.

MAN:

OK, right, listen up. This, train station, those, train tracks, where sometimes if you're bloody lucky trains come along. That, Banksy wannabe, this, platform, me, pissed-off man who happens to be a fucking crossword god. (BEAT) Jesus.

WOMAN:

But ... but ...

MAN:

(MIMICS)

But ... but ...

WOMAN:

This ... you can't really think ... It's an office! How else would you rationally explain the chairs, the desk, the filing cabinet, the carpet, the ...

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MAN:

Chairs: metal station chairs,
wouldn't recommend them.
Probably catch swine flu. Desk –

WOMAN:

The chairs, they're not metal.

MAN:

Yeah, they are.

WOMAN:

Sit on one.

MAN:

What?

WOMAN:

Go on, sit on one.

MAN:

Why?

WOMAN:

Go on!

MAN sits down.

WOMAN:

See?

MAN:

What? They're metal.

WOMAN sits and bounces up and down.

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WOMAN:

See? They're nice chairs, squashy chairs, *office* chairs.

MAN moves away.

WOMAN:

Fine. Don't believe me. But no trains are ever going to stop here because Sutcliffe, Hart and Denham isn't on the Bakerloo line!

Pause.

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This was caused by a technical difficulty ...

MAN:

Ha!

TANNOY:

... however, if you could make your way to your seats, tonight's performance of *The History Boys* will begin in five minutes.

Pause.

MAN:

What the fuck is going on?

WOMAN:

I don't understand.

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MAN:

Is this some kind of joke? Are you
... Is there a camera?

MAN waves his arms.

MAN:

Yeah, very good. You got me.
(TO WOMAN)
You with them, yeah?

WOMAN:

No. I don't ... I don't understand –

MAN:

Right, enough. You really had
me there.

WOMAN:

Please. Can you ... Do you know
what –

MAN:

Seriously. Some of us have jobs to
get to.

WOMAN:

No. I've had enough.

*WOMAN walks straight into the wall stage right. She stares at it in
astonishment.*

MAN:

Yeah, sure, walk into a wall, great
idea.

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WOMAN:

But ... there's a doorway ... I'm
sure, it's right ...

MAN:

Oh for ... Come on, you.

MAN helps her up and leads her in the opposite direction.

WOMAN:

Hey, get off ... What are you ...
Help! Someone!

They walk straight into the wall stage left.

WOMAN:

Ow!

MAN:

What the ...

WOMAN runs back to the opposite wall. MAN starts hitting his wall.

MAN:

What ... What's going on? Come
on, open up! Open fucking sesame!
Let me out!

WOMAN:

(OVERLAP)
Please, is someone there? Can you
... ? Ms Adams? Please! Someone!

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise
for the delay. This was due to

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circumstances beyond our control.
 However, this evening's
 performance of *Noises Off* will begin
 in five minutes.

MAN:

Oi! Who's there?

WOMAN sinks down next to her wall. MAN bangs at his wall.

MAN:

Whoever's behind this, I'm going to
 kill you! Get it? You're dead!

WOMAN:

I'm stuck here. This is it. I'm
 spending the rest of my life in a
 stupid office and I didn't even –

MAN:

For the last time, it's a train station!

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise
 for the slight delay and any
 inconvenience this may have caused.

MAN:

Yeah, what now? Waiting for
 fucking Godot?

TANNOY:

This evening's performance of
Waiting for Godot will begin in five
 minutes.

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MAN:

Oh, hey, it can hear me. Mate! Hey, can you ... Come on, let us out of here, will you? (PAUSE) Hello?

WOMAN:

Oh God ...

MAN:

Hello?

WOMAN:

Oh God ... Oh God ...

MAN:

I'm dreaming. That's it. Or someone ... slipped me something. Must be. Either that or I'm going mad. Do I look mad to you?

WOMAN:

Yes!

MAN:

Oh, whatever, you're completely fucking ... (BEAT) Hello?

WOMAN:

This is just ... this can't be happening, not again. Cutbacks, or losing the freelance budget, or too much experience, or not enough, or –

MAN:

Give it a rest, will you?

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WOMAN:

Why me? What is it? I must be
cursed, or ...

MAN:

Hello? Reality check?

WOMAN:

Reality?

MAN:

Yeah, OK, bad choice of words, but
could you stop thinking about
yourself for just one minute?

WOMAN:

Excuse me?

MAN:

Hole? No doors?

WOMAN:

This isn't happening.

MAN:

Yeah, that's one way to deal with it.

WOMAN:

What's the other?

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise
for the delay. This evening's
performance of *War Horse* will
resume in five minutes.

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MAN:

Come on, open up! Let me out!
(BEAT) I know, I know there's an exit
there, I know, I know ...

MAN slams at the wall with his shoulder.

MAN:

Shit!

WOMAN:

I'm going to die here. I'm going to
die in a shabby outer office with
beige carpets.

WOMAN starts to cry. MAN sighs and goes over to her. He pats her shoulder awkwardly.

MAN:

There, there. (BEAT) Hey, look on the
bright side. At least that voice has
stopped.

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise
for the delay ...

MAN yells in frustration.

TANNOY:

Tonight's performance of *Mamma*
Mia will begin in five minutes.

MAN:

Oh, fuck off!

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WOMAN:

Our father, which art in heaven ...

MAN:

Yeah, great, start praying.

WOMAN:

... hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done ...

MAN:

That's nice and all, but it's not going to help.

WOMAN:

... on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses ...

MAN:

We really are doomed, aren't we?

TANNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay ...

TANNOY 2:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay ...

MAN:

Oh, it's brought a friend along.

TANNOY:

This evening's performance ...

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TANNOY 2:

This evening's performance ...

TANNOY:

... of *Romeo and Juliet* ...

TANNOY 2:

... of *Private Lives* ...

TANNOY:

... will begin in five minutes.

TANNOY 2:

... will resume in five minutes.

WOMAN:

Our father, which art in heaven ...

MAN:

Stop that!

WOMAN:

... hallowed be thy name ...

MAN:

Look, the only thing ... up there, is
some bastard, having a laugh, and
... Just stop it!

WOMAN:

... thy kingdom come ...

MAN:

Shut up!

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MAN slaps her. WOMAN gasps. MAN retreats to his wall. TANNNOYS continue in overlap.

TANNNOY:

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *The Dumb Waiter* will begin in five minutes.

TANNNOY 2:

(OVERLAP)
Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *Glengarry Glen Ross* will begin in five minutes.

TANNNOY:

(OVERLAP)
Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *No Exit* will resume in five minutes.

TANNNOY 2:

(OVERLAP)
Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *Endgame* will begin in five minutes.

TANNNOY:

(OVERLAP)
Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *Happy Days* will resume in five minutes.

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TANNOY 2:

(OVERLAP)

Ladies and gentlemen, we apologise for the delay. This evening's performance of *Getting On* will begin in five minutes.

Beat.

MAN:

OK. There must be a way out. We got in, didn't we?

WOMAN:

Yes, but –

MAN:

So we can get out. There's a doorway here. I can see it. I walked through it. I know it's here. Simple, right?

Sudden blackout.

WOMAN:

Oh God!

MAN:

It's OK ...

WOMAN:

Where are you?

MAN:

Right here.

*UEA Creative Writing Anthology 2011***WOMAN:**

Where?

MAN:

By the exit.

WOMAN:

What exit?

MAN:I'm coming towards you. Don't
move.*Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik starts playing over the tannoy.***MAN:**Oh great. BT hold music. I hate this.
Don't you? (BEAT) Hello? (BEAT)
Hello? (BEAT) Hey, this isn't funny.
Are you OK?*The music gets louder.***MAN:**Oh great. Fucking great. HELLO?
Somebody please ... HELLO! HELP!*The lights come up slightly to reveal that he is now alone onstage.***MAN:**Hey, where did you ... Somebody ...
please ... please help ... Where ...
where is she? HELLO?*The music gets louder and louder. MAN collapses. Music suddenly stops.*

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MAN:

Thank you.

*Beat.***WOMAN:**

(OVER TANNOY)

Hello.

MAN:

Hello? Hey, where are you? Where
 ... can you see me? (WAVES HIS
 ARMS) How d'you get out? Is there
 ... a door? (BEAT) Hello? (PAUSE)
 Where did you go?

WOMAN:

Not far, Jim.

MAN:

Then where ... Wait, how d'you
 know my name? (BEAT) What's
 going on?

*Long, LONG pause.***WOMAN:**

I got the job.

Slow fade blackout.

Marianka Swain read English at Oxford in 2003-6 and completed UEA's Scriptwriting MA in 2010-11. She has taken part in young writers' programmes at the Gate and Soho theatres, and her achievements include having a short story published by Piccadilly Press and winning the 2004 Oxford New Writing Festival with her play *Under My Skin*.