

More for the sharks

by

Phil Hurst

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Performance

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Please contact Phil if you would like to perform this play via email plays@philhurstwriter.com

About the author

Phil lives in Colchester, UK, with his partner, Emma and cat Luna. He works for the civil service and writes in his spare time. He has a Masters (with Distinction) from Queens University Belfast in Creative Writing in 2011.

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Further reading

Full versions of Phil's plays are available on request at www.philhurstwriter.com.

Novels are available on Amazon.

Plays

Plastic Flowers

Novels

The Unjudged: The Battle for Cromer

Characters

Chathura Suranda

Mercenary, late 20s. Sri-Lankan descent. Quiet, calculating, manipulative.

Peggy Arnold

Socialite, early 20s. Easy going, confident and forthright.

Emma Dance

Nurse, late 40s. Reserved, professional.

Kevin McEvoy

Mercenary, late 30s. Loud, brash and annoying.

Act one

A new but uncared for boat sits off the coast of the Seychelles. A small door leads through to a cabin, and a ladder leads up to the driver's seat. A trunk and two deckchairs sit on the deck. Near the stern there is a mount for a machine gun, but the weapon has been discarded and replaced with a fishing rod. Chathura Suranda (Chat) is perched forward in one of the deckchairs. Peggy Arnold is asleep, sunbathing.

Emma is away from the boat, at the edge of the stage, next to an empty wheelchair surrounded by full plastic bags.

CHAT STARES AT PEGGY. EMMA IS SMOKING AND TALKS TO HIM BUT DOESN'T SEE WHAT HE DOES.

Emma: I didn't think I'd actually find you.

Chat: It's too warm.

Emma: The news said an Icelandic wind.

Chat: Makes it impossible to concentrate on anything.

Emma: The cold?

Chat: The heat. The way it seeps into you, stops you moving, stops you doing anything.

Emma: I had a holiday like that once. Tunisia.

Chat: It stops you being you.

Emma: Still, better than a train station in Suffolk.

Chat: Are you cold?

Emma: You can't tell?

Chat: Are you from the centre?

Emma: I came from the centre.

Chat: But do you work for the centre?

Emma: Come and sit down. We can have a chat.

Chat: You sound like you're from the centre.

SHE TAKES A SCARF FROM THE BAG AND WRAPS IT AROUND HERSELF.

Emma: You don't mind do you?

Chat: It's not mine.

Emma: Whose was it?

Chat: He wasn't using it.

Emma: I'm always cold. Southern bones, my Mother called it.

Chat: I'm always warm.

Emma: Is that a new thing?

Chat: Relatively.

Emma: I'm jealous.

Chat: It's usually cold in the centre.

Emma: It is.

Chat: But you're not from the centre.

Emma: I've been to the centre.

Chat: Where are you from?

Emma: Don't be paranoid.

Chat: I'm worried.

Emma: What about?

Chat: Nothing.

Emma: Some might say it's in your head.

Chat: But a nurse wouldn't.

Emma: She might.

Chat: So you're not a nurse.

Emma: I could be a nurse.

Chat: But you found me.

Emma: I did.

Chat: The nurses couldn't find their own arsehole with a map.

Emma: You usually need a mirror as well.

PAUSE.

Chat: Shouldn't you be calling someone?

Emma: I want to hear your side of the story.

Chat: It's in my files.

Emma: Call it professional curiosity. I want to hear it from the horse's mouth.

Chat: No you don't.

Emma: You don't want to talk about her?

Chat: Peggy.

Emma: What happened to Peggy?

Chat: She was on the boat.

Emma: And Kevin?

Chat: He was on the boat.

Emma: And the others?

Chat: They hadn't arrived yet.

Emma: So no-one had died.

Chat: Not yet.

Emma: Do you know where you are now?

PAUSE.

Chat: A train station in Suffolk.

Emma: And you're also on the boat.

Chat: Not always.

PAUSE.

How did you find me?

Emma: Why would I give away my secrets? You might disappear again.

Chat: I've nowhere else to run.

Emma: Can you promise me that?

Chat: No.

Emma: Then you'll run again.

Chat: Are you going to stop me?

Emma: Running?

Chat: Jumping.

Emma: Oh, probably.

Chat: You don't sound very confident.

Emma: Well you're not going to jump are you?

Chat: I've had some bad news.

Emma: There's no other kind.

Chat: Very supportive.

Emma: Tell me your story. I might keep you alive until you tell me.

Chat: I won't tell anyone you found me.

Emma: Have you got a coat? It'll stop you catching hypothermia. Pneumonia. Something.

Chat: Not really worried about that.

Emma: No, I suppose you're not.

SHE STUBS THE CIGARETTE OUT ON THE
ARM OF THE WHEELCHAIR AND FLICKS IT
AWAY.

I should probably stop you.

Chat: Try it.

Emma: My husband is fucking my sister.

Chat: I don't need that information.

Emma: I'm trying to connect with you Chat.

Chat: Don't bother.

Emma: I miss him sometimes, when he's away. I'm sure your wife feels the same. Especially if she thinks you're dead in the Indian Ocean somewhere.

PAUSE.

Do you remember your wife?

Chat: You're not a nurse.

Emma: Why did you start to work for Clearwater?

Chat: What's that got to do with your husband?

Emma: Did you want to support your family? Did a shit job.

Chat: Why do you care?

Emma: A smart lad like you. Working private security? Doesn't make sense.

Chat: It's all I'm good at it.

Emma: Not true though, is it? Degree in African studies. Masters in International Security. You're good at lots of things.

Chat: My nurses don't know that.

Emma: I'm not a nurse.

Chat: So why are you here?

Emma: I'm here for a tete-a-tete. A chinwag.

Chat: I'm not in the mood.

Emma: Why don't we call it a confession then?

Chat: I don't have anything to confess to.

Emma: Now that's not the truth.

Chat: You can go then. You're not a nurse. You can go.

Emma: So you didn't take the job to support your family.

Chat: They gave me a job.

Emma: They were the only ones who gave you a chance, right? After the army?

Chat: That's it. I needed to work. For my family.

Emma: In other circumstances, I might have liked you.

Chat: I don't care.

Emma: Can I tell you a secret?

PAUSE.

I don't mind that he's fucking her. Gives me more time to gamble. Roll the dice, hit the tables, flip the bird.

Chat: Please. Fuck off.

Emma: I let him, and he doesn't even know. I don't think she does, either.

Chat: You're lying.

Emma: The kids are the only reason I'm with him I suppose.

Chat: You're not married.

Emma: I'm not allowed to wear the ring at work.

Chat: You're not married.

Emma: I don't think I'll leave him though.

Chat: You're lying.

Emma: Mr. Suranda. I refuse to have you accusing me of treachery in public.

Chat: Why are you here?

Emma: I'm here to hear your story.

Chat: You know what I did.

Emma: I have your report. Bits and pieces.

Chat: It wasn't my fault.

Emma: So why are you here?

Chat: Out of options.

Emma: Why don't you talk to me? I could help.

Chat: I've spoken to counsellors.

Emma: I'm not a counsellor.

Chat: Who sent you?

Emma: What you've told Clearwater, what you told the police, what you told your counsellor. It's not the truth.

Chat: You don't know that.

Emma: My husband is your sort. My son is becoming your sort. You're not telling the truth.

Chat: Shame I'm the only one who can talk.

Emma: Is that what you think?

Chat: Is she awake?

Emma: Missing a few teeth. Oh and a bit fucked in the head. But other than that, lucid enough.

Chat: I didn't think she'd get hurt.

Emma: I'm sure.

Chat: They told me she was dead.

Emma: Nope.

Chat: There were too many of them.

Emma: You sorted them though. Killed them all.

Chat: Not all of them.

Emma: Oh you did. Probably deserved it. Scum.

Chat: You can't know that.

Emma: That's all any of us are Chat.

SHE SEARCHES HER POCKETS, FINDING
ONLY AN EMPTY CIGARETTE PACKET.

I'm out of fags.

Chat: Go and get some. I'll wait here.

Emma: I once saw a man who had a two machete cuts in each shoulder. Literally through each collarbone. Arms dangling, blood everywhere. And the worse thing? Every time - every time - someone moved to touch him he shit himself. Literally shit himself.

SHE ROOTS THROUGH HIS COAT AND
FINDS ANOTHER CIGARETTE.

Result.

SHE LIGHTS IT.

He died in the end. Thought it was blood loss. No. Dehydration. We couldn't get the fluids into him quick enough. Thing was, he had nothing wrong with his stomach, bowels, anything. It was all up here.

Chat: I'm missing your point.

Emma: Are you looking at anything in particular?

CHAT CROUCHES DOWN, CLEANING SOMETHING HIDDEN BY THE EDGE OF THE BOAT. PEGGY IS AWAKE NOW, MISCHIEVOUS.

Peggy: I don't know. What about the Hungry Caterpillar?

PAUSE.

Remember when everyone read that?

Chat: No.

Peggy: I'll buy it for you. You can read it on the plane home.

Chat: You're fine.

Peggy: You can read it to your little boy.

Chat: He has plenty of books.

Peggy: You should read it.

PAUSE.

What do you normally read?

Chat: Nothing.

Peggy: Not even Army stuff?

Chat: No.

Peggy: You lot love that stuff. Pictures of guns and bullets and stuff.

PAUSE.

Books open up your mind Chat.

Chat: Guns and stuff?

Peggy: How else do you expect to become a true man of the world?

Chat: Why would I want to do that?

Peggy: A friend of mine said that I read like I fuck.

Chat: A good friend.

Peggy: Don't get jealous.

Chat: I'm not jealous.

Peggy: Everyone is jealous of me.

Chat: I must be forgetting.

Peggy: It's not your fault. You're only human.

Chat: If I'm so jealous, how come I leave you alone with Kevin?

Peggy: Because you know I wouldn't touch that state with a ten-foot pole.

Chat: Why would you.

Peggy: I have standards.

Chat: I'm honoured.

Peggy: Just.

Chat: So when we're back on the mainland.

Peggy: You'll be jealous. Did you know that one of my ex-boyfriends once shot someone for looking at me too long?

Chat: You mentioned it.

Peggy: You don't have to worry about it.

Chat: He's in jail.

Peggy: Did I tell you this before?

Chat: Yes.

Peggy: He didn't kill the guy.

Chat: You said.

Peggy: Just in his leg. But still. That's the affect I have on men. You can't help it.

Chat: Some men can't help it.

Peggy: I'm having fun. Are you?

Chat: I'm not here to have fun.

Peggy: So why ask me to come along?

Chat: Stress relief.

Peggy: You could have achieved the same with a box of tissues and a magazine.

Chat: Maybe I didn't want you to feel abandoned.

Peggy: You've been working since you got on the boat.

Chat: So has Kevin.

Peggy: Kevin knows how to have fun when he's working.

Chat: What Kevin is doing isn't fun.

Peggy: Looks fun from where I am.

Chat: He's not right.

Peggy: And you're a well-rounded good living model of humanity.

Chat: I didn't say that.

Peggy: Then leave off Kevin.

Chat: Are you sure you don't want to fuck Kevin?

Peggy: Don't be disgusting.

Chat: I'm not jealous.

Peggy: You have no need to be. Or not to be.

Chat: It'd probably make his day.

Peggy: Make his year more like.

Chat: There's that ego again.

Peggy: I'm trying to say. You need to have more fun.

PAUSE.

Do you know how many people would kill to be in a place like this?

CHAT HOLDS THE MACHINE GUN HE HAS BEEN CLEANING UP TO THE LIGHT, INSPECTING IT.

Chat: Interesting choice of phrase.

Peggy: You are hard work.

CHAT CHECKS THE FISHING LINE AND, FINDING NOTHING, REPLACES THE ROD WITH THE MACHINE GUN. HE LOOKS DOWN THE SIGHTS AND BEGINS TO SCAN THE HORIZON.

He won't like that.

Chat: I don't care what he likes.

Peggy: I don't suppose you have to.

PEGGY LIES BACK DOWN.

Chat: Are you going to lie there all day?

Peggy: Do you have any coke left?

Chat: No.

Peggy: Does Kevin?

Chat: I have no idea.

Peggy: Just something to perk me up.

Chat: I don't know.

Peggy: I just... It's hard work out here isn't it?

Chat: For you?

Peggy: I have to talk to you.

Chat: Go back to sleep.

PAUSE

Peggy: Does your wife know about me?

Chat: Of course.

Peggy: Really?

Chat: Of course fucking not.

Peggy: I just thought. She might be up for... you know.

Chat: No idea.

Peggy: Sharing.

Chat: No.

Peggy: You didn't even consider it.

Chat: I know.

Peggy: I'm going to ask Kevin for more coke.

Chat: Go then.

Peggy: What if he asks me to fuck him in return?

PAUSE

Chat? What happens if -

Chat: Then I'll fucking kill him.

Peggy: Have you ever killed anyone?

Chat: You shouldn't ask that.

Peggy: You can take guns apart and put them together again. You might know how to use them. I don't know for sure.

Chat: I can use them.

Peggy: Show me.

Chat: Don't be silly.

Peggy: Go on. Shoot a seagull. Ca-caw-bang-pop!

Chat: There's no seagulls this far out.

Peggy: Really?

Chat: When did you last see one?

Peggy: No one notices seagulls.

Chat: I do.

Peggy: Shoot an apple then.

SHE FINDS AND THROWS AN APPLE INTO
THE WATER.

Chat: No.

Peggy: You're supposed to be impressing me. Come on. Bang-
pop!

PAUSE.

Who is going to know?

Chat: It doesn't matter.

Peggy: You're no fun.

Chat: I'm aware.

Peggy: You promised me excitement.

Chat: Did I?

Peggy: A stowaway, a hidden secret that only you and me
would know about. A secret affair in the middle of the ocean.
Now look at us. You're cleaning a gun and I may as well be
invisible.

Chat: Neediness isn't attractive.

Peggy: I'm not being needy. I'm demanding to be
entertained.

Chat: I've entertained you plenty.

Peggy: I think we have different ideas about entertainment.

Chat: You think you're funny.

Peggy: I'm smart Chat. Remember that.

Chat: I must write it down.

Peggy: What about the big one?

Chat: You want to shoot the big one?

Peggy: You don't?

Chat: What about the handgun?

Peggy: I know how to shoot that.

Chat: Really?

Peggy: I'm not some kind of victim Chat.

Chat: You wouldn't be able to shoot the big gun.

Peggy: Why not?

Chat: It's not for women.

Peggy: I've shot more guns than you think. Don't think because I'm here to have fun I wouldn't shoot your fucking balls off in a second.

Chat: Like that is it?

Peggy: I'm fucking hardcore.

Chat: Really?

Peggy: Test me.

Chat: Sit down.

Peggy: Come on. Let me have a go.

Chat: Sit down.

Peggy: Chat - come on.

VIOLENTLY BUT WITH A STRAIGHT FACE,
CHAT SWINGS THE GUN AROUND AND
POINTS IT AT PEGGY.

PAUSE.

Chat: It's not long until we're relieved. You'll need to hide again.

Peggy: Fuck the cupboard.

Chat: Espionage, excitement, violence. Isn't that why you're here?

Peggy: You get in the cupboard then.

PEGGY MOVES TO EXIT.

Chat: Good girl.

Peggy: Fuck you. I'm going for a piss.

Chat: Wake Kevin up will you?

Peggy: Oh no. That's all up to you.

Chat: Love you.

Peggy: I'm sure you do.

PEGGY EXITS.

LIGHTS ON EMMA.

Emma: Did you love her?

Chat: Of course.

Emma: No you didn't.

Chat: I loved her.

Emma: Like my husband loves my sister?

Chat: I loved her.

Emma: Do you miss her?

Chat: Of course.

Emma: She doesn't miss you.

Chat: Probably not.

Emma: Do you think she regrets meeting you?

Chat: I don't know.

Emma: Not that anything was your fault.

Chat: Not on the boat.

Emma: But before the boat?

Chat: I should have spent more time with her.

Emma: None of us spend as much time with our families as we'd like.

Chat: My family were a long way away.

Emma: I'm not here to judge Chat.

Chat: Why are you here?

Emma: To find the truth.

Chat: Are you armed?

Emma: I'm here to help.

Chat: Everyone just wants to help.
Emma: Where did you and Peggy meet?
Chat: In a club.
Emma: Love at first site?
Chat: She was exactly what I needed.
Emma: She was a pretty girl.
Chat: Was.
Emma: You'll see her again then?
Chat: She won't want to see me again.
Emma: Why?
Chat: Would you want to see me again?

PAUSE.

Emma: I'm not really married.
Chat: I'm not surprised.
Emma: Peggy thought you were.
Chat: She did.
Emma: I think she knew the truth.
Chat: No she didn't.
Emma: She's smarter than you think.
Chat: Than both of us, probably.
Emma: So why tell her you were married?
Chat: She liked being naughty.
Emma: So why did you tell Clearwater Security? Trying to impress them?

PAUSE.

Chat: How do you know this?
Emma: I know things.
Chat: They let you see my file?

Emma: No.

Chat: But you have.

Emma: Yes.

Chat: Who sent you?

Emma: Why did you tell them you were married?

Chat: I don't know.

Emma: I know why you told everyone you were married.

Chat: No you don't.

Emma: It makes you more trustworthy.

Chat: To someone I want to sleep with?

Emma: Of course. Someone, somewhere, thinks that you're good enough to marry. So for Peggy, that means you can't be all that bad. So that fight you had with the bar staff, that raised hand in anger, that horrible argument that came from nowhere, it all loses a little bit of the edge. It softens a bit because someone, somewhere, loves you. She thinks it's just her. It can't be you. You're a proper person, a good human. Someone she can trust, no matter your flaws.

PAUSE.

Am I close?