

Plastic flowers

By

Phil Hurst

Copyright and performance

Copyright © 2017 Phil Hurst

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or in any means - by electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise - without prior written permission.

Performance

There is no fee required to perform this play.

All amateur and professional performance rights to this play are controlled exclusively by Phil Hurst.

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.

Phil is online at philhurstwriter.com and facebook.com/philhurstwriter

Further reading

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

Novels are available on Amazon.

Plays

More for the Sharks

Novels

The Unjudged: The Battle for Cromer

Characters

Ellen

A parliamentary candidate, who becomes the Prime Minister.

Logan

Her opponent, who becomes a businessman.

Maisy

Her special advisor, who becomes desperate.

Act one

A FRESHLY FILLED GRAVE. FLOWERS ARE SCATTERED AROUND UNTIDILY. A SOLITARY BENCH FACES THE GRAVE.

ELLEN ENTERS WITH A GLASS OF WINE. SHE TOASTS THE GRAVE AND PATS IT IN A CONDESCENDING MANNER.

Ellen: Good boy.

MAISY ENTERS, ALSO WITH A GLASS OF WINE, AND A NEWSPAPER TUCKED UNDER HER ARM.

Maisy: Do you need a moment?

Ellen: Why would I need a moment?

Maisy: Say to say your goodbyes.

Ellen: I've had plenty of chances for that.

Maisy: I suppose.

MAISY LOOKS AT THE NEWSPAPER.

This is weird isn't it?

Ellen: I don't follow.

Maisy: This. It's weird. Do you not think it's strange?

Ellen: No, Maisy, I don't.

Maisy: Being buried in your own back garden?

Ellen: I think it's nice.

Maisy: I mean, not strange. Just... You know.

ELLEN POINTS AROUND.

Ellen: His Mother. His Father. His Grandfather. His Great-grandmother. His Great-grandfather.

Maisy: Dead people belong in graveyards.

Ellen: Graveyards are impersonal.

Maisy: Whereas burying someone in your back yard is...

Ellen: I thought you were good with words.

Maisy: Only if one exists.

Ellen: It's a tradition.

Maisy: Traditions are for old people.

Ellen: Jasper was old.

Maisy: I wouldn't want my family by me.

Ellen: You have family?

Maisy: I was not spawned from the depths of a lagoon.

Ellen: Do you not get on with them?

Maisy: Not well enough to introduce my boss to them.

Ellen: Who is that then?

Maisy: The difference is, when they die, I'll find them a nice grave somewhere in a nice graveyard somewhere and leave them there.

Ellen: My Father asked to be cremated.

Maisy: Not sure about that.

Ellen: We threw off him Westminster Bridge.

Maisy: After the cremation?

Ellen: Got some funny looks.

Maisy: Would you like that?

Ellen: Put my ashes wherever you want.

Maisy: That probably won't be up to me.

Ellen: The way it's going it probably will be. What about you?

Maisy: Bury me where I drop.

Ellen: Aren't we a desperate pair?

Maisy: I haven't lived long enough to form an attachment to anything. Or anywhere.

Ellen: I like this house.
Maisy: Check his will.
Ellen: He left it all to the party. And his wife.
Maisy: How selfish.
Ellen: I don't know where the free bar came from.
Maisy: The taxpayer, probably.

MAISY HANDS OVER THE PAPER.

Did you see what the Prime Minister was wearing?

Ellen: Dead man walking.
Maisy: Brave.
Ellen: Attending a funeral?
Maisy: Papers loved it.
Ellen: Tomorrow's chip paper.

ELLEN RIPS A PAGE OUT.

Maisy: You can see the church graveyard from the second floor.
Ellen: The second floor?
Maisy: The master bedroom. You can see Bradnorth graveyard.

ELLEN PAUSES.

I was up there today. Disposing of some...

Ellen: Evidence.
Maisy: Sensitivities.
Ellen: So?
Maisy: If she wants to feel close to him she could bury him in the graveyard.
Ellen: Until her cataracts get worse.
Maisy: He'd still be close.

Ellen: He wouldn't belong to her.

Maisy: Ownership? Of his corpse?

Ellen: It's a family tradition Maisy.

Maisy: It's creepy.

ELLEN BEGINS TO FOLD THE PIECE OF
PAPER INTO AN AEROPLANE. MAISY
TEARS OFF A PAGE AND DOES THE
SAME.

Maisy: Have you ever been here before?

Ellen: You have.

Maisy: Now and then.

Ellen: Is that how you knew where the bedroom was?

Maisy: I dropped off some papers. At the front door.

Ellen: No scandal then.

Maisy: I wasn't going to become another one of his -
harem.

Ellen: Like me?

Maisy: You weren't. Were you?

Ellen: Am I not attractive enough?

Maisy: No, I -

Ellen: Am I too old, do you think?

Maisy: Not too old..

Ellen: We went to a lot of conferences. Lots of
opportunity. Have you seen my husband
recently? Thinning hair.

Maisy: Good head of hair until the end, did our
Jasper. And you - you're winding me up.

Ellen: Now I have the nomination, could I have you
killed?

ELLEN THROWS THE PLANE, AND SHOOTS
IT WITH HER THUMB AND FOREFINGER.

Maisy: That would be your first mistake.

MAISY THROWS HER PLANE. IT GLIDES
FURTHER THAN ELLEN'S.

Ellen: So if Jasper and I ever did -

Maisy: Don't tell anyone. Don't tell me, don't tell
your husband, don't tell your dog. The Mail
will find out.

Ellen: I have no intention of lying.

ELLEN BEGINS FOLDING AGAIN.

Maisy: Someone has to.

Ellen: You want the job?

Maisy: Who else are you going to give it to?

Ellen: To lie for me?

Maisy: I won't use that word.

Ellen: I could find another advisor.

Maisy: No one who knows you like I do.

Ellen: How familiar. I should definitely have you
shot.

Maisy: You'll give me the job.

MAISY FOLDS AGAIN.

Ellen: How will *you* help *me* get elected?

Maisy: Your family.

Ellen: I'm happy with my family.

Maisy: We can jazz them up.

Ellen: My daughters are not getting jazzed up thank
you.

Maisy: Not your living family. Remember Jasper's
Cromwellian ancestors?

Ellen: Is that a word?

Maisy: Very difficult to verify. Do you want to be Oscar Wilde's niece? Or a second cousin of Benjamin Disrali?

Ellen: Oscar Wilde's grand neice.

Maisy: I can do that.

Ellen: That's the best you can do?

Maisy: I have a low starting point.

Ellen: Thank you.

Maisy: It will sex you up for the voters.

Ellen: Sentences like that are why I haven't given you the job.

Maisy: Well you're going to, aren't you?

Ellen: I might want to interview other candidates.

ELLEN THROWS A NEW PLANE.

Maisy: Ellen.

Ellen: I could have a selection day.

MAISY THROWS HER SECOND PLANE. IT FLIES FURTHER.

Maisy: Who else would you interview?

Ellen: What can you offer me that no one else can?

MAISY PICKS UP HER PLANE.

Origami?

Maisy: Success.

Ellen: One is easier than the other.

Maisy: Ideas then.

Ellen: You're not the only one to have ideas. Jasper had ideas.

Maisy: Have you announced your nomination yet?

Ellen: No.

Maisy: We'll tweet it.

Ellen: Not exactly ground-breaking.

Maisy: What's the password to your Twitter?

MAISY TAKES OUT A PHONE.

Ellen: I'm not giving you that.

Maisy: The first rule of being a MP. Delegation.

Ellen: I'm not an MP.

Maisy: One word?

Ellen: It's Password one. One word. Number one.

Maisy: Seriously?

Ellen: Capital P.

Maisy: We'll have to change that. Right.

SHE TYPES.

Announced.

ELLEN STARTS.

Ellen: You didn't let me approve the text.

Maisy: Delegation.

Ellen: I haven't told my husband yet.

Maisy: Yes you have.

MAISY SHOWS ELLEN THE PHONE.

Smiley face.

Ellen: If Logan finds out through Twitter -

Maisy: What's Logan got to do with anything?

Ellen: He'll want to be told in person.

Maisy: He doesn't know what Twitter is. I'm not sure he knows what the Internet is. Anyway, you can still tell him in person.

Ellen: He's here?

Maisy: Arrived just after you came out here.

Ellen: What's his plan?

Maisy: It's a free bar. I doubt it goes much further than that.

Ellen: He's got an angle.

Maisy: You give him too much respect.

Ellen: And you not enough.

Maisy: High level plans. What do you think?

Ellen: Before you've got the job?

Maisy: By the time we leave this wake, I'll have a plan of attack for you. You will wipe the floor with Logan. You'll knock the old bastard dead.

Ellen: That's not very respectful Maisy.

Maisy: Him? Really? You think Jasper had respect for any dead people?

Ellen: War Veterans?

Maisy: The voting capabilities of their widows, maybe.

Ellen: I could have a selection day tomorrow. Bit short notice, but there's sure to be -

Maisy: It's in the public domain. You're already getting trolled.

Ellen: This hardly seems fair.

Maisy: Don't go on Twitter then.

Ellen: I don't think I will.

Maisy: We need to talk about you. Sex you up.

Ellen: I do not need sexing up.

Maisy: You need something.

Ellen: You want me on page three?

ELLEN TEARS ANOTHER PAGE FROM THE
NEWSPAPER

Maisy: What the hell is page three?

Ellen: You know. Boobs.

Maisy: They don't do boobs on page three anymore.

Ellen: Really?

MAISY READS FROM HER PHONE.

Maisy: "I hope she doesn't get nominated. Sir Jasper was a great servant of the people. She's just a floozy in a suit." "There's a housing shortage in our town, yet neither of them are willing to address it." And apparently you're to blame for global warming and Ebola.

Ellen: House shortage?

Maisy: Not in Bradnorth.

Ellen: So they're wrong.

Maisy: Not voters. Never. Misinformed idiots, but never wrong.

Ellen: I hope you're not replying.

Maisy: This is what the electorate are worried about. If you can respond to this - talk about this - then you'll come across like one of them.

Ellen: I am one of them.

Maisy: Maybe ignore the ones talking about your arse though.

Ellen: Jasper used to ignore them.

Maisy: No, not good enough. Not for you. Not for a woman. You need to be a figurehead. Like a sexy teacher at school. Flirt with them and they'll work hard. But don't even get close enough to touch them.

Ellen: Please tell me you've never worked in a school.

Maisy: It's a metaphor.

Ellen: You want the speechwriting job?

Maisy: One of the other advisors does that. He's spectacular.

Ellen: Thank God.

Maisy: We should let people know about your talent.

Ellen: Folding paper aeroplanes is not a talent.

ELLEN THROWS A PLANE, WHICH LANDS
NEAR THE GRAVE, AND MAISY SWEEPS
IT UP.

Maisy: That's enough littering. You never know when someone has a camera.

Ellen: No one here cares about my paper aeroplanes.

Maisy: Maybe that's the issue.

MAISY REFOLDS THE PLANE.

Maybe we need something to make people notice you.

MAISY THROWS THE PLANE.

Ellen: I could just copy Jasper.

Maisy: Shag everything in sight?

Ellen: No you're right. I need to become a bit of a twat. Like you.

Maisy: You're too distinct to Jasper.

Ellen: That's good isn't it?

Maisy: People liked Jasper. A lot.

Ellen: We wouldn't want to tarnish his reputation.

Maisy: It's your future I'm worried about.

MAISY SWEEPS UP THE REMAINING
PAPER AND HIDES IT BEHIND THE
GRAVE.

I need a drink.

Ellen: Good idea. Leave me with him.

Maisy: Jasper?

Ellen: Look over there. Something wicked this way comes.

Maisy: Logan.

Ellen: Does he know I've got the nomination?

Maisy: Only if he's been on Twitter.

Ellen: So no.

Maisy: He's probably coming to pump you for information.

Ellen: Avert your eyes and still your tongue,

LOGAN ENTERS WITH A BUNCH OF
FLOWERS. HE PASSES MAISY.

Logan: Maisy! How are you? Oh and look at the right honourable Jasper. How peaceful.

Maisy: There's a funny smell all of a sudden.

MAISY EXITS.

Logan: I see her manners have improved.

A PAUSE AS LOGAN PLACES THE
FLOWERS.

Ellen: Looks like you beat him at last.

Logan: I wanted to say goodbye to the old boy.

Ellen: Your mortal enemy?

Logan: Indeed.

Ellen: He'd be happy to see you here.

Logan: I wouldn't be a good sport if I let him go without a goodbye.

Ellen: Did the Party make you come?

Logan: I am not at the whim of the whips like you will be Ellen. They merely suggested my attendance.

Ellen: But could you have said no?

Logan: I pity you, heading into a dictatorship like that.

Ellen: Your presence shows humility. I suppose.

Logan: I'm going for respect.

Ellen: I suppose it does.

HE PLACES THE FLOWERS BY THE GRAVE.

Logan: Back in feudal times, opposing clan leaders would weep when hearing of a rival's demise. They'd light candles and wish their opponent well in the afterlife. They'd throw a god-dammed funeral party for a rival who they'd been trying to vanquish.

Ellen: And you bring flowers.

SHE BEGINS TO TIDY THE FLOWERS.

Do you want me to sign your thank you card now?

Logan: Why would you need to do that?

Ellen: Seems like the thing to do.

Logan: Surely his successor should sign the cards.

Ellen: It should be a member of his staff.

Logan: Are you still a member of his staff?

Ellen: No. Jasper died Logan. You're at his funeral. Remember?

LOGAN DECLINES TO HELP.

Logan: I never touch another general's garden.

Ellen: You're lazy.

Logan: Watch your tongue.

Ellen: I'm not a child Logan.

Logan: Did you cry at the funeral?

Ellen: No.

Logan: Voters love a bit of humanity from their elected officials.

Ellen: So I hear.

Logan: Have you been briefed to cry at funerals?

Ellen: Did you? Cry?

Logan: A little.

Ellen: But then, you're not an elected official either.

Logan: Yet.

Ellen: Would he have cried for you?

Logan: Of course not.

Ellen: I think he would have.

Logan: Always was a soft touch.

Ellen: He liked to show his humanity.

Logan: Will you? For me?

Ellen: Maybe I'll send flowers.

Logan: Don't put yourself out on my account.

Ellen: Really, it'll be no hassle.

Logan: This was supposed to be my year you know. Victory over the old enemy at last.

Ellen: How selfish of him.

Logan: Who will I battle now?

Ellen: Only time will tell I suppose.

Logan: I'm waiting on your ridiculously bureaucratic and inefficient party to announce my opposing general.

Ellen: If only there was some way of letting the voters know immediately.

Logan: It's a matter of politeness to show your hand to the other players before the audience.

Ellen: Not a big poker player, are you Logan?

Logan: I've dabbled.

Ellen: Always keep them guessing.

Logan: There are no cameras here Ellen.

Ellen: So you say - you can't know that...

Logan: I'll keep quiet.

Ellen: Someone might be listening. There might be a journalist in the bushes.

Logan: With a microphone. Or a Facebook. How paranoid.

LOOKING AROUND THE GRAVE, LOGAN
FINDS THE NEWSPAPER. HE PICKS IT
UP.

Ellen: It's a great age to be alive.

Logan: So everyone keeps telling me.

Ellen: You have to believe it to enjoy it.

Logan: Did Jasper leave you any last words?

Ellen: A few pages.

Logan: Not bad.

Ellen: He'd been dictating to Mrs. Jasper for the last week.

Logan: Anything about me?

Ellen: No.

Logan: You're lying.

Ellen: I don't lie.

LOGAN TAPS A PAGE IN THE
NEWSPAPER.

Logan: Neither did Jasper, according to his obituary.

Ellen: Lovely, wasn't it?

Logan: They should have asked me to write it.

Ellen: They quoted you.

Logan: Misquoted me.

HE TUCKS THE PAPER UNDER HIS ARM.

Why would anyone want to be in this game?

Ellen: I still hear him you know. Shouting at me, telling me I've done wrong. I've probably not picked up the cards properly.

Logan: What you hear is an echo. Not a ghost.

Ellen: They both tend to hang in the air.

LOGAN INSPECTS THE GRAVE. HE LOOKS AT THE FLOWERS AND FOCUSES ON A SINGLE BUNCH.

Logan: Did you bring plastic flowers?

Ellen: Nothing wrong with plastic flowers.

Logan: Maisy bought them didn't she?

Ellen: I might keep them. Send them to your funeral.

Logan: No one will send that colour flower to my funeral.

Ellen: I hear you have your bathroom painted that colour.

Logan: Is that an opening volley Ellen?

Ellen: Why would I shoot at you Logan?

Logan: Jasper and I were old enemies. Old warriors on the field of -

SHE TAKES OUT A NOTEBOOK AND SCRIBBLES.

What are you doing?

Ellen: It's like bingo. Every time you make a reference to the war, or the army, I mark off a square. Maisy has a card too.

Logan: Would you like to use them?

Ellen: War references? What for?

Logan: I suppose you'll have a team writing for you from now on.

Ellen: A team? For little old me?

Logan: You know, Jasper tried to get me to retire just before he died.

Ellen: You should.

Logan: I suppose whoever replaces him would rather not battle me.

Ellen: The war again?

Logan: Well, I suppose I -

Ellen: Just ask.

Logan: There's an air of arrogance around you. I don't need to.

Ellen: Are you not on Twitter Logan?

Logan: Every generation thinks they are the one to best the previous. I thought the same when I first stood, all those years ago.

Ellen: And did you?

Logan: We didn't have to. They never came back.

Ellen: I think that's house.

Logan: That wasn't an anecdote.