

STILL LIFE

A play by Phil Lewis

Additional dialogue by Joy Tilbury

This play requires permission to perform and a performance fee

SHORTENED SAMPLE VERSION

For full version please contact:

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Approx. 8 minutes.

CAST:

DAWN: Any age over 40

SET:

Single chair and spotlight.

Large sheet on the stage floor.

STILL LIFE

(OPENING MUSIC.

LIGHTS UP ON DAWN ENTERING, DRAPED IN A DRESSING GOWN. SHE ARRANGES HERSELF IN A POSE – EITHER ON THE CHAIR, OR ON THE SHEET ON THE FLOOR.

AS SHE SPEAKS, SHE ALTERS THE POSE, AS IF BIDDEN BY AN UNSEEN VOICE.

IF POSSIBLE, THE LIGHTING CAN CHANGE BETWEEN EACH POSE. SOMETIMES DARK AND SULTRY. AT OTHERS BRIGHT AND GLOWING.

THERE ARE LONG PAUSES BETWEEN SENTENCES, NORMALLY JUST AFTER SHE'S CHANGED A POSE. THIS ADDS TO THE VISUAL ASPECT OF THE PIECE.)

DAWN: It's coming, I can feel it. Have to move.

(SHE SUBTLY MOVES HER LEG OUT STRAIGHT)

Don't change the face. Grin and bear it. The pain will subside. Here it comes.

(SLIGHT GRIMACE)

There it goes.

Sodding cramp. It'll be the death of me and my profession.

Do you know...last week...or was it the week before...I was at a dinner party at Patties and this woman – I forget her name - stared at me the whole evening. I began to get annoyed and when I do - I show it.

She eventually turned to me and said, "You do modelling?" In THAT tone. Know what I mean?

I said, "Yes."

She said, "In the nude?"

I said, "Yes. Still Life, in the nude. Why not?"

She said, "I wouldn't do that!"

I said, "Nobody would ask you to, love."

She said no more. Fat cow.

I do get that a lot. Alright ... to look at me now you'd never know, but when I was younger...I was in demand. I can tell you.

They still talk about me at the South Croydon Photographic Club, like it was yesterday.

In the old days, some of them didn't put film in their cameras. Oh...I know that look. No film in their camera became a euphemism for something else.

One bloke said once, "I usually use pastels, but I'll put lead in my pencil for you love."

A frosty stare from me and absolute silence in the room was his answer. I don't stand for any of that nonsense. Well...you let that remark slide and where will you be be the end of the course?

But nowadays, with digital, they snap away happily getting real photos.

Although...there does seem less call for it now.

Art classes are on the decline actually. People stay in with their computer games and all that. Their hand eye coordination is fine for a mouse but they can't grasp a 4B pencil anymore.

Added to that, school art classes aren't what they were. We were taught proper drawing but now its all toilet rolls and gluing pasta shapes.....child centred education they call it. But can you imagine someone commissioning the Queen's likeness in alphabetti spaghetti?

In the earlier days, naked women were not to be seen very often. Nowadays any top shelf mag will have girls showing more than I've ever shown. Still life photographic modelling is not what it was. At least not at my level.

These days the shoots are mainly for fashion and calendars. But even calendars are dying a death, aren't they?

And here I am still doing it. I don't get as much work as I used to. But then I don't have as much as I used to. Regrettably, in some places, I've a lot more than I used to.

However, they say the woman who did this job before me was a little too old. She could have done with a bit of an iron lets say!

But some people still like a live model. Like this lot. Artists. Yes, they paint and draw and stuff, but they still take loads of photos too. Once I'm gone, their main point of reference has disappeared. And memory is so short these days. Especially with this lot of old men. Oh, there are a few ladies out there too. Okay. Fair dos.

You know...I was talking to one of them the other day. Monday, or Thursday. Those are the two evenings I work here. I think it was Monday. Although it could have been Thursday. Some of them come to both. I can get confused. They're mostly regulars, so why they need to see quite so much of me...I don't know.

He was telling me the difference between a flat image from a camera and the real live and warmth giving image of the real human body.

Apparently there's a great variety of subtly in the lighting and texture the camera can't pick out. There's an ambiance and atmosphere in the room with a live model – whether male, or female.

What a lot of tosh!

Just need to get away from the spouse is all. Have a beer afterwards.

Though what their wives think of the final results I just don't know.

Do you know, I've only ever seen myself in print once? I was surprised to see my face staring back at me. I didn't recognise myself at first, I was so....photogenic. But that was a long time ago.

I suppose I should ask to see their final results. See what they make of me. She how they see me.

Or perhaps not. I might be horrified. Certainly disappointed and ultimately depressed and undermined.

They moan about the cost of a model but, what with the price of food these days, I'm cheaper than a bowl of fruit and less likely to attract flies !

But the pay is good. For doing very little. But you try and sit for twenty minutes and not move. Not easy, I can tell you. Though you couldn't make a living out of just this. You have to have another job.

Mine? Pole dancer.

No. Not really. Though I did try it once. Fell and hurt my wrists. It's sodding difficult. First you have to be able to lift your own weight. Surprisingly few people can do that, you know. So, although I wouldn't do it again, I do have a new respect for those who do.

I work in a café.

There's a surprise, eh? And a disappointment too, I bet. You thought something more...glamorous. Befitting my image.

No. I going from running around like a mad thing all day, to sitting around like a mad thing in the evening.

EDITED