

A Drop of Human Kindness by Danusia Iwaszko. Copyright © 2020 Danusia Iwaszko.
Free to use June 1st – August 1st 2020

A Drop of Human Kindness

By Danusia Iwaszko

Version for female performer

One of 4 plays commissioned as part of Menagerie Theatre Company's 'Escapism' project,
May 2020.

This is a play for one performer

Notes for performers :

- SFX or FX in the script stands for 'Sound Effect'
- Feel free to add live or recorded music if you wish
- If you are unable to create desired sound effect, find a creative way around that (eg. Narration)
- Please open and end your recording of the play with the title followed by the writer's name.
- If you wish, you may also name the performer and anyone else who was involved in the recording. By doing this, you give your consent for those names to be in the public domain when Menagerie releases the recording via our website and social media channels.
- See the guidelines on our webpage for how to send the recording to Menagerie.
- If you have any questions about the play or recording, please email office@menagerie.uk.com
- And don't forget – have fun.

A Drop of Human Kindness

by

Danusia Iwaszko

Cast: Kelly. 45. Mother of two boys, stay at home housewife. Married to Stephen.

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(Kelly is digging the potato patch on her allotment with fervor.)

SFX: digging, birds singing, distant traffic.

Kelly: Almost done. Potatoes are meant to be good for sorting out the soil. If your soil needs sorting out, plant potatoes! That's what they say. It loosens it up, I think. Must be all the digging. But you need plenty of space for them, thank God for the allotment! Stephen said he didn't want vegetables in the garden. He just likes his lawn. "What do you want to grow vegetables for?" he said. "Just buy them." He doesn't understand. Right, phew, that is hard work. No joke, digging. Maybe if I didn't go so hard at it, oh well ... Look at them all, sitting patiently in a line. "With you in a minute, lads! you'll be tucked up in your bed very soon, all nice and cozy, all nice and safe."

I think I used to put faces on potatoes when I was young ...that's right! Mum bought me a little set of plastic features, *(She laughs)* eyes, lips, a little battered hat. I used to make potato men. Hours of fun! Imagine if I suggested it to the boys? "Here you are, boys, you're going to love this. Here are some potatoes and here are their eyes and lips and all you have to do is pop them in the spud." *(Imitating her boys)* "Err why?" *(Back to herself)* "There's no "why". Look, the little plastic bits have a spike on them and you put them in the potato and make potato men." *(The boys)* "I don't think so, Mum."

(She laughs and puts the seed potatoes in the ditch.)

SFX: digging.

Come on, in you go. There we are, a foot apart, plenty of room for you to have lots of baby potatoes. You are the Mummies and I wish you many children, loads and loads, so I can eat them! Eat them all! *(She laughs.)* Stephen doesn't like potatoes. Says they're high G.I., whatever that is. The only G.I. I know is in American films. Army films. Army G.I.? What does it stand for? Oh I don't know, I'll ask Stephen, he'll know. He insists that I cook him sweet potatoes, but they don't taste like normal potatoes. They're all sweet. He says they have less sugar than normal spuds, but that can't be right. When I questioned it, he went into all this scientific guff. "You see, Kelly, when boiled, a sweet potato has low GI and the carbohydrates and glucose and blah, blah, blah..." Lost me. I didn't say anything.

No! I like an old-fashioned spud, in you go boys. Oh, you're not the Mummies are you? You're the boys! Yes! You are the Mummies and the Daddies. You don't need another spud to produce your babies, do you? Just pop you in and off you go.

(Planting.) Who's the Mummy? You're the Mummy! Who's the Daddy? You're the Daddy! That's it. Lovely! You all look lovely. All in a row with your sprouty bit facing up, it looks like hair! We didn't have hair on our potato men. I think there might have been a moustache. Yes, that's right! A curly black moustache, and ears. Big, plastic pink ears. I wonder if they still make them?

Chitting, that's what the sprouty bits called. Isn't that a funny word, "chitting"? "Always chit your potatoes, before you plant them." That's the proper way to do it. Well so Monty Don says. Monty Don ... funny how tastes changes over the years. I'd have never gone for a "Monty Don" when I was young. He would have been boring, steady, safe. Now I think he's solid, reliable, and creative. Each area of his garden has a separate feel, The Jewel Garden, with its vivid colours, purples and reds, The White Garden, all gentle and quiet and the Wild garden ... I wish Stephen wouldn't say: "You love Monty more than me!" He means it! "I can see it all over your face, when you're watching him." I deny it, but he's not convinced. Neither am I.

Right! So, you lot need covering up. Okay, here we go. *(SFX: shoveling mud over the potatoes.)* Bye now. Make the soil a bit higher where the spud is ... lovely! Look at those straight lines. Nature is basically chaotic, and we tame you, don't we? Order from the chaos. There! See you and your families in a few weeks. That'll be lovely. It's always so exciting digging them up. How many will there be? Sometimes there's loads and it's like I've won the lottery! And sometimes it's really sad and the potato has rotted in the ground. Terrible. All that potential gone, wasted. Right, that'll do them. Off to the tap with my trusty can, water them in and I'm done.

SFX: footsteps on gravel.

God! How I love it here! *(Out loud.)* Did you hear that God? I love it here! I love your handy work, the sun, the air! I can breathe. *(Internal)* Oops! George is looking over. He's wondering what's going on. Oh, better not wave. *(A beat.)* Ah, he's so lovely.

SFX: hens clucking in the distance.

Look at him, sitting by his shed with his hens, he's the picture of contentment. That's my dream, to have some hens. One day. I better not talk to him, I promised Stephen I wouldn't. I'll just give him a little wave and a smile. That's okay isn't it? (*A beat.*) It's my own fault, I should never have told Stephen that he helped me with the fruit cage, but I couldn't have done it myself. I did go on about him a bit. I suppose it's not nice for a husband to hear his wife going on about other men. Nothing in it, of course, George must be 80 if he's a day, oh well.

SFX: tap filling a metal watering can.

You know he gets jealous, Kelly. He can't help it. I used to like it when we were first together. It made me feel special. But it got a bit ... I don't know, out of hand. He always wanted me to dress up when we went out but he didn't like it when other men looked at me. That's mad! I'd say, "You don't have anything to worry about" but, I don't know ... he's always been possessive. It did quieten down when the boys were born, but now ... coming down here has sparked it all off again.

SFX: picking up watering can.

God that's heavy! Ooo! My wrist is still sore! Only a sprain the doctor said but I still can't use it. Never mind eh, it'll mend. Right! Water in the spuds, put in my sunflowers and I'm done.

SFX: footsteps on gravel.

(She starts to whistle The Lord's My Shepherd, then sings:)

... he makes me down to lie

In pastures green, he leadeth me,

The quiet waters by."

I love all the higgledy piggledy plots and the tiny little paths. You'd never think you were in the city. I can hardly hear the traffic, it's there, but in the distance. All those people rushing about and us lot here, quietly, peacefully tilling the earth. Monty Don said it helped him with his depression, I know what he means. When I'm working here everything else disappears, all that matters is the digging, the planting, and the mud. Sometimes I plunge my hands into the soil. I don't know why, but it feels so good.

Gosh, my time's running out! It flies by, I lose track. Okay water in the boys,
SFX: watering. How's that, lads, lovely eh? That's all you need to make you grow,
water and kindness. That's what we all crave isn't it? A drop of human kindness.

Right, I'll just have time to plant up my sunflowers, then off. I think I'll put them
along the boundary. There's rather a lot, but it'll be a show. They're so tiny at the
moment in their little pots, hard to imagine they'll grow so tall.

(She plants up the Sunflowers.)

That's it, in you go and a good handful of grit around each one to stop Mr. Snail.
(SFX: Taking grit from bag.) He doesn't like it on his tummy, does he? I wonder
how big they'll grow? It says "giant" on the packet, I hope they are. That's it, in you
go. **(SFX: Taking grit from bag.)** A whole row of them with their big, sunny faces
turned up to the sky. They're amazing. When they're young, they really do follow the
sun. At dawn, they face east to greet it, then slowly turn west as it moves across the
sky. During the night they turn back to the east and do it all over again the next day.
Wonderful! But the weird thing is, as they mature, they stop doing it. **(SFX: Taking
grit from bag.)** There. All done and just in time! Honestly, half an hour down here
isn't enough really. I'd like to get my deck chair out, sit in the sun and do nothing. Oh
well, that's the deal I've made with Stephen. Right, spade away, fork away.

SFX: Shed door. Spade and fork being put away.

Good. Right. Home. Oh God! Come on, Kelly, it'll be alright, he might be nice today,
ask you what you did, yeah, or ... Oh God! Look, he's been fine recently, yes, except
for the wrist. Come on, Kelly! You have to make the boys their tea. You'll be back
here tomorrow. Yes. Deep breathe, head down, and you'll be back here tomorrow.

SFX: Shed door opening. Walking on gravel. *(She sings tentatively:)*

“The Lord's my Shepherd I'll not want

He makes me down to lie

In pastures green, he leadeth me

The quiet waters by.”