

**DAVID
HARE**

Slag

**DAVID
HARE**

Slag

SLAG

DAVID HARE

For this, his first play, David Hare was joint winner of the *Evening Standard* award for the Most Promising Playwright in 1971.

'*Slag* . . . is a study of militant feminism set in an exclusive girls public school run by a staff of three who pledge themselves to creating an ideal community without men. The result is that their original eight pupils gradually dwindle away until, by the last scene, the staff are reduced to playing their own hockey fixtures in the common room. . . . As a study of a closed female environment written by a man, and as a confident extension of a fashionable theme into a comic never-never land, the piece is a *tour de force* of marked originality.' Irving Wardle in *The Times*

' . . . demonstrates a grasp of stunning dialogue, assured wit and theatrical virtuosity which is astonishing. . . . His cast of three . . . revel in the blunt, vulgar, uninhibited, sometimes even poetic, lines that keep this curious play always alive and throbbing.' Milton Shulman in the *Evening Standard*

Faber Paperbacks

ISBN 0 571 09643 3

SLAG

SLAG

by

DAVID HARE

FABER AND FABER

London • Boston

*First published in 1971
by Faber and Faber Limited
3 Queen Square London WC1
Reprinted 1979
Printed in Great Britain by
Whitstable Litho Ltd Whitstable Kent
All rights reserved*

ISBN 0 571 09643 3

CONDITIONS OF SALE

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

All professional and amateur rights in this play are strictly reserved and applications for permission to perform it must be made in advance to Clive Goodwin Associates, 79 Cromwell Road, London, S.W.7.

© David Hare 1971

For Margaret

**First performed at the Hampstead Theatre Club, London, on
6th April 1970, with the following cast:**

JOANNE	Rosemary McHale
ELISE	Marty Cruickshank
ANN	Diane Fletcher

Designed by John Halle

Directed by Roger Hendricks-Simon

JOANNE (23)

ELISE (26)

ANN (32)

Scene 1: Common Room. Summer

Scene 2: Cricket Pitch. Summer

Scene 3: Bathroom. Summer

Scene 4: Common Room. Same Day

Scene 5: Bedroom. Autumn

Scene 6: Common Room. January

The play is written deliberately with as few stage and acting instructions as possible. Blackouts should be instant, gaps between scenes brief, and scenery minimal.

SCENE ONE

Common Room. They are standing formally with hands raised.

JOANNE: I, Joanne.

ELISE: I, Elise.

ANN: I, Ann.

JOANNE: Do solemnly promise.

ELISE } : Do solemnly promise.
ANN }

JOANNE: For as long as I know Elise and Ann.

ELISE: For as long as I know Joanne and Ann.

ANN: For as long as I know Joanne and Elise.

JOANNE: To abstain from all forms and varieties of sexual intercourse.

ELISE } : All forms and varieties of sexual intercourse.
ANN }

JOANNE: To keep my body intact in order to register my protest against the way our society is run by men for men whose aim is the subjugation of the female and the enslavement of the working woman.

ELISE } : The working woman.
ANN }

JOANNE: All forms of sex I therefore deny myself in order to work towards the establishment of a truly socialist society.
(ANN breaks away.)

ANN: Oh, come on.

JOANNE: What?

ANN: I've come along with you so far, but . . . socialist society!

JOANNE: All right, you may dissent at this point, but the essential commitment is made. All sex I deny.

ANN: Can we not drop the subject now once and for all?

ELISE: No one's going to test our determination anyway.

JOANNE: Is there any coffee?

ANN: No. No one's going to be much deprived.

ELISE: It's not as if we ever saw men except parents, and it's very unlikely we'll ever see any more of those.

ANN: It wasn't really that bad.

JOANNE: It was a disaster.

(Exit ELISE.)

ANN: They were a little conscious of the lack of numbers. Who wouldn't be? A chill in the air of Great Hall.

JOANNE: The singing of the Internationale should have warmed them up.

ANN: That was a singularly silly gesture on your part. Nobody knew the tune anyway. But your stupidity at least managed to unite them. We've been through the very worst that we can know, and now it'll be time to rebuild.

JOANNE: When Robinson Crusoe landed on a desert island, his first instinct was to create a perfect embryo of the society he had escaped from.

ANN: Thank you, Joanne, but can we leave politics out of this? We will build a new sort of school where what people feel for people will be the basis of their relationships. No politics.

JOANNE: In Bunuel's version—1952, I think, anyway his Mexican period, the part of Robinson Crusoe was played by . . .

(Re-enter ELISE.)

ELISE: Coast's clear. They've gone.

JOANNE: The part of Crusoe was played by . . .

ELISE: For Christ's sake shut up.

ANN: Let's not talk like that.

JOANNE: You started it.

ANN: What's the point?

JOANNE: She was getting at me.

ANN: Divided we fall.

(ANN resumes chalking in the coloured parts of the black-board. ELISE starts knitting.)

ELISE: I've nearly finished another bootee. Its little feet are going

to look so sweet.

ANN: Lovely.

JOANNE: All you need now is a fuck.

(JOANNE *picks up* Sight and Sound.)

ELISE: I'm sitting here and often I stop and think perhaps I've seen my very last man.

ANN: Tradesmen.

ELISE: I mean real men. I can't quite grasp what that means.

Ann, Joanne, imagine it.

JOANNE: Tremendous.

ELISE: No more men.

JOANNE: The ideal.

ANN: We're perfectly well used to it. I've been two years without now and I tell you I feel better.

ELISE: You don't look any better.

ANN: I eat better.

ELISE: Repulsive.

(JOANNE *goes to the window where something has caught her attention. She screams out.*)

ANN: I've taken off weight and I don't have my skin trouble any longer.

JOANNE: Stop bugging about, you vile little child.

ANN: I don't doubt, Elise, that men will some time reappear in your life.

JOANNE: That's better.

ANN: And you will be happy. But until then we must spend the time creatively.

ELISE: Hurrah.

ANN: We will build a new Brackenhurst.

JOANNE: When Robinson Crusoe landed on a desert island his first instinct . . .

ANN: Well what would you do?

JOANNE: Do as you like. You're in charge.

ANN: You find it so easy to criticize. What would you do?

JOANNE: I don't know.

ANN: Really? Elise?

ELISE: What?

ANN: Do I have to do all the thinking?

ELISE: Mm.

JOANNE (*back at window*): Take that thing out of your mouth.

(*A bell rings incredibly loud.*)

ANN: There's no time to be lost.

JOANNE: Incidentally, I'm fed up with my room.

ANN: Your room will be seen to.

JOANNE: When I was a projectionist . . .

ELISE: We don't want to know.

JOANNE: Do you know the last film I saw?

ELISE: *Touch of Evil*, Orson Welles, 1957.

JOANNE: Stupid to claim it's a great film, but it does contain
the most wonderful camera-work.

ELISE: The last film I saw was *Look at Life*.

ANN: I haven't been for years.

ELISE: Called *Loads on Roads*.

JOANNE: That's late 68 *Look at Life*. Not a very great period at
all. Very facile camera-work.

ELISE: I enjoyed it.

JOANNE: Crap.

ELISE: I thought it assured.

JOANNE: I thought it crap.

ELISE: I had a really good time.

JOANNE: What are you trying to get at?

ANN: And I never saw it.

ELISE: You'd have liked it, Ann.

JOANNE: What are you trying to prove?

ANN: Girls, my girls.

JOANNE (*faintly*): Oh yes.

(*ANN gets up, throws the chalk into the air. The bell rings
again. Yells across the room out of the window.*)

ANN: Get into class.

JOANNE: Who's teaching?

ELISE: I am.

ANN: Why aren't you in there?

ELISE: I've given them reading. I put that bossy one in charge.

ANN: Is that the sign of a good schoolteacher?

ELISE: We're appalling schoolteachers.

ANN: Come, come.

JOANNE: Are you going to teach?

ELISE: No.

JOANNE: I think I will, then.

(Exit JOANNE.)

ANN: I won't have that said.

ELISE: Why have we only got eight pupils then?

ANN: Eleven paid.

ELISE: Eight stayed.

ANN: The eight are very happy.

ELISE: Freaks.

ANN: You're as responsible as anyone.

ELISE: Agreed.

ANN: Though not as responsible as her.

ELISE: She's not harming anyone.

ANN: She's harming my girls. My beautiful girls. I'm sentimental perhaps but I do think girls should be spared her sort of nonsense.

ELISE: It does them good.

ANN: Stop expressing your opinions. They don't help.

ELISE: Leave off.

ANN: You're such a hopeless person. As a person. Don't you wish anything for yourself?

ELISE: In the words of Isadora Duncan, I would like to be remembered as a great dancer but I fear I will only be remembered as a good bang.

(Bell rings yet more insistently.)

That's all. The whole thing can probably be blamed on some childhood vitamin deficiency. Or a great rush of air to my legs that sucks men to me. I'm chilly.

ANN: It is chilly.

ELISE: Stop staring at me.

ANN: Window.

(ELISE shuts the window.)

Do you think things are very far gone?

ELISE: Of course.

ANN: The parents were not impressed. What do you think of Joanne's plans?

ELISE: Ridiculous.

ANN: She's renamed her study the Women's Liberation Work. She says she's teaching dialectics this week instead of gym.

ELISE: You'll have to fight back.

ANN: What do you think of my plans?

ELISE: Hopelessly naïve.

ANN: I like the idea of a new cricket pavilion.

ELISE: Hopeless optimism.

ANN: I'd like a new row of baths.

ELISE: Hopeless incompetence.

ANN: They're currently filthy.

ELISE: The girls tell me they find it exciting to smoke cigarettes in their baths, the height of decadence.

ANN: I'd prefer you didn't talk about the girls smoking in front of me.

ELISE: You know they smoke.

ANN: I do not know they smoke. I don't know that at all. And if they do, Elise, I want it reported to me properly, not slipped into our conversation by subterfuge. I'm only trying my best.

(No response.)

There are sixteen too many milk bottles coming every day. This has been going on for nine days. There are 144 spare bottles of milk in various shades of cheese.

ELISE: Joanne is domestic science.

ANN: Joanne is.

ELISE: She's a constant reproach.

ANN: I've told her.

ELISE: I told her to love life. If you come to Brackenhurst unused, you are sure to be unused for life.

ANN: It's not that bad. Fancy a game?

ELISE: Thank you, no.

ANN: Just because you always lose.

(ANN is bouncing a ping-pong ball on her bat.)