

**TOM
STOPPARD**

*Enter
a
Free
Man*

**TOM
STOPPARD**

*Enter
a
Free
Man*

Enter a Free Man

Tom Stoppard

'George Riley is the man who invented indoor rain . . . from the moment he sweeps into his local, announcing that he has left home for ever with nothing but a toothbrush and a ten-bob note, he imposes the authority of his fantasy not only on the audience, but on the regulars who have heard the same declaration of independence every Saturday for years. He imposes it by language, the gorgeous comic rhetoric of a talent so transparently theatrical that it must have been born in a trunk . . . he is a splendid full-fledged comic creation . . . If we hadn't already seen *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* we'd be hailing *Enter a Free Man* as the liveliest début for years.' Ronald Bryden in the *Observer*

£1.95 net

Faber Paperbacks

ISBN 0 571 08794 9

ENTER A FREE MAN

Other plays by Tom Stoppard

★

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND

ALBERT'S BRIDGE and IF YOU'RE GLAD I'LL BE FRANK

ALBERT'S BRIDGE

AFTER MAGRITTE

JUMPERS

DIRTY LINEN

ENTER A FREE MAN

by

TOM STOPPARD

FABER AND FABER

LONDON & BOSTON

*First published in 1968
by Faber and Faber Limited
3 Queen Square London WC1
Reprinted 1971, 1973, 1977 and 1981
Printed in Great Britain by
Whitstable Litho Ltd., Whitstable, Kent
All rights reserved*

ISBN 0 571 08794 9 (Faber Paperbacks)

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved and professional applications for permission to perform it, etc., must be in advance, before rehearsals begin, to Fraser and Dunlop (Scripts) Ltd., of 91 Regent Street, London W.1., and amateur applications for permission to perform it, etc., must be made in advance, before rehearsals begin, to Samuel French Ltd. of 26 Southampton Street, London W.C.2.

© 1968 by Tom Stoppard

In an earlier version, under the title *A Walk on the Water*, this play was first performed in a television production by Rediffusion in November, 1963.

The first London performance of *Enter A Free Man* was at the St. Martin's Theatre on March 28th, 1968. The cast was as follows:

George Riley	MICHAEL HORDERN
Persephone	MEGS JENKINS
Linda	VANESSA FORSYTH
Harry	ROLAND CURRAM
Florence	MARIA CHARLES
Carmen	LIAM GAFFNEY
Able	ROY HOLDER
Brown	KENNETH MC CLELLAN

Directed by FRITH BANBURY

Designed by REECE PEMBERTON

Lighting by JOHN B. READ

CHARACTERS

GEORGE RILEY

PERSEPHONE

LINDA

HARRY

ABLE

CARMEN

FLORENCE

BROWN

ACT ONE

Stage Right is the living-room of RILEY's home . . . a dining-table with chairs, a settee, a grandfather clock, a portrait of the Queen, a transistor radio (the only thing that does not look vaguely out of date). Everything is spick and span. There are lots of potted plants, on sills, shelves and tables, and almost everywhere where there is a plant there is some plumbing above it, quite discreet. Stairs to the bedrooms can be seen beyond the door.

PERSEPHONE is responsible for the tidiness. She is matronly, plump, plain, nice, vague, usually vaguely distracted. She is a great duster and emptier of ash-trays. Her daughter LINDA is in pyjamas. She is eighteen, self-assured, at least on the surface, and can be as cruel or warm as she feels like being. She is never sentimental, and often anti-sentiment: sharp, abrasive, cool, when her guard is up, and rather childlike when it drops.

Stage Left is the bar, the public bar of a slightly old-fashioned unfashionable pub in what is probably a seedy urban suburb.

The two playing areas blend into one another at Downstage Centre but they have no geographical relationship. CARMEN the barman is middle-aged and big, taciturn but in fact warm, tough-looking but curiously ineffectual. HARRY is thirty-odd, flashy, sharp, well dressed, cheaply rakish.

ABLE is a young callow sailor, almost gormless.

BROWN is almost anonymous—meek, colourless—a man in a pub, minding his own business.

RILEY is a smallish untidy figure in a crumpled suit (when he appears)—a soiled fifty with a certain education somewhere in the past: it gives him a tattered dignity now. He is certainly not mad but he is definitely odd. Unsinkable, despite the slow leak.

Before the curtain rises; "Rule Britannia". The music fades to nothing as the lights come up on the home.

At home; PERSEPHONE and LINDA. LINDA in pyjamas.

PERSEPHONE: You'd better get dressed, Linda. We don't want

another row when your father gets in.

LINDA: He won't get back till late . . . meatless Saturday for George Riley, the man who's on his way . . . to the pub on the corner.

(The lights come up slowly on the bar.)

(In the bar; CARMEN behind the bar.)

PERSEPHONE: Well, why shouldn't he go to the pub? At least he meets people.

LINDA: How do you know? I bet he's just another lonely feller having a quiet drink. The point is, what's he like? I mean when we can't see him. He's got to be different—I mean you wouldn't even know me if you could see me——

(ABLE enters, downstage of the bar, carrying a letter and writing-paper. He collects a glass of beer from the bar and goes slowly to the corner table and sits, writing letter.)

PERSEPHONE: Come on, Linda.

(She leaves the room and goes off towards the kitchen.)

LINDA: And that goes for everyone. There's two of everyone.

(The gent (BROWN) enters downstage of bar and sits on stool, reading newspaper.)

You see you need that

(HARRY enters upstage of bar, looks about impatiently.)

and if the two of him's the same, I mean if he's the same in the pub as he is with us, then he's had it.

(RILEY enters with a flourish, but his entrance makes no impact.)

RILEY: Enter a free man!

LINDA: Poor old Dad . . .

HARRY: It's him again.

RILEY: Free as the proverbial bird.

(PERSEPHONE reappears at the home door.)

PERSEPHONE: Linda. *(Goes off and upstairs.)*

(The lights on the home start to fade.)

LINDA *(rising and going off upstairs)*: You'll have to do something about him, you know . . .

RILEY: Unashamed I have left her.

LINDA: Before I'm old and ugly.

RILEY: A good woman I daresay, in many ways a fine woman—

in many ways a terrible liability. Who'll drink to that? A toast.

(No reaction. He pauses in the vacuum . . . the living-room has faded.)

What time do you open?

ABLE: Morning, Mr. Riley. . . .

RILEY *(ignoring him; to BROWN)*: Good lord, it's my old C.O., isn't it?

BROWN *(nervously)*: I don't think so.

RILEY: I saved your life at Monte Casino—that's worth a drink!

BROWN: I'm afraid——

RILEY *(calls)*: A foaming tankard on the Colonel.

(CARMEN takes little or no notice.)

BROWN: I don't believe——

RILEY *(dismissing him equably)*: Just as you like. *(To ABLE.)*

Thank God for the British Navy.

ABLE: Hello, Mr. Riley . . .

RILEY: At ease, carry on smoking.

ABLE: Oh—have one?

RILEY: Why, yes—I think I might.

(ABLE offers and lights a cigarette.)

HARRY *(to CARMEN)*: She won't get here for next year's Derby, never mind the one o'clock . . . I'll give her five minutes. If I'm gone, tell her the same time tomorrow.

RILEY: I don't know where to start.

ABLE: What?

RILEY: Free as air. Walked out with my toothbrush and a ten-bob note, and I don't know where to start. *(Indicating ABLE's notepaper.)* What have you got there?

ABLE: Well, it's this letter, Mr. Riley—I don't know how to . . . I'm not very good at . . .

RILEY: Who's it to?

ABLE: Well, it's this girl, you see. I met her at this dance. I thought you might be able to . . .

(RILEY has already taken up the letter.)

RILEY: "Carissima Silvana . . ." *(Pause.)* Where was this dance?

ABLE: Naples.

RILEY: "Carissima Silvana . . . I'm sorry I didn't write before

but I put it off till we got back on Monday. I've been thinking about you, though. Well, as you can see, we got back all right and I've got ten days before we report back. I don't know where we'll be going but I'm keeping my fingers crossed for Naples. I hope your shoe's all right——"
(RILEY *looks up inquiringly*.)

ABLE: Her heel came off.

RILEY: ". . . I hope your shoe's all right. Well, I just wanted to say I had a nice time with you, the best time I had on the trip, and I've been thinking about you. I'm sorry the photo is a bit blurred. The other bloke is Dave Collins, you remember him. . . ." (*Looks up*.) Is that all?

ABLE: It's not very good, is it?

RILEY: Take a note. (*Starts dictating, pacing*.) Dear Silvana, please try to forget me. I have just met a man in a pub whose example stands as a warning against even the most casual relationship with young women. A thing like that could end in disaster—twenty-five years of dead domesticity, fatal to a man of creative spirit—only today, after much loss of time and dignity. . . . (*He has travelled to the bar: to HARRY and CARMEN*.) Walked out with my toothbrush and a ten-bob note. (*To CARMEN*.) A pint of half-and-half. (*To HARRY*.) I was driven to it, you see. Do you think I did the right thing?

HARRY: What?

RILEY: Leaving her.

HARRY: Who?

RILEY: My wife.

HARRY: Where?

RILEY: What? At home.

HARRY: Left her at home?

RILEY (*irritated*): No—I *left* her. Walked out.

HARRY: Never.

RILEY: I told you.

HARRY: What—Percy?

RILEY: Persephone is her name, if you don't mind. However, yes I have. Man is born free and——

HARRY: Walked out on her again? Where's your stuff?

RILEY (*slapping his pocket with a smile*): Here. I've got something in here that will open doors to me, Harry.

CARMEN (*with RILEY's drink*): Two and tuppence.

RILEY: Two and tuppence for a pint of half-and-half. Half beer, half water. Times change, Carmen, my old barman.

(*He tosses down a ten-shilling note and turns back to BROWN and stands in front of him regarding him.*)

I'd say you were a man who could understand.

BROWN: I beg your pardon?

RILEY: Granted. I have left my wife.

CARMEN (*from the bar*): Now then——

RILEY: I wanted you to know that. . . . Left her. My wife. You married?

CARMEN: Mr. Riley——

RILEY: Give me your honest opinion. What would you have done in my position?

BROWN: I don't really know what your position was.

RILEY: Of course you don't. How could you? I'm an inventor.

CARMEN: Your change.

RILEY: Keep it.

CARMEN: Seven and tenpence.

(*Small pause.*)

RILEY (*getting up*): I'll owe it to you. I'll be worth thousands in a short while.

CARMEN: We close at three.

RILEY (*calling up to HARRY*): A man is born free and everywhere he is in chains. Who said that?

ABLE: Houdini?

RILEY (*turning*): Who?

ABLE: —dini.

RILEY: Houdini. No.

ABLE: Give up.

RILEY (*turning back to HARRY*): Still wasting your life, Harry?

HARRY: No, I'm waiting to see if my horse comes in before my pools come up.

RILEY: Gambling. The opiate of the common herd.

HARRY: For eight draws on a wet Saturday you can call me common, I can stand it. Filthy rich and common with it,

that's my idea of living. You can come and watch me through the palace railings, blowing on my soup.

RILEY: You see? Dreams. Diversions to keep the mob happy. It's the Government, you see.

HARRY: I always suspected it.

RILEY: It's the truth. The government's taking a tip from the Romans. When the place was declining and falling round their ears, you know what the Romans did?

HARRY: No?

RILEY: Bread and circuses. To take the mob's mind off it. Same thing now, only it's football. Football drugs them, keeps them hoping. And the government knows it.

HARRY: Oh, it knows it.

(ABLE to bar, for "one more, same again".)

RILEY: You're right. Because if the mob didn't have its circus you know what would happen? They'd rush 'em! Up from the Elephant, over Westminster Bridge, surround the Houses of Parliament and string 'em up. That's the whole point of electing an M.P.—you've got to have someone to string up as a last resort. (*Pose.*) Gentlemen! It's football or anarchy.

ABLE: It's cricket now.

RILEY: What?

ABLE: Cricket.

RILEY: True. (*Thought.*) But these things take time to grow. If cricket went on till Christmas, you know who would be ruling the country?

ABLE: Who?

RILEY: You would.

ABLE: I never look at it that way.

RILEY: Just as the mob is getting restive, football comes back, nips revolution in the bud. Have you noticed how football starts earlier and finishes later every year?

ABLE: No.

RILEY: Well, it does. It's the government. They know, you see.

HARRY: They do.

RILEY: So you can see why, can't you?

HARRY : I can.

RILEY : It's the Government.

HARRY : They're no fools.

RILEY (*with scorn*) : Dreams! The illusion of something for nothing. No wonder the country is going to the dogs. Personal enterprise sacrificed to bureaucracy. No pride, no patriotism. The erosion of standards, the spread of mediocrity, the decline of craftsmanship and the betrayal of the small inventor.

HARRY : It's terrible really. I blame youth.

CARMEN : Education.

HARRY : The Church is out of touch.

CARMEN : The family is not what it was.

HARRY : It's the power of the unions.

CARMEN : The betrayal of the navy.

HARRY : Ban the bomb.

CARMEN : Spare the rod.

HARRY : I'm all right, Jack.

CARMEN : The little man goes to the wall.

HARRY : Supermarkets.

CARMEN : Everything's plastic.

HARRY : Country's going to the dogs. What happened to our greatness?

RILEY : Look at the Japanese!

HARRY : Look at the Japanese!

RILEY : The Japanese look after the small inventor!

HARRY : All Japanese inventors are small.

CARMEN : They're a small people.

HARRY : Very small. Short.

RILEY : The little man!

HARRY : The little people!

RILEY : Look at the transistor!

HARRY : Very small.

RILEY : Japanese!

CARMEN : Gurkhas are short.

HARRY : But exceedingly brave for their size.

CARMEN : Fearless.

RILEY (*furiously*) : What are you talking about!

HARRY: Good luck!

RILEY: Oh yes—luck, leave it to luck. But luck is not for us inventors.

HARRY: You're right.

RILEY: Of course I'm right. Because we rise above it, we don't submit to the common decay. We have minds, I think therefore I am!

ABLE: I've been meaning to ask you about that, Mr. Riley—

RILEY: A man must resist. A man must stand apart, make a clean break on his own two feet! Faith is the key—faith in oneself. (*Producing out of his pocket an envelope which he waves about.*) I have in here a little idea—one of many—that will take me away from all this. I'm saying good-bye to it all, Harry, just as I said good-bye to Persephone.

HARRY: It rings a bell. Let's have a look at it.

RILEY: What the creative mind needs is respect for its independence.

HARRY: Exactly! Respect. That's what we've got for you. We all have. Right, Carmen?

CARMEN: What?

HARRY: You see—respect. You've been coming in here, and we like it. Raises the tone. Right, Carmen?

CARMEN: Eh?

HARRY: Because of what? Because we're common. I mean, what have we got to give the world? Nothing. But you're—well, you're a genius! An inventor! You're a clever bloke, sitting there in your workshop, pioneering you might say, from your blood and your sweat for the lot of your fellow man.

RILEY: The lot of my fellow man!

HARRY: It's people like you who made this country great.

RILEY: You've got something there, Harry. That's very good.

HARRY: I had to say it.

RILEY: Thank you, Harry.

HARRY: Able thinks you're somebody—don't you?

ABLE: What?

HARRY: Don't you think George here is a clever bloke?

ABLE: 'Course he's a clever bloke. He's an inventor, isn't he?

HARRY: My very point. An inventor. That's your job. Amazing.