

EXTRACT

SUDAN

CHRISTINE DAVEY

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NOTE ON THE SCRIPT

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Character list

Sudan – male, older – the last male white rhino. Sudan should never be played as a rhino but as a human failing and dying. Sudan is the last of his kind – struggling to come to terms with impending death, struggling to come to terms with remembering life. Sudan is funny, selfish and knows what it means to be special.

Frank – female, 40s, 50s – Sudan's carer, Frank has taken charge of Sudan for two decades, making sure the rhino has everything he needs. Frank enjoys being useful and sees her purpose slipping away as the rhino dies. Frank is a storyteller, creating narratives to make life less meaningless.

Dr Cathy – female, 30s – a scientist, focussed on the job at hand – making sure Sudan lives long enough to be useful to the remainder of his species. Cathy believes the human race has hope.

Open – in the blackness we hear ELO’s ‘Mr Blue Sky’. Lights up. A door sits centre stage. Two people sit either side of the door. 1 – Dr Cathy Peterson. 2 – Francine – (Frank). A small table sits to one side with an iPhone attached to a speaker. ELO’s ‘Mr Blue Sky’ comes through the speaker. Frank is dressed in black, secret service-style. We get the sense that if she wanted, she could kill you with her bare hands. She’s strong, forthright. Frank taps her foot to the music and reads the paper. A book is beneath her chair – Maeve Binchey’s latest – ‘Emily’s Lament’. Dr Cathy isn’t dressed in a white coat (too obvious) but she has a stethoscope around her neck. She is 30/40s, brisk and efficient. She doesn’t like the music and doesn’t tap her foot. She has a load of folders in her lap, she makes notes. Next to her is a drugs trolley. A plethora of pill bottles are on the trolley, or in draws in the trolley. They all have different coloured lids – blue, green yellow, orange, white, purple, red.

Cathy glares at Frank.

Cathy Do we have to listen to this?

Frank Electric Light Orchestra. His favourite.

Cathy Isn’t.

Frank Is.

Cathy So isn’t.

Frank So is.

Cathy Do you have to be childish?

Frank Don’t *have* to be, *choose* to be.

Cathy Jesus.

Frank sings along with the song, paying no attention to her

 Could you at least turn it down?

Frank sighs, reaches for the iPhone, turns it off.

 I didn’t mean off, I meant/

Frank What/

Cathy Down/

Frank I’ve turned it off, so/

Cathy Did I ask you to turn it off?

Frank Yes/

Cathy No, actually. No. I said, could you at least turn it down – completely different set of words. Really pays to listen.

Frank (*mimicking*) Really pays to listen.

Pause. Frank glares at her, continues reading paper. Cathy clicks pen, writes in notebook.

Cathy (*checking notes*) Not on his playlist for the month. (*reads*) David Bowie, Elvis Presley the Vegas years, and, if in a reflective mood – Leonard Cohen.

Frank Boring as bat shit/

Cathy His choice. It's his choice that counts. Batshit or otherwise.

Frank ELO's a late entry. He told me to add it last night.

Cathy Codswallop.

Frank What? An event can't occur without your supervision? Human activity can't take place without your necessary input? (*smiles at her*) Know your trouble?

Cathy Excuse me?

Frank God complex.

Cathy Jesus Christ.

Frank Delusions of grandeur. An unshakeable belief characterised by consistently inflated feelings of personal ability, privilege and physical and/or metaphysical infallibility.

Cathy Well obviously you're right. After all, I only have a Masters and two PhDs whereas your knowledge base springs from a Cert Three in Security Services/

Frank God complex.

Cathy (*whisper*) Oh just...fuck off/

Frank What's that?

Cathy You heard me.

Frank Let it out, doc. Don't hold back. Stick it to the man.

Cathy What on earth are you talking about?

Frank Fuck ‘em. Fuck the lot of ‘em. Like this bozo. (*reading from paper*) Here’s this thief in Townsville, right. Robbing a bank. (*pause*). Why are they always from Queensland? (*smiles*) Anyway, our Mensa candidate notices he’s on CCTV, rips off his balaclava, waves at the camera and says, ‘hi mum, check me out, top of the friggin’ world!’. Cops nab him within thirty-five minutes.

Cathy How about you concentrate on/

Frank Bet you ten bucks Chuckles here is on the One Nation ticket by the next election. There but for the grace of evolution go I.

Cathy Do we pay you to read the paper, Francine?

Frank Frank.

Cathy Do we pay you to read the paper, FRANK?

Frank Nope.

Cathy Has anyone given you specific instructions to read the paper?

Frank (*Laughing*) Someone should.

Cathy Have they?

Frank stops laughing.

Frank Nope.

Cathy Then do what we pay you for and don’t read the damn paper.

Frank sits back down on her chair. Folds arms. Cathy checks her phone, sends a text/checks clipboard, keeps busy and bustling. She stands and heads towards the door, listening.

Frank (*looking at door*) Not a peep for two hours.

Cathy He’s sleeping.

Frank Getting quieter every day.

Cathy It’s hot. Who wants to be loud when it’s hot?

Frank Bought him a new Maeve Binchey yesterday and he hasn’t even looked at it.

Cathy He’s still going with *The Life of Napoleon*. Can’t hurry the *Life Of Napoleon*.

Frank Two hours, not a snort, laugh, click of his heel on the lino/

Cathy Don’t be ridiculous, he’s got plush pile carpet! We don’t skimp.

- Frank On the important things/
- Cathy No. Not the important things.
- Frank He used to be so noisy, back at the beginning. (*he smiles*) When he first got here, we couldn't shut him up. The loudest bastard. The funniest bastard. The grumpiest bastard sometimes, but Christ he was a party and a half.
- Cathy (*smiles*) Watched him arrive on TV. Remember it practically word for word. (*she raises her hands*) 'After 30 years in zoos, wildlife parks and game reserves across the globe, Sudan finally has a home at Rosebank Sanctuary. The last of his species'.
- Frank The last and the best.
- Cathy (*nods*) Reporters were practically apoplectic. One – can't remember his name, but he had this porno moustache and comb-over, the living embodiment of self-importance on legs – and he said in a big, booming voice – 'The survival of Sudan, against all odds, is testament to what is possible if we put our heads together and work consistently for a...'
- Frank (*sarcastic*) Beneficial outcome.
- Cathy (*genuine*) Beneficial outcome. (*pauses, smiles*) I was just a teenager, maybe fifteen, fourteen. Decided there and then to be a scientist. Devote my life to discovering the answer to the eternal question 'why?' A moment of definition. World-altering. Ha! Almost made me believe in god/
- Frank (*smiling*) In yourself you mean?
- Cathy Idiot.
- Frank We didn't need to believe in anything then. We had him – resplendent in his...resplendence. Twenty-four-seven, stamping and stomping and roaring and laughing and wanting us to bring him drinks and snacks and it was all 'yes sir, no sir, three bags full of whatever drinks and snacks you want sir'. Time, temperature, atmospheric pressure, none of it mattered then – he was unstoppable/
- Cathy Unbreakable/
- Frank Unbelievable/
- Cathy Irrefutable proof of our cleverness.
- They pause. It's bitter sweet to remember.*
- Frank How much longer do you reckon?



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