

## **ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE - Overview**

Author: Joe Orton

Year: 1964

Cast: 3 M : 1 F

Acts: 3

Setting: The living room of a house on the edge of a rubbish dump

### **Characters**

Kath - Female, middle aged. She holds both sexual and maternal feelings for the young Mr Sloane. Despite appearing to be the cliché of the voluptuous landlady, she is indeed real and human, as well as being a brilliantly comic part, holding some of the funniest lines in the play. Although she may appear docile and unintelligent in comparison to her calculating brother, she herself displays the same characteristic in seducing Sloane and keeping her hold on him toward the end of the play.

Sloane - Male, 20's. The eponymous lead character. Confident, attractive and psychotic, he holds a hypnotic sexual control over Kath and Ed. He has a shady past, quickly brought back to the surface by Kemp. He effortlessly uses his sexuality to play parlor games with the siblings and allows his mental instabilities to take over when he "accidentally" kicks Kemp to death. A genuine treat for an actor to perform.

Ed - Male, middle aged. A strongly built businessman with a three piece suit and one track mind, who has worked his way up in his field, complete with twitching mustache. Repressing his own sexuality with a constant stream of cigarettes for the sake of decency and societal pressures, the excitement of Sloane's arrival brings these feelings to a head. He is intelligent and calculating, imagining the various ways in which he can use Mr Sloane, and how he can get his father to sign away the house before his death. As much as he loves his sister, his inherent misogyny runs through his actions and beliefs.

Kemp - Male, elderly. The frail father to Kath and Ed. Recognizes Sloane as the man who, many years ago, killed his boss. Despite his ailing health, he is the least of his daughter's priorities. Although he is nearly blind, ironically, he is the only one to see the true colors of Sloane and is thusly repaid for this service with his own death.

### **Synopsis**

Joe Orton's 1964 play is a dark comedy in the deepest shade of black - a cross between the works of Pinter and *Carry On*. Young Mr. Sloane is looking for parents to love. His middle-aged landlady is looking for a baby. Her younger brother is looking for some action.. their elderly father is in the way.

Sloane, a beautiful and psychotic young man, arrives at the house (situated on the edge of a rubbish dump) of Kath, a middle aged landlady looking for a lodger. Kath shares this home with her ailing and nearly blind father, Kemp. From the moment Sloane walks into her house, Kath opens up to him, telling him of a previous relationship she had. Mr Sloane responds in a similar fashion, telling the story of his parents passing away together, which the eagerly maternal Kath laps up. Kemp appears and despite his daughter's obvious adoration of this new man, distrusts him immediately, believing him to be the man who murdered his boss. In a violent altercation, Kemp stabs Sloane in the leg with a fire prod,

and Kath angrily sends him away and manages to get Sloane's trousers off as Sloane makes advances toward her. Ed, repressed homosexual brother to Kath then arrives and is horrified to find his dear sister taking in a lodger. Kemp has an estranged relationship with his son, after finding him "committing some kind of felony in the bedroom" in his youth. Despite initially being reluctant to Sloane's presence there, Ed relents in speaking with him as his smothered sexuality takes over him, offering Sloane the position of his chauffeur, complete with tight leather uniform. Kath is delighted, and after Ed exits, she appears to the recovering Sloane clad in a barely covering negligee and rolls on top of Sloane as the curtain falls on Act 1.

Months later we rejoin our characters with Sloane taking a break from his chauffeur position to Ed, sleeping on the sofa. Kath is irritated as a woman has called for him, and begins to get jealous, ambiguously hinting, before dropping the bombshell that she is pregnant, much to Sloane's terror. Ed, too is unhappy as he has been out joyriding in his car, and warns Sloane of the dangers of women. He tells Sloane to pack his things - he will be working for Ed full time now. As Sloane leaves, the frail Kemp informs, in an attempt of reconciliation with his son, tells Ed of Kath's sleeping with Sloane. Furious, he confronts him about this, also believing Kath to be pregnant. Sloane says that she threw herself at him, and Ed departs to buy cigarettes. Sloane's playing of the siblings against one another has caught up with him. Enraged, he is confronted again by Kemp, accusing him again of murdering his boss. Sloane's psychotic nature takes over and he kicks Kemp to death.

The third act opens a few minutes later with Ed's return from the shop, demanding Sloane be taken to the police. Sloane's persuasiveness wins Ed over and they agree to fabricate a story for the police, in exchange for Sloane's servitude. Kath, however is reluctant to follow suit as she will lose her hold on Sloane. Sloane is thusly caught between the devil and the deep blue sea - if he decides to stay with one sibling, the other will of course turn him in. With political skill, Kath and Ed compromise - in exchange for both their silences, he will live with one for six months at a time. Sloane and Ed leave, and Kath happily sits on the sofa sucking a boiled sweet as the play ends.

### **My Proposal**

I want to direct *Entertaining Mr Sloane* because, amongst other reasons, it is absolutely my favorite play, with good reason too - the wonderfully created characters and sharp dialogue, and an abundance of fantastic jokes only aid this. It presents its actors with genuinely interesting characters to play, and thus a real treat for the audience.

Aside from being a purely comedic piece, it smashes apart the preconceptions of sexuality and family life in a classic Oedipal manner. Orton paints a wonderfully subversive picture of family life in which amorality and lust reign supreme. The characters revel in innuendo and artificiality to conceal their darkest desires.

It's a brilliantly exciting play too - with smut, high drama and extreme violence scattered through as casually as you'd like.

I think this play would be good for the society as, not only do the actors playing in it have a real opportunity to stretch their theatrical legs, a similar challenge is presented for the design team - a house set on the edge of a rubbish tip. Aside from this, the play is quite well known in it's own right and would attract a good deal of attention, what with the recent revivals of older plays such as *Rattigan* that have been popular of late.

My experience of directing includes co-directing a submission for The Shakespeare School's Festival (*Richard III*), the school production of 2011 at EGS (*A Funny Thing*

*Happened on the Way to the Forum*), as well as both of the A-Level Theatre Studies pieces (Bertolt Brecht's *St Joan of the Stockyards* and *The Trials of Luke Jobson*, a piece I wrote through workshop processes). In terms of acting, this year alone I took part in 8 productions, including several lead parts, and in August of next year I will be taking the part of Milo Tindle in a local touring production of *Sleuth*, showing a clear experience in many areas of the field of theatricality. I would like to do a piece for SuTCO as I believe it will give me a chance to hone my skills and put on a really amazing production.

Ideally I would like week 5 or 10 for the production to give the actors sufficient time to find the right way of performing the roles without turning them into ridiculous caricatures. This will also leave ample time to construct the set, although quite simple in design, the finishing touches, such as the overall decay of the place would take a while to get just right.

In terms of my vision for the piece, I would emphasize the violence as well as the undercurrent of sexuality throughout the play. Also, the idea of the house being on the edge of a rubbish tip is too brilliant to forget, given that as a result, all that can ever walk through the family door is disease and ill health. The set too should reflect this, with the walls being decayed and worn, same for all the furniture. Period costumes of the 1960's are also highly important, as this is indeed a very visual play. The play shows clear links to Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, and I believe there are many directorial homages to be paid to this fact, such as the portrayal of the relationship between Kath and Ed. Overall, it would be a biting sexual, dark and hilarious piece for all concerned.

Publicity would include a "viral" campaign including posters asking for a lodger, wanted posters with Sloane's description as well as a filmed trailer and potentially something live in the city centre. I would also attempt to place advertisements on local radio stations and the like.

The technical ideas I have already formed include a period soundtrack for the piece, including perhaps *Unforgettable* to be played as Kemp is murdered.

In conclusion, I would absolutely love to do this project as I think as well as the points listed above, the play is quite different in many aspects to many other shows, and this flair would undoubtedly draw in and entertain audiences and performers alike.

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