

A GENTLE RAIN

By

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## Cast of Characters

ARTHUR: An elderly gentleman in his mid-80s

PAUL: Male, 40's, market trader

KATH: His wife

DESK OFFICER: Any gender, uniformed member of front counter staff

VANESSA: Female, mid 30's

DIXIE (DEBORAH): Her daughter, aged 7

ISHTIAQ ASLAM: Taxi driver

ACT I

Scene 1

*The entrance area of a police station. An unmanned help desk is visible, there are various posters on the walls (Crimestoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, warning about cybercrime etc). There are about six uncomfortable-looking chairs along the walls. On one of these, an elderly gentleman ARTHUR is sitting. On nearby chairs, a burly looking man PAUL is sitting with his wife KATH. A uniformed member of the front counter staff (DESK OFFICER) appears at the desk, bends down and starts shuffling through a box of papers.*

PAUL

Hey!

*The DESK OFFICER does not look up.*

PAUL

Hey, you! We bin 'ere fifteen minutes.

*The DESK OFFICER's head appears.*

DESK OFFICER

I'll be with you shortly, sir.

ARTHUR

Actually, I was here f...

PAUL

You can deal with me now, can't ye?

DESK OFFICER

*(Standing up) Well, as you can see sir, we are very busy right now (she indicates the waiting room with a sweep of her hand)*

PAUL

What the fook..?

KATH

Paul! Calm down.

DESK OFFICER

We have other people to deal with sir, not just yourself. But I assure you, that I'll get to you next.

ARTHUR

I think I might be ne...

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Well, you bloody make sure you do, eh?

KATH

For God's sake Paul, you're going to get yourself arrested.

DESK OFFICER

I'd listen to your wife, sir. And just settle yourself down.

*The DESK OFFICER disappears. PAUL sits and fulminates. KATH smiles over at ARTHUR.*

KATH

He's a bit upset. Some mix-up with our licence.

ARTHUR

Right, yes, I see.

KATH

Superdrug's saying we have to pay to trade on their forecourt all of us a sudden! None of the other traders are getting bothered for extra fees. Just us.

PAUL

Not fookin' fair.

KATH

Alright, Paul. We'll get it sorted (*to ARTHUR again*) We've had to leave our Shirley looking after the stall. God knows what's going on back there. She dun't know a dahlia from a chrysanth!

PAUL

Forty years that stall's bin in me family. Forty years, and all of a sudden they want us to hand over money for something we bin doing anyway! I'm not going to give in to 'em.

KATH

We shouldn't, should we? Just stand firm.

*ARTHUR realises he's being asked for an opinion.*

ARTHUR

Oh.. absolutely. Yes. Stand firm. Of course

KATH

See? I told you, everyone sees our point of view. We got the - whatsit? - the moral high ground. The court of public opinion, that's what the Craven Herald called it. We're winning in the court of public opinion.

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*The DESK OFFICER has returned.*

DESK OFFICER

Mr and Mrs Braiththwaite, can you come next door please, I need you to complete some licence application forms.

PAUL

(*To ARTHUR*) Its those who shout loudest who get noticed, that's what me dad used to say.

ARTHUR

(*without a hint of sarcasm*) Yes. I think I see what you mean.

*The DESK OFFICER lifts a hatch and ushers PAUL and KATH through. They disappear into another room.*

DESK OFFICER

I'll be with you shortly, Mr....

ARTHUR

Kettlewell. Arthur Kettlewell.

DESK OFFICER

Kettlewell. Raight.

ARTHUR

I don't suppose there is anyone else I could speak to? It's quite urgent.

DESK OFFICER

(*Regretfully*) No, sorry, we're a bit short-staffed today. That's why I'm having to do the licence application with the Braithwaites. If you could just sit here and wait, I'll be back with you soon as.

ARTHUR

Thank you.

*The DESK OFFICER leaves. ARTHUR is now sitting on his own. He looks around the room. He looks at his feet. He sits and looks at his hands. Commotion at the door, a woman in her mid-30s has appeared (VANESSA) with her 7 year old daughter DEBORAH (DIXIE)*

VANESSA

Oh! I thought the help desk was still being manned!

*ARTHUR realises she is addressing him.*

ARTHUR

It is. It's open. It's just that they are short-staffed today. The desk officer will be back soon.

VANESSA

Thank God for that! I've got to sort this out today or Jeremy's going to kill me.

DIXIE

Mummy! Is Daddy really going to kill you?

VANESSA

No darling, it's just a figure of speech. But Daddy is going to be very very cross when he finds out about my little car accident.

*VANESSA addresses ARTHUR ruefully.*

VANESSA

It's a brand new Volvo. Well, it was. Now it's had - a bit of a bashing.

DIXIE

The other car's much much worse!

VANESSA

Yes, it is, isn't it? That's going to be the main problem. Anyway, I'm here to report it. Present the papers and all that. Deborah, don't be bothering the gentleman.

*DIXIE has started kicking the chair leg.*

DIXIE

Dixie! I'm Dixie now.

VANESSA

*(sighing, and addressing Arthur)* This is her latest thing. After that reality show star. Dixie Taylor. I mean, I wouldn't care if she wanted to model herself upon Helena Kennedy or Mary Beard. But no! It had to be someone with big puffy lips, eight facial piercings and purple hair.

DIXIE

I want to have purple hair!

VANESSA

Yes, but I don't think Skipton Girls High likes their pupils to have purple hair. And you do want to go to Skipton High don't you? One day when you're bigger? That's why I've arranged for nice Lucy to give you extra maths tuition. Lucy went to Skipton High. And she has brown hair. Lovely, normal, brown hair.

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