

The Queue

A Ten-Minute Play
By
Stephen Bittrich

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"THE QUEUE"

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SETTING:

A waiting room. Five chairs are lined up against the wall.

AT RISE:

Two men, WILLIAM and STREAM sit a few chairs apart from each other. WILLIAM, quite the dapper dresser, reads the paper, the Times. STREAM, dressed in blue jeans, a blue jean jacket, and a blue shirt, looks over at him and checks him up and down, smiling.

STREAM

Really going all out, eh?

WILLIAM

Beg your pardon?

STREAM

Oh, that's nice. That's good. Doing the whole thing. The total deal.

WILLIAM

Sorry?

STREAM

The English thing. Doing the whole deal. I don't blame you.

WILLIAM

You--you don't blame me for what?

STREAM

Going all out. Hey, ya gotta do what ya gotta do.

WILLIAM

Yes, of course.

(Beat)

I beg your pardon. I have no idea what your talking about.

STREAM

The get up. The phony accent. I'm saying--more power to ya, man.

WILLIAM

Oh, you mean...phony accent?

STREAM

Sounds pretty good. My agent tells me, "Just be yourself. No need to give a "performance." Just be yourself. Go in and be truthful." But let's face it. These people have no imagination. You gotta hand it to them on a silver platter. I don't blame ya at all.

WILLIAM

You think my accent is phony?

STREAM

Well, you're no Peter O'Toole, but it sounds pretty good.

WILLIAM

Yes, well, would you believe I really am English?

STREAM

Yeah, right.

WILLIAM

I'm quite serious. I am English.

STREAM

Okay, Bro, go for it.

WILLIAM

You don't believe me?

STREAM

(Facetiously)

Yeah, I believe you.

WILLIAM

I truly am English!

STREAM

Okay, okay. I know you're getting into character. I won't disturb you. It's very convincing. Really.

WILLIAM

It's not meant to be convincing at all.

STREAM

Oh, that's nice. I like that. The way you said, "Atall."
Like it's one word or something. That sounds real English.
Work that one in a few times.

WILLIAM

"Work it in?"

STREAM

(In a pathetic English accent)

Yeah, and maybe you could say, "I say old chap, the tube
was rather chaotic this morning. Just arrived by the seat
of my trousers."

WILLIAM

Why on earth would I say that?

STREAM

Oh, and then as you're leaving you could say, "I don't
suppose you could direct me to the w.c.?"

WILLIAM

I don't think that's necessary atall.

STREAM

Oh yeah, you've got that "atall" down. That's right on the
money.

WILLIAM

There's no reason why it shouldn't be on the money. I've
been saying it my entire life.

STREAM

Method actor, eh? Hey. Go for it. Don't let me disturb
your..."trance."

(Like a hypnotist)

You are English. You are English.

(As if he's performing every
character in a bad Oscar
Wilde play)

"Jolly good, old chap." "Cecily, take out the rubbish."
"Care for a game of cricket, old boy?"

WILLIAM

In the first place, I don't play cricket. In the second
place I am English. Now, I don't mean to be rude, but, I'm
sorry--I'm just going to do a spot of reading before I go
in...to relax myself...and I suggest you do whatever it is
you do for your own preparations.

STREAM

Okay. Okay. Don't get your knickers in an uproar. You do your thing. I'll do mine.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

STREAM

(After a beat)

You're next in the queue?

WILLIAM

Yes, very astute. I am the next. I understand they've taken a short recess and will be returning **promptly**.

STREAM

A short recess. A short recess. Well, that really burns my bum.

WILLIAM

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, but I really don't--

STREAM

(Pronouncing "schedule" in the English way)

Don't they realize we have a schedule to keep. Infernal buggers.

WILLIAM

Sorry, sorry, don't mean to be rude, but I prefer not to talk if you don't mind. These people are our colleagues, and to speak of them in such a way is **most** unprofessional. I think I know what you are trying to do, but--

STREAM

You're right. You're right.

(In a hushed tone)

It's a close knit business. Don't want to piss anybody off in this industry. One false move--and you'll never work in this town again. You're on "the list."

WILLIAM

Ah, yes, right. Well, as you said before, it's time to put myself into my trance, so to speak, and to accomplish this little feat I do require some silent meditation. It has been nice chatting with you, and I do wish you the best of luck.

STREAM

Hey, you don't have to hit me over the head with a hammer.

WILLIAM

What a relief.

STREAM

Do your thing, old boy.

WILLIAM

Thank you ever so much.

STREAM

Not at all.

(WILLIAM unruffles his Times
and continues to read. There
is a pause)

STREAM (cont'd)

I'm sorry. Just one more thing, and then I'll let you
alone.

WILLIAM

Yes?

STREAM

That get up. That jacket. Where did you--did you rent that
or--?

WILLIAM

Get up?

STREAM

Yeah, that, with the little--what are these?
(Referring to his unique ivory
buttons)

Is that ivory? Is this some kind of English hunting coat?
This is really wild.

WILLIAM

Actually, it's not English. It is an Austrian Riding
jacket. Interestingly, I didn't wear it with the purpose in
mind of appearing more English. I just happen to be fond of
the jacket. It was a gift from a very dear relative. Now,
sir, if you'll excuse--

STREAM

Stream.

Pardon me? WILLIAM

Stream. STREAM

Stream? WILLIAM

You got it. STREAM

What have I got? WILLIAM

Stream. STREAM

I've got Stream? WILLIAM

Yes. STREAM

Bully for me. WILLIAM

Stream Fallow. Unique, huh? STREAM

Indeed. WILLIAM

What's your name? STREAM

WILLIAM
(Suddenly realizing "Stream"
is his proper name)

Name? Good God, name? STREAM

Nomen. Moniker. Title. Tag. Nom de plume. WILLIAM

Are you saying your name is Stream Fallow? STREAM

Bing! Survey says--good answer! Good answer!

WILLIAM

Well...that is unique.

STREAM

Yeah.

(In a hushed tone)

It's not my real name, but I'm pretending, like, that my parents were really into the hippie-flowerchild-thing and named me Stream out of their own personal convictions and beliefs--their love of nature and oneness with the universe and all. Makes for great chit chat, you know? Conversation piece.

WILLIAM

Yes. I would imagine.

(HE is about to read his paper again)

STREAM

My real name is Polish and has no vowels.

(Beat)

And your name was--?

WILLIAM

(Infinitely frustrated, abruptly turning and offering his hand to shake, although one is not sure at first if HE isn't going to deliver a blow instead)

Yes! Right! William! William Devonshire at your service.

STREAM

Get out! Really? That's, like, your real name?

WILLIAM

I have no reason to fib.

STREAM

That even sounds English. William. William. William the Conqueror. I might as well just go home right now.

WILLIAM

Yes, well, if you must.

STREAM

William Devonshire. Sir Devonshire at your service.

(In his best Sean Connery--)

Devonshire. . . William Devonshire. Martini shaken not stirred.

(HE does a rendition of the
"James Bond theme")

WILLIAM

(Looking at his watch)

My, this is a long recess, isn't it?

STREAM

So, are you a knight?

WILLIAM

A knight? You're asking if I've been knighted?

STREAM

Yeah. A knight. That would be cool.

WILLIAM

No, I am not a knight. I am not royalty. I do not have a title. Being knighted is not actually such a widespread occurrence. There are many **normal**, everyday English chaps in the world, and I am one of them.

STREAM

Okay. All right. It's not what I would have done. I would have used the knight bit. It's a real grabber, you know. They'd remember that. They'd write down something like that in the corner of your resume--"kighthood." "Has been knighted."

(Then holding up and imaginary
picture and resume)

"Oh, yeah, remember? This was the knight guy." But I understand. You're going for the subtle approach. Don't wanna hit them over the head. Just an English dude. William Devonshire, English gentleman. Country squire.

WILLIAM

Yes.

(HE looks at his watch)

STREAM

You know you gotta be naked in this thing?

WILLIAM

Naked?

STREAM

Yep, my agent told me. Total exposure.

WILLIAM

Well, I shall keep that in mind.

STREAM

Yep. She read me the breakdown. "Needed: one English guy willing to be nude." You gotta go naked today in fact. It's a very important element of the play.

WILLIAM

Well, strangely, my agent said nothing about it.

STREAM

Yeah, I used to have an agent like that. Never gave me the straight dope. Then I'd go down to an audition--and it was like, "Drop 'em, fella." Whoah!

WILLIAM

Well, I've actually never had occasion to display my private parts at any castings. How very unique that you have.

STREAM

Well, I'm not saying every audition, but every once in a while. And it can be pretty embarrassing if you don't know. Like if your *knickers* have little teddy bears on 'em.

WILLIAM

Look...Creek--

STREAM

Stream.

WILLIAM

Yes. I've tried my utmost to be polite, and it doesn't seem to be getting through. This--you--you are distracting me from the task at hand. I think it extremely unfair--

STREAM

Yeah, unfair, like how you conquered every third world country on the globe, that kind of unfair?

WILLIAM

Personally, I've had only one occasion in my entire life to conquer or be conquered, and that was at parochial school, and I failed miserably, so I don't think--

STREAM

Just think you can come in here and raise our taxes. Tax our tea? Huh?

WILLIAM

Tax--? What?

STREAM

We will fight you over land. We will fight you over sea--

WILLIAM

Yes, yes, that's very clever--

STREAM

You can eat my shorts, Devonshaiyer!

WILLIAM

Devonshire.

STREAM

You English make me sick. Think you're so smart.

WILLIAM

I don't think that atall.

STREAM

Atall. I'm William Devonshaiyer. I'm better than you are. Nanee, nanee, boo, boo.

THE PLAY CONTINUES FOR ONE MORE PAGE.

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