



THE POSTMAN
BY
HEATON WILSON

Extract

A SMITH SCRIPT

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Basic stage set consists of a single bed SL, an armchair DSC, and a kitchen table and chair SR.

A well spoken lady of about 60/70 sits on the edge of a bed.

That metallic click and clatter is uniquely addictive, I find.

I take it as my signal to begin the long journey from bed to that other world down the stairs: the journey that gives such an odd topographical perspective, as if one is descending from the clouds to a lesser place. Like a bird swooping to peck at crumbs.

If I push myself up against the softness of my mattress, I can occasionally catch a glimpse of my postman's bobbing head, just above my bedroom windowsill.

He seems to move away so quickly, always whistling an indiscernible tune.

But somehow he knows I'm here. He always raises a hand like a papal blessing as he closes the gate.

The letterbox ends its activity for the day, and the gate sighs shut.

In May and June, when birdsong seems to be at its peak, I sometimes find it hard to detect when the postman's whistle fades and the song thrush takes over.

I always wait, in the slight hope I should hear more. Maybe he's forgotten something and he'll come whistling down the path to delight the letterbox.

I often feel a little tremor of pleasure at the memory of him...

It seems so silly, behaving like this, at my age too.

But his presence, this tenuous contact, is as important in my life as it is fleeting. And his departure is the prelude to the moment when one must grit one's false teeth, as it were, and get on with the day.

As she struggles to get up from the bed.

There are times when one just curses like a trooper. Everything takes so long, and nothing works as well as it used to. And pulling up one's knickers with the crook of one's walking stick is just an awful circus act. It might be amusing, if only it didn't hurt so much.

But I do sincerely thank the Lord for a stair rail. A simple piece of wood, that's all it is, but without it I would be forever imprisoned upstairs.

Lighting fades. She moves to sit at a kitchen chair, where she sips from a cup before placing it carefully in the saucer.

Lights fade up once in position. She looks out as if through the window, then looks through some junk mail on the table.

It is such a release to be in the downstairs world.

Even more so, of course, when there is one's post to read and something interesting on the radio.

I do so enjoy a few moments plonked down on what James always used to call my directors chair, with tea and toast, and Woman's Hour, and whatever providence has chosen to push through my letterbox.

I read it all.

It is very rare for me to get a real letter, but I'm reconciled to that. Most of my dear friends have died, and the children have moved abroad to make their own lives. How ironic that they have travelled the world, and I am too frightened to leave my own home.

What must they think of me?

I welcome all mail including the unsolicited material, the fliers, without discrimination. One wonders why they are called fliers. Unless, of course, they make perfect paper aeroplanes. Anyway, I find the catalogues and the offers (which are always 'special' offers, I find – how could there be an 'ordinary' offer?) ... where was I? oh yes, the fliers and the brochures help to keep me interested and up to date, and sometimes amused.

I remember getting a brochure from that German sounding supermarket – Little? – and they were actually selling a set of bongos! There was a picture of them, right next to a pressure washer, and a roof rack. Talk about spoiled for choice! I was tempted by the bongos, I must admit ... but then, I much prefer reading, and watching television.

But unfortunately, I can't watch television much these days. I get so cross with all the advertising. There's another irony ...

The BBC tells me about the next programme almost before the current one is over. No, it's not for me anymore. Unless there is a period drama, of course.

So, odd as it might seem, my post is my lifeline, I suppose one could say.