



HAPPY ENDINGS

By Tony Hunt

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Tony Hunt is the author of two collections of short stories, including the very successful 'Geordie Boy', and a play set in the charity shop, and written for older actors, 'Dark Charity'. He has also written and narrated many business-related webinars, all of which are available online. He is the father of five children, works as a management consultant and lives in a quiet valley in the Lake District with his wife, Wendy.

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a comedy in two acts

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3m 2f

A simple office set with one significant lighting change is all that is needed. Two desks, three chairs, a couple of computers, a flipchart and stand, some trade directories, and a telephone

Finding your ideal job isn't easy, we all know that. Sam and Eleanor joust with each other at the Job Club, each hoping that their dream may lift them out of the abyss of mid-career unemployment. Julian, the manager, Geordie, an angry unemployed manual worker and Julie, a beautiful young girl just starting out in her working life, bring this play to an unusual and thought-provoking conclusion.

CAST

SAM	30 – 50 Intelligent and witty – maybe tries too hard
ELEANOR	30 – 50 Elegant, and competent
JULIAN	Any age – job club manager. He can surprise us
GEORDIE	50+ A tough, unemployed northerner (any strong regional accent will work)
JULIE	18 – 22 approx. Very pretty, very self-confident

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

A JOB CLUB. THIS IS AN OFFICE-LIKE ROOM WITH A COUPLE OF DESKS, EACH WITH A COMPUTER, MAYBE SOME TRADE DIRECTORIES AND A TELEPHONE.

SAM AND ELEANOR ARE SEATED AT THE DESKS. SAM IS WORKING ON HIS COMPUTER.

JULIAN ENTERS. HE IS THE MANAGER OF THE JOB CLUB. SMARTLY DRESSED, HE IS CARRYING A NUMBER OF FILES WHICH HE PUTS DOWN ON ONE OF THE DESKS. HE POPS IN AND OUT OF THE OFFICE DURING THE SCENE, BUSYING HIMSELF.

ELEANOR, AFTER FLICKING THROUGH A DIRECTORY, LOOKS AROUND, PICKS UP ANOTHER DIRECTORY, PUTS IT DOWN AND LOOKS ABOUT. SHE IS BORED. SHE CATCHES SAM'S EYE AND LOOKS AT HIM INTENSELY.

SAM What?

ELEANOR Sam?

SAM What? Can't you see....?

ELEANOR Prostitution?

PAUSE

SAM Tried it Doesn't work. I'm not that attractive, evidently

PAUSE

ELEANOR Not you, you fool!

SAM Oh ... You?

ELEANOR Well?

SAM Nothing. You think that you're...

ELEANOR Careful!

SAM No, it's not that It's the paperwork, Ell. You can't....

ELEANOR There's no paperwork! You just go and do it. It's a cash business, no paperwork at all!

SAM You're right. I was confusing it with something else.

ELEANOR Confusing it with....? Never mind. I don't want to know.

PAUSE

Where do I start?

SAM Needs thinking about. And, by the way. There is a lot of paperwork – obviously....

ELEANOR How's that?

SAM You don't know?

SAM New world, now. Covid? – All change! Risk assessment, 'Covid Compliance'

ELEANOR I didn't think it would apply

SAM It's a risky business at the best of times.

ELEANOR Tell me about it – I've been listing the risks and I hadn't thought of that one

SAM I suggest you do – now let me get on with this

ELEANOR Mmmmm. Pity there are no 'How To' books.

SAM You mean you don't know how?

ELEANOR Of course I don't know how! What do you take me for?

SAM That surprises me. A good-looking woman like you....

ELEANOR Duh! Doing it as a job, I meant! I know what's expected.... I know what you are supposed to do – I think. It's the 'How to do it Professionally' bit. That's a closed book because there isn't ..

SAM Isn't what?

ELEANOR Well, a book.

SAM Ah! Probably not.... I've never seen one. You get those books at railway stations and airports, don't you? It would be helpful...

SHE GIVES HIM A LOOK AND HE GETS BACK TO HIS COMPUTER

If you are serious about this – and I really hope you aren't, I think you should look on it as you would a small business.

ELEANOR And you can help me – you being the small business expert.

SAM Ha! Some expert! What do you think I'm doing here? This is a job club, you know, not the CBI! I'm not off-shoring my millions

as we speak. I'm as desperate as you are – and you're so desperate you're thinking of going on the game!

ELEANOR You could help me if you wanted.... Think back.... If I do go into this as a business. Please.... For me. When you started working for yourself, who were your first customers?

SAM Family and friends, mostly.... Neighbours.

PAUSE

ELEANOR So you wouldn't think....?

SAM Not really, no.

ELEANOR Not even as...

SAM A try-out? A favour? A freebie?

ELEANOR No, not even as Oh, I don't know. I was using my imagination! I thought that if I disguised myself Dressed up a bit....

SAM Forgive me if I'm wrong, here

ELEANOR You? Wrong? Perish the thought!

SAM I would have thought that 'dressing up' was only only a preliminary. As things get under way....

ELEANOR I see your point.

SAM So would the neighbours – not to mention the family.

PAUSE

ELEANOR Your uncle Bill wouldn't mind, though.

SAM Eleanor, behave. This is not the time.

ELEANOR Oh it is the time. He always gooses me! Every time he sees me – those grubby little hands...

SAM It's just his way. He grew up long before it was a crime...

ELEANOR He just Does it. Eewww!

SAM It's his way –. He's always done it – makes him feel good. He thinks women appreciate it. He had a great wolf-whistle – hear it for miles - When he had his teeth. Happy days – now long gone.

ELEANOR What?

SAM Long gone - 'Hashtag Me Too!'

ELEANOR And not before time.

SAM Matter of opinion.

ELEANOR Certainly my opinion – and that of most women! - And when he's getting away with that – groping and whistling - he's not paying anything for his thrills, is he? It's free. So, he's a potential customer.

SAM Uncle Bill? He's seventy- eight!

ELEANOR It is a niche market, I grant you.

SAM Ellie, you don't have to be coy with me.... I understand.

ELEANOR Not that kind of niche! I meant in terms of a specialised market.

SAM The 'active elderly'?

ELEANOR Not too active But yes, it's worth thinking about.

SAM You might find yourself being surprised.

PAUSE

ELEANOR Yes, you could be right. I'd not thought of that.

SAM Not thought of what?

ELEANOR That! – you know...

SHE GESTURES SOME VERY UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE – MAYBE SHOWS IT BY PRETENDING TO VOMIT

SAM I was thinking. ...differently. The other kind of 'Active elderly' – it might have been some time since ... so there could be some unexpected enthusiasm.... a kind of bonus if you will...

PAUSE

ELEANOR Ahhhhh! Right

SAM Of course, there's always the possibility that too much enthusiasm might lead to

SAM GESTURES A HEART ATTACK

ELEANOR Don't! I get it!

PAUSE

So, what do you think?

SAM I'm not sure. I'll have to give it some serious thought It's a big decision.

ELEANOR It is?

SAM Certainly. I'm not at all sure how I'll be able to take it.

ELEANOR How you? I see. No, I don't. Give me a clue.

SAM It could affect our relationship.

ELEANOR How?

SAM Aesthetically it may pose a question or two.

ELEANOR Oh?

SAM Yes, even given your present circumstances, is it in good taste, would you say? And then there's status.

ELL Whose?

SAM Ah! Quite.

ELL Whose status?

SAM That's the question. Sociology, eh? Difficult You're right, of course.

ELL Am I?

SAM Yes, had there had been a book, a manual of some sort – I'm not sure what we'd call it – it would have to be polite to get on the shelves – Have you checked that 'Windows for Dummies' series? They may have.... 'Selling Sex for Dummies', 'Prostitution for Dummies' Too strong, that. Sorry! 'Escorting for Dummies'. Yes, that might do.

ELEANOR Why 'for Dummies'?

SAM Are you really asking that question?

PAUSE

Anyway, if there was such a book, that kind of question would have been raised – and answered – in the first chapter. And they'd be bringing out a new edition with a chapter on the er sanitary side of things. I don't think that washing your hands and singing 'Happy Birthday' twice would create the right kind of ambience...

PAUSE

Typical! Are you serious about this?

ELEANOR Could be.

SAM I wonder if there are many others?

ELEANOR Other what?

SAM Others in this situation. People – like you, thinking about this subject in the way you are. Because, if there are enough of them

ELEANOR We could write the manual....

SAM We could write the manual.... I bet it's never been done before A virgin market!

ELEANOR A what?

SAM Just think of the sales. Straight on to Amazon!

ELEANOR That would solve our problems.

SAM Problems? What problems? No problems – not with this! If we could – Instagram. Web sites, TV rights – We'd need a presenter – someone with the right gravitas to carry it off....

ELEANOR You're getting a bit ahead...

SAM Someone with just a slightly 'seedy' reputation would be great.... That MP, remember him? Brown envelope man - No! Even better! Aristocracy – Royalty!

PAUSE – SAM MUSES

Good plan, though....

Put it on 'hold', eh? As, in my opinion, it doesn't quite address the immediate issues.

ELEANOR Agreed.

PAUSE

And there *are* a number of those.

SAM And so there ought to be. It's only fair Living, as we do in the early years of the twenty-first century. We've got to be aware.

ELEANOR These 'issues' that you are referring to As I understand it, they don't relate to the pressing needs of our more immediate future. Next week Tomorrow This afternoon, for example. Having something ready for Julian. We've got to come up with something soon, or all of this goes.

SHE INDICATES THEIR SURROUNDINGS

PAUSE

- SAM Does being right all the time make you feel good?
- ELEANOR Not especially No, it doesn't. I'm trying to work things out, trying to give myself a chance We've all got to survive.
- SAM No we don't, that's the real challenge.... And it's also where you are wrong.
- ELEANOR And how's that?
- SAM There's no reason why you *should* survive. No sort of law – no prize for trying hardest. Even if you do it all. ... Even if you manage to service all the active elderly within a radius of twenty-five miles, you'll only survive if you make a profit.... That's capitalism.
- ELEANOR And not catching anything
- SAM Yes, that too. That's an 'attendant factor'. You'd probably need to do a risk assessment for each new job – loads of forms and tick boxes – industrial quantities of sanitiser. And the private sector is going to be even more risky, don't you think?
- ELEANOR Shop doorways and so on?

PAUSE

- SAM Yep Shop doorways That caught me I wasn't exactly thinking Those too, but I was thinking more about indoors. Spare bedroom? No, you're right. Too close to home. Better to use a flat Or a hotel room – maybe with a kindly older lady taking care of the sheets – a computer for bookings, payments Condoms – you'd want a lot of those – bulk buying's best - you can set yourself up for credit and debit cards with those card readers that use your phone... and there would be discounts to set up
- ELEANOR Discounts?
- SAM Regular bookings, parties. Pensioners
- ELEANOR They'll all be pensioners!
- SAM Then they'll all want a discount, won't they? That's pensioners for you! Offer a 'Pensioners' Special', like those half-size fish and chip suppers they get...

HE MUSES. ELEANOR LOOKS AT HIM IN DISBELIEF

I would have thought that
contract work would keep you regular.

ELEANOR Sorry?

SAM You'd know exactly what you were getting – how many – how often – specialities

ELEANOR Thank you.

SAM I'm not a fastidious sort of person, not usually, but it's the hygienic side that bothers me – social distancing and hand sanitiser is ok, but it doesn't allow for

ELEANOR Believe me, I've been thinking of that too.

SAM I mean, you don't know where these old fellas have been, do you? Nope! You'd have to work for the NHS....

ELEANOR Do you think I could?

SAM I don't see why not – apart from the visors and the masks and all that blue plastic stuff – and the gloves.... That won't last forever

ELEANOR Stop it!

SAM It won't always be a problem – they'll find their way around it. If you make the right kind of case, I reckon that the Trust hospitals might go for it. They've got to attract customers, haven't they? And Hospital Radio can only do so much to keep the patients entertained.... That's a thought! Advertise there! Captive audience! And it would improve their listening figures, I bet! Synergy, pure synergy Perfect!

ELEANOR You appear to have it all thought out.

SAM Or you could go for that job at the florists.

ELEANOR For minimum wage? Come on!

SAM Better than what you're getting now

ELEANOR I do know that....!

SAM Good working environment. Very green, of course....

ELEANOR Blue – freezing cold!

SAM And this from the woman who's planning to work in shop doorways! You don't know when you're well off, that's your problem.

ELEANOR So you would recommend the florists?

SAM Depends on your ambition.

ELEANOR And my allergies.