



NUMB NUTS

By Ben Henderson

A SMITH SCRIPT

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a one-act comedy



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Written to raise awareness of the work of **The
Theatres Trust**

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The basic conceit.

Over 35 theatres in the UK are at risk. Year on year cuts in funding to the Arts. A 1% employment rate amongst professional actors. An inability of theatre to access lucrative advertising and sponsorship revenue. A general insouciance in the great British public who are broadly content with satellite television.

To compete with Sky, Virgin Media and the like, the Numb Nuts Satellite Theatrical Agency has had Domestic Theatres installed in homes across the land. The home owners must believe they still have complete control of what they choose to watch. Each Home Theatre comes with its own outsized remote control. The contracted actors must enter the homes surreptitiously and live unseen and unheard by the residents when they're not performing. The whole deceit is made entirely feasible by the use of the Agency's specially formulated spray – Numb Nuts!

The Characters

The actors:

Frances/Francis

Dorian

Noelle/ Noel

Only Dorian need be male. Open casting as to age of all three and sex of the other characters. These characters are dressed in black. The script may readily be adapted as to how it's cast.

The couple:

Kim

Bernie (Bernard/ Bernadette)

Open casting as to age and sex. This may be a straight or gay couple.

A very basic stage set. A sturdy table and three chairs. Dependent on where performed, either a two-seater sofa between the front row seats and the

stage/performance area. Where raked seating is present, the middle two seats should have a throw or similar placed over them for the use of Kim and Bernie. If practicable, a small, low coffee table in front of these seats upon which is an oversized, mock satellite remote control. For the Numb Nuts spray, cans of compressed air of the type used to clean computer keyboards/circuitry etc with the initials N.N brightly emblazoned.

A cardboard tissue box or similar may be decorated to represent the oversized remote control.

Scene 1

Place two chairs with their backs to the centre of stage/performance area facing the audience. Perhaps have a throw over them to lend the appearance of a sofa. Stage curtains are shut. - It's a Saturday morning, Kim enters. She's wearing night attire and a dressing gown. She carries a copy of The Mail on Saturday. She sits, puts the supplements on her lap and opens the paper in front of her face. After a few seconds, Bernie enters. He too is dressed in nightclothes and dressing gown. He carries a copy of the Guardian. He sits and opens the paper in front of his face. It's the casual badinage of a couple reading the papers.

They read their papers. After a few seconds...

Kim – Bernieeee..

Bernie – Yeeees.

Kim – Shall we have a few in the Dog and Duck tonight?

Bernie – Can't, the Dog and Duck's a Vietnamese restaurant now.

(beat)

Kim – Don't say it.

Bernie – Say, what?

Kim – You were going to say something about them both being on
the menu.

Bernie – No, I wasn't - I wouldn't say anything so culturally insensitive – I'm a
Guardian reader.

(beat)

Kim – How about The Lord Nelson?

Bernie – It's a French restaurant.

Kim – The Bricklayers?

Bernie – Knocked it down.

Kim – The Woodman?

Bernie – Got the chop.

Kim – The Garden Gate?

Bernie – Closed.

Kim – You're joking!

Bernie – Yeah, I am, actually - the Woody and the Gate are still open.

Kim - Wow! For a moment I thought every pub we'd had too much to drink in had closed. – CAMRA will have us whacked.

Bernie – Whacked! - you've been watching the Sopranos boxset again, haven't you?

Kim – Badabing badaboom!

(beat)

Bernie – Be a good name for a strong real ale though, wouldn't it?

Kim – Whacked. Oh, yes. *(laughs)* – *(as a Soprano character)* – Hey, Landlord, make sure your punters get Whacked, or you'll be feedin' the fishes.

(beat)

Bernie – I don't think the Campaign for Real Ale actually have people whacked.

Kim – No?

(beat)

Bernie – It's never been mentioned in the Guardian.

Kim – It was in the Daily Mail, then.

(beat)

Bernie – We couldn't be responsible for over 13 thousand pubs closing in the UK.

(beat)

Kim – That would have been quite a night, wouldn't it?

Bernie – Anyway, it's people not going to pubs that force them to close, not people that do.

Kim – Good point. CAMRA should present us with lifetime achievement awards, not have us whacked.

Bernie – Be a bit embarrassing though, wouldn't it? Getting an Oscar from CAMRA. It's like being identified as a seedy boozier.

Kim – Like the Woodman.

Bernie – I think I'd prefer it if they just had us whacked.

(beat)

Kim – They wouldn't present Oscars, they'd present red nose awards, probably.

Bernie – Here, it's not just pubs. Listen, this is Mark Brown, the Arts correspondent in the Guardian – *(reads article)* Theatres across the UK are in danger of being lost forever unless more local authorities start seeing them as opportunities rather than liabilities, according to a new report. The Theatres Trust annual report lists 35 theatres that will disappear, even though each has the potential for a sustainable future. The comedian and TV presenter Dara O' Briain, a trustee of the

Theatres Trust, said, 'they were all at risk but all so achingly close to being saved'..

(beat)

Kim – It's a shame, isn't it?

Bernie – The pubs or the theatres?

Kim – Both. We need both, don't we?

Bernie – Nah! People don't go to the theatre. It's just people on stage called Bunty, holding a tennis racket, walking in and out of shaky, cardboard veranda doors, isn't it?

Kim – You've never been to the theatre, have you?

Bernie – Nope.

Kim – If these Victorian theatres go, we'll never get them back. We've already lost so many Victorian buildings...

Bernie – The workhouses went, we don't want them back.

Kim – Have you read the new Conservative Work and Pensions policy?

Bernie – Are they bringing back workhouses?

Kim - I think it was in the Mail.

Bernie – Do you think the Victorians would have gone to the theatre if they'd got Sky TV?

Kim – Listen, theatre isn't just wobbly sets and Bunty.

Bernie – Yes, it is. - And a butler, there's always a butler, isn't there?

Kim – What about the pantomimes at Christmas? You wouldn't take that away from kids, would you?

Bernie – *(in pantomime style)* Oh, no, I wouldn't.

Kim – *(ditto)* Oh, yes, you would.

Bernie – Do kids still want that now? They could have a virtual reality panto.

Kim – And comedians. They all appear at the local theatres.

Bernie – Just buy the DVD's.

Kim – They're all recorded, live, in theatres, you dummy.

Bernie – Bah!

Kim – And live music.

Bernie – Bah! Just stream it.

Kim – Theatres are about excitement, atmosphere. They're about performance, they're about expression. It's part of being human.

Bernie – So's sitting about in your pants, eating crisps.

(beat)

Kim – We should go to the theatre.

Bernie – Really!

(beat)

Kim – Go in your pants, if you want.

Bernie – Cool.

Kim – Is that what the history books will say? All the theatres went because the average British bloke just wanted to sit around in his pants, eating crisps.

Bernie – Yup, they'll teach it in schools, along with the fall of the Roman empire.

Kim – You don't sit around in your pants and you don't like crisps.

Bernie – It's a metaphor - A metaphor for relaxing at home.

Kim – A metaphor?

Bernie – Yup. We like a metaphor.

Kim – Who do?

Bernie – Guardian readers. – We like metaphors and we like the truth.

(beat)

SFX –SOUND OF WOOD SAWING AND NAILS HAMMERED

Bernie – What’s that racket?

Kim – They’re having one of those new Home Theatres installed at number 8. I saw them carrying in the proscenium arch this morning.

Bernie – What for?

Kim – Those Home Theatres are becoming quite popular.

Bernie – Oh, yes.

Kim – They’ve got one next door at number 12.

Bernie – They’ve got a jacuzzi in their garden too, I don’t want one of those either.

Kim – They’re supposed to be very relaxing.

Bernie – It looks like the back yard of an Italian brothel, especially when they put up that Cinzano Bianco table parasol.

Kim – They like to try new things, Bernie. They want home entertainment.

Bernie – We Guardian readers like home entertainment too. Just don’t want the garden to look like a pit stop for Italian kerb crawlers.

(beat)

Kim – What do Mail readers like?

Bernie – Mmmm!

Kim – What do Mail readers like, Bernie?

At that moment the magazines and advertisements slip off her lap. Bernie looks.

(beat)

Bernie – Supplements. I think they like supplements, Kim. – I'm going for a shower.

Bernie exits.

Kim gathers the magazines from the floor. Amongst them is a flyer. She reads it.

Kim - The Numb Nuts Satellite Home Theatre Agency – Free installation and trial.

She takes her mobile phone and dials the number, as she exits.

Kim – Hi, is that the Agency? – Yes, I've seen your advert in the Mail...

The stage manager then walks across the stage carrying a very large sign saying, 'SIX MONTHS LATER'.

Then a sign, '**USE YOUR IMAGINATIONS**'

Remove the chairs, open the curtains for Scene 2.