



THE OLD QUEEN'S TIME
by Rod Dungate

PREVIEW

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For further information, please contact theatreplays@proton.me

The Old Queen's Time

Rod Dungate

Representation: Paul Smith

theatreplays@proton.me
07519316916

Rod Dungate
Rod@RodDungate.uk
0121 258 2228 / 0771 897 6167

www.RodDungate.uk

This play is dedicated to Michael Cashman. A small thank you for his endless and energetic campaigning across the world for equal rights for LGBT+ people. Also, for encouraging me to finish the script and advice along the way. If he hadn't checked up from time to time, it would never have been completed.

Characters

Ramsay 68, a gay man in the grand old style

Kieran About 18

The play is set in Spring 1992, not long after John Major won his General Election. It is also just three years after Stonewall was founded. The play with its dialogue, Polari, music, and of course, story endeavours to capture this time of change for LGBT+ people.

The acting space is a comfortable living room, furnished with taste and many knick-knacks.

The play changes between duologues and direct address monologues. Try to keep the atmosphere as informal and intimate as possible, specially during the direct address. There is no direct address in the duologues. The change-overs must be fluid, without breaks. You can add lighting changes as you wish but keep the play moving along.

A significant number of music cues are indicated. For the most part these are more to the fore than usual scene change music cues. Where the characters dance, the dance would be there in its own right, reflecting the character's (or characters') mood, or sometimes working against it.

The play is set in Birmingham, the city in which I live. Feel free to change place names to suit you and your audience.

One: Ramsay

[As the audience comes in there is music playing at a comfortable level. The audience may or may not realise these are numbers from music that could well have been heard a lot in 1992. Gradually the volume builds and Snap, Rhythm is the Dancer is recognised. Ramsay comes into his sitting room. It is comfortably furnished but possibly over-full with knick-knacks and antiques. If asked, Ramsay would point out that he's one of the antiques himself. He dances along to the music, although he does this well it must be remembered he is 68 so not in his prime. He is vacuuming as he dances.

He finishes the vacuuming and rids himself of the machine. Dances more vigorously.

The doorbell rings. Ramsay reacts. Takes off his pinny. Goes towards the door. Remembers the vacuum, and dashes back to take it out.

Once he is out, Kieran comes into the room, Ramsay returns, and we are in Section Two. No blackout.]

Two: Ramsay and Kieran

Ramsay Are you sure?

Kieran I am who I am?

Ramsay You are who you say you are.

Kieran Hundred per cent.

Ramsay Oh dear.

Kieran What about you?

Ramsay Me?

Kieran Are you who you say you are?

Ramsay I've no need of such certainties.

Kieran I said a name. You answered to it.

Ramsay Pavlovian conditioning.

Kieran What's that?

Ramsay A sociological fallacy. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. Actually, I'm wrong. It's a truism. You can't teach an old dog new tricks, but an old dog can learn them by himself. Like me. I did. Learn them. Learn a lot. I'm a living example of an onanistic vanishing cabinet.

Kieran I did Sociology at school.

Ramsay A Got over it yet?

Kieran What's onanistic?

Ramsay I'd've thought you'd've known.

Kieran We didn't do it in A Level Sociology.

Ramsay I'd've said they were inextricably linked.

Kieran Are you Ramsay Stokes?

Ramsay Could be.

Kieran 46 Cedar Close.

Ramsay I can't deny it.

Kieran There you go then.

Ramsay Oh my.

Kieran Hello.

Ramsay Oh fucking my.

Kieran You want to sit down. You ought . . . You know, old bloke and all, like you, you know. You ought. Surprise like this. Could . . . right . . . Shock even.

Ramsay What is she talking about?

Kieran Who?

Ramsay You, dear heart.

Kieran I'm me. Not she. D'you get, like, you know. You know, like confused.

Ramsay I've only just got over Joanna Major winning her election.

Kieran You a Socialist then.

Ramsay Don't want to be governed by a man ran away from the circus to take up double entry book-keeping.

Kieran Did he do lion taming?

Ramsay You shouldn't be let out on your own.

Kieran Sit down why don't you?

Ramsay How did you get here?

Kieran Train, then a taxi.

Ramsay By what circuitous route did you find me?

Kieran Circuituitous? [*Sic*]

Ramsay Yes. No. – Circuitous. Roundabout. Wandering
hither and yon. Devious even. Circumambulatory.

Kieran You don't half use long words mate.

Ramsay How did you track me down? – How the fuck did
you know how to start to try to track me down?

Kieran Internet.

Ramsay Technology has a lot to answer for.

Kieran Googled you.

Ramsay And I didn't feel a thing.

Kieran Search engine, innit.

Ramsay Is none of us safe?

Kieran You're safe enough with me. Even though you get
confused.

Ramsay I don't get confused.

Kieran Old geezers who say they don't get confused are
usually the ones get confused. We done a module on
social care.

Ramsay Got your results yet?

Kieran It was Sociology brought us together.

Ramsay We're not together.

Kieran We're on the brink.

Ramsay I have a horrible feeling you're about to break into
song.

Kieran Not me mate.

Ramsay Thank the Little Sisters for little mercies.

Kieran I could if you like.

Ramsay I don't like.

Kieran Who are the Little Sisters? You got sisters then?

[Ramsay goes to answer.]

Do Fagin for you. Acted Fagin at school.

Ramsay Run away success no doubt.

Kieran I'll say. Encores and all.

Ramsay Hidden talents eh?

Kieran Hundreds of them.

[Kieran gives a huge and winning smile. Kieran, you are a bad boy.]

I'll do Fagin.

Ramsay No.

Kieran BTEC National Drama. Mrs Hopley said I was brilliant. Thought about taking it up. Professional like you.

Ramsay God help us.

Kieran That's not very gracious.

Ramsay It's just my way. Sorry.

Kieran That's better.

Ramsay *[Paraphrasing.]* 'I'll do it with more grace while you do it more natural.'

Kieran You think I'm thick.

[Ramsay doesn't answer this.]

I'm trying to make a go of this.

Ramsay Of what?

Kieran Us.

Ramsay There isn't an us.

Kieran There might be.

Ramsay Not every cloud has a silver lining.

Kieran Nan used to say that.

Ramsay What?

Kieran Every cloud has a silver lining.

Ramsay She believed in miracles.

Kieran You don't seem pleased to see me.

Ramsay I'm . . .

Kieran Surprised.

Ramsay Somewhat.

Kieran Nonplussed.

Ramsay Wrong footed.

Kieran Are you shocked.

Ramsay You could say that.

Kieran Bolt from the blue.

Ramsay Sounds good. A ripple in the deep.

Kieran I'd just like you to be pleased.

[He smiles again.]

I'd like you to like me. I'm family.

Ramsay What d'you want here, Kieran?

Kieran Hello.

Ramsay What do you want?

Kieran A widdle.

Ramsay A couple of bevvies on the train?

Kieran Steady me nerves, like.

Ramsay Into the hall, marked *Carsey*. By the stairs.

[Kieran goes to the carsey.]

Three: Ramsay

[Ramsay goes to a cupboard or the like and takes out an old box. It's full of photos. He searches through as he speaks and eventually hands some round.]

Ramsay

My grandson – so he says. No one knows
I've got a grandson;
didn't know it myself till he introduced himself.
'Ramsay Stokes?' 'Yes.' 'I'm your grandson, Kieran.'
'Well I'll be bugged,' I said; 'What the hell d'you want?'

No one would suspect me of siring off-spring;
dizzy old queen most people think. And they're right
Sixty-eight and still screaming.

But in a previous incarnation, in the age of the dinosaurs
I'd begotten . . . a little girl, named her Iris . . .
Look at that, pretty little thing. Half my own work.

Six months later I left the wife
for a Flight Lieutenant in uniform.
Now ain't that a dainty dish to set before a queen?
Vada the eek on him, eh? Tight little corybungus.
Fambles soft as your face –
Nothing but mild fairy liquid for him.
Ogles the colour of brandy and soda.
He broke my heart and set me on the road to ruin.
That's when I started to scream
and haven't stopped since – except to breathe,
a need more urgent now that it used to be.

Better put these away.
You never know what'll creep out If you turn your back on them.

Lovely snarl the lad's got. Bona pearly pots, eh?
What a dolly.
Family or family or family family?

[Ramsay returns to the sitting room where Kieran is waiting.]

For a copy of the full script, or for details on licencing for performance contact:

Paul Smith

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