

DREAMS "R" US
OR
TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

A Play in One Act

by Bruce Pearl

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Cast of Characters

Simon: big, burly and mean

Gladys: Simon's wife

Adele: Gladys's teenage daughter

John and Allen: juniors at the University of Alabama

Scene

The South.

Time

Circa 1957, ostensibly.

While set ostensibly in the South in 1957, John and Allen are professional dreams and therefore exist only in the dreams. The other characters do, although we only see them in the dreams until the last page.

Scene 1

SETTING: The living room of SIMON and GLADYS. There are chairs, A throw rug, a phonograph, a telephone and a locked trunk.

At Rise: SIMON is peeling an apple with a large knife. Gladys is on the phone and ADELE sits on a throw rug with earphones, singing along to Bye, Bye Love. When she notices the audience, she takes off the earphones.

ADELE

I'm sorry, I didn't hear you come in.
I have no sense of time since Tammy Lynn
Dropped off all those 45's. Bye, Bye Love:
Ever hear of it? I swear it's brand new,
At least to me, but then what do I know,
Living here in the past, a prop in this show.
It could be 1390 from all I can -

SIMON

Adele -

ADELE

ALRIGHT! I can do my part as good as the next.
Besides, I'm a girl and so the right sex
For what he has in mind, the son of a bitch.
But mind me, you catch his slurred, glassy-eyed pitch,
And you can beat him back to where we started from -

SIMON

By the count of three, you had better move on -

ADELE

We each only get a fixed swatch of time,
So, I better get started and string some rhymes.
At Trumpington, not far from Castlebridge,
There's a brook and hard by that a mill. That's where I lived
With my mom and stepdad - at least till they arrived -

(JOHN and ALLEN enter at the front door.)

The guys - John and Allen. They were juniors
At 'Bama and thought themselves the flavor
Of the week. Now, John was alright for college
Prep, but Allen, oh, was so on the edge
If you'd never done anything, and
I hadn't. I mean I'd never even seen a -
A you know - before. God that drove me crazy,
Not knowing. I'd asked my friend, Stacey,
But she didn't know neither, no more than me,
Though she swore her brother had showed her. You see,
My daddy was the miller and no one
Messed with the miller. First, he was big: 221
If a pound and mean. You took your life in your hands
If you got in his way without planning
To apologize, and he always carried
A knife and wasn't averse to using it.
He'd married my mom just to curry some class,
The parson being her father. I guess
Even her upbringing and being blessed
As she was with a good name couldn't squelch

That stint she done in the nunnery --

GLADYS

Adele,

Who are you talking to?

ADELE

No one, momma - but wealth
Was second nature to her so, of course,
She blew herself into a social force
In Trumpington. Daddy used to mumble,
And more than once, that she was -

SIMON

More trouble

Then a you-know-what with an education -

ADELE

Anyway, the parson being my relation
Decided to make me his direct heir
On the condition that, within one year,
I was properly married to a man
Of like wealth that, as I gathered the plan,
The money wouldn't just get pissed away.
Well, as you might guess, by the next day,
My parents, and tighter than stink on a fart,
And with no thought to what I might impart,
Had me engaged to the undertaker's son -

GLADYS

He's a perfectly nice boy -

ADELE

The undertaker's son:

The one who drools when he sees the sun.
Who the plumber delivered with pliers and shears
When the midwife screamed and fell down the stairs.
Who's stupid and ugly and smells like ____,
His clothes a target he is unable to miss.
Why couldn't they have picked his brother,
The one his parents didn't try and smother?
But - oh shoot, I'm lying; he ain't that bad.
Hell, he's even housebroken - not like my dad -
But so boring, I swear to God I'll die.
I'd run away - and believe me I've tried -
But he won't let me; I'm too much in demand:
A coed decoy for his three-card scam.
So, clearly, this was my last chance to sin.
The second I saw him I knew: tonight, Allen.
He, of course, suspected nothing of this,
Having been sent here in all innocence
Of my purpose - which I hadn't even formed
Till he pulled up with that cartload of corn.
Now what are you two doing here dressed like this?
My word, daddy, but we got us some business.
These college boys have brought us a load of corn
For stone grinding.

ADELE

Stop it. Y'all so bad. I don't understand -

ALLEN

A word we've said. (Sotto voce) She's never had a man.

JOHN

Really? You mean?

ALLEN

Uh huh, an innocent.

ADELE

I am not neither. That's not what I meant.

ALLEN

You know, it's OK. We both think it's cute,
You still have your cherry: blossom and fruit.

ADELE

God, the things you say, I can't catch my breath -

ALLEN

By the way, what do you think of oral sex -

JOHN

I like it a lot -

ALLEN

Not you -

JOHN

Not my turn yet?

ADELE

That's it, make fun of me. It's a sure bet:
Her whole world's sock hops and schoolwork and such,
So, she can't even once have -

ALLEN

Popped a clutch?

ADELE

That's it. I swear, not another word.

Whatever I say, you just that one thing infer.

I'm gonna sit here, all quiet, till my stepdad returns.

It'll serve you both right, a good lesson learned.

JOHN

Don't you think you better apologize?

ALLEN

Me? I'm not the one who got her antagonized.

JOHN

Of course, you are, like she cares what I said.

You're the one who's got her turning all red.

ALLEN

You know, it's not fair.

JOHN

What, that you got the looks?

ALLEN

But that's all I got. Didn't you read the book?

JOHN

There's a book?

ALLEN

You know, just for once, I want to be the brain:

That when I meet a girl whose sexy or plain,

And she says, "Oh, my gosh," she means, "Whoa, smart,"

And not just, "Please push my knees apart."

Really, darling, you must mind your manners:
Business before pleasure where eternity matters.

ADELE

I knew they were right: you are just a beast,
Taunting me with pent-up passion's release.

ALLEN

(Kissing her) There's a deposit on what I said I'd pay.

ADELE

Well, don't expect change unless you change the delay.

ALLEN

Introductions first. (Offering his hand) John, I presume --

(JOHN takes it automatically and then drops it.)

JOHN

Allen, what the hell do you think you're doing?

ALLEN

Cleaver metaphor, I like it a lot.
But then, again, these bodies are just robots,
Controlled by the programs of their minds.
While the mind sees but what the senses define.
To Allen, asleep in her sopping bed,
This is just a dream: it's all in his head.

JOHN

But why?

ALLEN

Because I've promised to answer prayers,
And this little pumpkin, this Bartlett pear,
Prayed to me for a full satisfaction

Of a covenant breached by premature action.
While as for you, it's to deliver your life.
For just as the truth can be sharp as a knife,
By accepting my word into your heart,
All this can be yours: the world your K-Mart.

JOHN

In exchange for what: my immortal soul?

ALLEN

John, I'm comprised of something as old:
Spirit forged before the dawn of time,
Before the cosmos was and all mankind.
So, what in the world would I want yours for?
What feats can I do to prove what I say?

JOHN

Magic and sleight-of-hand: I shall not be swayed.

ALLEN

Can you not conceive of all this as a gift?

JOHN

I know you, Satan, stay your parlor tricks.

ALLEN

But that's how the truth has always been proved.

JOHN

My faith is like a rock. I shall not be moved -

ADELE

Oh, honey, you already got my heart,
As for the rest, just push my knees apart -

GLADYS

What have you monsters done with my daughter?

JOHN

Allen?

ALLEN

Not a damn thing. Don't break your water.

GLADYS

Don't for a second think I don't know who you are.

JOHN

OK, who are we?

GLADYS

You're those two smart-ass

College students.

JOHN

You mean -

GLADYS

Allen Strothers -

JOHN

And -

GLADYS

John, his dim-witted, babbling brother.

JOHN

Wait. What? Oh no, now that's not fair!

ALLEN

Hey, I just got possessed by Lucifer.

JOHN

But you got fu - fu - you got to have sex.

ALLEN

Who you kidding? I barely got off the flight deck.

GLADYS

Excuse me, but if you two rejects don't mind,
We each only got a fixed swatch of time -

ALLEN

Hey, don't worry about it: we know the drill.
You think you're the first old hag we ever thrilled?

GLADYS

How dare you, white trash, talk to me like that?

ALLEN

How dare you be as old and dumpy as that.

GLADYS

That's it. I want to see your supervisor.

ALLEN

Hey, lady, we're independent contractors.
You don't like our work, don't use us no more.

JOHN

Yeah, ffind someone else to ffill the store.

GLADYS

It's always the same: I'm always last.
I get the dregs as the night rushes past.

JOHN

Did she just call us ddregs?

ALLEN

Yeah, and I'm not pleased,
Which ain't something you want to do, Clarice,

Unless you want to meet your worst nightmare -

GLADYS

You mean that ball of phlegm asleep upstairs?

ALLEN

Yeah, well, you still better watch, as they say,
Your step, cause we got our own agenda.

GLADYS

But that's not possible. You're not equipped -

ALLEN

To think for ourselves? Forget your script.
We ain't students. We're criminals escaped from -
Where was it? Come on John, you know -

JOHN

F-Folsom -

ALLEN

That's right, Folsom Prison, and we murdered
Those two college kids and just for the fun
Of it.

GLADYS

That's what you're doing with Simon's trunk:
You, after getting him falling down drunk,
Planned like serpents to abscond with our wealth,
Lacking the courage to confront him yourself.

ALLEN

Yeah, and what are you going to do about it?

GLADYS

I shall stop you.