



HEISENBERG

BY SIMON STEPHENS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

HEISENBERG
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The world premiere of HEISENBERG was commissioned and presented by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) on May 19, 2015, as part of the Harold and Mimi Steinberg New Play Series. It was directed by Mark Brokaw; the set design was by Mark Wendland; the costume design was by Michael Krass; the lighting design was by Donald Holder; the sound design was by David van Tiegham; the choreographer was Sam Pinkleton; and the production stage manager was David Sugarman. The cast was as follows:

GEORGIE BURNS Mary-Louise Parker
ALEX PRIEST Denis Arndt

CHARACTERS

GEORGIE BURNS is 42 years old. She is from New Jersey.

ALEX PRIEST is 75 years old. He is from Enniscorthy,
County Wexford.

PLACE

London.

TIME

The present day.

The stage should be as bare as possible.

The walls of the theatre should be revealed.

The lighting rig should be revealed.

If any props are used at all they should be revealed and remain onstage throughout.

HEISENBERG

Scene 1

The forecourt of St. Pancras railway station. 6:25 P.M.

ALEX. It's fine.

GEORGIE. It's not.

ALEX. It really is.

GEORGIE. It's just weird. I feel awful.

ALEX. You mustn't.

GEORGIE. I do.

Don't tell me how I must or mustn't feel.

ALEX. I'm sorry.

(They look at each other.)

GEORGIE. I'm going to go.

ALEX. Okay.

(They look at each other.)

Were you supposed to be meeting him here?

GEORGIE. No. What gives you that impression?

ALEX. Nothing. Just.

GEORGIE. You're just joining the dots. Woman walks up to man.

He's sitting down minding his own business.

ALEX. You kissed the back of my neck.

GEORGIE. I know, right? "What the fuck are you doing?"

(Beat.)

Kind of thing.

ALEX. That kind of thing, yes.

GEORGIE. I'm so sorry for swearing.

ALEX. Don't be.

GEORGIE. I swear all the time. Sometimes I don't even notice it. Sometimes it just pops right out of my mouth.

ALEX. It doesn't bother me in the least. I like a good swear.

GEORGIE. I have a complete inability to control my own language.

ALEX. Ha.

GEORGIE. I wasn't. Expecting to meet him. He wasn't going to be here. That's not what I was doing at all. I think that's why I was so surprised.

ALEX. I see.

GEORGIE. He died eighteen months ago.

He had a heart attack. He was all alone in our flat. Nobody found out until I got home later that night. He'd been on his own for six hours. He'd been alive for about forty-five minutes after the heart attack. Flailing around. Trying to attract somebody's attention. Failing. I'm so sorry. Was that an unnecessary act of confession?

ALEX. Not, no. No. No. It must have been a bit of a surprise to imagine you'd seen him again.

GEORGIE. It was. It was. It really was. I'm Georgie.

ALEX. Hello Georgie. Alex.

GEORGIE. Georgie Burns.

ALEX. Alex Priest.

GEORGIE. This is all very formal isn't it?

ALEX. I suppose it is.

GEORGIE. "Georgie Burns. How very nice to meet you. Alex Priest. Charmed, I'm sure."

ALEX. Yes.

GEORGIE. Don't panic. I'm going now.

ALEX. I wasn't panicking.

GEORGIE. I like it here.

ALEX. Yes.

GEORGIE. I like train stations on the whole. Are you waiting for somebody?

ALEX. No.

GEORGIE. Are you waiting for a train?

ALEX. No.

GEORGIE. You're just sitting here.

ALEX. That's right.

GEORGIE. That's good. I like that idea. It's good, sitting, isn't it?

ALEX. It is, I think.

GEORGIE. Take the weight off your feet.

(He smiles at her.)

Gosh.

ALEX. What?

GEORGIE. Your smile.

ALEX. What about it?

GEORGIE. Can I take your photograph?

ALEX. Why?

GEORGIE. I like to take people's photographs. I do it all the time. I do it with loads of people. I've got millions of the things. Sometimes it's fun to take photographs of complete strangers. The idea is to freeze them. It's completely private. It's just something I do.

ALEX. I don't think that's a good idea, do you?

GEORGIE. Why not?

ALEX. I'd really rather you didn't. Thank you.

GEORGIE. Is it because you're a celebrity?

ALEX. What? No. I'm not a celebrity. Why would I mind having my photograph taken if I was a celebrity? Isn't that kind of in their job description?

GEORGIE. Is it because you're a very arrogant person?

ALEX. No.

GEORGIE. Do you imagine yourself to be a little bit above people like me?

ALEX. Not in any way.

GEORGIE. You do, I bet.

ALEX. I don't.

GEORGIE. Then why won't you let me take your photograph? It's because you're shy. Isn't it? I can tell. I can read you like a flipping book. That's one of my skills. Reading people. It's a professional characteristic. It comes with my job.

ALEX. What job do you do?

GEORGIE. I'm an assassin.

I'm not really.

ALEX. Aren't you?

GEORGIE. No. I'm a waitress. Gosh. I bet that's a rather overpowering disappointment isn't it. "Crikey," he thinks, "a real assassin. You don't meet an assassin every day of your life! Oh no. She's not an assassin. She's a fucking waitress."

ALEX. I didn't think that.

GEORGIE. Yeah you did. You lying fucker. Sorry. I didn't mean that to be quite as rude as it must have seemed.

ALEX. I like waitresses.

GEORGIE. Do you?

ALEX. Some of them. Not all of them. That would be absurd. To make a blanket generalisation like that. Some waitresses are really lovely.

GEORGIE. I work at Ottolenghi's.

ALEX. Terrific.

GEORGIE. Do you know it?

ALEX. No.

GEORGIE. It's on Upper Street. In Islington. It sells a fusion of continental, North African, and oriental food, driven by a scientific determination to pursue culinary excellence to its highest level.

ALEX. Magic.

GEORGIE. I like science.

ALEX. Yes.

GEORGIE. So I've seen your type before.

ALEX. Right.

GEORGIE. The shy, brooding, intellectual type. You come in. You sit down. You order a croissant. You read a fucking poem. Or something. You're too shy to smile. You're too shy to tip. You leave. I'm right aren't I? I've got you down to a tee. Don't you try and think you've got the measure of me, mister man. 'Cause on the contrary, I have the measure of you.

ALEX. I never said for one second that I thought I had the measure of you.

GEORGIE. Some of the food we make is astonishing to me. It's like it sets off a small explosion in my mouth. It's transformative. It transports me to places I've never been to. It takes me to the corners of Europe in my mouth. It takes me to areas of northern Africa. Have you ever been to Africa?

ALEX. I've never been anywhere.

GEORGIE. I'd love to go to Africa. I don't think I've been to enough places in my life where things could happen to you that are completely unpredictable and which could honestly and properly just kill you. Do you like food?

ALEX. Yes. Yes. Yes. I like food perfectly well.

GEORGIE. I have been to Thailand though.

ALEX. Jolly good.

GEORGIE. My husband took me to Thailand for our honeymoon. We drank cocktails in pools with bar stools actually in the pools. And had massages on the beach. It was sublime. He was English. He was the reason I came to London.

ALEX. Why are you talking to me?

GEORGIE. I'm sorry. I'm really weird. I know. You don't need to tell me. I'll go.

It's just. Days like this. There's something about them isn't there?

ALEX. I honestly have no idea what you're talking about.

GEORGIE. I miss every single bit of him.

ALEX. I see.

GEORGIE. It's like I miss him in my skin and my bones and my blood. I miss him on a cellular level.

We never had children. Which is one thing. I don't regret it. I do really. I live in Islington too. Bet you wouldn't think that to look at me, would you? I bet you'd think I lived somewhere like, I don't know, Acton or something.

ALEX. Why Acton?

GEORGIE. Because I look normal. I don't look extremely bloody rich. But let me tell you there are parts of Islington that are still, even now, affordable.

ALEX. Great.

GEORGIE. I love it there. I wander up and down Liverpool Road. Go into the shops. Rummage about. Go to work. Go to the theatre there. Go to the cinema there. There's something about cities that just makes me really fucking happy. It's the monumental amount of people. The gaps in between them creates this crackle.

I do like the countryside too though, by the way.

ALEX. Good for you.

GEORGIE. I like sitting in silent rooms in the countryside. I like silent rooms. I like silent rooms and the electric crackle of most given cities.

What job do you do?

ALEX. I'm a butcher.

GEORGIE. No you're not.

ALEX. Yes I am, I'm afraid.

GEORGIE. Are you?

ALEX. What?

GEORGIE. Really?

ALEX. Yes.

GEORGIE. A butcher?

ALEX. Yes. What's so strange about that?

GEORGIE. Is that really your job?

ALEX. This is getting a bit cyclical.

HEISENBERG

by Simon Stephens

1M, 1W

Amidst the bustle of a crowded London train station, Georgie spots Alex, a much older man, and plants a kiss on his neck. This electric encounter thrusts these two strangers into a fascinating and life-changing game. Simon Stephens's sharply original HEISENBERG brings to blazing, theatrical life the uncertain and often comical sparring match that is human connection.

"On its surface, [HEISENBERG] is a satisfyingly sentimental, life-affirming mating dance between two people who are so utterly dissimilar that of course they are made for each other. But if you choose to tune into the quieter frequencies, you'll detect the presence of a probing work that considers the multiplicity of alternatives that could shape our lives at every moment."

—**The New York Times**

"Stephens's great interest ... is how our perception of people and relationships alters depending on what we know, what we see and whose side we see it from. Seemingly senseless actions that seem inexplicable reveal reasonable motives; solid facts dissipate and disappear. [HEISENBERG] rewards watching, both where it is and where it's going."

—**The Guardian**

"[Simon Stephens] tells the simple story of two perfect strangers who embark on an affair and find their lives changes irrevocably. You've seen this one before, you say? Not like this one, you haven't. ... Georgie is a marvelous creation: a wide-eyed, brutally honest id ... and Stephens [gives] full commitment to these lost souls through his tough, bracing writing style."

—**Entertainment Weekly**

Also by Simon Stephens

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE
DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME
HARPER REGAN
PUNK ROCK

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