

Anxiety 2404 - A short play

Characters: Harry, Tom, Dick and a stranger. Also, a reader of the stage instructions (given in italics).

Harry and Tom are tapping their fingers on the top of the table they are seated at. There's a knock at the door. Harry goes to the door. Dick enters and Harry follows him to the table. They sit down with Tom.

DICK: How are you Tom?

TOM: The landlord wants the flat back even though I'm not in arrears with my rent. Nor have I done anything wrong! I'm going to lose my home.

HARRY: It's tough right now.

TOM: Don't I know it! I haven't eaten today, Harry. I need to save for a deposit to rent a room.

HARRY: Let me get you something. Will a plate of ham sandwiches do, that and an orange juice?

TOM: That would be welcome.

Harry goes to the kitchen to make the sandwiches.

DICK: What are you thinking?

TOM: What?

DICK: You looked as though you were deep in thought.

TOM: I was.

DICK: What were you thinking about?

TOM: I can't say, Dick.

DICK: Why?

TOM: Something I can't shake off.

DICK: What is it?

TOM: Something I was thrown into when I was born and a little later on when I started to think where I was. And where I am now.

DICK: Where were you?

TOM: I was in my world.

DICK: Was it a difficult world to exist in?

TOM: No, it was so ordinary. Ordinary in the extreme. Now it's no longer even that.

DICK: Do you think that most people have the same reaction to the state of affairs, they're thrown into, as you?

TOM: I don't know what to believe.

DICK: Belief is Truth!

Harry returns with some sandwiches and a glass of orange juice for Tom. Harry hands the food and drink to Tom. Harry sits down. Tom will speak as though he is still eating something, for a while. He will also pick up the glass of orange juice from time to time to take a sip.

TOM: Thank you, Harry.

HARRY: What is all this about belief being the same as truth, Dick?

DICK: Tell me three things you believe in that you don't think are true.

HARRY: You got me there! Where do you get those ideas from?

DICK: I went to a meeting the other day.

HARRY: What about?

DICK: The situation.

HARRY: It's dire for sure.

TOM: There's nothing we can do about it. We're just ordinary citizens, after all.

DICK: Not even citizens! We're subjects remember, Tom.

HARRY: You think that there is an ultimate truth?

DICK: Scientific truth has a base but only until it has been scientifically displaced and replaced by another. Science is one thing but we don't go around challenging someone because we think they are getting more gravity than we are, do we? Knowledge in that sense is not something to argue about.

TOM: What is it then, Dick?

DICK: Human thought constructs. Like one should not kill and not steal. That's at its best. When the people can vote for a government. That's politics for you!

HARRY: And at its worst?

DICK: Being made to believe in something you can't sense.

TOM: Like what?

DICK: Like gods and religions. They're all human thought constructs, imposed by the powers that be.

HARRY: But it isn't like that now!

DICK: Oh, the ruling class. The first son would inherit the estate and possibly take his seat in the House of Lords. . The second would go to Sandhurst. The third goes, into the clergy and the forth into parliament.

TOM: So that's how they've got it all sewn up?

DICK: 11% of the population own 89% of the wealth.

HARRY: And they say the 11% is even lower now. And the City has its own rules. Not to mention, those who have the money and the knowledge, to have funds in off-shore accounts.

TOM: No wonder taxation no longer pays for social housing.

HARRY: And there are people dying of cold on the streets.

DICK: What do you think of the Labour leader Harry?

HARRY: Dull as dishwater. I couldn't vote for Brown either. Not after

he called a Labour supporter a bigot. I voted Liberal.

DICK: Did you vote Brexit?

HARRY: Yes, I thought it would destroy the Party. I didn't expect it to take so long.

TOM: I don't think D a D will last that long after the new intake of Labour MP's. He can't do interviews or choose decent speech writers. His speeches are a hit and miss affair. And praising the Party's previous leaders won't help.

TOM: When the last Party canvasser came around asking me to vote for them, I asked: MacMillan built 300,000 council houses in one year, was he a communist?

HARRY: It doesn't look like the Party will get in next time.

TOM: Do you think things will change?

DICK: For a while. Then those who benefit and gain more wealth, resent the taxation system and vote those with financial interest back into power. They get lower taxes until the 89% are poorer again. There is another change once more and the cycle begins all over again.

TOM: Do you think there is any hope?

DICK: Not whilst a third of the electorate don't vote.

TOM: So you think voting should be compulsory?

DICK: Yes., And if a no vote is more than any other candidate's vote, no one wins a seat.

TOM: So a no vote could result in the seat remaining vacant?

DICK: And why, not! I also believe in proportional representation.

TOM: Why?

DICK: Because it would make politicians more polite to one another. And it should reduce the extremes in politics.

TOM: How come?

DICK: Because they would be more likely to end up in a coalition, with those they haven't been rude to. Other parties might not want to work with those, who have been rude to them.

HARRY: And people might be more sympathetic to those in Parliament.

TOM: Why do you think we've got the government we've got?

DICK: Because of self-interest or people wanting to believe in what lies they're being told.

HARRY: Do you believe in a perfect system and who is to judge what that is?

DICK: The prison population tells you that.

TOM: How, Dick?

DICK: By its size. If the prison population is more than it was during the previous administration it is a less perfect system. Why are more people having to steal? Why are more people sleeping on the streets? How can they feed themselves? And the cost of keeping people in prison!

HARRY: So you think there should be no prisons?

DICK: No, I didn't say that! Perhaps they should be renamed as secure units. Some people should be kept locked up. If they are a danger of harming others. And some people are.

HARRY: You don't think they can be treated?

DICK: People can stop taking their medication. It's happened before. And they have harmed others. And torture should be unforgivable!

TOM: What do you mean by that?

DICK: Life. Life that mean's life!

HARRY: Do you have a family, Dick?

DICK: No, I don't want to bring anyone else into this world.

TOM: Do you think living at the moment is so dreadful?

DICK: I wouldn't say dreadful as such but there are so many weapons in the world that could end civilization at any one time.

HARRY: What do you think the greatest dangers are today?

DICK: Nuclear weapons, over population and pollution.

HARRY: So, you think nuclear weapons should be banned?

DICK: There's no point, a nation can always carry on producing them. They cannot be un-invented, so to speak.

TOM: How would you stop people having as many children as they are today?

DICK: Some faiths want to outnumber other faiths. That is a problem even within Christianity.

TOM: How would you counter that, if you were asked?

DICK: By a new age of enlightenment.

HARRY: And how would you stabilize the population at 2.2 children in a marriage?

DICK: That is difficult when some men want more than one wife and some women want a career rather than a family.

TOM: That's because some governments don't pay their citizens enough to live on or if their pensions don't cover housing. We live in a state that prevents a person getting welfare payments if they have more than £11,000, the cost of two dental bridges and their own funeral. What is fair about that. And people are going around with terrible teeth.

HARRY: So, you think that we should pay more taxes.

DICK: The Randians only want to pay taxation for the police and the armed forces. To safeguard their wealth and property. The police no longer visit shopkeepers who have been shoplifted.

TOM: Who are the Randians?

DICK: The followers of Ayn Rand.

TOM: Who are they, Dick?

DICK: Mrs. Thatcher misquoted her when she said, “There’s no such thing as society.”

HARRY: A democratic election can’t take place if there is no society. A society consists of all economic groups, therein and peoples belonging to it, too.

DICK: Rand wrote in her book *The virtue of Selfishness*, “there is no such thing as the entity of society”. Greenspan and Clinton were also followers of Rand. Anyway, no one could be a prime minister without a consensus within a nation or part of it, in our case.

HARRY: We sure can’t afford the poverty we have, anymore. People are living on the streets, turning to drugs, to numb their misery.

TOM: How else can Britain save money?

DICK: We sure don’t need a House of Lords with over 800 members, getting £400 a day for attendance. Some have been known to log in and go to their clubs. They return to check out, without doing any work. They think it’s a privilege of being a Lord.

TOM: How would you change that?

DICK: If it was up to me, hypothetically speaking, I would divide the House of Commons into two. All ex-ministers would go into the second chamber, or the Senate as it should be called. Ex-ministers would have some expertise in drawing up legislation.

TOM: What about the monarchy?

DICK: There isn’t a majority to get rid of it, at the moment, anyway.

HARRY: What do you think of Charlie?

TOM: Isn’t that being a little disrespectful?

HARRY: I’d like to think of everyone in Britain to be a friend and on first name terms, or shorter ones as we are addressing each other.

DICK: Well said.

HARRY: What about Andy?

DICK: The less said about him the better.

TOM: What about Kate's tampering with that photograph?

DICK: Trivial! A storm in a tea cup! She was recuperating from surgery.

HARRY: They said, the Chinese and the Russians were fuelling the controversy.

TOM: It was the Press Agencies that wouldn't touch it.

HARRY: Why didn't Willie take half a dozen shots. No self-respecting photographer takes only one photograph of a subject.

DICK: Enough of that, only there must be something in our food and packaging that is harming us. There are too many young people sub-coming to illnesses and obesity these days. We don't know what the effects are of eating so many additives in our food.

TOM: We can't produce the things we need due to the exchange value of some currencies.

DICK: We are to blame for that. Governments receive kudos if the value of their currency is high. even if it makes our products uncompetitive. It will be corrected only when the international system corrects it. You can build up a trade deficit only, until we've sold all our industry and property.

TOM: And then the wealthy can go and live in Switzerland.

HARRY: You think that is going to happen, Tom?

TOM: The way things are going, yes.

HARRY: You think we are all going to end up as serfs?

TOM: Yes, and to another power, too.

DICK: In Austria you don't pay more than 40% of your income on rent, no matter what your savings are. 60% of their citizens live in social housing. It sure makes no sense to make people so poor that they can't afford dental treatment or for their heating.

TOM: Nurses shouldn't have had their wages reduced from those recommended by their pay review body over twelve or so years so they can't afford to eat.

HARRY: And that's just so the rich can have tax cuts.

TOM: Twenty percent of people of working age are not looking for work. They have lost the will. Think what that's doing to society as a whole.

HARRY: Do you think everything should be nationalized?

DICK: Definitely not. A mixed economy can reduce the effects if the stock-market crashes again. The water supply, the National grid and the NHS should stay in the public sector. We put middling in, and get middling out of it. Some rail services, too. We need public transport so people can get to work in out of place places.

HARRY: What about drugs?

DICK: If the government wanted to it could employ enough people to man the importing areas and to go through cargo. They just don't want to spend more money than is being raised by taxation at the moment. And, whatever, there is, they want to give more to the richer members of society, that is, those who are likely to vote for The Party.

TOM: What about the drugs that are being produced here in Britain?

HARRY: Some can be legalized. And more surveillance where the supply is taking place.

TOM: How do you solve the housing problem?

DICK: At the moment it is the Labour Councils that are taking the brunt of the cost of housing refugees. Just because it costs so much more to re-house people in The Party's areas or boroughs. The poor always have to pay.

Knock. Knock.

DICK: I'll answer it, Harry.

Dick goes to the door. Footsteps can be heard in the passageway.

Dick and a stranger walk into Harry's sitting room.

STRANGER: The revolt has started! Are you going to join us?

HARRY: What!

STRANGER: The revolt to overthrow the government.

DICK: Yes, this government is only interested in the rich. Count me in.

HARRY: Yes, lead me there.

TOM: Yes, take me to the front.

All characters leave the house.

This play is pure fiction. The characters do not represent anyone with these names. These names were first used in 1657 but Dicke could have been a shortened name for Dicken. The next used date for Tom, Dick and Harry was in 1734. That is in the context of, any Tom, Dick or Harry...

The End.