

THERE'S ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE.

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Read by the person playing the part of the reporter to introduce the play:

The term psychopath is one which has come into common parlance in recent times. It is often connected with people who commit heinous crimes, such as murders, but the vast majority of people who are psychopaths do not commit such terrible deeds. They are classified as psychopaths because they have certain characteristics. These can include being extremely charming, an inability to experience remorse, arrogance, taking large risks and being master manipulators, often using strategies such as flattery and guilt to dominate the people that they come into contact with. The term psychopath is not a medical term. It is estimated that one in every hundred people is a psychopath, the vast majority being men. You have probably known, or worked with, one in the past, or even know or work with one now.

Characters:

- George: a resident of Rickmansworth.
- Eric: a resident of Rickmansworth.
- Reporter: who gives a report on the death of Eric.

ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE.

George: (Singing the lyrics and melody of 'Venus in Furs' by the Velvet Underground):

*Shiny, shiny, shiny boots of leather,
Whiplash girl child in the dark,
Comes in bells, your servant don't forsake him,
Strike, dear mistress, and cure his heart.*

After he stops singing George shakes himself out of his semi-trance and addresses the listeners.

George: Ah yes, now where was I? That's right. I was talking about life in a little village in the south of England called Rickmansworth. Well, as you may have guessed, life in Rickmansworth could get a little bit dull, even for the best of us. I mean, none of you come from Rickmansworth, do you? I would not want to cause offence. I am sure that Rickmansworth is just full of interesting people. And kind people, just like me! (Looks to the side to speak to another imaginary character) Excuse me madam, I believe that you might have dropped your purse. (George indicates this to an imaginary woman and accepts the imaginary compliments) No problem, my pleasure!

(He stops to take a photograph out of his pocket. He looks at the photograph with fondness). Ah yes. Eric. He was such a kind man. I was very fond of him, not in that way, of course! No, we were just good friends. But we used to share a house, you know just to pay the rent. Well, you can imagine, it was so expensive, and who can afford to rent a house in Rickmansworth these days? Only the very rich, and I can assure you, that neither I nor Eric was one of those! Oh yes, I loved Eric, loved him as a true and dear friend, (Pauses slightly) although he was a little strange. Did some very strange things, I have to admit. But, we don't expect our friends to be perfect do we?

Eric: (Looking over to George) Hi George, how are you today? Bit chilly this morning, isn't it? I must get ready to pop down to the sports club to meet some friends. I promised I would have a game of squash and then a few beers afterwards. A nice way to spend a Saturday, don't you think? I would have invited you, but I don't think it's the sort of thing that you would be interested in. I mean squash isn't really your thing, is it?

George: (Looking back to the audience) Well, you can imagine. That was very strange. Eric and I weren't partners or anything. But don't you think that he should have invited me? I was going to be sitting at home, by myself with nothing to do, while he was off, out with his friends, enjoying himself, 'having a few beers' as he put it. And the lockdown restrictions had only just been lifted. No thought for me, of course, no thought whatsoever! *Oh yes, George, you just stay at home while I go out and enjoy myself with my friends!* Strange man. Yes, I am going to be honest. I saw Eric in a different light after that, and not a bright one, I can tell you that.

George pours himself a drink.

George: Still, I could always stay at home and have a few drinks by myself. 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em,' that's what my dear departed father used to say. (Raises a glass) Or perhaps he was not so dear, not to me, anyway. Cheers, everyone! My father did not understand me, of course. Not like my mother. (Smiling with a sense of pride and affection for his mother) She knew me so well. She understood what a kind and loving young man I was. Not like my father. He didn't understand me at all! That was the problem with that man! He had no sensitivity, no intelligence. He just did not

understand the things that my mother and I understood. He just didn't have the wit! (**Pauses and smiles at the audience**) But let's face it, some people have it and others don't; that's life!

Eric: George, I don't seem to be able to find my car keys. You haven't seen them, have you? I am sure I left them where I usually leave them, but they seem to have disappeared. Strange! And the trouble is that the bus service here is so bad.....you know I don't think I'll be able to make it to play squash and see my mates at the club. It's such a pity! We used to have such a great time before this flippin' pandemic began! And they were expecting me..... I'll just have to give them a call and let them know.

George: That was the problem, you see. There were not many buses and the taxi service was very poor. So when Eric mislaid his keys, poor man, he just couldn't go down to the sports club to see his friends. Mind you, thinking about it, that was probably fair. I mean, he didn't think of me now, did he? And I can't be blamed if he doesn't know where he's left his keys, can I now? Some people are just downright selfish and that, unfortunately, was Eric. Always thinking of himself!

Eric: George, why won't you speak to me? What is the problem? What have I ever done to you? You know how much I was looking forward to going out with that woman and she told me that she had sent me letters and the postman told me that he had delivered them, because he remembered all the big, red kisses on the envelope, but I have never seen them. (**Shouts out, almost in desperation**) What is happening? George, what are you doing to me? I thought we were friends!

SFX 2: There is a strangled cry. Eric leaves screen. There is loud bang.

George: (Now seeming more eerie than he had before) Eric tried to get away, of course, but he could not. And that was right, right and proper. (**Starting to sound a bit creepy**) If you treat people the way in which Eric treated me, then what do you expect? There have to be standards in this world, there has to be an understanding that some things are right and that others, well they are just wrong! Eric had not understood that because he had not been brought up properly. No, that was not his fault! That was the fault of his parents, but unfortunately, Eric was the one who paid the price. (**Pauses**) Now, whether he did it himself on purpose, or it was an accident, or whether, even one of his so-called friends had come round while I was at work, I cannot know, but I do know this, if Eric had listened to me in the first place, this never would have happened.

Reporter: This is Jason Richardson of your local Hertfordshire news. Earlier today, in Rickmansworth, there were reports of the death of a man who appears to have fallen from the top floor of his house. Initial reports, yet to be confirmed, say that the deceased was a man of 55 years of age. Police say that there were no witnesses to the incident, which they are assuming, for the time-being, was an accident. The deceased's family have been informed.

George: Yes, Eric was dead. But why should I say anything to the police? I mean, who are the police anyway? Just in it for themselves, most of them, if you ask me! No, I was going to keep my thoughts to myself! I think I was in a state of trauma. I just could not believe what had happened! Poor Eric. Such a lovely man. Such a lovely man. I was very lucky to have known him, and he was, well, (**Without any sense of irony**) really lucky to have known me. I did try to cry, of course, but I couldn't. I don't know how other people cry so easily, what they feel, what is wrong with them. But I certainly could not cry, and I never have been able to, unless someone has hurt me, of course, but then that is different. (**Pauses**) And then there was the trial. I was found guilty of murder in the first degree. The Judge was clearly a man with no feelings. All he had to say was that 'Sentence will be passed after due deliberation'.

How awful and what a miscarriage of justice, of course. A complete travesty. But I shall, supported by my lawyer, appeal and I know that, with the support of the right-thinking people of this world, that we shall win the appeal and win the day. Justice will prevail and I shall be found, as I truly am, innocent of this crime, a true victim of the prejudice inherent in our legal system. (**George then looks to the sky and raises his fist in the air**). *Viva la revolucion!*

George returns to an almost trance-like state to repeat his singing of the lyrics below:

*Shiny, shiny, shiny boots of leather,
Whiplash girl child in the dark,
Comes in bells, your servant don't forsake him,
Strike, dear mistress, and cure his heart.*

George bows his head, which signals the end of the play.

THE END.