

Party Conversations

One Act Drama

by Sheree Veysey

Synopsis: At a friend's engagement party Abbie meets a young woman crying in the bathroom. The resulting conversation proves to be more than either of them anticipated. Trigger warning: Sexual assault theme. Please ensure audiences know this before the play.

CAST (In order of appearance)

ABBIE: Young woman, twenties to early thirties.

SARAH: Young woman a couple of years younger than Abbie.

Estimated running time: 30 minutes

Scene 1

SETTING: Present day, 8pm. A two-room interior space of a granny flat/ sleepout. One is a toilet/bathroom with an interior door. The other is some kind of living space, including a chair and mirror. Lockable exterior door is at stage right.

ABBIE opens the exterior door and enters. She has an airpod in one ear or phone to ear and is drinking from a wine glass. Sounds of a party are heard in the background.

ABBIE

No, no, I'm glad you called - it's good to have a breather from the noise. Oh there's heaps here, the wedding's gonna be huge! Mm not many, Rob came, April ...some other faces... Jacob.. Remember Jacob Grant... he's with Bianca you know from the year below? Yeah she's pregnant with her first, she's looking good - but man Jake-o has aged!

ABBIE leans into the mirror examining her eye makeup.

ABBIE

I know! It's like the women are still putting in all this effort and the guys have just let it go.

SARAH rushes in, panicked and in obvious distress.

ABBIE

Yeah I saw Tim in town the other day..

SARAH

I' I'- I can't... Where's the? I can't, I can't.

SARAH enters the toilet and shuts the door behind her.

ABBIE

Hey Kat - I've gotta go. Update you tomorrow. Thanks.

ABBIE pauses, then tentatively approaches the door.

ABBIE

Hey, are you okay in there? *Silence.*

Can I do anything? *Silence.*

Did you come with someone? Could I get them? *Silence.*

I guess you just want privacy eh- so I'll go.

ABBIE leaves the stage briefly. After she does, a small sound of distress is made by SARAH.

ABBIE

Okay, I'm back. I can't just leave you. Us women have to stick together eh. So if you want to have a cry in there, or hide out all night, that's fine.

I'm just gonna plop myself down here.

ABBIE pulls a chair forward and sits. Silence stretches on.

ABBIE

I'm Abbie. And if you wanted to give me your name...*Beat*

This is awkward eh. *Beat*

Well I'm a Pisces... very fond of seafood, beach walks. I have a hobby, well my boyfriend says it's a problem but it's a hobby.

I buy "Stolen girlfriend Club" stuff online. I love their jewellery. Oh and their bags! *Beat*

My mates say I can start a conversation with anyone - I once got offered a job just from chatting on a plane. *Laughs at herself.* Which would have been super flattering if I actually worked in clothing. *Beat.*

I met my best friend in a bathroom you know... I was crying cause my period came two weeks early AND our skirts were this light grey colour that showed everything. There is no horror like a thirteen-year-old with no pads and their period! What on earth were they thinking giving girls a pale uniform skirt!? So our very first conversation was like this. Through a toilet door.

SARAH

I..

ABBIE

Yeah?

SARAH

I'm not sure I can talk about it.
She is obviously still quite distressed

ABBIE

Ok.

SARAH

I'm not sure it's something you tell a stranger.

ABBIE

Hey, I'm here to listen if you want me to. Or I can go get someone?

SARAH

No. I came by myself. I know Cass from dance.

ABBIE

Oh cool. I was at school with her, in John's year. *Beat.*
So something happened, out there?
Long silence.

SARAH

Just I saw someone. Someone I didn't expect to.

ABBIE

An ex? A guy? A girl?
ABBIE assumes this is a romance situation

SARAH

Look, you don't want to know. It's not nice.

ABBIE

Actually now, I'm quite curious.

SARAH

Beat

I don't want to put my crap on you.

ABBIE

Hah - don't worry about me- strong shoulders.
So did they cheat on you? Break your heart?

SARAH

No... Not really -he... *Beat.* He held me down. Had sex with me.

ABBIE

What?!! *Beat.* Raped you?!! *ABBIE stands.*

SARAH

Well I didn't. I haven't seen him in years.

ABBIE

What a shock for you!

SARAH

Yeah. A shock. His face. I feel a bit shaky.

ABBIE

Do you need a tissue? Let me get you a tissue!
She goes to her bag and scrambles in it.

SARAH

I don't need a tissue.

ABBIE

I can get you tissues!

SARAH

I've locked myself in a toilet. I'm fine for tissues.

ABBIE

Oh, right.

SARAH

He was just having a good time. He didn't see me. *Beat*
He looks so normal and nice, how could? How did..?

ABBIE

You start to doubt yourself?

SARAH

Well he doesn't think it was rape, I don't think. Like he
pulled me against him after and said it was great.

ABBIE

Screws up her face in disgust. Mmm - They know!
They bloody know. *Beat.* When you're into it, when they've
actually asked! They know.

SARAH

He suggested we move it to my bedroom and "go again".

ABBIE

That's so creepy. And gas-lighty!

SARAH

Yeah and I hadn't like screamed or anything... So

ABBIE

So he just got up and left.

SARAH

Well. Poured himself a juice. *Incredulous*. Offered me orange juice. Then got his shoes and left.

ABBIE

That's so horrible. *Long pause*. Did you like do anything? Get anyone?

SARAH

No. I just sat in the shower. Ran the water cold.

Silence

There is a knocking at the door

SARAH

Jumps What's that!

ABBIE scoots over to the door and quickly slips the lock then peers out the window.

ABBIE stage whisper

Someone wanting to come in. I've locked it now. *The door has some shaking noises as someone tries to enter.*

SARAH

It's not a guy?

ABBIE shakes her head. *There is silence.*

ABBIE

No, some nana - probably hunting a loo.

SARAH

referencing how jumpy she is

Oh God, my nervous system's so fried.

ABBIE

You can relax with me here. If she had managed to come in I would have scared her away. I would have said you were puking your guts out with the Monkey flu.

SARAH

Do you vomit with monkey flu?

ABBIE

I don't know. I thought I made it up.

SARAH

Half laughs. Thanks.

ABBIE
Where were we?

SARAH
Oh you know, I was just sharing horrible secrets with a complete stranger.

ABBIE
Well it's your story.

The women sit in silence for a while.

SARAH
I was so messy that year.

ABBIE
Messy?

SARAH
Lots of partying. Nearly failed the semester.

ABBIE
Trying to block it out? Trying to take back your power?

SARAH
Maybe.

Extended silence.

ABBIE
You wanna know something really crazy. There's this US study. They anonymously surveyed these college guys, and like only a handful said they'd raped people. But then they changed the words to "have you ever forced or pressured a woman to have sex" - and then a third agreed they had.

SARAH
A third! *Incredulous.*

ABBIE
I know right!

SARAH
For real?

ABBIE
Yeah, legit. A third.

SARAH
But that is rape? It is, isn't it?

ABBIE

It's that word eh. Rape.

SARAH

I remember a few weeks after just standing in the uni bathroom saying "You've been raped. He raped you." And it was like there was someone else in the mirror.

ABBIE

You know there's free therapy for this eh?

SARAH

Yeah my last boyfriend kept pushing me to go... Do you work in social services or something?

ABBIE

Laughs. No! I'm a beverage company analyst... I can tell you a lot about the increasing demand for alcoholic kombucha.

SARAH

And quite a bit about sexual assault. Did something..

ABBIE

Not to me. My best friend. One Saint Paddy's day she went out with workmates. I was home with a cold. She comes to the next morning behind the Kmart. Her thighs and arms were covered in bruises.

SARAH

Oh my God! Someone roofied her?

ABBIE

Yep. She only remembers flashes.

SARAH

Shaking her head. That's. That's horrific!

ABBIE

She's still - I dunno, she's way more herself but it changed her.

SARAH

Beat. I don't even feel like mine counts hearing that.

ABBIE

Oh please don't compare.

SARAH

But waking up like that... *Beat* Like that's a real...
Me, I ... How is it rape if I let it happen?

ABBIE

It's rape. It's definitely rape. *Beat*
Sorry I still don't know your name.

SARAH

Sarah. Thank you. For all of this- for saying the right things.

ABBIE

Lord! Have I gone and said the right things for once!
Well thank you community counselling!

SARAH

You went?

ABBIE

Yeah. Kat's attack did a number on me.

SARAH

Yeah?

ABBIE

At first it was the shock. But then months went by and she never wanted to do anything or go anywhere. She'd had this thing... and I wanted to be supportive, but really I just wanted the old Kat back. It was like she was behind glass and I couldn't reach her.

Sarah nods.

SARAH

Yep.

ABBIE

I felt like such a cow "making it about me."

SARAH

Did it help?

ABBIE

So much! Well, not the first lady, she was useless... but yeah, it did.

SARAH

Tentatively Had Kat drunk much?

ABBIE

She doesn't think so. She thinks it was in her second glass.

SARAH

I'd been drinking.

ABBIE

SO! You blame yourself for drinking?