

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

# Two Bottles of Relish

by  
EDWARD DARBY

Based on the Short Story by  
LORD DUNSANY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. *A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience.* All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P.O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT  
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

TWO BOTTLES OF RELISH

is fully protected by copyright. *No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.* On all programs this notice should appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

© MCMLXVII, By

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America  
All Rights Reserved  
(TWO BOTTLES OF RELISH)

---

---

TWO BOTTLES OF RELISH  
A Play in One Act  
FOR TWO MEN and TWO WOMEN

---

CHARACTERS

WILLIE SMITHERS.....*a salesman*

DAVID LINLEY..... *his friend*

JENNY HUTCHINSON... *a young girl*

MRS. HUTCHINSON..... *her mother*

**PLACE:** *The living room of a small bachelors' apartment.*

**TIME:** *The twentieth century.*

While it is customary to include a program note indicating the time and place in which the action is set, it is suggested that no such reference is necessary for this play.

The Time can be selected arbitrarily by the director, since there are no topical references or indications pinpointing any specific era. It could be the early 1900s, the mid-20s, the early 30s, the present; and can be largely determined by the costumes and furniture available (which should always be in good taste and comparatively modern for the period chosen). If possible, the play should be set back in time some forty years or more, since the relatively unfamiliar dress and furnishings will add to the inescapable Gothic aura and style of the story.

The Place is quickly established through the dialogue and accents of the characters. No foreknowledge is needed for the audience to become quickly involved with the play.

The Set is described in detail in the production notes at the end of the book. A drawing of the set is on page 39. The suggested setting can easily be simplified if desired.

---

---

## Two Bottles of Relish

---

THE CURTAIN OPENS slowly and silently on a dark stage. After a few seconds a small pool of light, which is kept at a subdued level, comes up D R. Standing there is WILLIE, head bent down, one hand slowly twisting a button on his jacket. He is somber in this moment, and a trace nervous. Slowly he raises his head to look directly out over the audience; and as he does, his hand stops fingering the button and is gradually lowered to his side. He speaks quietly, building the speech as he goes along.)

WILLIE (a touch of awe in his voice). It's . . . it's strange, y'know. It really is. The way the mind works, I mean. . . . You try to push something away that's . . . best forgotten, that you never want to think about again . . . and instead, it all stays fixed in place like . . . some lesson that's been studied hour upon hour. . . . Each word. . . . Every detail.

It's not . . . easy to talk about. David and the others . . . well, they're all for hushing it up. And I agree. Yes . . . I agree. But . . . but I've had it bottled up inside me all this while, and . . . and some things work like a . . . poison in your blood until you just have to get them out . . . at least once. (Quietly.) It isn't a very pleasant story . . . Perhaps, in the end, you'll feel sorry you were willing to

listen to it.

(WILLIE lowers his head, slowly turns, and walks up to the fireplace. As he does, the general stage illumination begins to come up and the special spot is faded out.)

(It is evening and the room is lighted at generally low levels. Shadows occupy all the corners, and only a slight haze of night-time blue creeps in through the window. The fireplace glows with burning coals, and WILLIE, now reflecting a cheerful mood, stands before it warming his hands. After several seconds DAVID enters from the bedroom D L. He is dressed in casual but expensive clothing, complete with an ascot scarf at the neck.)

DAVID. Oh, there you are. I didn't hear you come in.

WILLIE. Didn't want to disturb genius at work.

DAVID (almost hooting it). Genius? You're looking at the world's greatest blockhead!

WILLIE (smiling). Problems with the book?

DAVID. That is putting it mildly. (Crossing up to window). Ah, well, I shouldn't complain. I knew it wouldn't be easy, and much of it is going far better than I had any right to expect. (Seated on the window seat; glancing out window.) How was your day?

WILLIE. The best! I brought in some fairly large orders.

DAVID. Good man!

WILLIE (with delight). You should have seen the new customer I took on in Chelsea--a regular Ebenezer Scrooge in flesh.

DAVID. Oh?

WILLIE (crossing L between chairs to C). Has this very large shop with at least a dozen clerks scurrying about. And right smack in the middle of it, there he sits, on a sort of platform, where he can keep an eye on everything----

DAVID. And shout out: Bah! Humbug?

WILLIE (laughing). Just about.

DAVID (laughing, too). And you actually got an order from him?

WILLIE. I did indeed! He says to me--(Does imitation.)--"Smithers, why should I bother stocking this floor varnish you peddle?"

DAVID. Floor varnish?

WILLIE. He was baiting me, y'see, but I didn't blink an eyelash. Just gave him a very direct look, and says----

DAVID (springing to his feet, crossing to below chair L of table). "Sir, Num-numo is rapidly becoming world-famous as the finest relish available for meats and savories."

WILLIE (gleefully). Righto!

DAVID. "It's made of the finest ingredients, with all deleterious acids eliminated. Guaranteed to tenderize and add flavor, without heartburn."

WILLIE. Good Lord! you've got it down word for word.

DAVID (crossing below WILLIE to back of left fire-place chair). "Num-numo satisfies the stomach and makes happy customers. And you needn't take my word for that, sir; it is an undisputed fact which can be verified by any leading merchant in London!"

WILLIE (addressing DAVID and doing imitation). "Smithers, I don't know when I've heard such hogwash. But . . . well, we'll give it a try."

DAVID (stepping to WILLIE, offering his hand).



"Thank you, Mr. Scrooge."

WILLIE (as himself). No, no, no. Shnudlengibs-forcroftstempitts.

DAVID (as himself). Is that a name? It sounds more like a fungus infection! (Acting.) "Ahhhh, thank you so much, Mr. Shnudlen-thingumabob. (They shake hands.) I'm sure you won't regret it."

WILLIE (bursting out with laughter). David, you're a marvel. Why don't you drop the book and join up with me?

DAVID (also laughing). Oh, wouldn't that be royal! I can just see us storming into all the shops. (Improvises song and a side-step dance--a "shuffle-off-to-Buffalo"--which carries him between the chairs to the mantel.)

Hello, hello, hello,

We're selling Num-numo!

WILLIE (applauding). I'll take ten cases!

DAVID. Sold! To the grinning wretch who wants to lure me into a life of misery.

WILLIE (crossing to left fireplace chair; very jovially). Here, now, it's not so bad, y'know!

DAVID (crossing slowly to below fireplace table). Of course not; it's a wonderful career, if one is blessed with the patience and ability to sell--which I am not, but you certainly are.

WILLIE. Well, I don't know about that, but it really has been going a lot better these past few months --thanks to you.

DAVID. To me? How do you mean?

WILLIE. Why, all that I've learned from you.

DAVID (puzzled). Such as . . .

WILLIE (coming straight down a few steps).

Fancier words; improvement in my grammar; references to poetry, literature, art. Picked it all up from you.