



NEW CYCLE OF MYSTERY PLAYS

The Parable of the Good Servant
by Frazer Flintham

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Wendy | Rosie Cavaliero |
| Carly | Lizzy Watts |
| Rod | Will Howard |
| Loren | Christine Absalom |
| Alan | Adam Nagaitis |
| Mr Bell | Patrick Brennan |

Directed by Jessica Dromgoole

PLEASE BRING HARD-SOLED SHOES TO THE STUDIO
PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN YOUR CONTRACTS

Readthrough/ Record:

Wednesday 31 October 2012 1430-1900

Venue:

Studio 60A
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA

TX: Wednesday 19 December 2012 at 2245 in The Essay BBC Radio 3

SCENE ONE – INT. SHOP FLOOR

Music in 00:00

GILES FRASER: In the year 1210, Pope Innocent III issued a ban on clergy performing in any sort of drama on the public stage. For a while, the church had been getting increasingly twitchy about the popularity of religious plays that had spilled out from the church and into the market place where they were often sponsored by the local town guild. But no one ever granted the church some exclusive deal to be the sole custodians of the Christian message. The proliferation of popular interpretation represented a confidence that the stories of the Bible could be understood in a whole host of different ways and by different people. In this new cycle of commissions, radio 3 has asked a series of contemporary playwrights to do something similar, to take some familiar New Testament stories and to set them in the context of the modern workplace. In this retelling of the Parable of the Good Servant, the mysterious Mr Bell watches his department store from a distance. But like the absent of God, some begin to doubt his existence. And as the loose faith, so the store begins to change character.

1 .Wendy Right, morning team. So. Overall Store sales for last week were basically – amazing. Not only did we hit all our daily targets but we also smashed it with the new Ladies and Gents fragrance lines, with Floral Dimension and Masco-Mucho coming out on top. Mr Bell specifically asked me in this morning's email to pass on his thanks.

Out 1:24

2. Carly (*whispering to Rod*) Where's he live again? Swindon?

3. Rod Sweden.

4. Carly (*sighs*) I'd love to go to Sweden.

5. Rod I'd be happy with Swindon right now.
6. Wendy And as it's only my third week here, I also really appreciate your efforts. However - at the end of play yesterday, I did notice three bottles of 'I'd Dye To be Brown' hair coloring bottles with their labels facing in opposite directions. Now, I didn't tell Mr Bell this, but he could make his store visit at any time, and it's these little things that he'll be assessing us on...
7. Carly I really thought she was gonna be more chilled out than Rosa – her coming from Glossers. I might apply for Burger City.
8. Wendy Is there something the matter Carly?
1. Carly No. No!
2. Wendy Then why's your face all crunched up? You want to watch that—people won't take advice on our Spring Lipstick Range from someone with a top lip like a Quaver!
- Now! In Mr Bell's email this morning he also informed me that as of this coming Friday - Loren will have been an employee at Bells for twenty-five years!
3. All No/Gosh/Really?
4. Wendy So come here Loren.

5. Rod (to *Carly*) I think I'd have topped myself at six.
6. Wendy In true Bells Store ethos, Mr Bell will be putting an extra £100 into Loren's account this month.
7. Loren A hundred pounds? Wait 'til I tell my Frank!
8. Rod Huh! You'd get more begging outside Greggs
9. Loren (to Wendy) Can you thank him in your email?
1. Wendy Of course. Right. Okay, well it's ten to, let's get those doors open and aim for more of the same this week! Because when Mr Bell arrives, we want to make him ding-a-ling-a-ling!
- FX The Sounds of the Tills opening and closing.

SCENE TWO – INT. OFFICE

- 1.Loren So Wendy. How've you found your first month? You settling in all right?
- 2.Wendy Yeah - I think so.
- 3.Loren Well the store looks gorgeous. I mean, you never know when you get someone new in, if they're going to rise to the challenge or belly-flop.
- 4.Wendy Well that's why I made the move here from Glossers. Bells has such a wonderful reputation – I'm made up to finally be a part of it.
- 5.Loren Yes. Well Mr Bell sounds pleased.
- 6.Wendy Yes his emails are very encouraging. It's good to know that he trusts me to just get on with things. Although I do hope he makes a visit soon, because it would be nice to meet him. I had my interview with his daughter, who he sent over from Sweden.
7. Loren That's how he's always done it, yes
8. Wendy Well I just hope he likes what I've done.

SCENE THREE – SOUNDSCAPE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1.Wendy Another wonderful week team – so thank you for your hard work.... Now Mr Bell...

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2.Carly Yes Madam, of course. I think Fire Of London Orange would suit your natural tones perfectly.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

3.Rod Mr Bell, Mr Bell, Mr Bell!

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

4.Wendy So another excellent week on sales – and the store is looking top drawer.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

5.Wendy Rod! How many shades of tanning lotions do we have in the summer Shimmer like a winner Range?

6.Rod Er....

1.Wendy Twelve Rod!

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2.Rod Do you think she's always going to be like this?

3.Carly Why can't he just turn up, so we can all just relax.

SCENE FOUR – SHOP FLOOR

1.Wendy Okay Carly – you can come off that till and do Ladies Leg Care when Rod gets back from his lunch.

2.Carly All right.

Wendy exits.

3.Rod You'll never guess who I've just seen in the arcade?

4.Carly (*shock*) Not her with that fringe?

5.Rod No. Rosa!

6.Carly Oh! Did you tell her that we thought she was bad enough?

7.Rod No. But you'll never guess what she told me?

8.Carly What?

9.Rod The real reason she left!

10.Carly She was in love with Loren and couldn't bear it any longer?

1. Rod No. Mr Bell had promised her first dibs on running a new store he's opening in Westfield – Bells In Heaven.
2. Carly No!
3. Rod Yeah! An even higher-end store than this one!
4. Carly Wow! So that's why Wendy came here from Glossers!
5. Rod Yeah. But he never made one visit. Not once, in the whole five years she was here!

Carly notices Wendy approaching

6. Wendy Err...Rod You may be on your lunch, but Carly isn't.
7. Rod Yeah, sorry. (pause) Err... Wendy, can I have a word?
8. Wendy What is it?
9. Rod I ermm. I've errmm, just seen Rosa. Our old manager, before you.
10. Wendy Oh right.

1. Rod Yeah. And she asked me to give you a message.
2. Wendy Me?
3. Rod Yeah. She ermmm... (*in confidence*) She said that she isn't allowed to speak to you herself, as it was in her contract - but there's something she thought you should know.
4. Wendy Go on.
5. Rod She said to tell you - 'Mr Bell didn't come'.
6. Wendy (*beat*) She told you this?
7. Rod Yes. She said he never visited when she managed here, not once.
8. Wendy He must have done!
9. Rod That's what she said!
10. Wendy And how long was she here?
11. Rod Five years.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

SCENE FIVE – INT. OFFICE

1.Wendy Is it true, that Mr Bell never visited when Rosa was here?
(*pause*) Loren?

2. Loren Erm....

3.Wendy Is it?

4. Loren Yes.

5.Wendy And that's why she left?

6.Loren Yes.

7. Wendy But....!

8. Loren Look, just because he hasn't been yet - doesn't mean he won't
come at all. Don't lose faith Wendy. You've only been here six
months. He'll come. You just have to trust him.

9. Wendy You mean he's never made a visit?

PAUSE

10. Loren?

1. Loren Not yet, no.
2. Wendy And you've never met him?
5. Loren Everyone round here knows he's a wonderful man.
6. Wendy But you've been here twenty-six years and he's never visited, once?
7. Loren If he said he's coming, then one day he will.
8. Wendy But...
9. Loren I know what he's promised you...
10. Wendy (*beat*) How do you know about that?
11. Loren Oh don't you leave as well Wendy, you're the best manager we've had – the store's never looked so good, it really hasn't.
12. Wendy Really?
1. Loren Yes. And this new store – it sounds just wonderful. Just think how wonderful that's going to be – I mean what an honour – that's something money can't buy!
2. Wendy But if he never comes!

3. Loren He will! Do you think I'd have stayed working for a man this long if I didn't think he was a man of his word? I don't need to work – what with my Frank's retirement money – but knowing that when I walk down that high street people say 'look, there's Loren Hope, she works at Bells !
4. Wendy But it's only his word!
5. Loren Mr Bell's old school – he rewards loyalty. Look at the bonus he gave me! He's the God of Bells, and in our God, we must trust. All the other managers have bailed, but you Wendy, if you keep faith in his word, just think how greatly you'll be rewarded.
6. Wendy Well I'd better be

SCENE SIX – SOUNDScape

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy Okay, there must be two of you in each aisle at all times, and we must ensure that there is a member of the team available to them within four seconds of store entry.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Wendy Carly, where's your badge?

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

3. Loren Yes, of course Madam, which would you like?

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

4. Carly Would you like a bow on that Madam?

5. Customer Yes please.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

6. Wendy Is that a crease in your shirt Rod?

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy ...this month's overall sales are up again on last month....

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Wendy Carly – was that a yawn?

3. Carly No.

4. Wendy I'm in here at 5am every day and I don't leave much before 9 –
but do you see me yawning? (*beat*) And swill some
mouthwash – I can smell pasty from here.

FX Till shutting crescendos.....

SCENE SEVEN – INT. OFFICE

- 1.Rod Well that's all the Autumn shades hair pieces out Wendy, so I'm gonna head off now.
- 2.Wendy Okay, thanks Rod.
- 3.Rod (*pause*) Are you okay Wendy?
4. Wendy Yes, yes, I'm fine. I'm just a little tired that's all.
5. Rod Why don't you leave with us?
6. Wendy I need to do these figures.
7. Rod Okay. (*beat*) All he's bothered about is whether or not we hit our targets. Mr Bell!
8. Wendy Rod!
9. Rod I'm just saying. All this work you do – in here every night.
10. Wendy It's my job Rod.

1. Rod I know but. If you ask me, what's it matter if we put bows on stuff or curtsey every time someone comes in if?
2. Wendy Have you been curtseying?
3. Rod No.
4. Wendy Good.
5. Rod if we're hitting the targets anyway. People would still come in - the products you get here are all the same as at Glossers.
6. Wendy Mmmm.
7. Rod Well.. I'm sure Mr Bell appreciates it. I'll see you in the morning.

Rod exits.

Wendy lets out a long sigh.

SCENE EIGHT – SOUNDSCAPE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1.Wendy Well done again team, Mr Bell is over the moon about the further increase in profits over this last quarter.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

5. Rod Hey Wendy – they're having a Fireworks theme day over at Glossers.

6. Wendy Really?

7. Rod Yeah it's packed.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2.Carly Wend – just so you know - I'm going to dust that display down straight after I do these - I haven't forgotten!

3.Wendy It's okay. Do it tomorrow.

4. Carly Oh, right

1. Wendy Actually Rod, just get as many of them on the shelf as you can – don't worry if they aren't all in line hey, as long as they're on there.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2 .Loren Wendy, I don't wish to seem like a snitch – but Carly's been handing out bags to customers with the Bells logo facing away from the customer.

3. Wendy I'll have a word with her later.

4. Loren Well I'd say something to her now - she's already done it twice this morning.

5. Wendy I'll speak to her later.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

6. Carly Wendy, me and Rod just wondered – and please it's only a suggestion, but would it be okay for me and Rod to use some of the damaged make-up as face paints for Halloween?

7. Wendy (*pause*) I don't see why not!

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

SCENE NINE – INT. OFFICE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Loren Can I have a word?

2. Wendy Come in Loren.

3. Loren Is everything okay?

4. Loren Not really no.

5. Wendy What's up?

6. Loren I'm a little concerned as to the direction this store is going in?

7. Wendy Oh!

8. Loren Yes. I... I've been wanting to say something for a while now,
but I thought maybe it was just a blip.

9. Wendy But we've never been busier Loren – and our sales are
through the roof!

10. Loren Yes, but...

1. Wendy And Mr Bell's emails are nothing short of gushing!

2. Loren But the store? It's like Poundworld out there.

3. Wendy Loren...

4. Loren A lady came in yesterday and asked Carly where she could find the facemasks and Carly told her she'd be better off just buying a balaclava.

5. Wendy People like banter.

6. Loren People don't come to Bells for banter! They come to Bells for a deluxe customer experience and always have done. If they want banter and their goods shoved in a bag like the cashiers stuffing a chicken - they can go to Glossers for that.

7. Wendy And what's so wrong with the people who shop in Glossers? Hey?

8. Loren I mean there're people coming in who eat at Burger City! Mr Bell employed you to maintain this store's reputation, to protect the brand, not...

9. Wendy We're still hitting our targets?

1. Loren When Mr Bell visits, you'll be for the high jump!
2. Wendy (*pause*) He's never coming Loren! Do you not see?
3. Loren Yes he is. And he'll come when you least expect him!
4. Wendy There hasn't been a drop in sales because we haven't dusted on top of every shelf, or grovelled to every customer as they pass by. People are getting their products, Mr Bell's making his money, we're all getting our annual pay-rise, so what's it matter?
5. Loren Well if this is going to continue like this, then I can't stand and watch it happen.
6. Wendy (*pause*) What are you saying Loren?
7. Loren I'd like to resign.
8. Wendy Well if that's what you want.
9. Loren Yes. I don't think I could bear to watch it when Mr Bell does arrive. For him, for any of you.
10. Wendy I'll be sorry to see you go.

1.Loren And I'm sorry too. Because I really thought you were the one who'd stick with it, no matter what.

2.Wendy Well it seems this place has been a surprise for all of us then.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

FX Christmas Carols play – it fades to the background music in the store, into the next scene.

SCENE TEN – INT. SHOP

FX Christmas tunes now play in store

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Carly And eighty-five change. See ya

Wendy approaches.

2. Carly Wendy, is it okay if I nip and get a hot chocolate to have behind the till, I'm freezing.

3. Wendy Yes, go on then. Put a coat on though, they said it might snow today.

4. Carly No.

5. Wendy Yeah.

6. Carly Well I hope it doesn't stick. I've got Zumba tonight.

Music Deck the halls carol.

SCENE ELEVEN – INT. SHOP

1. Carly Just look at it! How are we going to get home?

2. Wendy We'll have to stay here the night.

3. Carly Here?

4. Wendy Yes – we don't want to get stranded in this. We'll get set up in the tea room with the fire on and sleep on the sofas.

5. Rod Well let's shut the shop and get out the back now – nobody's going to coming out in this.

6. Wendy We've got another hour yet?

7. Rod Oh please Wend!

8. Wendy (pause) Oh alright.

FX The store doors open. The sound of the wind and snow comes
in.

9. Alan How come you've got power! It's all gone off in our place.

1. Wendy Oh no!
2. Alan Yeah.
3. Wendy Ah – I wanted a Quarter-Pounder for my tea!
4. Alan No chance of that. It's freezing in there. Is it alright if I send my staff over here Wendy? Coz they can't get home just yet, and I can't leave them in there.
5. Wendy Course yeah.
6. Alan Cheers Wend!
7. Wendy We're all going to stay here tonight.
8. Alan Are you?
9. Wendy Yeah.
10. Alan Well we were meant to be having our Christmas party tonight.
11. Wendy Well that won't be happening will it.

12. Alan No – the venue's already called to say they're not opening.
1. Wendy What a shame.
-
2. Alan Yeah. And I've still got a people carrier full of party bits and
booze – and twelve cold miserable staff on my hands.
-
3. Carly Have it here!
-
4. Wendy Carly!
-
5. Carly (*whispers*) Come on Wendy! The Burger City guys are FIT!
-
6. Rod I bet they've been looking forward to their Christmas party all
year - there's nothing worse than being promised something
and then it never happening, hey Wendy.
-
7. Wendy (pause) Alright then. But no making a mess!

SCENE TWELVE – INT. SHOP

Music Slade's 'Wish it could be Christmas Everyday'

Cheers – partying.

Singing 14:14

1.Rod I just can't believe what a good bar the perfume counter makes!

2.Carly Right Wendy – you're having a shot!

3.Wendy No. No.

4.All Yeah / Go on / Do it! Do it!

5. Rod Let your hair down!

6. Wendy Alright then.

7. All Cheer.

SCENE THIRTEEN – INT. SHOP**Out 14:35**Music The Macarena. In 14:36

1.Wendy Is that a Zumba move as well Carly?

2.Carly Yeah.

3.Rod We just thought you were having a fit Carl!

Out 14:48

SCENE FOURTEEN – INT. SHOP

Music Mambo Number 5. In 14:48

1.Rod Let's get the wigs out?

2.Wendy Rod!

3. Rod Oh come on Wendy!

4.Wendy Well I'm having the blonde!

Out 15:06

SCENE FIFTEEN – INT. SHOP

Music George Michael – Last Christmas.

Wendy is now drunk.

In 15:06

1.Wendy because, you know Rod, that he promised me, once he'd visited the store and was happy – Bells in Heaven. Oh yeah!

2.Rod We know Wend!

3.Wendy Do ya?

4.Rod Yeah.

5.Wendy Well you see Loren - she was just old school – believing in something just because she's been told to. You've got to be more savvy than that – or people take advantage. Rosa should have stayed and made the most of this – pay rises with no one looking over your shoulder.

6.Carly (*shouts*) Okay lads! Who's next under my mistletoe?

Cheers from the lads.

FX The music suddenly goes off.

Out 15:42

7.All Ahhh!

1.Rod Not our power as well!

2.Wendy It's okay, it's okay. We've got a backup generator, I'll...

3.Rod Loren?

Everyone goes quiet.

4.Wendy Loren? You came back, you came back!

5.Loren What have you done?

6.Wendy We're having a party Loren? A Party! Would you like a cheese twirl? (*pause*) Is this your Frank? Hello Frank, welcome to the party! Would you like a cheese stick?

7.Loren Wendy, this is...

8.Mr Bell Hello Wendy. I'm Mr Bell.

9.Wendy Mr Bell? Mr Bell. Right... Mr Bell!!!

10.Mr Bell It's nice to meet you at long last Wendy.

11.Wendy Yes. Yes. You too.

1.Mr Bell But what a shame.

2.Wendy Oh, I can explain, we err...

3.Mr Bell No need.

4.Wendy Loren! Did you...?

5.Mr Bell No, she didn't. I told you I would come Wendy. You weren't the one for Bells in Heaven after all.

6.Wendy But I...

7.Mr Bell I think you'd better leave, don't you.

8.Wendy But how am I going to get home?

Music in: 16:50

Annos.

Music out 17:20