

Marigold Mews

**A farce by
Peter Rolls**

Spotlight Publications

Marigold Mews

CAST (in order of appearance)

Avril Hook, Council worker, a maid-of-all-jobs
Boadicea Briggs (Bo), "Lady of the road", long-term traveller
Clovis Dalrymple, fellow traveller, ex-dancer
Esme Flyte (Ez), poet, passing through
Mrs Froggatt, Councillor, Chair of Arts & Entertainments
Gwendolyn Gish, Community Arts Consultant

Setting - a fence and bare billboard

Time - modern

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Time: early morning

Setting: a run-down back-street

Action takes place on the pavement in front of a derelict corner-site. The set is a fence and bare billboard. Fixed to the fence is the name: Marigold Mews. On the pavement are a couple of shopping trolleys, piles of boxes and clutter. Some boxes conceal the sleeping Bo

Enter Avril, street-sweeper, pushing her broom briskly along near side of the road. Exit Avril. Then she re-enters, pushing broom briskly along middle of road. Exit. Then she re-enters, pushing broom briskly along the gutter. She stoops, picks up a tin and throws it on to a heap of boxes.

Bo *(from her heap)* Oy! Watch it!

Avril Who's that!

Bo *(sits up)* What time is it?

Avril Five to eight.

Bo Five to eight! Where have you been?

Avril I'm sorry. Did you miss your early call? I'll have a word with the concierge.

Bo Don't you come the sarky with me, madam. Look at the state of this place. Disgusting. Those tins ...

Avril Tins are Refuse. I'm on Clutter.

Bo For God's sake! Refuse, clutter ... it's all rubbish! What's the difference?

Avril Do you really want to know? *(Takes book from trolley)* Here we are ... just out ... CRUD.

Bo CRUD!

Avril Council Regulations for Urban Disposals. Euro-compatible. *(Reads from book)* Here we are: "Dusts, dregs, detrituses ...

Bo Yes, yes ...

Avril ... swills, scums and slags..."

Bo Yes, yes.

Avril I don't do any of them. *(Turns pages)* Where I come in is Clutter, miscellaneous. Which includes the Bio-degradable.

Bo Apple cores?

Avril Yes.

Bo You'll want this then. *(Tosses core on the pavement)* Nice bit of Clutter.

Avril *(pushes the core back)* Not if I see you dropping it. Then it's Litter. Which is illegal. Summary fine. *(Reads from the book)* "Litter. Unwanted matter left on path, road or other public space." People are supposed to take it home.

Bo This *is* my home - at the minute.

Avril Where's your bin, then? Homes have bins, bins have homes.

Bo Exactly. Where is my bin?

Avril Have you applied for a bin?

Bo No.

Avril There you are, then. You need Form B-1. Up the Office, odd Mondays.

Bo And that will take care of my Litter, will it?

Avril Unless it's big stuff - the Lumber. Then it's Lou and his lads. Thursdays.

Bo But you do the Small Degradable?

Avril *(gives card)* That's me. Avril Hook, Clutter Consultant. Specialist in Degradables - animal or vegetable ...

Bo *(reads card)* Oh, I wish I'd known. I had a rat died in here the other day. I could have kept him for you.

Avril Rat!

Bo Yes. We was sharing a curry and he just went ... *(snaps fingers)*. Eyes popped - one blood-curdling squeak and he was gone ... you heard it, didn't you, Clo?

Clo Curdling, Bo. *(Does dying rat-squeak)*

Bo Poor little devil. Still, he came in handy. I passed him on to the DSS.

Avril That was you was it? The rat in their letter box?

Bo They're always on about declaring your assets. I thought they'd like to see what shape mine was in.

Avril Well, next time, don't waste it on the DSS. Street clearing is down to the Council. We've all got our targets: 10 points for a rat, 500 for a dog and so on

Bo Insects? *(Stamps her foot on the pavement)*

Avril *(looks down at squashed insect and scrapes it with her foot)* Not really worth it, love. Unless it's a nest. Or a Colorado beetle. They're favourite.

Bo What about humans?

Avril Dead - or alive?

Bo Whichever.

Avril Alive is tricky. But dead is okay. (*Looks at broom-head*) Probably get a new broom out of a decent body. If it had boots.

Bo I'll bear you in mind.

Avril Anyhow, I'll be getting on ... (*makes to leave*)

Bo Oy! (*Points to paving*) You've missed my crevice.

Avril Crevice!

Bo This gap by the bed-head. Look at it. All that fluff and muck. Get that down your tubes and it's good-night Geronimo ... is that what you're after? The dead-body bonus ...?

Avril Okay, okay. (*Brushes vigorously in corner*)

Bo No, it needs a real dig out. (*Grabs at spade*)

Avril Leave that alone! This is technical. City & Guilds, NVQ - the lot. (*Scrapes dirt meticulously*)

Bo (*gets on knees*) You've still missed this bit.

Avril (*scrapes finally*) Is that it, then? Or do you want the complete swilling? Will and his Washer?

Bo No, no. Catch your death on wet slabs.

Avril bustles about, knocking boxes etc.

Hey, mind her ladyship.

Avril Another one of you?

Bo Yes, my mate Clo. She was up half the night for the astral. Checking her conjunctions.

Avril Into that, are you? Mystic moonbeams ... Virgo rampant ...

Bo She does the airy-fairy - stars and auras. I'm more of the down-to-earth. D'you fancy a palm-reading? Rattle a rune or two?

Avril No, I can't stop now. (*Brushes round boxes, knocks some down. Shouts into heap.*) Sorry. (*Peers*) She is okay, is she?

Bo Yes, of course. (*Bangs on nearest box*) All right, aren't you, dear? (*Bangs harder*) Wakey, wakey! This is the Angel of the Dawn!

Avril and Bo pull aside boxes, searching

Her trolley's still here. Where's she gone?

Avril Aliens got her?

Bo Not round here, love. Nor the white slave, neither. They sent her back.

Clo enters and stands unseen at edge of stage

You can see their point. She's not much ...

Clo (*cuts in*) Not much what?

Avril Oh, hello! You're up then.

Clo I've been for the papers. Look at this mess ... (*stacks her boxes*). Where's your civic pride?

Avril My civic pride is getting this street clear.

Bo (*to Clo*) This is Avril. She does the small degradable.

Clo (*sniffs*) Yes, you can tell.

Avril I'll be getting on, then.

Clo (*scrapes paving with foot*) There's chewing gum stuck here.

Avril I only do the gum if it's loose. (*Refers to regulations*) Otherwise, it's Sid and his scrapers. Wednesday mornings. Okay?

She takes empty milk bottles from her cart. Referring to the diagram, she places them on the kerb

Clo What are they for?

Avril Council's idea for brightening things up. Art on the street. Phase One. (*Nudges bottles in line*)

Bo (*looks at bottles*) That's exciting. What happens in Phase Two?

Avril You wait and see ... (*tidies up, then exits*)

Bo (*to Clo*) Waiting! We spend all our time waiting for something or other - getting our minds into gear. But I'm not sure I was ready for arty milk bottles.

Clo It's probably poly-conceptual, Bo. Never mind, have a slab of the soft and dry. (*Gives Bo a pile of newspapers*)

Bo Thanks. (*Sorts pages*) City pages is best. All them fat cats - gives it a bit of plush ... (*settles into paper. She takes out book and reads*)

Clo (*spreads her paper*) Court and Society News ... Lady Clapp is at home for her 64th birthday.

Bo Is she doing a tea?

Clo It doesn't say.

Bo Stingy cow. (*Goes back to book*)

Clo reads paper

Anything in Wills?

Clo Are you expecting?

Bo No, but if I ever see a Biggs, it's worth dropping round. Try the long-lost relation.

Clo Neat idea. The loony gibbering ...

Bo Exactly. Skeleton in the cupboard. *(Reads book)*

Clo What are you reading?

Bo A bit of Beckett. He had skeletons all over. Do you know him?

Clo No, I can't say I do. Isn't he rather - obscure?

Bo Yes, that's what people think. But he's got something, has old Samuel. *(Reads from book jacket)*
"Addresses the eternal human condition - tragic, yet comic." And I go along with that. Mind you, I'm only on page 6.

Clo "Waiting for Godot" ... isn't that the one about ...?

Bo People waiting.

Clo What for?

Bo Exactly.

Clo What do you mean?

Bo What for? That's what he wants us to ask. Mind you ... *(flips on a few pages)* ... he's taking his time about telling. Still, that's life, isn't it?

Clo What?

Bo Takes its time.

Clo Loses its place, Bo.

Bo And that, Clo ...

They lean back, taking their time

Enter Avril, pushing bicycle with sack of leaflets

Avril Morning, ladies.

Bo It's you again.

Avril Juggling the jobs. I'm on tea break for the sweeping and moonlighting for the leaflets.

Bo Leaflets?

Avril Your offers ... double glazing, Spanish holidays ... *(tosses sheaf of leaflets on to Bo's lap)*
Bo *(stuffs leaflets inside clothing)* Thanks, love. You can't beat the double glazing.

Avril *(looks along Mews)* And will you take it for the other lot?

Bo May as well. All empty, of course, but still ...

Avril *(tosses piles of leaflets to Bo and Clo)* Keeps the figures up. Used to be a good post-code round here. They like that.

Bo When we've finished with them, shall we ...?

Avril Against the fence, love. Back on Friday ... Hump it out, hump it in again. Help the targets, eh?
(Hefts sack on to bicycle) Oh, I nearly forgot ... *(takes cans from bag and fills the bottles with red water)*

Bo and Clo watch as she fills the bottles

Bo The tension mounts, eh, Clo?

Clo Tenterhooks, Bo. Agog.

Bo Just as well we're trained in the waiting, eh?

Avril is filling the bottles

Look at that red, Clo. I reckon that's symbolic.

Clo Must be, Bo.

Bo What do you think? Revolution - blood on the streets?

Clo Raspberries, Bo.

Bo Eh? *(Looks)* Yes, you could be right. *(Sniffs)* Or maybe rhubarb. *(To Avril)* What is it, love?

Avril Red ink. *(She exits)*

Bo There you are, Clo - in the red. Typical. Only been on for ten minutes and the whole thing's gone bust.

Clo It's the pin-stripes, Bo. The professionals.

Bo Pirates the lot of them, Clo. Pick you clean.

Bo and Clo resume reading

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Peter Rolls' award-winning play was highly commended in the NDFA one-act playwriting competition 2000.

Plot Summary

Three "ladies of the road" are bedded down in a back-street Mews. Bo reads Beckett, Clo's an ex-dancer, and Ez writes poetry. No longer New Age, not yet old Age, the women clash with authority (street-cleaner, traffic-warden, Councillors *et al*). However, the Community Arts organiser recruits them for the street Festival. The resulting performance has got it all: art, drama, poetry. Like you've never seen before!

Playing time approx. 46 minutes