

The Party Dinner

Written by Elliott Grant

Premise

The Party Dinner is a dark comedy set in an autocratic dystopia, in which Britain is ruled by 'The Party' (lead by the unstable 'Great Leader'). The audience sit, as part of the scene, among the members of The Party, and their staff, at the table of a disastrous dinner party. The Great Leader is poisoned and the other members scramble for control over the situation by any means necessary.

Characters

The Staff

Waiters – Meek, helpful and fearful, they ensure the evening runs as smoothly as possible for all the guests and Party officials. They assist the audience with any difficulties and act as a 'Front of House'.

Guardsmen – Rigid and disciplined, though not particularly loyal, these are the executioners of the Party members whims. They also assist as the tech crew and as stage hands.

Party Members

Rex – A naive and devout loyalist to The Party. Fierce and ignorant, they are the youngest member and the only Party member that strongly believes in The Party's ideals.

Jackson – Charming, friendly but inwardly reserved, in charge of public relations and propaganda artist. They joined The Party to accel their artistic career, despite disagreeing with its politics.

Spencer – An older Party member. Involved in The Party since the beginning. Cynical and calculating. Rivalry with Carter. Both have run The Party since the Great Leaders decline.

Carter – An older Party member. Involved in The Party since the beginning. Cunning and pragmatic. Rivalry with Spencer. Both have run The Party since the Great Leaders decline.

Great Leader – Drunken, temperamental and paranoid, he is well into the throes of a mental decline. Power (and perhaps late stage syphilis) has brought him to the brink of madness.

Costume

Waiters – White shirt, Black trousers, Black bow ties

Guardsmen – Black Shirt w/ Epaulets, Black trousers, Brown chest and waist belt, Black beret, Rounders bat

Rex – Same as Guardsmen

Jackson – Dark suit w/ Bright Corsage

Spencer – Dark suit, Stethoscope

Carter – Dark suit

Great Leader – Dressing gown

Script

Prologue

The Audience, Waiters and Party Members (excluding the Great Leader) mingle outside of the performance space. The Waiters serve appetisers and drinks, as the Party Members socialise and Audience members arrive.

Jackson taps a glass to make a speech and announces:

Jackson Hello Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you so very very much for making it to this rather prestigious meal, it is nice to see that most of you have made an effort to dress up for the occasion. I am Jackson, and I oversee the public relations, among other things, as I'm sure you all know. Before we go in for this wonderful meal, I would like to remind, and perhaps warn you, that there are some very explosive and quite "" Passionate "" individuals at the table tonight, so it is likely that things could get quite violent or upsetting, and I am sure there will be plenty of foul language. If this does not sound like your kind of party, we more than understand and you are welcome to leave.

If there's ever a problem at the table, we ask you to please wave over one of the waiters, in white, and they will help you and/or escort you off the premises if that's requested.

Obviously, I am here to help too, but I may be otherwise occupied.

I believe that the main dish tonight is rather delightful rack of lamb, but I must remind you, as is customary that none of us will be eating until Our Great Leader finishes their meal first.

So, if you'd like to follow me into the great hall and find a seat.

Act I

The Great hall – A rather small, plain looking room that contains a long table covered in a plain red tablecloth. Cutlery is set out on the table at each seat. It is overwhelmingly plain and non-glamorous. At the head of the table is an empty chair with two Guardsmen either side. Guardsmen are also watching over the exits and checking people for weapons. The audience are brought to their seats by waiters. All are present except for Great Leader.

There is a silence.

Rex What do you think this is all about?

Spencer It's a bloody PR stunt. Get's him looking like he's 'one with the people'

Rex I don't think there's any doubt about that

Spencer Get him schmoosing with the proles

Jackson Excuse me? They can hear, Spencer.

Spencer You know what I mean. Not proles, but, you know, not government. Grass roots.

Carter It's hardly 'Grass roots' these are the bloody upper echelons here. Proles wouldn't make it past the guards.

Spencer I know. You know I bloody know. But I mean people see other people with him, or at least hear about it, and they eat that shit up. Especially when it's in the papers.

Rex This is going to be in the papers?

Spencer Of course it fucking is. Whether this happens or not it's going to be in the papers. 'Great Leader is hero of the people. Still. Look how he eats like one of you.'

Carter For now

Rex Forever

Carter He's eaten before, why can't they just use that image again? Doctor it a bit.

Spencer You tell me, that's your department.

Jackson I proposed this meal. And, actually, that's more my department, thank you Spencer. It's been a while since his last appearance and so I thought it was worth doing it again. Word of mouth spreads. Plus, we've just finished clearing up all the fallout from last time.

Rex There were bombs?

Jackson No, the aftermath. The bribing families and what not after the last public appearance.

Spencer I didn't know we bribed. I just thought we threatened.

Carter It's a new development. Trial period. They're two sides of the same coin.

The two Guardsmen by the chair exit

Spencer How very retro. God. Couldn't you have picked somewhere nicer Jackson? The tables are bland, the chairs are cheap and it's too hot.

Carter Even the cutlery is shit

Jackson It's-

Rex It is not shit. It is reliable, high grade, functional and British made.

Spencer Is Rex doing poetry now? Watch out Jackson he's after your job.

Rex This is unpatriotic slander. You're lucky I don't report you.

Carter To who? Me?

Spencer A taste for the arts, eh?

Carter This young dog is learning new tricks.

Jackson Carter

Rex Old dogs die in the street.

Pause

Spencer What a put down

Jackson Oh shut up.

Spencer You're all bark.

Jackson Wait and see.

The Lights go out – Power cut

Spencer Oh for fuck sake. Fucking typical.

Carter It's a power cut.

Spencer Well no shit. No wonder he put you in charge of fucking intelligence

Rex We need to dedicate our country's power to the projects that better our future. Not just the future of this Great Nation, but the future of this Great Earth.

Carter What a load of shit

Jackson Hey! I wrote that.

Rex You didn't. It was in the paper.

Spencer Who do you think bloody put it there?

Jackson Don't worry, the power will be back on soon.

Carter Why do you say that like it doesn't happen five times a day?

Jackson For our guests. They might be tourists.

Carter No they're not. They can't be. You know the laws.

The lights come back on

Spencer Sometimes makes you wish they didn't privatise the National Grid

Rex That was for the benefit of this nation. Besides, we'd run out of power if it was on all the time.

Spencer Did you write that one too?

Jackson No Spencer, he came up with that one all one his own.

A guardsman leans over to whisper in Jacksons ear.

The full script is available on request by contacting Elliott Grant at ietheatreproductions@gmail.com or via www.ietheatre.co.uk