

VACANT

Written by

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VACANT

OPENING TITLES:

OVERHEAD SHOT OF AN EMPTY SCRABBLE BOARD.

A MALE HAND PLACES THE LETTER V ON THE MIDDLE STARTING ROW,

FOLLOWED BY A, C, A, N

FINALLY THE T IS PLACED... BUT IT IS UPSIDE DOWN.

A FEMALE HAND TURNS THE T THE RIGHT WAY AROUND.

THE TILES READ - V A C A N T

CUT TO C/U OF SARAH AND MARTIN'S FACES, BOTH WITH BLANK/BORED EXPRESSIONS

FADE TO WHITE TEXT ON A BLACK

*Vacant - Definition*

*(1) not occupied; empty*

SLIGHT PAUSE

*(2) having or showing no intelligence or interest*

CUT BACK TO MARTIN AND SARAH'S FACES. THEY OCCASIONALLY NOD OR SMILE BUT THEIR GAZES ARE GLAZED. THEIR EYES DRIFT TO THE CLOCK ON THE WALL WHICH SHOWS 9.24AM

CUT TO A DULL BUTTONED-UP MAN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE. HE IS IN HIS MID TWENTIES, WHO LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE YOU'D AVOID GETTING INTO A CONVERSATION WITH. HE IS TALKING NON-STOP.

THE SOUND FADES UP, HE IS ASKING A VOLLEY OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AVAILABLE ROOM (BILLS, STORAGE NEIGHBOURS)

SARAH AND MARTIN STUDY THEIR SCRABBLE LETTERS, WORKING OUT WHAT LETTERS TO PUT DOWN.

PAUSE

CHATTY GUY:

So are you guys a couple then?

SARAH:

(QUICKLY AND SLIGHTLY DISGUSTED)

God no!

MARTIN THROWS SARAH AN AFFRONTED LOOK

CHATTY GUY:

(GRINNING INANELY AND LOOKING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER) Oh I seem to have touched a nerve.

AWKWARD PAUSE

SARAH:

(ABRUPTLY) Any final questions?

CHATTY GUY:

When will I know about a moving in date?

MARTIN:

We've got lot more people to see today.

CHATTY GUY:

I need to take another look at the room.

MARTIN:

Another look? For a third time?

SARAH POINTS UP AT THE CLOCK AND SHAKES HER HEAD NO.

CHATTY GUY:

(TAKING OUT A TAPE MEASURE) I need  
to take measurements.

SARAH:

No time.

MARTIN:

Measurements for..?

CHATTY GUY:

(AS IF IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS) My  
tanks.

MARTIN:

Your..?

CHATTY GUY:

My tanks (A BEAT) You wouldn't want  
lizards wandering about the house  
(GRINS) Although they are  
surprisingly sociable creatures..

SARAH AND MARTIN SHARE AN INCREDULOUS LOOK.

SARAH: (SUDDENLY WITH ENTHUSIASM)

Tedious.

MARTIN GIVES SARAH A SURPRISED BUT AMUSED LOOK. CHATTY GUY  
NOW LOOKS AFFRONTED, HE TURNS FROM SARAH TO MARTIN WITH A  
CONFUSED AND SLIGHTLY HURT LOOK

CUT TO SARAH'S HAND PUTTING DOWN HER SCRABBLE LETTERS TO  
SPELL OUT THE WORD: T E D I O U S

SARAH LOOKS UP IN TRIUMPH, MARTIN NODS HIS APPROVAL, CHATTY  
GUY SMILES UNCERTAINLY.

MARTIN:

Tedious (WRITES SARAH'S SCORE ON A  
SCRAP OF PAPER) Very good.

THERE IS TENTATIVE KNOCKING FROM THE FRONT DOOR UPSTAIRS

END OF SCENE - BLACKOUT

FADE INTO A MOROSE LOOKING WOMAN IN HER 30s, SHE IS STARING  
AT THE TABLE RATHER THAN ENGAGING IN EYE CONTACT.

MARTIN IS HOLDING HIS HEAD WITH HIS HAND, SARAH'S EYES FLIT  
BETWEEN THE CLOCK AND THE VISITOR. THE CLOCK TIME READS 9.51  
AM

SARAH:

Soooo (STRUGGLING FOR WORDS) Did  
you like the room?

PAUSE

MOROSE WOMAN:

Yes.

MARTIN AND SARAH LOOK AT THE VISITOR EXPECTING MORE - BUT  
THAT'S IT

MARTIN:

(TRYING TO GET MORE) Anything in  
particular you liked about it?

MOROSE WOMAN:

(WORDS COME OUT SLOWLY) No, I just  
liked it.

AGAIN MARTIN AND SARAH ARE EXPECTING MORE - BUT SHE'S DONE

SARAH AND MARTIN GLANCE BETWEEN MOROSE WOMAN AND THE CLOCK.  
THE CLOCK HANDS SEEM TO BE MOVING SLOWLY, ALMOST IN SLOW  
MOTION.

SARAH:

(SLIGHT DESPERATION IN HER VOICE)  
Did you want to see the room again?  
Maybe the garden?

MOROSE WOMAN SHAKES HER HEAD AND THERE IS A DRAWN OUT SILENCE

MARTIN:

(SUDDENLY) Well if there's nothing  
else..

MOROSE WOMAN DOESN'T SEEM TO TWIG THAT THIS IS HER CUE TO  
LEAVE

MARTIN: (CONT'D)

Our next appointment is due about  
now.

MOROSE WOMAN:

My viewing is until 10, it's 9.52

MARTIN AND SARAH BOTH TURN TO THE CLOCK, IT IS INDEED 9.52

SARAH:

(TO MARTIN) Did you change the  
batteries in the clock?

MARTIN:

It does seem to be running very  
slow.

AGAIN THEY SIT IN SILENCE ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOUND OF THE  
CLOCK'S SECOND HAND SLOWLY TURNING AND TICKING EVER LOUDER.

MOROSE WOMAN:

I have a question.

SARAH:

Oh great.

MARTIN AND SARAH LEAN FORWARD, GLAD THAT THE SILENCE HAS BEEN  
BROKEN

MOROSE WOMAN:

Are you a couple?

SARAH/MARTIN: (TOGETHER)

No!

SARAH AND MARTIN IMMEDIATELY SIT BACK AND THE SILENCE  
RESUMES.

MARTIN LOOKS AT HIS SCRABBLE LETTERS HE HAS. UNDER THE T ON  
THE BOARD HE PUTS DOWN; O R P I D

SARAH:

Torpid? What's it mean?

MARTIN:

Inactive; lethargic.

SARAH:

(NODS KNOWINGLY) Ah I see.

THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, SARAH AND MARTIN ARE OUT OF  
THEIR CHAIRS INSTANTLY

SARAH: (CONT'D)

Oh they're here early (OVER  
EAGERLY) Well thanks for coming.

MARTIN:

We'll let you know.

FADE OUT

FADE IN - CUT TO A QUICK MONTAGE OF ODDBALL POTENTIAL HOUSEMATES, THE SCRABBLE BOARD HAS MORE AND MORE WORDS ON IT, THERE ARE SHOTS OF THE CLOCK MOVING FORWARD IN TIME. WE SEE MARTIN AND SARAH WHO LOOK LIKE THEY HAVE LOST THE WILL TO LIVE AS THE INTERVIEWS CONTINUE

FADE OUT

FADE IN - MARTIN IS LEANING FORWARD AND IS VERY ENGAGED. HE HAS A PUPPY-LIKE ENERGY TO HIM. SARAH IS LOOKING AT HIM WITH AMUSED CONTEMPT

MARTIN: (TO THE UNSEEN VISITOR)  
(CONT'D)

Oh I think they're hugely underrated.

CUT TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE, AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN IN HER LATE TWENTIES

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN: (BUBBLY)  
I know right! You really need to see them live.

MARTIN:  
Don't tell me you've seen them live?!

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:  
Three times!

MARTIN:  
Wow! I am sooo jealous.

SARAH CANNOT HELP LAUGHING OUT LOUD

SARAH:  
You hate Coldplay.



MARTIN: (RAISING HIS EYEBROWS)

She doesn't like them, Sarah's into all this weird stuff.

SARAH: (SMIRKING)

It's true I'm not as big a Coldplay fan as Martin.

PAUSE

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

You know I'd love to explore Bristol, I don't really know it that well. Be amazing to get to know the cool places.

MARTIN: (OVER EAGER)

I could show you! (UNSURE) Only if you want to that is.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

That'd be amazing.

MARTIN CANNOT HELP BUT SMILE DREAMILY

MARTIN:

I think you'd be a great fit!

SARAH:

We've still got lots of other people to see yet.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

I'm definitely keen.

MARTIN:

Me too.

SILENCE

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

You guys a couple?

MARTIN:

Oh god no!

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

Oh sorry (A BEAT) I was thinking we could have double dated?

MARTIN:

Double dated?

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

Me and my boyfriend Frank love eating out, it'd be cool to do it with another couple.

SARAH SUPPRESSES LAUGHTER

SARAH: (HINT OF IRONY)

Oh that would have been lovely.

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN:

Frank's looking for a place too at the moment, so he'd occasionally stay over (A BEAT) I Hope that's ok?

SARAH:

I can't see a problem with that, can you Martin?

THE WIND HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF MARTIN'S SAILS

MARTIN: (FLATLY)

Terrific.

SARAH PICKS UP ONE OF HER SCRABBLE LETTERS AND ADDS D ONTO THE END OF D E F L A T E TO SPELL D E F L A T E D

SARAH:

Deflated.

SLIGHT PAUSE

MARTIN:

Yeah I didn't spot that (FORLORNLY)  
Seems obvious now though.

MARTIN WRITES THE SCORE ON THE PIECE OF PAPER

FACE OUT

FADE IN - ANOTHER VERY QUICK MONTAGE OF MORE PROSPECTIVE HOUSEMATES. THE CLOCK HAND SPINS FROM AFTERNOON TO EVENING

FADE OUT

FADE IN - FINAL CANDIDATE, EARLY 30s MALE, NORMAL LOOKING, HE TAKES THE SEAT AT THE TABLE, CUT TO MARTIN AND SARAH, SARAH'S HEAD IS SLUMPED ON THE TABLE, SHE WAKES WITH A START, SHE HAS A SCRABBLE LETTER STUCK TO HER HEAD

LAST GUY:

You've a W on your forehead.

SHE PEELS IT OFF AND PUTS IT WITH HER REMAINING LETTERS, BOTH ONLY HAVE TWO SCRABBLE TILES EACH REMAINING

LAST GUY: (CONT'D)

Long day?

SARAH: (SLIGHTLY SHELL-SHOCKED)

Oh yes.

LAST GUY:

Am I your last?

SARAH:

Oh yes.

MARTIN: (NO ENTHUSIASM)

Shall I show you the room?

LAST GUY:

You've just shown it to me.

MARTIN:

Did I?

MARTIN AND SARAH ARE STRUGGLING TO ENGAGE

SARAH:

You work in accounting right?

LAST GUY:

Teaching.

SARAH:

Yes you did say.

SILENCE - MARTIN AND SARAH CAN'T HELP BUT LOOK AT THE CLOCK

LAST GUY:

Its late I'll leave you to it.

MARTIN:

Any questions or anything?

LAST GUY THINKS

LAST GUY:

Just one.

SARAH: (QUICKLY)

No we're not a couple.

LAST GUY:

I assumed you weren't (LOOKS AT THE SCRABBLE BOARD) I just wondered what word you were going to put down for me?

SHOT OF THE SCRABBLE WITH LOTS OF DEROGATORY WORDS ABOUT PREVIOUS INTERVIEWEES, THEY BOTH LOOK SLIGHTLY SHEEPISH

MARTIN:

We've run out of words.

LAST GUY GETS UP TO GO BUT SITS BACK DOWN

LAST GUY:

I've been sat on your side and it's bleak. It's nowhere near as bleak as this side though, believe me,

A room comes up (CLICKS HIS FINGERS) Seconds later it's gone.

And if I do get a viewing I'm shown around by a 12 year in a suit, who claims to be a letting agent.

He's showing me a room we can barely squeeze into at the same time. But he's still keen to remind me just how lucky I am to be looking around whatever shit-hole we're in.

Oh and the people I've met.. God the people I've met!

(MORE)

LAST GUY: (CONT'D)

The Woman with 12 cats, the  
inappropriate middle-aged couple,  
the guy with a collection of  
hunting knives in a display case..  
I could go on.. So believe or not  
this is a step up.

So here we are then, none of us  
wanting to be here. Thanks for your  
time though.

SILENCE - LAST GUY LOOKS DOWN AT THE SCRABBLE

LAST GUY: (POINTS TO BOARD) (CONT'D)

Can I?

MARTIN:

Sure.

SARAH AND MARTIN SLIDE OVER THEIR LAST REMAINING SCRABBLE  
TILES. SLIGHT PAUSE AND LAST GUY PUTS THE LETTERS W H I N IN  
FRONT OF AN E TO SPELL W H I N G E

LAST GUY:

Seems to fit.

SARAH LOOKS AT THE BOARD, SHE LEANS OVER TO TAKE AWAY THE H  
AND THE G, NOW SPELLS W I N E

SARAH:

Wine.

LAST GUY LOOKS A LITTLE CONFUSED

MARTIN: (TO LAST GUY)

You want some?

SLIGHT PAUSE

LAST GUY: (SMILES)

Yes I would.

MARTIN GETS UP TO GET THE WINE, SARAH PICKS UP THE BOARD AND  
POURS THE LETTERS INTO THE SCRABBLE TILE BAG.

CLOSE UP OF THE EMPTY BOARD - FADE OUT

THE END