

Marina Carr

**WOMAN AND
SCARECROW**



Gallery Books

Characters

WOMAN
SCARECROW
HIM
AUNTIE AH
THE THING IN THE WARDROBE

Set

A bed. A chair. A wardrobe. A CD player.

Time

The present.

Woman and Scarecrow was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, Sloane Square, London, on Friday, 16 June 2006, with the following cast:

WOMAN	<i>Fiona Shaw</i>
SCARECROW	<i>Brid Brennan</i>
HIM	<i>Peter Gowan</i>
AUNTIE AH	<i>Stella McCusker</i>

<i>Director</i>	<i>Ramin Gray</i>
<i>Designer</i>	<i>Lizzie Clachan</i>
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	<i>Mischa Twitchin</i>
<i>Sound Designer</i>	<i>Emma Laxton</i>

ACT ONE

WOMAN *lies in bed, gaunt and ill.* SCARECROW *watches her.*

WOMAN I ran west to die.
SCARECROW You ran south — and you didn't run, you crawled.
WOMAN I ran west. West. Why would I go south?
SCARECROW You got lost.
WOMAN I thought you were the navigator.
SCARECROW He found you under a bronze statue of a man with his arm pointing out to sea.
WOMAN Did he? . . . Oh yes, and his eyes fixed beyond the horizon and I remember thinking before I passed out, if I can't see the horizon myself at least I'm near something that can. Why didn't you help me get back west?
SCARECROW We're not cowboys.
WOMAN I started out west. I'd like to finish there.
SCARECROW When you could've gone west you refused.
WOMAN No, listen to me. If I could get across the Shannon once more maybe the air would perform some kind of miracle . . . I might live.
SCARECROW You think crossing the Shannon is all it takes? Once perhaps, long ago, that would've been the thing to do.
WOMAN What you asked was impossible at the time.
SCARECROW I would've looked after you. The world would have looked after you. I was getting used to it here. I'm only settling in and now you're going to cart me off with you.
WOMAN Suppose we headed west, for good this time. Let's get up and walk. One foot in front of the other till we reach the river.
SCARECROW Walking is no longer an option. He's waiting in

the wardrobe. Can't you hear him sucking his oily black wings?

WOMAN In the wardrobe? In *my* wardrobe?

SCARECROW He moved in while you were away. Do you want to meet him?

WOMAN No. Good God, no. He's not really here? Tell him to go away.

SCARECROW goes to wardrobe. Opens door.

SCARECROW Go away . . . please.

A muffled laugh from wardrobe. A deep-throated guffaw.

Yes, I understand this is all in a day's work for you. You find us amusing but this is her wardrobe and she requests your departure from it.

*An angry outburst of growls and glottals.
SCARECROW backs away. Closes door timidly.*

WOMAN Is he gone?

SCARECROW Of course he's not gone, and don't annoy him anymore or he'll take you right now.

WOMAN But I'm not ready.

SCARECROW You think all the dead were ready? (*Whispers*) That thing will eat you alive. He doesn't care. I've seen him in action. He's in there now making a bracelet out of infant ankle bones.

WOMAN He has taken enough of mine before their time. I thought my tribe were due a break.

SCARECROW It seems not. (*Looks out*) The clouds are so beautiful today. Why doesn't everyone just look at the clouds? It should be a law like paying taxes, the clouds passing, everything is there, every shape that can be imagined, there's one going by, wings of a bird, torso of a man, gaping mouth, triangle

eyes, looking for all the world like it could eat the world. You did not eat the world.

WOMAN I barely tasted it.

SCARECROW And what did it taste of?

WOMAN Put on some music to drown that fella in the wardrobe out.

SCARECROW What do you want to hear?

WOMAN Demis Roussos.

SCARECROW No way. Not again.

WOMAN Just do as I say.

SCARECROW All my life I've been doing as you say and look where it's landed us.

WOMAN What about the twins' lunches? Did someone buy bread? Cartons of juice? Who is making the lunches?

SCARECROW We're beyond making lunches.

WOMAN I wonder did Toby bother bringing home his lunchbox. I'm blue in the face telling him, and who is washing the uniforms? I have to stay on top of the uniforms.

SCARECROW The time for washing uniforms is past.

WOMAN And Hal won't do his homework. Hal can't even read yet. I have to do his reading with him. I have no business lying here. Who is going to make the sandwiches? . . . This is all thanks to you . . . their little backs . . . their little necks . . . if you'd just put on Demis Roussos.

SCARECROW All your problems would be solved.

WOMAN And what exactly are your objections to Demis Roussos?

SCARECROW Where to start.

WOMAN He's sentimental I know, and the dentist on the 28th. Who will remember that? And Aoife, she's such a slob. She'll never get to university if I don't sit on her for the next six months. Who is studying with Aoife? And Tom is somewhere in Asia. Did Tom ring? Does he know I am going? Did anyone bother to tell him? Tom, oh Tom, my blackhaired baby. No one congratulated me when

you were born. No one. That's why he's trying to climb Everest. Can no one contact him? Put on the music. I'm asking you nicely . . . If you don't put him on I'll . . . I'll . . . I'll . . . (*Looks around desperately*)

SCARECROW You'll what? . . . What'll you do?

WOMAN I'll stop breathing! This second!

SCARECROW Go on! Stop! Let me see you stop breathing! Remember him in there. Go on! Stop!

WOMAN I'm not playing with you. I'm going to count to three. If by three I don't hear 'My Friend the Wind' blasting off the CD I'm going to put an end to it all. (*Counts ominously*) One . . . two . . . three.

SCARECROW stands there defiantly.

Right! That's it! Goodbye, you vicious parasite that's led me a crazy dance. Barking orders to kingdom come. All that unnecessary guilt. All those sly commands. All that wrong advice! All that metaphysical claptrap. Goodbye and good riddance, you stinking old turkey box!

WOMAN refuses to breathe. Things are calm for a while as they eyeball one another. Then both start to go red in the face. Then WOMAN starts thrashing around. SCARECROW clutches her throat, doubled over. They both fight it a while, both refusing to give in. Eventually SCARECROW reels towards CD player and struggles to put on Demis Roussos. WOMAN is now catatonic, oblivious until she hears 'My Friend the Wind' or 'Ever and Ever' blasting out. She inhales violently as soon as she hears music. Smiles triumphantly. Croons softly as SCARECROW falls on floor panting. WOMAN raises a fragile hand and conducts the music.

Now . . . that's all I wanted . . . I spoke to a chef

once at a party . . . what's this his name was? . . . very boring . . . no, not boring . . . very calm . . . still . . . odd . . . like most away from the thing they know . . . anyway it turned out he had cooked for Demis Roussos once. The man ate nine lobsters in one sitting. That's what I call passion for living. A man who can eat nine lobsters, well there's no stopping him, is there?

Silence from SCARECROW who lies on the floor fuming.

Is there?

Silence.

Thick, are we? Thick as a brick? I warned you.

SCARECROW You nearly took us to the blue beyond is what you did.

WOMAN Now you know who's boss. I love this. This is great. Gets me churning. (*Shouts over the music*) I was meant for someone of Demis Roussos' magnitude. Someone who can devour nine lobsters as an appetizer. You can hear the lobsters in his voice. Floor of the sea stuff. Greek sea stuff. Written off by snobs like you.

SCARECROW This has been your problem all along.

WOMAN (*Shouts*) What?

SCARECROW All this gush. All this hugeness.

WOMAN Speak up!

SCARECROW (*Shouts*) All these passions and nothing, nothing back of them!

WOMAN So I'm not cold and articulate like you. I have no reserve. No restraint. No, what do they call it? . . . that awful quality they rate so highly these days?

SCARECROW Subtlety?

WOMAN Yes, that, I have none of that. What else do I lack?

SCARECROW An eternal sense.

WOMAN That's right. I can't even see tomorrow.