

# **The First Move**

(A short play)

By Christine Williamson

Contact:  
Christine Williamson  
2710 Rt. 25A  
Orford, NH 03777  
(603) 558-0999  
Mossflower@fastmail.fm  
www.moonsongstudios.com



Member

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### **Synopsis**

A short comedy about how our fears of imposing and looking foolish contribute to social isolation, despite the common human wish for contact and social interaction.

### **Characters**

ONE	Mildly curious, but unwilling to impose on strangers.
TWO	Lives with ONE. Practical and incurious.
THREE	Looking for company, but afraid of looking foolish.
FOUR	Lives with THREE. Practical. Not ambitious.

### **Setting**

A reversible living room that starts off belonging to ONE & TWO. After reversing, it belongs to THREE & FOUR.

### **Time**

Any Time Period. Mid-afternoon. Tea Time.

### **Minimal Setting Options**

This piece could be performed black box, but the major props pieces should be used.

Approximate Running Time: 8-10 minutes

*(Lighting/Sound: Lights up, revealing the interior of a modest living room. ONE stands by a window, peering curiously out, while TWO sits in an armchair nearby, reading a book. From time to time ONE glances at TWO, seeming troubled. TWO reads quietly, not acknowledging ONE's looks.*

*Finally...)*

ONE

Who do you think that shadow is?

TWO

The shadow?

ONE

Yes, the shadow.

TWO

Oh. Well, I expect it's a neighbor.

ONE

Of course it's a neighbor.

TWO

Well... Who are our neighbors?

ONE

I don't know. I never actually meet any of them.

TWO

Maybe you should.

ONE

You think so?

TWO

Can't do any harm.

ONE

I wouldn't want to intrude.

TWO

Well...

ONE

I don't want to bother anyone.

TWO

That's it, then...

ONE

...

TWO

...

ONE

Why do think they're waving like that?

TWO

What?

ONE

They're always waving.

TWO

Maybe they're trying to get your attention.

ONE

You think so?

TWO

Why not?

ONE

They could be waving to someone else.

TWO

They could.

ONE

Someone they know.

TWO

...

ONE

I'm only saying...

TWO

Right.

ONE

No. It can't possibly be me. I don't know them.

TWO

Maybe they noticed you staring all the time.

ONE

No, I don't think so. They're behind a curtain.

TWO

What?

ONE

A curtain. They're behind one. Can't possibly see me.

TWO

Then how do you know they're waving?

ONE

Well, they're all...

*(Waves arms.)*

With a light behind them. See? Casts a shadow...

TWO

How very odd.

ONE

That's what I thought. Want to see?

TWO

No, no. I'm fine. I'll take your word on it.

ONE

Your very blasé about it.

TWO

Well, it's not the first time.

ONE

What?

TWO

We do this every day. Every day we talk about the curtain. And the waving. And the shadows.

ONE

We do, don't we?

TWO

And every day I sit here with my book.

ONE

...

TWO

...

ONE

...It's not the same book.

TWO

No. ...But it's still mine.

ONE

Touché.

TWO

Indeed.

ONE

You always take my word for it. You've never actually looked.

TWO

No.

ONE

Aren't you even a little curious?

TWO

...

ONE

It's only a question.

TWO

And where would curious get me?

ONE

...

TWO

I don't see you running off for answers. Much less finding any.

ONE

True...

TWO

What's the point in being curious if I don't intend to do anything about it? No point. Waste of energy.

ONE

Indeed. Waste of energy...

*(Stares out window thoughtfully.)*

...

Well...

What time is it?

TWO

*(Checks watch.)*

3 o'clock.

ONE

Oh, good. I'll put the kettle on.

*Exit ONE.*

*Scene Shifts*

*(Sound/Lighting: Stage dims as TWO reverses the living room, moving the armchair and the window so that they're now opposite their former positions.)*

*Exit TWO*

*Enter FOUR, carrying a tall floor lamp.*

FOUR

*(Sets lamp near window and plugs it in. Sits and begins reading.)*

*Enter THREE, carrying a curtain rod with curtains.*

THREE

*(Puts up curtain rod. Adjusts curtains. Turns on lamp. Adjusts lamp.)*

*(Sound/Lighting: Lighting returns to normal.)*

THREE

*(Stands by the window, waving, making sure the shadow is cast properly. From time to time, glances at FOUR. Peeks timidly around the curtain's edge. Quickly draws back, still waving. FOUR ignores THREE's actions.*

*Finally...)*

THREE

*(Still waving.)*

Do you think they'll ever come round for tea?

FOUR

What?

THREE

Tea. Do you think they'll come?

FOUR

Who?

THREE

The person at the window.

FOUR

The one that's always staring?

THREE

Yes.

FOUR

Oh, I don't think so.

THREE

No?

FOUR

They haven't yet, have they?

THREE

No.

FOUR

And you've been waving, how long?

THREE

Ages. Days, weeks. I don't know.

FOUR

That's it, then.

THREE

But they see me. At least, I think they see me. They must be curious...

FOUR

Perhaps they don't realize it's an invitation.

THREE

What?

FOUR

Maybe if you tried pushing the curtain aside. And mouthing words at them.



THREE

I couldn't possibly! They might be looking at someone else. I'd feel horribly silly, interrupting someone else's conversation like that. I'd look a right fool.

FOUR

You look a right fool now.

THREE

Yes. But they don't know it's me. And they won't, until they come over. But when they come over, we'll become friends. And what's a fool among friends?

FOUR

...

THREE

It's a joke, isn't it? And we'll have a laugh. And everything'll be grand. But, in the meantime, we must protect appearances.

FOUR

Ah, yes. Appearances.

*(Sound/Lighting: Sound of a kettle whistling.)*

FOUR

I'll bring the tea.

*Exit FOUR*

THREE

They'll come over, today. You'll see.

*(Continues waving and peeking as...*

*(Sound/Lighting: Fade to black.)*

*FINIS*