

TRAITOR AT THE BEECHES

A comedy drama by

Kathy Reid

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CHARACTERS

Colonel Howard Resident of Room 1 who after his experience of war is commanding, instructive with still a lot of fight in him.

Walker Resident of Room 2 who knows everything and everybody and is always in the middle of a deal.

Iris Resident of Room 4 who is intelligent and private with a love of words and crosswords.

Cassandra Aka Woo Woo. Resident of Room 5 who is colourful, larger than life and spiritually connected.

Pearl Resident of Room 3 who is new to the home having just moved from LA and is flamboyant and stylish.

Flora New housekeeper at the home. Hardworking, nosy and bossy.

Dora New housekeeper at the home. Hardworking and seemingly not as intelligent as her colleague and longtime friend.

The first performance of Traitor at the Beeches was given on 30th April 2026 by Twyford Drama at Loddon Hall, Twyford with the following cast:

Colonel Howard David Tanqueray

Walker Marc Reid

Iris Sally Gillard

Cassandra Jocelyn Robinson

Pearl Ruth Clement

Flora Diana Lavery

Dora Viv Williamson

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Forest Lounge of the Residential Home of Beeches Manor which is grand but faded and rather shabbily furnished with a portrait of Lord John Cornwallis on the wall. Double doors open onto the hall and the opposite door opens onto the kitchen. Cassandra wafts around the room. Walker and Colonel sit in their usual seats.

WALKER Pull the other one. *(to Cassandra)* 'E's yankin' our chain.

COLONEL It is here in black and white, dear chap.

WALKER An 'Ollywood film about us? No way.

COLONEL It's called Enigma. Look!

WALKER Cobblers!

CASSANDRA Walker it's true and it'll be very successful. Enigma's energy is very strong.

COLONEL Surprising they've waited so long to make a film about us. We are fascinating after all.

WALKER *(to Cassandra)* You're fascinatin', but not 'im.

COLONEL Beg your pardon.

WALKER You 'eard.

COLONEL If there weren't ladies present, I'd....

CASSANDRA What does the article say Colonel?

COLONEL Moment's passed dear Woo Woo.

WALKER *(to Cassandra)* 'Es the one who's passed it!

Colonel throws a pen at Walker.

COLONEL Take that as your second and final warning Walker.

CASSANDRA Gentlemen please! The day's barely begun and you're fighting like two bears in a bar room brawl.

Colonel looks at his impressive watch.

COLONEL It is precisely nine fifty eight am on Tuesday, first of May 2001. Nearly mid morning Woo Woo and this is Beeches Manor Residential Home not your local boozer.

WALKER Love a pint.

COLONEL Coffee will have to do. Two minutes to go. Let's see if they're on time for a change.

CASSANDRA Be kind Colonel.

Colonel harrumphs.

CASSANDRA It's only their second week.

COLONEL No excuse. Punctuality makes perfect.

WALKER *(aside)* Always thought punctuality was for those who have nothin' better to do than think about punctuality.

COLONEL What?

WALKER Nothin'. *(under breath)* Better to do. You're goin' deaf in your old age.

COLONEL Deaf! I'm not deaf. I've got ears like a bat.

Walker mouths words but says nothing which Cassandra knows.

COLONEL How dare you, my hearing is as good as it was...

Walker and Cassandra laugh.

CASSANDRA Walker didn't say anything Colonel. It was a trick.

Colonel stands in front of Walker and rolls up a newspaper to act as a sword.

COLONEL I challenge you to a duel.

Walker faces up to him having also picked up a 'sword'.

WALKER As you like.

CASSANDRA Stop!

COLONEL Only sparring Woo Woo.

CASSANDRA I smell treachery in the air.

Walker halts the fighting and smells Colonel.

WALKER Not me. It's 'im.

COLONEL How dare you. En garde.

Colonel and Walker carry on 'sword' fighting.

CASSANDRA Something rotten is brewing.

Unseen Cassandra collapses into a chair into a strange position.

COLONEL Not the coffee! Yesterday's tasted like boiled grass. Those newbies haven't a clue...

Colonel's attention has wandered. Walker lands a winning lunge.

WALKER I win.

COLONEL Unfair. I wasn't concentrating.

WALKER Too bad.

COLONEL Doesn't count. You agree don't you Woo Woo?

Colonel can't see Cassandra and then spots her on the chair.

COLONEL Cassandra! Was it a vision? What did you see?

WALKER Don't say "two old men lookin' down on me".

CASSANDRA Evil. Don't like this. Need a coffee. Is it time?

The duel is forgotten.

COLONEL It's precisely ten o'clock and they're still not here. That classifies as late in my book.

Colonel storms towards the kitchen door and is stopped by Walker.

WALKER My stomach says they're late. It's feelin' a bit peckish.

COLONEL Isn't it always?

Walker goes to fight again and then stops.

WALKER How dare...? No, I'll concede that one. I can always manage a biscuit especially a buttery shortbread covered in thick chocolate.

Colonel looks at his watch again.

COLONEL Insufferable. I'm going in.

CASSANDRA *(to Colonel loudly)* Remember, Flora and Dora are housekeeping as a favour to Lady C. Nobody knew that she'd end up in hospital, that Helen and Roger would leave us and that the agency would let us down.

WALKER *(joking)* And 'ere's us believin' you're psychic!

CASSANDRA I'm not perfect.

Walker points at Colonel.

WALKER None of us are.

Colonel points at Walker

COLONEL Some of us get closer than others. As I say and have said before...

WALKER ...Many times.

COLONEL Punctuality makes perfect. We need coffee, now!

Comic entrance by Flora and Dora who enter backwards making a performance of carrying trays with coffee cups and biscuits and placing them on a table.

FLORA Here's your bloomin' coffee Colonel.

DORA We're bang on ten your Lordship.

COLONEL What did you call me?

DORA *(bowing)* Your Lordship.

Silence.

DORA What did I say Flo?

FLORA Beats me Do.

CASSANDRA You weren't to know.

FLO/DO Know what?

Colonel stands and indignantly points at Lord John's portrait.

COLONEL There is and will only ever be one Lordship in Beeches Manor.

Colonel turns to face the portrait, his arm across his chest. Walker and Cassandra stand and do the same. They all bow their heads.

COLONEL To The Boss.

ALL The Boss.

COLONEL Our leader, mentor and inspiration during the darkest of times.

CASSANDRA The kindest of men.

WALKER And the brightest. A code breaking legend.

DORA I was only joking.

This is met with stony faces.

FLORA We beg your very pardon.

DORA And so do I.

FLORA Didn't mean to offend I'm sure.

DORA No fences here.

CASSANDRA Is that our coffee?

Dora looks confused and can't find the tray which is sat on a table behind Flora.

DORA Coffee? Now where did I put that tray?

FLORA It's here Do.

DORA So I came into the room and crossed like this so it must be...

FLORA Here Do.

DORA Why didn't you tell me?

FLORA Did.

DORA Didn't.

FLORA Did.

Colonel coughs loudly and Flora and Dora remember themselves and try to laugh off their behaviour.

FLORA Oh my, apologies, you must be wanting your coffee.

COLONEL Indeed. Chop, chop ladies.

WALKER And a biscuit.

Walker goes to steal a biscuit and isn't impressed with the choice.

WALKER (to Dora) 'Ere, I know a man, he'd do you a good deal on a van load of those thick chocolate coated shortbread biscuits. They're divine.

Dora looks like she's considering the offer but Flora takes over.

FLORA No thank you. We'll stick with these.

WALKER Why? He'll do you a good deal.

FLORA A good deal of trouble.

WALKER Charmin'.

Flora and Dora try to serve Colonel and Walker coffee quickly but have mishaps and rattling cups.

COLONEL (under breath) At last. (looking into cup) Not much coffee left.

WALKER Nah. Need to top it up Colonel. I got a great deal on this. Nectar of the Gods.

Walker pulls out a secretly hidden whiskey bottle and tops up their coffees with prompting from Colonel for more.

COLONEL Great idea Walker. You're not annoying after all.

WALKER Thank you. From you that's a great compliment.

COLONEL *(aside)* It wasn't meant to be.

There is peace until Flora spots some mud on the floor by Walker's feet which is invisible to the others.

FLORA Look at this mess!

Flora picks up Walker's feet and rests them on her back as she gets down on her hands and knees to wipe the mud off with a cloth. Dora finds other things to dust rigorously.

FLORA How did all this mud get here?

WALKER What mud?

FLORA Look at it!

WALKER Can't see anythin'?

FLORA That's because I've cleaned it up.

DORA That's our job, isn't it Flo?

FLORA That's our job. Cleaning up mess.

FLO/DO We love to spend the time, mopping up the grime. Don't do it for the pay, cleaning is our way.

DORA *(to Flora)* Love our job.

FLORA *(to Dora)* Love our job.

CASSANDRA Is there a coffee for me by any chance?

Flora and Dora panic and then laugh with each other.

FLO/DO Oops. Here's your coffee, Cassie...

All residents shake heads as Flora and Dora get the name wrong.

FLO/DO Cassidy...Cassius...

CASSANDRA Cassandra.

FLO/DO *(in unison)* Cassandra. *(to one another)* Like Cass and Sandra. Cassandra.

FLORA *(to Dora)* Weird name.

DORA (to Flora) Weird woman.

Flora and Dora laugh and turn to face stony silence.

DORA (to Cassandra) Call yourself Sandra, that's a lot easier.

FLORA Do! Don't be rude.

Flora swipes Dora with her cloth. Flora heads in the direction of the hall and Dora the kitchen.

FLORA We must go and clean the....

DORA ...Kitchen.

FLORA ...Hall.

DORA The hall.

FLORA The kitchen.

In the confusion Dora spots a mark on Colonel's suit.

DORA Colonel that won't do.

Dora gets out a cloth, spits on it and cleans off the mark.

DORA Better.

Flora can see Colonel's red mist descending.

FLORA Do.

DORA Isn't it Colonel? Much better.

FLORA Do! Let's go.

DORA Wait a moment Flo. This is a spot emergency. Call me the fourth emergency service Colonel.

Flora grabs Dora by the apron and pulls her away just as Colonel goes to throttle Dora.

DORA What is it Flo? Don't do that, it hurts Flo.

Flora and Dora exit.

CASSANDRA Calm yourself Colonel. They mean well.

COLONEL That's all they do well.

Silence. Walker looks at Cassandra and they burst into laughter followed by Colonel.

COLONEL Are they really the best we could do?

- CASSANDRA** The answer is yes and under the circumstances we should be grateful.
- WALKER** Only Lady C'd take trouble to find us new 'ousekeepers from 'er sick bed.
- COLONEL** True.
- CASSANDRA** Let's keep in their good books. We don't want them to leave too.
- COLONEL** You make a good point dear Woo Woo. As wise as ever.
- CASSANDRA** These are strange, unsettling times gentlemen. Lady C in hospital, new housekeepers, a new resident about to arrive. And Iris away. I miss Iris even though it's only been a few days.
- WALKER** Miss her too. And even 'er rotten crossword clues. Never thought I'd say that.
- COLONEL** When she's back shall we all go and see that Enigma film?
- Cassandra picks up the paper to read about the film.*
- WALKER** *(to Colonel)* The 'olliwood blockbuster starring Colonel Howard of Little Cracknell.
- COLONEL** Don't start that again.
- WALKER** I didn't start.....
- CASSANDRA** I agree, it could be about us.
- WALKER** You agree?
- CASSANDRA** Yes.
- WALKER** But it'll be all 'olliwood, over the top and not like real life.
- COLONEL** We know the real story so let's go for a laugh.
- CASSANDRA** Listen to this...Enigma is a 2001 espionage thriller film directed by Michael Apted from a screenplay by Tom Stoppard. The script was adapted from the 1995 novel Enigma by Robert Harris, about the Enigma codebreakers of Bletchley Park.
- WALKER** Well I say. Who's in it?
- CASSANDRA** Dougray Scott, Kate Winslet. So young and glamorous!

COLONEL Just like you Woo Woo.

WALKER Gorgeous you were.

CASSANDRA Hush, you're making me blush.

COLONEL It's true.

CASSANDRA Gentlemen please. Listen...the film's about how they decipher stolen intercepts to find the traitor in their midst.

Cassandra shudders.

WALKER Stolen intercepts?

COLONEL Treachery?

WALKER We wouldn't 'ave stood for any of that nonsense.

COLONEL Too right Walker. Good man.

Colonel stands, walks over to Walker and slaps him hard on the back. Both Cassandra and Walker are surprised at the honour.

CASSANDRA I can't keep up with you two!

COLONEL We might not always get on Cassandra but we always bat for the same team.

WALKER We're very different but we're in this together.

COLONEL He annoys me intensely but I owe him immense respect.

WALKER He's a pain in the ... you know what, but I admire him greatly.

Colonel and Walker suddenly realise the insult the other has given and talk over each other.

COLONEL A pain!

WALKER Annoying!

CASSANDRA It was too good to last.

COLONEL Come here and say I'm a pain.

Walker stands, gets a twinge in his back and sits again.

COLONEL Come here.

WALKER I'll send a telegram.

Colonel looks indignant and then they all laugh. Cassandra stops in her tracks.

CASSANDRA Our new resident is nearly here. I'm being told they're a real gem.

COLONEL Highly recommended by Lady C that's a good start.

WALKER Hope 'e's got a good sense of 'umour.

COLONEL And won't meddle. I like things the way they are.

WALKER Me ideal fellow resident'd be ... Frank Sinatra. Could listen to 'im sing all day.

Walker does a poor impression of Frank Sinatra's My Way.

COLONEL That's more Walker in the shower than Ol' Blue Eyes.

WALKER You 'ave no soul.

COLONEL I'd like a comedian. Let me think...

WALKER Norman Wisdom?

Walker does an impression.

COLONEL No.

WALKER Stan Laurel?

Walker does an impression and Colonel raises one eyebrow.

COLONEL The Goons. That's it.

WALKER That's four. You can't have four.

COLONEL Why not?

WALKER There's only one room.

COLONEL They can all live in there together.

WALKER Now you're making it up.

CASSANDRA It's a woman.

Colonel and Walker speak together.

COL/W Where?

CASSANDRA The new resident is a woman. Feels like a woman.

COLONEL Not a chap.

CASSANDRA No.

Walker and Colonel are both disappointed.

WALKER *(whispering to Colonel)* Woo Woo's got that wrong.

CASSANDRA I don't think so Walker. I'm going for a walk. Need to clear my energy.

Cassandra exits as if in a dream.

WALKER Time check Colonel.

COLONEL Time for a swim. Will you be joining me today?

WALKER I'll meet you there.

COLONEL Don't be late.

WALKER Wouldn't dare.

Colonel exits. Walker takes out the whisky and carries it like a precious baby and puts it away in one of his secret stashes dotted around the room. He pauses, turns back and opens the stash and takes a sneaky drink from the bottle. Walker exits. Lights down.

SCENE TWO

Following. Lights up. Cleaning cupboard with cleaning products. Flora and Dora sit on two makeshift stools.

DORA Can't believe we've been here two weeks already Flo.

FLORA Seems like two months

They laugh.

DORA Think of Lady Caroline. We owe her.

FLORA Of course. Nothing's too much trouble for her.

DORA May the Lord keep her well.

FLORA She's in my prayers every night.

DORA May the Lord help us with that lot too.

FLORA A right handful.

They laugh.

DORA We love it don't we?

FLORA Too right Do. Nothing I'd rather be doing. We'll lick this place into shape no problem.

DORA And they won't even realise it's happening.