

Wuthering's: A Serious Comedy Episode 6

By

SG Byron

WUTHERING'S: A SERIOUS COMEDY EPISODE 6

MUSIC: INTRO 1

INTRO VOICE

You're listening to Wuthering's: A Serious Comedy,
brought to you by Francis Hardy Productions.

(SOUND + INTRO TO THIS POINT ALWAYS THE SAME)

(ALLY AND GEORGE WITTER, POSSIBLY IN FUNNY VOICES,
AT THE START OF EACH STORY AS OUTSIDE OBSERVERS,
LIKE A MODERN, TWO-PERSON GREEK CHORUS)

MUSIC: INTRO 1 FADE OUT

ALLY

I thought I knew what Mr Wuthering was capable of. But
this is beyond the pale.

GEORGE

It is outside of my comprehension.

ALLY

He looks so affable, so ordinary. But what is he,
really? A human-shaped wrecking ball.

GEORGE

Except that he is no better off than anyone else, right
now. It defies explanation.

ALLY

Wuthering's will surely live in infamy from now on. We
are witnessing the darkest chapter in cake shop
history.

GEORGE

I suppose I ought to cancel our subscription.

ALLY

What subscription?

GEORGE

Our fortnightly order of special tiny *diet* cakes from
Mr Wuthering. I doubt those poor urchins will be doing
any mail order packing at the moment.

ALLY

A subscription? To this address?

GEORGE

You agreed to it.

ALLY

I did not.

GEORGE

You did. I asked about setting an order up, and you said 'A little of what you fancy does you good'. Or something similar.

ALLY

That's the very opposite of what I would say.

Have you been visiting the multiverse again?

GEORGE

Well...It's just like pottering in the shed...Everyone does it.

ALLY

Gallivanting around the multiverse is not 'pottering in the shed'.

GEORGE

It is a leisure activity.

ALLY

Don't patronise me, George. You should not be casually dropping into a parallel universe if you're going to get all the possible realities mixed up! In this reality, we never buy from Wuthering's. And from the looks of things, no-one ever will.

MUSIC: CHEESY TV NEWS THEME

NEWSREADER 1

A cake shop in central London has been frozen in ice while a man, a woman and a donkey were still inside. From St Paul's, Chili Frost has this report.

SOUND: BACKGROUND - STREET NOISE

NEWSREADER 2

With no signs of cold weather in the city, passers-by became suspicious when they noticed broken ice crystals in front of Wuthering's, an independent cake shop.

Suspicion became fear when they opened this - seemingly innocuous - door, and found a man, woman and donkey frozen to the spot. They are trapped in ice 4 inches thick.

In sub-zero conditions, the fire service has worked for 5 hours in an attempt to free them, but, so far, the ice has proved impenetrable. Tools capable of twisting

(MORE)

NEWSREADER 2 (cont'd)

metal have left barely a scratch. Boiling water glances off every surface; blasts of hot air have had no effect in this arctic prison.

The frozen man, thought to be the shop's owner, stands unblinking, in an expression of permanent surprise.

SOUND: ATMOSPHERIC

EMILY

That's the 'real' world, Mummy! The one you made me go to!

MRS RICHPIN

It was good experience.

EMILY

What was good about it? I'm traumatised. I shall never leave the house again.

MRS RICHPIN

You will. You will pick yourself up and find something else.

EMILY

What will I tell people? That my last place of work, a little part-time job - was in a frozen Hell, the one they saw on the news.

Sorry, I can't supply a reference because my last boss is currently trapped in a block of ice.

MRS RICHPIN

People are surprisingly understanding about things like that. They won't blame you.

EMILY

I blame me. I got that poor donkey mixed up in it. No, I won't even try to find something else - I won't have anything to do with the 'real' world anymore. It was an out and out disaster.

MRS RICHPIN

Stop sulking and help me with these invitations.

EMILY

What's this for?

MRS RICHPIN

My sister-in-law is having a party.

EMILY

Another kind of hell.

MRS RICHPIN

It shouldn't be. She is surprisingly well-connected.

SOUND: BACKGROUND CHATTER

MRS RICHPIN

Emily, you must speak to people. That is how parties work.

EMILY

I'm still thinking about the cake shop. I'm haunted by it...as anyone with a heart would be.

MRS RICHPIN

There is a time and a place for a heart, and this is not one of them. You're attracting attention in all the wrong ways - the guests are wondering why a nice young lady sits by herself in a corner, glaring into the middle distance. Your expression is sour; I've spent half the evening apologising for it.

EMILY

Tell them I have been to the 'real' world, and what I saw there frightened me.

MRS RICHPIN

Why don't you tell them some of your stories? They're wonderfully entertaining.

EMILY

They don't have the wit for them. Only the brightest can face into darkness.

(A NEW, DEBONAIR VOICE)

JORDAN

I couldn't agree more.

EMILY

You agree that you don't have the wit?

JORDAN

I agree that light is the counterpoint to darkness. It is a necessary counterpoint. Look at any piece of art.

EMILY

Whatever.

MRS RICHPIN

Jordan - what a great insight. But can it applied to all the arts? Architecture, for instance? The work of a chef? Or music?

JORDAN

Those disciplines are beyond my expertise. My specialism is the self-portrait.

MRS RICHPIN

Of course. Have you met my daughter, Emily?

JORDAN

I haven't had the pleasure. I'm Jordan.

EMILY

Emily.

MRS RICHPIN

I much admired your show, Jordan.

JORDAN

The summer one?

MRS RICHPIN

360 Degrees. Jordan photographed his face from every angle, all 360 degrees, every day for a year.

JORDAN

A total of more than 130,000 pictures.

MRS RICHPIN

I found it very moving.

JORDAN

Thank you. I was exploring the constancy of the human condition.

MRS RICHPIN

So much to think about. More gin!

JORDAN

Yes, please.

MRS RICHPIN

It wasn't a question.

EMILY

If you think I'll make conversation to fill the embarrassing silence, you are wrong.

JORDAN

I have no expectations of the sort. This is a polite social occasion - or, in other words, an unforgiving, morally barren desert. You are brave to have ventured into it.

It would be brave at any time, but so soon after - what you've been through...

EMILY

How do you know about that?

JORDAN

It's all anyone will talk about. I just want to say I really respect your decision not to speak publicly about it.

EMILY

It wasn't a decision, exactly.

JORDAN

If or when you do speak out, let me give you some advice. I'm a - you-could-say - high-profile person, not super-high-high-profile, but sort-of high-medium-moderately- reasonably-well-known -if-you-know-what-you're-looking-for- niche-influential-high-profile person. Personality, really...Are you on Instagram?

EMILY

I know what it is.

JORDAN

All I'm trying to say is that I understand the public eye. And I want you to know that - whatever happens, you mustn't let the Arctic-prison-Cake-Shop-tragedy define you.

EMILY

(PAUSE)

So what brings you to the 'unforgiving, morally barren desert' that is my family's social gathering?

JORDAN

Apologies if I have caused offence.

EMILY

You haven't.

JORDAN

After 360 Degrees, I felt lost. I went a little crazy...130,000 photos took its toll. So I'm actively reconnecting with the world. Reaching out. Taking all

(MORE)

JORDAN (cont'd)

those pictures of myself made me realise - a life with only me in it - is a bit dull.

In fact, next weekend I'm hosting an open house. There's plenty to see - large gardens, a lot of history. We're expecting a lot of people. It would be great to see you there.

MUSIC: INTERVAL

EMILY

I was not particularly impressed by Jordan. But I was intrigued by the 'large gardens' he mentioned. Not 'garden' - 'gardenzzz'. I tried not to think of perfectly trimmed lawns and flowing fountains. And I hoped I would not be disappointed.

MUSIC: INTERVAL

JORDAN

The house dates back to Tudor times.

EMILY

It's almost a castle.

JORDAN

We always open for visitors in the summer. This is the first time we've opened the doors in winter.

EMILY

And the paintings - they are all of...you?

JORDAN

(LAUGHS)

No, no - the Le Ratt family goes back a long way. That is my great-great grandfather, the one to the left is my grandfather, that one is my great-great-great-great grandfather, the one in the corner is my great -

EMILY

I get the idea.

JORDAN

Sorry, you must find all this very boring.

EMILY

No, I don't.

JORDAN

We have a room dedicated to the history of rat-catching - that was the family trade. Want to see it?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON STONE

EMILY

It's like a maze. So many rooms...do you ever get lost?

JORDAN

Not any more. I grew up here, so...

EMILY

I feel like Alice in Wonderland...What's through this door?

JORDAN

(BELLOWING)
Don't go in there!

EMILY

Sorry.

JORDAN

There's nothing to see. Nothing at all. It's a storage cupboard. Old...vacuum cleaners...and stuff.

EMILY

Sorry again.

JORDAN

I should be the one apologising. I didn't mean to be abrupt. But I value my family's privacy.

EMILY

Of course. I should have asked.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON STONE

JORDAN

It's a bit of a hide-away up here. I go here to write sometimes.

EMILY

You're a writer?

JORDAN

Not exactly...It's very silly - it started out as a joke. But I have an alter ego - it is - I call myself 'The Gentleman Poet'.

And this is the 'rat-catching room'. In the 17th century, one of my ancestors established the 'Pied Piper' franchise; it made him very rich. Basically, people paid to learn and play the tunes that lured rats away.

EMILY

It's like a fairy tale.

JORDAN

This all belongs to my father, but he is away a lot. So it is only me - and a bunch of strangers trooping through the place.

There are times when it feels...a little lonely. These long corridors, and vast rooms, with not one familiar face...I walk into them and I know something is missing. Something important.

EMILY

You think someone is stealing? Is there a pattern?

JORDAN

No, nothing like that.

When I walk through the gardens, and it is a beautiful day, I should feel total happiness. But I don't. I want to share all of it...with someone special.

(PAUSE)

Do you ever feel like that, Emily? This might sound mad, but I imagine someone living here, and...I imagine someone...cooking for me.

(PAUSE)

Emily?

Emily, WAIT!

SOUND: DOOR SLAM

EMILY

I ran out of there and straight to the train station.

Maybe I over-reacted. But I was in a spooky house, in a spooky, rat-catching room. And when Jordan mentioned his cooking fantasy - that would scare anyone. He must have been harbouring ideas about my cooking skills from the start. Maybe because of the cake shop...But I never cooked anything there - it was all delivered.

I couldn't blame him entirely. I was so upset about what happened at Wuthering's Cake Shop, I had forgotten how desirable I am.

Everyone had told me to move on, but I couldn't forget Wuthering's. The news cameras had gone, but an Arctic prison remained - a man, a woman and a donkey shut up in ice. They deserved better. Miss Piratti was - is - a trailblazer. And Mr Wuthering - he's not so bad. And that poor animal, caught in the chaos.

And where was Jack Hatton? I hadn't seen him since he fled the scene all those weeks ago. A strange sort of guilt set in. There was only one thing for it. I'd have to call him.

SOUND: MOBILE RING

JACK

Hello?

EMILY

Hi, it's me, Emily.

JACK

Oh - hi.

EMILY

How are you?

JACK

Fine, not-fine - thanks.

EMILY

Is that a bit like 'sorry, not-sorry'?

JACK

Exactly like it.

EMILY

I was wondering if you'd had any news about Wuthering's? If there had been any...change?

JACK

None at all. The fire service gave up, people lost interest. It's become another of the city's forgotten corners.

EMILY

But we haven't forgotten.

JACK

No. Have you been keeping busy?

EMILY

Yes, I'm busy - rushed off my feet, lots to get on with. Job applications to write, friends to see...

JACK

The weeks have become an aimless blur and life has lost all meaning.

EMILY

That's right. I had so little to do, I accepted an invitation from a complete stranger to -

JACK

Is this a story suitable for my sensitive ears?

EMILY

It is a curious coincidence that he called himself 'The Gentleman Poet' just like the man in Miss Piratti's life. He lives in a castle...it's almost a castle. Looked amazing.

JACK

What's his real name?

EMILY

Does it matter? Er...Jordan Le Ratt.

JACK

The same name, too.

EMILY

Is it? His family goes back a long way, he said that.

JACK

(GRAVELY)
What else did he say?

EMILY

I see you haven't lost your nose for other's people's business.

JACK

You called me.

EMILY

I will admit that.

JACK

You wanted news. I might have news.

EMILY

He said various things. His family were rat-catchers. There was a franchise...something about a Pied Piper.

JACK

It's the same family. You've met a descendent of Miss Piratti's fiance.

(PAUSE)
What did he want?

EMILY

I believe it was a mix of romance and catering.

JACK

I see. There's something you should know about Miss Piratti's past. I stumbled across it.

EMILY

What's that?

JACK

You remember the day we found the cake shop - the last day? After I left, and, not knowing where to go, I wandered into an art gallery. There was an engraving which showed Miss Piratti's fiance later hanged at the gallows - for murder.

EMILY

He was a murderer...

JACK

Did this present-day Jordan act like he had anything to hide?

EMILY

Not really - he seemed honest. Although there was one room - when I went to the door and he shouted 'Don't go in there!'.

JACK

You have to go in there.

EMILY

He values his privacy. Don't you?

JACK

We have to find out the truth - the whole truth - about Miss Piratti's past. Things don't add up. And there must be a reason the cake shop is frozen. We can't ignore it.

EMILY

So it all comes down to me.

JACK

He is interested in you - in your catering skills. You have a reason to be there.

EMILY

It's obvious, isn't it? I arrange a candlelit dinner for two -

JACK

It's not that obvious.

EMILY

- Staged at his address. He'll think I'm slaving in the kitchen, sweating over a hot stove, when really, I'm snooping through the building -

JACK

It's brilliant...

EMILY

I shall concoct a ridiculous 12-course dinner.

JACK

Tell him you'll pluck the chicken's feathers personally, and make your own wine.

EMILY

The pudding will need constant observation; so will various home-made...European...sauces. Should buy me all the time I need.

JACK

Make sure you bring some sort of bag with you, in case you need to take - whatever you find.

EMILY

I'll need to carry all the ingredients in, anyway.

MUSIC: INTERVAL

JORDAN

Hi, you've reached the Gentleman's Poet's voicemail. Please leave a message after the tone.

EMILY

Voicemail! Drat.

SOUND: BEEP

Hi Jordan, it's Emily, here. Sorry about last weekend. I realised I was late for an appointment. Also, what you said - surprised me. But I've had time to think about it, and what you said was, also, surprisingly fantastic. I've waited a long time to hear - what you said - about cooking. Then when I finally did hear it, I had a surprising - surprised - reaction. It was only because I was SO DELIGHTED.

I am fully prepared to do some cooking. And that will be at your castle, on Thursday night, at 7pm. A candlelit dinner for two. I will take care of everything - you need only bring your appetite.

The time and date is non-negotiable.

SOUND: PHONE CLICK

That should do it.

MUSIC: INTERVAL

JORDAN

It's wonderful to have you here. After our last conversation, I couldn't be sure how you felt.

EMILY

It took me some time - to come to terms with the strength of my feelings.

JORDAN

I don't know what to say...

What's in the bag?

EMILY

Two candles, two candlestick holders - and the ingredients for a 12-course extravaganza.

JORDAN

It has 'SWAG' written on it.

EMILY

Designer label. I have brought a chicken covered in feathers...I'll be plucking it myself. And grapes - for the wine.

JORDAN

You make your own wine?

EMILY

Is that so unlikely?

JORDAN

But it takes weeks.

EMILY

I have a secret method.

JORDAN

Please, you must not go to so much trouble.

EMILY

It's no trouble at all. All I ask is that you sit yourself down, and wait.

JORDAN

How long will I be waiting?

EMILY

Difficult to say...Depends on many factors.

JORDAN

(ALMOST TO HIMSELF)

An enigma. I love it.

EMILY

Which way is the kitchen?

MUSIC: INTERVAL

EMILY

So many corridors....I'm totally lost. Did I just go around in a circle? But I recognise that suit of armour. Think - think - last time, after the armour, did I go left or right?

SOUND: TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

EMILY

I think this is it.

SOUND: DOOR OPEN

SOUND: INTRUDER ALARM (LOUD)

EMILY

Oh no.

SOUND: DOG BARKING

EMILY

Jordan never said he had a dog.

SOUND: INTRUDER ALARM (DISTANT)

JORDAN

Those bloody alarms again.

(LOUDER)

Emily! Don't worry about the alarms. We've been having problems with them.

(QUIETLY)

How many times?

SOUND: INTRUDER ALARM (LOUD)

EMILY

Stinks in here. So what does Jordan have to hide? Some dusty old diaries...this one is marked '1650' - will pocket. Then we have - skulls! They look real...

Better get going!

MUSIC: INTERVAL

EMILY

What a horrible man. What a tedious diary. Listen to this -

25 January, 1650

Morning hunt successful. 170kg stag met its end after 25 mile chase. Visibility in the forest was low - but a champion hunter prevails. There is beauty in death.

2 February

A bitter start concluded in triumph. 180kg kill. How quickly the light of life left its eyes.

3 February

Pistol froze in the cold. One can only trust in a dagger.

JACK

When does he meet Miss Piratti?

EMILY

Not until the spring. Lots of complaining about his doublets and boots, and then a trip to London.

All he writes is:

Met M D Piratti. A fine costumier.

JACK

They were engaged some time later. What sort of thing is he writing in autumn? Ignore anything about hunting.

EMILY

I know exactly what, and I can't read it out. I can't bear to. Here you go. It starts from September.

JACK

5 September

DP dared to challenge me on my treatment of the servants.

28 September

I wonder if I am by nature meant to be alone. But it is too late to turn back now.

1 October

DP made me fly at her with her impudence.

18 November

DP resists my good advice, so I must be embarrassed by her on every occasion. Silence at dinner.

24 November

Dona Piratti is no more. Her last breath was at my hands. It was an impulse beyond me, beyond my control - I was the puppet, it was the Fates with their strings that dismissed her life. She is dead, but not gone - I can sense it. I have acquired a second shadow - it is hers.

1 December

The shadow pursues me. It is even in the forest.

13 December

Is this madness? Who has known madness, and returned from it, that they might tell me its substance? And then...nothing. Those are the last lines. The pages following are empty.

EMILY

I think he killed her.

JACK

It's not an outright confession, but its near enough.

I owe Miss Piratti an apology. I was hostile to her - when she wanted us to know the truth. I should go to the cake shop.

EMILY

I'll go with you.

SOUND: TRAFFIC

SOUND: CAFE DOOR BELL - OPEN

SOUND: CAFE DOOR BELL - CLOSE

SOUND: ICE CRUNCHING UNDERFOOT

JACK

Here we are.

EMILY

It's the same as when we left it. Miss Piratti? Mr Wuthering - are you in there?

It feels strange talking to them, knowing they can't talk back. Have you prepared something to say?

JACK

No, I haven't. Give me a moment.

(DEEP BREATH)

Miss Piratti, I may have been a little judgmental, a little - close-minded. Emily and I have been looking carefully -

EMILY

I risked my life in pursuit of the truth.

JACK

When did you risk your life?

SOUND: ICE CRACKING (SOFTLY)

EMILY

I told you - Jordan had alarms - and a dog. It was terrifying.

JACK

Okay then, what breed was it?

EMILY

It was - large - I didn't have time to check the dog's breed because I was running -

JACK

You never actually saw it, did you?

EMILY

Listen -

SOUND: ICE CRACKING (LOUDER)

JACK

The ice is cracking.

EMILY

Mr Wuthering!

MR WUTHERING

Why is my shop covered in ice? It's a total mess.

JACK

Miss Piratti -

MR WUTHERING

And that poor donkey! He doesn't have a name yet.

VOICE: CLANKING CHAINS

EMILY

She's going.

JACK

Then stop her!

SOUND: CAFE FRONT DOOR BELL

SOUND: TRAFFIC AND BUSTLE

EMILY

Where is she?

JACK

She is - gone.

SOUND: SWISH

EMILY

Look - a shooting star!

JACK

There - on the ground - she's left her chains behind.
Do you think she'll come back for them?

EMILY

Probably not.

MUSIC: INTERVAL

JACK

We never saw Miss Dona Piratti again. Mr Wuthering says he goes to the graveyard in Moorgate sometimes, to pay his respects. Although he may be looking for new investors.

I don't think there's any trace of her there. But her real story has been faithfully recorded, and I had a little bit to do with it.

EMILY

Not just you, Jack. What would have done without me?
Without my courage?

JACK

I was investigating and you told me to give it up.

EMILY

No I didn't.

JACK

Yes you did.

EMILY

You must have misheard me.

MUSIC: SWING JAZZ (FATS WALLER)

INTRO VOICE

You've been listening to *Wuthering's: A Serious Comedy*. Jack Hatton was played by Luke de Belder, Emily Richpin by Hannah Siden, and Mr Wuthering by Kit Smith. It was written by SG Byron and brought to you by Francis Hardy Productions. If you enjoyed it, please subscribe and follow us on Twitter @spokenstory.