

# Invisible Friends

Alan Ayckbourn

First performed in 1989 at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, the play is about a very ordinary girl called LUCY. With her father glued to the telly, her mother preoccupied with local gossip and her brother, known as 'Grisly Gary' shut up in his room listening to heavy metal music, no one wants to know about her place in the school swimming team. So LUCY revives her childhood fantasy friend, Zara. Only this time, Zara materialises, bringing with her an idealised father and brother, and showing her how to make her real family vanish.

In this scene, LUCY has just come out of Gary's bedroom having failed to make him listen to her, as she tries to tell him her good news above the sound of the stereo. She enters her own room and introduces the audience to her invisible friend, Zara.

Published by Faber & Faber, London

ZARA

You may have heard my mum talking about my invisible friend. Do you remember? Well, that's my invisible friend, Zara. *(Introducing her)* This is Zara. I want you to meet Zara. Zara, say hallo. That's it. Will you say hallo to Zara, my invisible friend? I invented Zara - oh, years ago - when I was seven or eight. Just for fun. I think I was ill at that time and wasn't allowed to play with any of my real friends, so I made up Zara. She's my special friend that no one can see except me. Of course, I can't really see her either. Not really. Although sometimes I. . . It's almost as if I could see her, sometimes. If I concentrate very hard it's like I can just glimpse her out of the corner of my eye. *(She is thoughtful for a second)* Still. Anyway. I've kept Zara for years and years. Until they all started saying I was much too old for that sort of thing and got worried and started talking about sending for a doctor. So then I didn't take her round with me quite so much after that. But she's still here. And when I feel really sad and depressed like I do today, then I sit and talk to Zara. Zara always understands. Zara always listens. She's special. Aren't you, Zara? *(She listens to Zara)* What's that? Yes, I wish he'd turn his music down, too. I've asked him, haven't I? *(Mimicking Gary)* 'How can I hear it if I turn it down, I can't hear the bass then, can I?' I used to have pictures in here but every time he put a disc on they fell off the walls. *(Pause. The music continues)* I mean, don't get me wrong. We like loud music, don't we, Zara? We love loud music. Sometimes. *(Yelling)* BUT NOT ALL THE TIME.

*(Pause)*

Why doesn't he ever listen to quiet music? Just once. Wouldn't that be nice? . . . But if he did that, he wouldn't be Grisly Gary then, would he?

*(Pause)*

Oh, Zara, did I tell you I've been picked for the school swimming team? Isn't that exciting? Yes. Thank you. I'm glad you're excited, too. Good.

*(Pause)*

*(Shouting)* IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED AT ALL, I WAS PICKED FOR THE SCHOOL SWIMMING TEAM TODAY. WHAT ABOUT THAT, FOLKS?

*(She listens. No reply)*

Great. Thanks for your support, everyone. *(Tearful)* They might at least . . . They could have at least . . . Oh, Zara ... I know you're always here, but sometimes I get so . . . lonely.