

Invisible Friends

Alan Ayckbourn

Lucy is an ordinary young teenager, absolutely fed up with her family who are too pre-occupied with their own lives to bother about her place in the school swimming team. In protest Lucy resorts to her childhood fantasy friend, Zara, who not only materializes in the play, but introduces her own ideal family and shows Lucy how to make HER family vanish.

Time: The present. In Lucy's house.

LUCY (*as she goes upstairs, to audience*). Come with me, if you will. Upstairs. If you listen very carefully you can just hear the distant sounds of the greater spotted Grisly Gary, my unbelievably talkative brother. Grisly Gary is doing a building course at the technical college, training to be a bucket. (*She reaches the door of GARY's room. The music is louder now.*) Here we go. I'll just have a quiet word with him. Cover your ears.

LUCY opens GARY's door. *The heavy-metal music comes up to a deafening level. LUCY, when she speaks, is quite inaudible.* GARY, lying on the bed with his eyes closed, fails to notice her at all.

(*Mouthing, swiftly.*) Hallo, Grisly. It's your loving sister, Lucy. Just to tell you I've been picked for the school swimming team. Thought you'd like to know. Bye, Grisly. (**LUCY** closes the door again. *The music goes down to a lower level.*) I enjoyed that chat. (*She opens the door of her own room and goes inside.*) This is my room. No one's allowed in here, except me. I'm a very tidy sort

of person. Which is a bit extraordinary in this house. I think I must be a freak. I actually like to know where I've put my things. This is my bed. That's my desk. And up there on the shelf. Those are my special, most favourite books. (*The music pounds through the wall.*) Actually, one of the reasons I keep it tidy is because my very, very best friend, Zara, also likes things tidy. Oh yes, I ought to explain to you about 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. 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*