

Could be better

Aim : *This is a light-hearted opener, exploring how we can look at everyday situations, and look forward to the future with very different feelings, seen in the extremes of an optimist and a pessimist.*

Characters :

2 people – any age and either gender

Props/Costumes :

Small table and a couple of chairs.

2 glasses – one half full/empty!

Aims : *These characters are meant to be fairly extreme, but not caricatures. We must believe that this is a regular occurrence, to meet up for a drink and discuss the latest news.*

The tone of each of the characters should provide a contrast, with the optimist speaking in a bright tone for most of the piece, and the pessimist fairly monotonous. Don't be scared of using pauses for comic effect.

We had a blast of “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” to frame the piece.

Could be better

An Optimist and a Pessimist are sitting as though they are in a pub, having a drink together. They start off in an easy silence, lost in their own thoughts. It's clear from their appearance which is which

P drinks and puts down the glass glumly

P) Look at that – half-empty already

O) Or still half-full

P) I'm sure they're making these glasses smaller

O) Or maybe you're having such a good time that you don't notice you're drinking it

P)(*doubtful*) Maybe – or perhaps I just need more drink to drown out the misery of it all

O) So, (*bracing himself for the answer*) how are you?

P) Could be better. You?

O) Could be a lot worse

P) Well, yeah, I suppose you never know what's round the corner

O) Exactly, what's there waiting to surprise you

P) Waiting to get you, was more what I was thinking

O) Oh come on, there's always a silver lining

P) Then there's always got to be a cloud

O)(Pause, as he tries to think of some good news) Oh, did you hear that Sam's back at work?

P) Yep

O) Well, you don't sound too pleased. I mean, surely that's good news.

P) Hmm, for now

O) What on earth do you mean by that?

P) My friend Jim, he had what Sam's had.

O) Oh right, and don't tell me, he was really ill for ages

P) No,

O) Oh right

P) He felt better quite quickly

O) Oh good

P) went back to work

O) Great!

P) went back too soon, got taken really bad – and died

O) Oh . . .well, Sam can look on the bright side surely. I mean that doesn't exactly happen every day now does it

P) Nope – but then just once was enough for Jim.

O) Well yes, that's true enough . . .but then you know what they say (*pleased to have finally thought of something positive*) lightning never strikes twice

P). . except on my friend Pete

O) Surely not!

P) Yep, same field, same gate. I told him after the first time to stay indoors, but he wouldn't have it. Kept going on about the great outdoors.

O) And he had to give up his walking?

P) Had to give up a lot more than that. Should have listened to me – three days after the second strike, he died.

O) Well that is exceptionally bad luck

P) No, that's just life, always read to kick you when you're down.

Silence

O) Well what about focussing on the simple pleasures in life. Did you watch television last night?

P) I did

O) Right, so that must have cheered you up. Did you see the Pride of Britain awards? I mean that was inspiring stuff

P) No. I was watching that thing about the minds of mass murderers.

O) Well why not watch something more uplifting for once? I mean, you should have heard some of those stories – the human spirit is a wonderful thing

P) No, it's a dangerous thing

O) Oh, you're so negative

P) And you're just naïve. Humans aren't wonderful, the world's not wonderful – it's all hard work and nothing to look forward to.

O) (*tries again*) What *you* need is a holiday

P) Why pay to feel miserable somewhere else?

O) Oh come on, just think – leave your cares behind, sun shining, waves lapping, birds singing

P) Sunburn, noisy crowds, mosquitoes

- O) Okay then (*determined now to find something good*) what about Christmas, after that, to look forward to. That always brings out the best in people
- P) Oh right yeah. Family arguments, inflated prices, greed
- O) Well, if you're so sick of this year, why not get to the New Year and take the chance to start again?
- P) That's what my friend Sue thought that she'd do last year.
- O) (*sarcastic now*) and don't tell me, she died
- P) On the strike of midnight.
- O) Well at least she probably went happy
- P) She was with me when it happened
- O) Oh, right. (*Pause as he is lost for something to say to that*) Look we've been friends for a while now haven't we?
- P) Acquaintances, let's say
- O) Okay whatever, and I know we have a different outlook on, well on most things in fact, but well, like I always say, vive la difference
- P) Bloody French, taking over our language as well
- O) (*really frustrated now*) Could you not for once, take on a brighter outlook, see the opportunities ahead carpe diem – seize the day!
- P) Well they would say that wouldn't they
- O) Who?
- P) Them Romans – being dead and all
- O) Right that's it, I've had enough, you're obviously not going to cheer up
- P) Well you've not given me any reason to with your fancy ideas and clichés
- O) You've always got to look on the bleak side
- P) While you're too busy skipping down the sunny side of the street
- O) You can stay wallowing in the mud
- P) You can stay with your head in the clouds
- They stand up to argue and it becomes more heated as the speech gets quicker, so that they end up not really listening as they finish off each other's sentences*
- O) You think you've got it all sorted
- P) when really you've not got a clue
- O) You see
- P) what you want to see

O) You should be

P) A bit more like me

O) Oh yeah

P) And what's that?

Finish drinks and slam them down

Both) A realist.

They walk off in different directions
