



REMOVAL OF SPACE

a play in one act

STUART ROBERTS

REMOVAL OF SPACE

a play in one act

STUART ROBERTS

ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE

Removal of Space was performed at the This Is Not Art - Crack Theatre festival, on October 3rd 2009. The cast was as follows:

HAMPTON
MORT

Dan Jobson
Arran Mckenna

Director

David Clapham

Designer

MOSAT

Lighting

David Clapham

Music

Nick McCorriston



Rights of Performance are controlled by The Masters of Space and Time and they, or their authorized agents, issue licences on payment of a fee. It is an infringement of the Copyright to give any performance or public reading of the play before the fee has been paid and the licence issued. Contact rights@mosat.com.au for further details.

The right of Stuart Roberts to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

REMOVAL OF SPACE

A table on stage. A thick chalk line bisects the stage, straight down the middle of the table. The two divisions of the stage have some marked differences, and on either side of the table are two different phones.

On the right side sits MORT, looking downhearted, heads in his hands. He looks like he is in a serious, morose play, a somewhat sad and self-pitying work

MORT pulls himself together reluctantly dials a number and the other phone rings. The other phone rings and HAMPTON comes on from the left side of the stage to answer it, drinking from a water bottle.

HAMPTON: Yello? *(When HAMPTON picks up the phone he is indirectly looking at MORT, so it keeps up the illusion that he is going along with the phone conceit.)*

MORT: Hampton, Hampton is that you?

HAMPTON: ...Yeah.

MORT: Hampton it's Mort.

HAMPTON: ...Right.

MORT: Hampton I've got some sad and tragic news.

HAMPTON: Yeah you don't look happy.

MORT: ...Yes, I guess that's coming through.

HAMPTON: What?

MORT: Are you alone?

HAMPTON: Are you high?

MORT: Are you alone?

HAMPTON: No.

MORT: It's just I've got some sad and tragic news.

HAMPTON: Anything to do with incipient blindness?

MORT: No, no, it's about the family. It's quite tragic.

HAMPTON: And sad.

MORT: There's been an accident. I know this must be hard considering you're so far away.

HAMPTON: I'm -

MORT: No don't speak, your silence is words enough.

HAMPTON: I'm -

MORT: Don't. Someone we both loved has met with a misfortune.

HAMPTON: Oh.

MORT: Yes. I really need a friend right now. It means just a lot to hear your voice.

HAMPTON: Do you-

MORT: Don't speak. I just need to know that you're there. Not saying a word (*HAMPTON reaches out but doesn't breach the line*), not trying to touch me, just there. Still. Not moving, not talking, just there ...

HAMPTON: Do you want a hug?

MORT: You can't hug me I'm on the phone.

HAMPTON: Oh, I won't interrupt then.

MORT: So are you.

HAMPTON: No, my guy hung up. Prick.

MORT: Hampton.

HAMPTON: Wonder if that porn line is still open? (*Taps number into phone*)

MORT: Hampton.

HAMPTON: (*As if hearing MORT on the porn line*) ...Mort?

Exasperated, MORT breaks the conceit and looks straight at HAMPTON.

MORT: We've done this before.

HAMPTON: We have?!

MORT: You know the script, don't you?

HAMPTON: I've read it twice.

MORT: This chalk line -

HAMPTON: Maybe once. Either way, I've heard of it.

MORT: This chalk line -

HAMPTON: It might have been a copy of Wisden.

MORT: This chalk line represents the removal of space. You and I are actually in different places, geographically distant, the separation -

MORT: - signified by this line and are we able to communicate, solely, by talking on the phone.

HAMPTON: On the phone. Right. Soz. Pretend I'm not here. (*Picking up the phone, back into character, if somewhat strained*) So Mort how are things way over your way... you look like you have something to tell me. Sound like.

MORT: I'll start again.

HAMPTON: Let's start again.

MORT hangs up, looks down at the phone, not realising that HAMPTON hasn't left the stage. He picks up the phone and slowly dials, look up to see HAMPTON, happy to have got the concept, standing there with the receiver in his hand. MORT jerks his head, indicating HAMPTON should leave the stage. HAMPTON just smiles. MORT puts the phone down. HAMPTON does the same. MORT picks it up, HAMPTON picks it up. MORT puts it back down, HAMPTON puts it back down. MORT reaches for it pulls back, reach, then back. MORT mirrors these movements. MORT goes to walk off stage, HAMPTON follows. They return. MORT leaves again, HAMPTON follows and MORT finally races for the phone, trying to beat HAMPTON back to the phone. HAMPTON gets there first.

HAMPTON: Mort, hi where are you?

MORT: Oh I'm-

HAMPTON: Far away, no doubt. I only ask because I can hear you but not see you.

MORT: Yes, that'll be because you're on a phone. Don't go making a big thing of it.

HAMPTON: A phone, magical. Tell me, what exactly is a-

MORT: You know what a phone is.

HAMPTON: I know what a phone is. What are you calling for?

MORT: Well I-

HAMPTON: On the phone.

MORT: Yes, I've got-

HAMPTON: You've got some sad and tragic news. Do you? Is it tragic? ... and sad? Is it?

MORT: I've got some sad and tragic news.

HAMPTON: Gott in himmel! Do you want me to come round?

MORT: No.

HAMPTON: It won't take a minute.

MORT: (*gritted teeth*) Yes it will. Are you sitting down?

HAMPTON: No, this is my normal height.

MORT: It's about Frank.

HAMPTON: Frank who?

MORT: Frank. Your brother Frank.

HAMPTON: Little baby Frank!

MORT: Older brother.

HAMPTON: Big Frank, Franky, brother Frank, yes, biiiig franky balls. Yes...
what about him?

MORT: Well it's to do with the surgery

HAMPTON: Oh dear, how is he?

MORT: Your surgery

HAMPTON: (*grabbing his shoulder*) – Oh yes, ahh ahh.

HAMPTON grabs his Shoulder with an "ahh, ahh". MORT gestures him down with his hand, HAMPTON moves to his heart, appendix, panics as he nears the groin, relieved as he gets waved lower, eventually settles on the feet.

HAMPTON: Yes. The old pins, the old get-away sticks, they say they might
have to amputate my possibly but not necessarily right foot.

MORT: Right.

HAMPTON: But I still live in hope that I will one day be the hummingbird
of the ballroom dancing circuit. It's not much, but a man has to dream.

MORT: Anyway...back to the sad and tragic news.

HAMPTON: Yes Frank, is he okay?

MORT: No, no he's not–

HAMPTON: Oh dear, will he be okay to make the big drop?

MORT: The big what?

HAMPTON: The drop, the ransom drop. Don't tell me you've forgotten.

MORT: I'm- no.

HAMPTON: My first time as collection man! I'm good to go - new sunglasses, black suit, attaché case, the car's all ready. You should see ol' Bessie, she's primed, waxed, lubed, pumped and rearing. God I love that car. It's risky, but I think we're up to it.

MORT: Are you?

HAMPTON: I hope so, it's lot of money. Don't tell me you've forgotten.

MORT: No, no, I know exactly, yeah it's easily twenty-five thousand...

(HAMPTON *gestures "up"*) fifty thousand... one hundred...two hundre -

HAMPTON: Half a million.

MORT: Easily

HAMPTON: Do you really think we should be talking about this stuff on the phone?

MORT: God no.

HAMPTON: Frank didn't mention it?

MORT: No, but he did tell me to ask you what the fuck you're on about.

HAMPTON: (*Covers the receiver and talks to MORT directly*) Aren't we doing the crime thriller?

MORT: No.

HAMPTON: No?

MORT: Why are you covering the handset?

HAMPTON: I want to do the crime thriller?

MORT: We're doing the social drama.

HAMPTON: Well which line is the crime thriller. I want to do it, and from the way this one's shaping up I'm pretty sure Frank does as well.

MORT: Frank doesn't get a say.

HAMPTON: Frank's the cat that came up with this caper.

MORT: There's no caper. There's no drop, there's no money, there's just a phone line with a knob on one end and some sad and tragic fucking news!! Now shut up and listen! Well Frank was working back to back shifts -

HAMPTON, *who is rather pissy about the knob call, tilts the table so MORT'S phone falls off onto MORT'S foot. MORT yelps.*

HAMPTON: What, what's going on? I can't see, I'm not there.

MORT: I'm fine. I'm fine, just dropped something on my foot.

MORT *shoves the table so it connects with* HAMPTON.

HAMPTON: Ooh, I felt that. Tell me...

In retaliation, HAMPTON empties the water bottle over MORT.

HAMPTON: Any rain over your way?

MORT: Yes, yes there was, that's actually why I just crashed your car.

HAMPTON: You what?

MORT: Yes, oh horrible, that thing you love?

HAMPTON: Bessie?

MORT: Upended, crashed into a ditch. Oh what a thing to happen on the ransom night, all our schemes gone to nothing.

HAMPTON: *(clearly hostile, but keeping a lid on it)* Wow, really, that's crazy. Are you okay?

MORT: Oh I'm fine. Car's written off.

HAMPTON: You're okay though?

MORT: Oh yeah.

HAMPTON: I think I should come over there and make sure.

MORT: No, no that's okay

HAMPTON: No, no please, I'll come over and bring my medical...bat.

MORT: No you can't come over.

HAMPTON: Oh, I'm coming.

MORT: No you can't, I'm in, in Canada.

HAMPTON: *(beat)* Canada?

MORT: Yeah.

HAMPTON: The country?

MORT: That's how it's advertised.

HAMPTON: So this line represents the entire Pacific Ocean?

MORT: Yes, yes it does. *(If there is a window on MORT's side, which has a view reminiscent of where the play is being performed, this would be the time he pulls a blind or a curtain over it)*

HAMPTON: Well, I'll be sure tell your wife you said hi.

MORT: My wife?

HAMPTON: She's over here. Tucked up in bed. Sleeping the sleep of the happy and moist.

MORT: What?

HAMPTON: She's a lonely, lonely woman Mort. You were off on your driving holiday after all. She wanted a little company. If it's any consolation she screams your name during sex- it helps stave off orgasm.

MORT: You bastard

HAMPTON: She's got a way of taking a man's mind off his foot and putting it on his...foot...if you get me.

MORT: You're a dead man.

HAMPTON: I'm talking cock.

MORT: I'm going to kill you. *(MORT abandons the illusion, and stops using the phone).*

HAMPTON: I can't hear you, you're going to have to talk into the receiver.

MORT: *(not complying, and now HAMPTON abandons the phone conceit)* I'm going to kill you.

HAMPTON: Don't think you are.

MORT: I'm going to strangle you right now.

HAMPTON: I'm afraid not.

MORT: What's going to stop me?

HAMPTON: Well you see this line, it represents the removal of space. This is home, and that's the land of the beaver. -

HAMPTON: - What you going to do about it, send me a postcard with a rudely gesturing moose? Eh?

Two beats. Then MORT hurriedly gets out a hankie and starts rubbing out the line. HAMPTON, panicking, gets out chalk and starts thickening it. The two fumble around with MORT eventually getting his hand through the line to grab HAMPTON'S tie. He pulls HAMPTON'S head through and starts pounding it against the Canada side of the table in a greatly exaggerated fashion, essentially letting him almost straighten up before pounding it into the table again.

MORT: This is how we do it in Canada motherfucker!

Hampton escapes by grabbing his chalk and drawing a line across his tie, which is promptly severed by the restored line. The sound of a slice or rip.

Beat.

The fight continues in a more hands on way, each rubbing out the line, grabbing the other and trying to use the line as a weapon. MORT gets knocked to the ground, but HAMPTON has a hold of his arm. He pulls it taught across the table, and MORT'S prostrate position makes it impossible for him to really struggle. HAMPTON holds up his chalk with an evil grin.

MORT: You wouldn't.

HAMPTON: Mort, I've got some sad and tragic news.

Blackout. Same slicing/ripping SFX as before. Scream.