NEW CYCLE OF MYSTERY PLAYS
The Parable of the Good Servant
by Frazer Flintham

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Directed by Jessica Dromgoole

PLEASE BRING HARD-SOLED SHOES TO THE STUDIO
PLEASE REMEMBER TO SIGN YOUR CONTRACTS

Readthrough/ Record:
Wednesday 31 October 2012  1430-1900

Venue:
Studio 60A
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA
TX: Wednesday 19 December 2012 at 2245 in The Essay BBC Radio 3
SCENE ONE – INT. SHOP FLOOR

Music in 00:00

GILES FRASER: In the year 1210, Pope Innocent III issued a ban on clergy performing in any sort of drama on the public stage. For a while, the church had been getting increasingly twitchy about the popularity of religious plays that had spilled out from the church and into the market place where they were often sponsored by the local town guild. But no one ever granted the church some exclusive deal to be the sole custodians of the Christian message. The proliferation of popular interpretation represented a confidence that the stories of the Bible could be understood in a whole host of different ways and by different people. In this new cycle of commissions, radio 3 has asked a series of contemporary playwrights to do something similar, to take some familiar New Testament stories and to set them in the context of the modern workplace. In this retelling of the Parable of the Good Servant, the mysterious Mr Bell watches his department store from a distance. But like the absent of God, some begin to doubt his existence. And as the loose faith, so the store begins to change character.

1. Wendy Right, morning team. So. Overall Store sales for last week were basically – amazing. Not only did we hit all our daily targets but we also smashed it with the new Ladies and Gents fragrance lines, with Floral Dimension and Masco-Mucho coming out on top. Mr Bell specifically asked me in this morning’s email to pass on his thanks.

Out 1:24

2. Carly (whispering to Rod) Where’s he live again? Swindon?


4. Carly (sighs) I’d love to go to Sweden.
5. Rod  I’d be happy with Swindon right now.

6. Wendy  And as it’s only my third week here, I also really appreciate your efforts. However - at the end of play yesterday, I did notice three bottles of ‘I’d Dye To be Brown’ hair coloring bottles with their labels facing in opposite directions. Now, I didn’t tell Mr Bell this, but he could make his store visit at any time, and it’s these little things that he’ll be assessing us on…

7. Carly  I really thought she was gonna be more chilled out than Rosa – her coming from Glossers. I might apply for Burger City.

8. Wendy  Is there something the matter Carly?

   1. Carly  No. No!

   2. Wendy  Then why’s your face all crunched up? You want to watch that–people won’t take advice on our Spring Lipstick Range from someone with a top lip like a Quaver!

      Now! In Mr Bell’s email this morning he also informed me that as of this coming Friday - Loren will have been an employee at Bells for twenty-five years!

   3. All  No/Gosh/Really?

   4. Wendy  So come here Loren.

The Good Servant final
5. Rod (to Carly) I think I'd have topped myself at six.

6. Wendy In true Bells Store ethos, Mr Bell will be putting an extra £100 into Loren’s account this month.

7. Loren A hundred pounds? Wait ‘til I tell my Frank!

8. Rod Huh! You’d get more begging outside Greggs

9. Loren (to Wendy) Can you thank him in your email?

1. Wendy Of course. Right. Okay, well it’s ten to, let’s get those doors open and aim for more of the same this week! Because when Mr Bell arrives, we want to make him ding-a-ling-a-ling!

FX The Sounds of the Tills opening and closing.
SCENE TWO – INT. OFFICE

1. Loren  So Wendy. How've you found your first month? You settling in all right?

2. Wendy  Yeah - I think so.

3. Loren  Well the store looks gorgeous. I mean, you never know when you get someone new in, if they’re going to rise to the challenge or belly-flop.

4. Wendy  Well that's why I made the move here from Glossers. Bells has such a wonderful reputation – I’m made up to finally be a part of it.

5. Loren  Yes. Well Mr Bell sounds pleased.

6. Wendy  Yes his emails are very encouraging. It’s good to know that he trusts me to just get on with things. Although I do hope he makes a visit soon, because it would be nice to meet him. I had my interview with his daughter, who he sent over from Sweden.

7. Loren  That’s how he’s always done it, yes

8. Wendy  Well I just hope he likes what I’ve done.
SCENE THREE – SOUNDSCAPE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy Another wonderful week team – so thank you for your hard work…. Now Mr Bell...

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Carly Yes Madam, of course. I think Fire Of London Orange would suit your natural tones perfectly.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

3. Rod Mr Bell, Mr Bell, Mr Bell!

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

4. Wendy So another excellent week on sales – and the store is looking top drawer.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

5. Wendy Rod! How many shades of tanning lotions do we have in the summer Shimmer like a winner Range?
6. Rod  Er....

1. Wendy  Twelve Rod!

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Rod  Do you think she's always going to be like this?

3. Carly  Why can't he just turn up, so we can all just relax.
SCENE FOUR – SHOP FLOOR

1. Wendy Okay Carly – you can come off that till and do Ladies Leg Care when Rod gets back from his lunch.

2. Carly All right.

Wendy exits.

3. Rod You’ll never guess who I’ve just seen in the arcade?

4. Carly (shock) Not her with that fringe?

5. Rod No. Rosa!

6. Carly Oh! Did you tell her that we thought she was bad enough?

7. Rod No. But you’ll never guess what she told me?

8. Carly What?

9. Rod The real reason she left!

10. Carly She was in love with Loren and couldn’t bear it any longer?
1. Rod  No. Mr Bell had promised her first dibs on running a new store he’s opening in Westfield – Bells In Heaven.

2. Carly  No!

3. Rod  Yeah! An even higher-end store than this one!

4. Carly  Wow! So that’s why Wendy came here from Glossers!

5. Rod  Yeah. But he never made one visit. Not once, in the whole five years she was here!

Carly notices Wendy approaching

6. Wendy  Err…Rod You may be on your lunch, but Carly isn’t.

7. Rod  Yeah, sorry. (pause) Err… Wendy, can I have a word?

8. Wendy  What is it?


10. Wendy  Oh right.
1. Rod   Yeah. And she asked me to give you a message.

2. Wendy    Me?

3. Rod    Yeah. She ermmm… (in confidence) She said that she isn’t allowed to speak to you herself, as it was in her contract - but there’s something she thought you should know.

4. Wendy    Go on.

5. Rod    She said to tell you - ‘Mr Bell didn’t come’.

6. Wendy    (beat) She told you this?

7. Rod    Yes. She said he never visited when she managed here, not once.

8. Wendy    He must have done!

9. Rod    That’s what she said!

10. Wendy    And how long was she here?

11. Rod    Five years.

FX   The sound of the tills being shut.
SCENE FIVE – INT. OFFICE

1. Wendy Is it true, that Mr Bell never visited when Rosa was here? (pause) Loren?

2. Loren Ermm....

3. Wendy Is it?

4. Loren Yes.

5. Wendy And that’s why she left?

6. Loren Yes.

7. Wendy But....!

8. Loren Look, just because he hasn’t been yet - doesn’t mean he won’t come at all. Don’t lose faith Wendy. You’ve only been here six months. He’ll come. You just have to trust him.

9. Wendy You mean he’s never made a visit?

    PAUSE

10. Loren?
1. Loren  Not yet, no.

2. Wendy  And you’ve never met him?

5. Loren  Everyone round here knows he’s a wonderful man.

6. Wendy  But you’ve been here twenty-six years and he’s never visited, once?

7. Loren  If he said he’s coming, then one day he will.

8. Wendy  But…

9. Loren  I know what he’s promised you…

10. Wendy  *(beat)* How do you know about that?

11. Loren  Oh don’t you leave as well Wendy, you’re the best manager we’ve had – the store’s never looked so good, it really hasn’t.

12. Wendy  Really?

1. Loren  Yes. And this new store – it sounds just wonderful. Just think how wonderful that’s going to be – I mean what an honour – that’s something money can’t buy!

2. Wendy  But if he never comes!
3. Loren  He will! Do you think I’d have stayed working for a man this long if I didn’t think he was a man of his word? I don’t need to work – what with my Frank’s retirement money – but knowing that when I walk down that high street people say ‘look, there’s Loren Hope, she works at Bells!"

4. Wendy  But it’s only his word!

5. Loren  Mr Bell’s old school – he rewards loyalty. Look at the bonus he gave me! He’s the God of Bells, and in our God, we must trust. All the other managers have bailed, but you Wendy, if you keep faith in his word, just think how greatly you’ll be rewarded.

6. Wendy  Well I’d better be
SCENE SIX – SOUNDSCAPE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy Okay, there must be two of you in each aisle at all times, and we must ensure that there is a member of the team available to them within four seconds of store entry.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Wendy Carly, where’s your badge?

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

3. Loren Yes, of course Madam, which would you like?

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

4. Carly Would you like a bow on that Madam?

5. Customer Yes please.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

6. Wendy Is that a crease in your shirt Rod?
FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy …this month’s overall sales are up again on last month….

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Wendy Carly – was that a yawn?

3. Carly No.

4. Wendy I’m in here at 5am every day and I don’t leave much before 9 – but do you see me yawning? (beat) And swill some mouthwash – I can smell pasty from here.

FX Till shutting crescendos…..
SCENE SEVEN – INT. OFFICE

1. Rod Well that’s all the Autumn shades hair pieces out Wendy, so I’m gonna head off now.

2. Wendy Okay, thanks Rod.

3. Rod (pause) Are you okay Wendy?

4. Wendy Yes, yes, I’m fine. I’m just a little tired that’s all.

5. Rod Why don’t you leave with us?

6. Wendy I need to do these figures.

7. Rod Okay. (beat) All he’s bothered about is whether or not we hit our targets. Mr Bell!

8. Wendy Rod!

9. Rod I’m just saying. All this work you do – in here every night.

10. Wendy It’s my job Rod.

The Good Servant final
1. Rod I know but. If you ask me, what’s it matter if we put bows on stuff or curtsey every time someone comes in if?

2. Wendy Have you been curtseying?

3. Rod No.


5. Rod if we’re hitting the targets anyway. People would still come in - the products you get here are all the same as at Glossers.


7. Rod Well.. I’m sure Mr Bell appreciates it. I’ll see you in the morning.

*Rod exits.*

*Wendy lets out a long sigh.*
SCENE EIGHT – SOUNDSCAPE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Wendy Well done again team, Mr Bell is over the moon about the further increase in profits over this last quarter.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

5. Rod Hey Wendy – they’re having a Fireworks theme day over at Glossers.

6. Wendy Really?

7. Rod Yeah it's packed.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Carly Wend – just so you know - I’m going to dust that display down straight after I do these - I haven’t forgotten!

3. Wendy It’s okay. Do it tomorrow.
4. Carly Oh, right

1. Wendy Actually Rod, just get as many of them on the shelf as you can – don’t worry if they aren’t all in line hey, as long as they’re on there.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

2. Loren Wendy, I don’t wish to seem like a snitch – but Carly’s been handing out bags to customers with the Bells logo facing away from the customer.

3. Wendy I’ll have a word with her later.

4. Loren Well I’d say something to her now - she’s already done it twice this morning.

5. Wendy I’ll speak to her later.

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

6. Carly Wendy, me and Rod just wondered – and please it’s only a suggestion, but would it be okay for me and Rod to use some of the damaged make-up as face paints for Halloween?

7. Wendy (pause) I don’t see why not!
FX The sound of the tills being shut.
SCENE NINE – INT. OFFICE

FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Loren Can I have a word?

2. Wendy Come in Loren.

3. Loren Is everything okay?

4. Loren Not really no.

5. Wendy What’s up?

6. Loren I’m a little concerned as to the direction this store is going in?

7. Wendy Oh!

8. Loren Yes. I… I’ve been wanting to say something for a while now, but I thought maybe it was just a blip.

9. Wendy But we’ve never been busier Loren – and our sales are through the roof!

10. Loren Yes, but…
1. Wendy  And Mr Bell’s emails are nothing short of gushing!

2. Loren  But the store? It’s like Poundworld out there.

3. Wendy  Loren...

4. Loren  A lady came in yesterday and asked Carly where she could find the facemasks and Carly told her she’d be better off just buying a balaclava.

5. Wendy  People like banter.

6. Loren  People don’t come to Bells for banter! They come to Bells for a deluxe customer experience and always have done. If they want banter and their goods shoved in a bag like the cashiers stuffing a chicken - they can go to Glossers for that.

7. Wendy  And what’s so wrong with the people who shop in Glossers? Hey?

8. Loren  I mean there’re people coming in who eat at Burger City! Mr Bell employed you to maintain this store’s reputation, to protect the brand, not...

9. Wendy  We’re still hitting our targets?
1. Loren When Mr Bell visits, you’ll be for the high jump!

2. Wendy (pause) He’s never coming Loren! Do you not see?

3. Loren Yes he is. And he'll come when you least expect him!

4. Wendy There hasn’t been a drop in sales because we haven’t dusted on top of every shelf, or grovelled to every customer as they pass by. People are getting their products, Mr Bell’s making his money, we’re all getting our annual pay-rise, so what’s it matter?

5. Loren Well if this is going to continue like this, then I can’t stand and watch it happen.

6. Wendy (pause) What are you saying Loren?

7. Loren I’d like to resign.

8. Wendy Well if that’s what you want.

9. Loren Yes. I don’t think I could bear to watch it when Mr Bell does arrive. For him, for any of you.

10. Wendy I’ll be sorry to see you go.
1. Loren
   And I’m sorry too. Because I really thought you were the one
   who’d stick with it, no matter what.

2. Wendy
   Well it seems this place has been a surprise for all of us then.

FX
   The sound of the tills being shut.

FX
   Christmas Carols play – it fades to the background music in
   the store, into the next scene.
SCENE TEN – INT. SHOP

FX Christmas tunes now play in store
FX The sound of the tills being shut.

1. Carly And eighty-five change. See ya

Wendy approaches.

2. Carly Wendy, is it okay if I nip and get a hot chocolate to have behind the till, I’m freezing.

3. Wendy Yes, go on then. Put a coat on though, they said it might snow today.

4. Carly No.

5. Wendy Yeah.

6. Carly Well I hope it doesn’t stick. I’ve got Zumba tonight.

Music Deck the halls carol.

The Good Servant final
SCENE ELEVEN – INT. SHOP

1. Carly  Just look at it! How are we going to get home?

2. Wendy  We’ll have to stay here the night.

3. Carly  Here?

4. Wendy  Yes – we don’t want to get stranded in this. We’ll get set up in the tea room with the fire on and sleep on the sofas.

5. Rod  Well let’s shut the shop and get out the back now – nobody’s going to coming out in this.

6. Wendy  We’ve got another hour yet?

7. Rod  Oh please Wend!

8. Wendy  (pause) Oh alright.

FX  The store doors open. The sound of the wind and snow comes in.

9. Alan  How come you’ve got power! It’s all gone off in our place.
1. Wendy  Oh no!

2. Alan  Yeah.

3. Wendy  Ah – I wanted a Quarter-Pounder for my tea!

4. Alan  No chance of that. It's freezing in there. Is it alright if I send my staff over here Wendy? Coz they can't get home just yet, and I can't leave them in there.

5. Wendy  Course yeah.

6. Alan  Cheers Wend!

7. Wendy  We're all going to stay here tonight.

8. Alan  Are you?


10. Alan  Well we were meant to be having our Christmas party tonight.

11. Wendy  Well that won't be happening will it.
12. Alan No – the venue’s already called to say they’re not opening.

1. Wendy What a shame.

2. Alan Yeah. And I’ve still got a people carrier full of party bits and booze – and twelve cold miserable staff on my hands.

3. Carly Have it here!

4. Wendy Carly!

5. Carly (whispers) Come on Wendy! The Burger City guys are FIT!

6. Rod I bet they’ve been looking forward to their Christmas party all year - there’s nothing worse than being promised something and then it never happening, hey Wendy.

7. Wendy (pause) Alright then. But no making a mess!
SCENE TWELVE – INT. SHOP

Music Slade’s ‘Wish it could be Christmas Everyday’

Cheers – partying.

Singing 14:14

1. Rod I just can’t believe what a good bar the perfume counter makes!

2. Carly Right Wendy – you’re having a shot!


4. All Yeah / Go on / Do it! Do it!

5. Rod Let your hair down!

6. Wendy Alright then.

7. All Cheer.
**SCENE THIRTEEN – INT. SHOP**

Out 14:35

Music The Macarena. In 14:36

1. Wendy Is that a Zumba move as well Carly?

2. Carly Yeah.

3. Rod We just thought you were having a fit Carl!

Out 14:48
SCENE FOURTEEN – INT. SHOP

Music Mambo Number 5. In 14:48

1. Rod Let’s get the wigs out?

2. Wendy Rod!

3. Rod Oh come on Wendy!

4. Wendy Well I’m having the blonde!

Out 15:06
SCENE FIFTEEN – INT. SHOP

Music George Michael – Last Christmas.

Wendy is now drunk.

In 15:06

1. Wendy ....because, you know Rod, that he promised me, once he’d visited the store and was happy – Bells in Heaven. Oh yeah!

2. Rod We know Wend!

3. Wendy Do ya?

4. Rod Yeah.

5. Wendy Well you see Loren - she was just old school – believing in something just because she’s been told to. You’ve got to be more savvy than that – or people take advantage. Rosa should have stayed and made the most of this – pay rises with no one looking over your shoulder.

6. Carly (shouts) Okay lads! Who’s next under my mistletoe?

Cheers from the lads.

FX The music suddenly goes off.

Out 15:42

7. All Ahhh!
1. Rod 
   Not our power as well!

2. Wendy 
   It’s okay, it’s okay. We’ve got a backup generator, I’ll...

3. Rod 
   Loren?

   Everyone goes quiet.

4. Wendy 
   Loren? You came back, you came back!

5. Loren 
   What have you done?

6. Wendy 
   We’re having a party Loren? A Party! Would you like a cheese twirl? (pause) Is this your Frank? Hello Frank, welcome to the party! Would you like a cheese stick?

7. Loren 
   Wendy, this is...

8. Mr Bell 
   Hello Wendy. I'm Mr Bell.

9. Wendy 
   Mr Bell? Mr Bell. Right… Mr Bell!!!

10. Mr Bell 
    It’s nice to meet you at long last Wendy.

1. Mr Bell: But what a shame.

2. Wendy: Oh, I can explain, we err…

3. Mr Bell: No need.

4. Wendy: Loren! Did you…?

5. Mr Bell: No, she didn’t. I told you I would come Wendy. You weren’t the one for Bells in Heaven after all.

6. Wendy: But I…

7. Mr Bell: I think you’d better leave, don’t you.

8. Wendy: But how am I going to get home?

Music in: 16:50

Annos.

Music out 17:20