

# DIRTY MONEY by JOE MAINGOT

## CHARACTERS

DAVE ANSELL - Managing Director of Microtech, a small software company - late 40s

SAM BURTON - Marketing Director of the same firm - late 30s

JACK WILLIAMSON - Production Director - late 30s

CHUCK ROBINSON - Investment Representative of Union Carbons, an American multinational company - in his fifties

GEOFF - a waiter, 20s.

The character of the Chef, who is never seen but shouts from off-stage can be read in by anyone.

The play is set in a restaurant in the City of London. The time is lunchtime, some time in 2005, as the conflict in Iraq continues. It is perfectly possible to update this to Afghanistan or any war zone you might find applicable.

This is a serious play which confronts the problems of morality and personal integrity. How far are people and corporations accountable?

Over a business lunch it becomes clear that Chuck, representative of a multinational corporation, will be using the latest innovation of a small software company to enhance weapons used in Iraq. Despite the need for the financial security this would bring, enabling him, too, to pay for his sick daughter's hospital bills, Jack, working for the struggling software company, finds that the price is too high. How could he live with himself and his own conscience?

The play is leavened by the comically desperate attempts of Geoff, the waiter, to get rid of a surplus of some dreadful wine and turkey steaks on these customers.

Running at about 25 minutes, this is a perfect examination script, for an all-male cast, with a reasonable spread of characters, plus good opportunities for character development and contrast.

## EXTRACT ONE

***Scene: a restaurant. A waiter, Geoff, is laying a table up for lunch. He hums cheerfully as he moves around the table.***

***From off-stage, the Chef calls out.***

**CHEF off** 'Ave you finished laying up yet, Geoff?

**GEOFF** Nearly. Just doin' this table for the suits.

**CHEF off** Good. Try and push some of that Bulgarian sparkling white wine, will ya? We've still got twenty cases to shift.

**GEOFF** I've been trying all week, believe me, but for some strange reason people look at me as if I'm offering them horse urine.

**CHEF off** Just flog it! We've got to shift it before the month's out or it'll get written off and my stock take ain't lookin' too great as it is.

**GEOFF** I'll do my best but I'm not promisin' nothin'.

**CHEF off** Good, and flog the turkey steaks as well, mate. They're virtually walkin' out of

the door as it is. Today's the last chance, I reckon.

**GEOFF** All right, I'll do my best. [*Pause. To himself.*] Anything but let the customers actually have what they want. Ha ha. Oh, I love it, I do: the decision makers of the world come here - the biggest bosses in town. Some o' their suits gotta cost three months of my salary - minimum, but can they decide what they're gonna eat and drink? Not on your life, mate. I decide! Of course, I gotta let 'em think that they decide themselves; it makes 'em feel full of self-respect. But it's me what ...

**CHEF off** And keep your thievin' 'ands off my chocolate mousse, you fat bastard!

**GEOFF** I ain't never...

**CHEF off** Just leave it alone, will ya?....

## EXTRACT TWO

***Enter Sam Burton, Director of Marketing for Microtech. He is in his late 30s, very relaxed and cheerful.***

**SAM** Hello, mate. Got the beers in?

**DAVE** What time d'you call this? I said twelve sharp!

**SAM** All right, all right. It's only five past.

**DAVE** Sam, this is important, OK?

**SAM** Well, of course, I realise that ...

**DAVE** Just stay awake, OK?

**SAM** You seriously think I'm going to fall asleep in my tomato soup?

**DAVE** I mean - be alert! We've got to be very careful how we handle this. Extremely careful about what we say. Extremely careful.

**SAM** OK,OK. I have handled things like this before. [*Pause.*] Anyway, listen. I think you should know that Jack's daughter is back in hospital again.

**DAVE** Oh God, that's all we need. I mean, that's awful. I'm sorry to hear that. Is it the same thing?

**SAM** Yes, I'm afraid so. It doesn't look too good from the sound of things.

**DAVE** Isn't there anything that can be done? A transplant or something?

**SAM** Maybe. But getting that done privately would cost a pretty penny. And with things as they are ... well...

**DAVE** Yes. It looks as if she could be in a National Health hospital for years, waiting for a donor.

**SAM** Yes, it's a hell of a thing to happen to a fourteen year old kid. Still, Jack says she's being really brave about it. So - have you ordered some beers or what, then?

***Enter Jack Williamson, Director of Production at Microtech, a strong character in his late 30s.***

**JACK** Hello, chaps. Sorry I'm a bit late. Couldn't get off the phone. Our suppliers again.

**DAVE** What did they say?

**JACK** If we don't cough up some cash by the end of the month, they're going to start proceedings. Looks like we're really in the shit this time.

**DAVE** Quite.

**SAM** Why doesn't he get a bollocking for being late?

**DAVE** You know, sometimes Sam I really get the impression that something happened to you at fifteen and you just stopped growing up. This is serious. If we don't convince our friend from America to invest, we're finished! Shut down! Receivers in, us out.

**JACK** Well, let's focus on the task in hand, shall we? We've every reason to be confident. Robinson is a down-to-earth Texan from what I can make out. He knows we've got a fantastic invention. OK, we've got money problems, but the actual idea is fantastic.

***Enter Geoff.***

**GEOFF** Gentlemen, nice to see you here once again. Could I interest you in some delicious sparkling white wine, very popular at the moment?

**SAM** I'll have a pint of that.

**GEOFF** What?

**DAVE** I have already told you what I feel about your allegedly popular Bulgarian sparkling white wine. Now will you please bring some mineral water and the menus immediately.

**GEOFF** Certainly, sir. At once, sir. [*He exits.*]

**SAM** Did you just order mineral water?

**DAVE** Yes.

**SAM** You can't expect me to pass two hours over lunch with you two and a Texan without a few bebies.

**DAVE to Jack** Do you find his puerile, asinine schoolboy humour amusing?

**JACK** Well ...

**DAVE** Listen, the both of you. If I could have done this on my own, I would have. After all, I usually do. I always have done. For the last ten years I have almost exclusively made this business work. Oh yes, I know what you both do is important, but who wins the contracts? Who gets the work? Me. Now, it just so happens that today Mr Robinson wants to see us all together. Just for once, we need to work together to stay alive. So, I want you to pay attention and follow my instructions exactly. Got it, Sam? To the letter...

### EXTRACT THREE

**CHUCK** Well, now, gentlemen. I'm sure you're all keen to know what we at Union Carbons feel about Microtech. I've looked over all the material Dave kindly sent me, and so have our experts in our German branch. That's why I was there recently. It seems pretty clear that your innovation has enormous potential. It really is a most remarkable piece of software - that we think could revolutionise certain aspects of the ICT industry.

**DAVE** Well, that's fantastic. I knew you'd like it.

### *Smiles all round, even from Jack.*

**CHUCK** Oh, yes. Now, I don't want to embarrass you guys, but I happen to know that Microtech is in a little financial difficulty at the moment...

**SAM** That's one way of putting it.

**CHUCK** Well, I spoke last night to the Chief of European investment and our product development director. They are both extremely excited about this new development. They are happy for me to place in your hands a considerable financial advance, that I think will resolve your cash flow problems and then some!

**SAM** Does that mean we'll be able to start paying our salaries again?

**JACK** What a refreshing thought.

**CHUCK** Ha, ha! I love this guy! [*Huge slap to the back of Sam.*] He's got a great sense of humour!

**DAVE** Yeah, hasn't he. Well, I think this is the best news I've heard in years. Let's have a toast, let's raise our glasses. [*They all stand.*] Gentlemen, I give you Microtech, Union Carbons and the Future.

### *All repeat the toast.*

**CHUCK** I'd like to make a toast myself, if I may. You might think that we're helping you out of a tough situation. Well, be that as it is, it may well prove to be that you guys will have helped us out of more than a few tough situations. Gentlemen, a simple toast: Freedom for the whole world.

### *All repeat the toast. They sit.*

**SAM** Chuck, I must say that I'm a little bewildered. Naturally, I'm over the moon that you think our innovation is worth investment, but I don't quite see how our software can be used quite so widely.

**DAVE** Of course, up until now we've been concentrating on the basic technical development and its immediate uses.

**CHUCK** Well, of course, when one person or group of persons grabs hold of an idea and then passes it on to someone else, it frequently changes. Each person sees a new possibility. Now, one of the most exciting possibilities for your product is its military application. We feel it's exactly what the forces could be looking for. Imagine that as a contract!

**DAVE** Of course, of course, of course! God, how limited we were! Absolutely right, Chuck. It just takes another person with a fresh approach. That is brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

**CHUCK** Of course, we haven't convinced the US government yet. But Union Carbons already hold a range of government contracts.

**JACK** What precisely do these contracts involve, Chuck?

**CHUCK** Weapons systems, navigational technology, and so on.

**JACK** I see. So that explains why Union Carbons are doing quite well at the moment. In fact, they're expanding at an astonishing rate. I haven't had much time, but I've done my research too...

**DAVE** Which is fantastic news for us as well, now. We're very lucky to have you behind us, Chuck.

**CHUCK** We are all lucky to be able to be partners in this thing. After all -

**JACK with sarcasm** We'll be partners in bringing freedom to the planet.

**CHUCK** That's right!

**DAVE** That's quite right, Jack. Now, what's happened to our food ...?

**JACK** I don't think I'm very hungry. [**He gets up to leave.**] I think I'd better leave now...

**DAVE standing** Sit down, Jack. I'm sorry, Chuck, but Jack sometimes has these immature outbursts -

**JACK** I'm leaving -

**DAVE** SIT DOWN!!!

**SAM** Hey, if he wants to -

**DAVE** Shut up, Sam. Keep out of it.

**CHUCK** Guys, what the hell's going on here?

**DAVE** It's nothing important.

**JACK** Nothing important? I have no intention whatsoever of getting into bed with the US military machine. How am I supposed to look anyone in the face when my home, my car, my school fees, my everything, is paid for from the profits of Bush's crusades? You may be able to buy your little girl her Christmas present and see her smile as she opens the present and forget at the same time that thousands of people were killed and maimed by the product that paid for that present, but I can't. No way, Dave. We've gone into some questionable stuff before, but this is the limit for me. If you want to go there, then I'll have to resign.

**SAM** Jack, you can't blame yourself for what other people do with your company's inventions. We never had any...

**DAVE** Shut up, Sam. Jack - if that's the way you feel, piss off out of it now.

**Pause.**

**CHUCK** May I say a word? [**Pause.**] Jack, we don't expect everyone that we work with across the globe to be pro-Bush or pro - the Iraq war and so on. Some of our own American employees are not completely happy with the way America has gone. These things are natural. After all, freedom of opinion is essential, is it not? But you must understand that it's too late now. Yes, you have a patent on your invention but it will run out, or be modified slightly and used and manufactured by another company. In fact, it would not be impossible that Union Carbons could buy you all out if things go well. You could never cope with the level of demand. You are miniscule as a company, in global terms. So - what's it all about? You resign and feel noble, but it isn't going to change anything at all. Nothing.

And what does Jack do next? He looks for a new job and he finds a great company and is very happy working there and then he finds out that some of their components are made in Third World sweatshops, or that one of their subsidiaries publishes pornography, or their software is used by tobacco companies to market cancer sticks, or - or something else! It's a web, Jack, and it sticks to you wherever you go. You can't escape it - you can't go anywhere.

But this need not depress you, Jack - not that much anyway. You keep your own life clean - your own corner. How can you possibly do any more?...

EXTRACT from Production Notes

## **PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES. ETC.**

### **INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS**

The main issue of the play is the conflict between personal integrity and financial gain. What happens when a struggling small business, under threat of closure, is offered a large investment and consequent security - with a sting in the tail. The sting is that the invention the company has made will be used to build more efficient and deadly weapons for the U.S. Army.

For Dave there is no issue. The business will be saved, their futures secure. He is quite prepared not to think of what their invention could mean in terms of human suffering. For Jack the issue is enormous. He cannot sign his name to such a use of their invention - which it is made quite clear was never envisaged as being used for such purposes.

Really, the play is about whether you are for or against the war in Iraq - though I don't see any reason why the whole thing cannot be updated to Afghanistan instead. That is firmly its background. Dave would probably have said he was against it, but is prepared to sell out for financial gain. Jack is completely against it and would not consider being a party to anything that will further it.

In the mix of characters are also Sam, who once he has to express an opinion, states that what other people do with a product once it's invented is not the inventor's problem, which is a way of washing his hands of a decision one way or another. Then there's Chuck, the pro-Bush, pro-Iraq American who has made them the offer and who is proud of his sons, prepared to die for their president's decision.

Thus we have a full mix of opinions for a dramatised debate and there are no easy answers. To load the dice further, Jack has a daughter likely to die in hospital if she doesn't have a life-saving operation. Private treatment would give her a better chance, but would cost money - money which Jack will not have if the firm goes bust. And yet, despite his daughter's plight, Jack still can not sell out.

It is a good conundrum and one which will cause the students many arguments themselves, I'm sure. It is hard to see whether the ending that Joe Maingot has written clarifies the answer or not. Jack says he will sell his house, whatever it takes, to ensure his daughter gets her operation but the play ends with him rushing to the hospital after a phone call stating that she is much worse. Clearly she is dying - it is already too late for that operation. Perhaps this is some sort of judgement on Jack, whose compassion for the innocents of Iraq made him decisive too late; compassion for his own daughter was marred by indecision: a bit late now to start thinking of selling the house or car to save her.

The role of the waiter, Geoff, throughout is to add a bit of comic relief and contrast from the rather heavy issues in the piece. There are a few side-swipes from him about those who have [the customers at this posh restaurant] and those who haven't - himself. He takes pleasure in the fact that despite the customers thinking they are the bosses, he is able to manipulate them into accepting his choices for their meal - a nice revenge.

Thus the play is political in a very wide sense, and though not written in a Brechtian style - it has to be played naturalistically, apart from Geoff's link with the audience - the issues that are aired would have delighted him. Despite being political, it is not boring; there are enough conflicts of character to sustain interest, as well as the anarchic interruptions of Geoff.

## CHARACTERS

**DAVE ANSELL** Managing Director of Microtech, a small software company, is in his late forties. Dave is a worried man, desperate to save his business from closure. He is prepared to do anything to ensure this, including selling out any beliefs he may have. Personal issues and emotions are not important to him. He is anxious that everyone else in the company should toe the line and some humour is gained by his heavy-handed anger at Geoff the waiter and at Sam, who is the company 'comic.' So far down the line of loss of 'self' is he that his first reaction to news that Jack's daughter is very ill is 'That's all we need.' Though he hastily tries to cover this up, we are supposed to remember this about Dave and to dislike him accordingly.

The actor needs to have a rather bullying tone with his own colleagues, but be horribly deferential to Chuck. His embarrassment at Jack's outburst needs to be huge. This is a strong part, needing strong and decisive acting with clear 'weighty' body language and voice. It also requires a feel for comedy. As the play progresses, Dave's attempts to divert attention from the Iraq issue become more strained and more comical, without spoiling the basic seriousness of the piece. Also comical is the 'war' he wages with Geoff.

**SAM BURTON** - Marketing Director of the firm, in his late thirties. Dave accuses Sam of having never grown up and in a sense this is a mask that Sam has adopted. He has become the office clown - always up for a laugh and a cheap joke. In fact, there is a warm person underneath. This is clear in his relating of Jack's daughter's illness to Dave early in the play. But though he states his support of Jack at the end, it is not strong enough to divert him from his food or to be said in front of the boss. This is a man who is as shallow as he pretends to be - who blows with whichever wind will benefit him and his warmth only stays as long as it does not endanger his career.

The actor playing this part must show the anxiety inside Sam as the play progresses. Sam's larking about is his way of sitting on the fence. He never quite leaves that fence - his support is offered safely out of earshot of his boss. He is not a bad character, though weak and a survivor. Even his habit of not wasting all the food and drink says something about that - his need to survive. And his sitting on the fence means that his personal integrity is never really tested - any decisions on his part are concealed under the jokey manner. As the play progresses, his manner as a survival tactic needs to be exposed. This can only be done by making the humour sound more forced, more brittle, more obviously 'hearty.'

**JACK WILLIAMSON**, the Production Director of the firm, is in his late thirties. As Production Director, the product in question for the play's purposes would be his 'baby'. As such, he cares what it is used for; it is clearly a device with much potential, as an aid to weaponry being only one possibility - and one which never crossed Jack's mind. Jack is principled and hot-tempered. He cannot compromise himself and his beliefs and as such is both admirable and a thorn in the company's side in this particular case.

I discussed above how Jack has left it too late to raise money to help his daughter. Perhaps we are seeing a man who has, like the others in the play, put his job first and escaped from home problems through it. Now confronted with a no-win situation at work - no job if the firm goes bust and no way he can see his product be used in Iraq - he is left to face up with the reality of his home life. His daughter's crisis is a way of jolting him back to facing what is really important. Will it, in the end, mean that he sacrifices his conscience? The ending doesn't give us an answer.

Fluency and fire is the key to playing Jack. He needs to sound authoritative and

ceertain, never pathetically angry. We need to see the tension in him when the meal is carrying on and he is 'biting his tongue.' It gathers into a spring inside him and explodes.

CHUCK ROBINSON is the American representative of a multinational company who can prospectively save this small company by buying their product - for use in a weapons programme destined for Iraq. He is in his fifties, a dyed-in-the-wool Bush fan. His sons are both out fighting in Iraq and he is staunchly proud of them.

In many ways Chuck is the prototype 'American': a rich Texan [Southern drawl necessary], hearty and bluff. The surprise comes later when we find out he is not just a stereo-type but a man with a good mind, if a cynical view of the world. He explains to Jack that having ideals are pointless. The individual cannot change anything - all he will do is ruin himself, resigning jobs every time he finds the company is compromised in any way. Sadly, the play seems to back this up - and yet Jack is an admirable character and Chuck's world-weary approach has our hackles up.

Play Chuck as very loud and hearty with a big laugh and gestures but a shrewd and incisive way of talking when the crunch comes and the bluff mask drops.

GEOFF is a waiter in his twenties. As the comic relief of the play he must be played with a light touch. An accent would emphasise a working-class background - but overlaid with 'mock posh' when talking to customers. The contrast gives the character more to play with. Though there is less for an actor to work with here, there are a variety of ways he could be played to make a mark.

I think he ought to be the 'cheeky chappie' - fast-talking, pushy. He is the sort that always goes a little far, which means that he often incurs anger, especially from Dave. This 'war' can be developed and made into an interesting feature for the character. Early on, he establishes a direct link with the audience and this ought to be kept up throughout. Go for the looks of triumph to the audience when he sells any of what the chef has asked him to get rid of. Careful to get this balanced and not to overdo it to the point of being irritating. You could build his part perhaps, by having him hovering and listening sometimes, giving us the benefit of his opinion, by facial expression, of the behaviour he sees amongst these customers.

## **SETTING**

This is of the simplest - but you can add to it if you want greater realism. For exam purposes it can simply be done with a table and chairs against black curtains. Added touches, such as a coat stand and a further table on which piles of crockery, cutlery, glasses etc., perhaps a bowl of fruit, baskets of rolls, and so on, with a centrepiece of a large flower arrangement would add interest to the set without being too complex. The table that is used by our actors needs to be smartly set - white cloth, small vase of flowers, napkins and shining cutlery, sideplates and glasses. Menus could be on the other table and brought over by Geoff. The other table would give a focal point for Geoff too.

For the audience's purposes, since we are told that the restaurant is busy, the rest of the eating area is offstage past the table with the flower arrangement; this makes this table as if tucked away in a corner, a special request from Dave, discreetly placed away from the rest.

From the viewing point of view, the chairs are set so that every character is visible to the audience - always a challenge. In this case, just four shouldn't be too difficult. Have Dave and Chuck along the long side facing out and Jack and Sam at either end...