

Short-Lived or "Gnat So Fast"

A Short One-Act Comedy By Stafford Krause

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Announcer

Nate Gnat: a male gnat or no-see-em fly

Katie Gnat: a female gnat or no-see-em fly

TIME AND PLACE

A recent Spring evening on a grassy knoll

Short-Lived or "Gnat So Fast"

(ANNOUNCER appears in front of the curtain)

ANNOUNCER

It was a beautiful Spring evening just before dusk and the smell of fresh-mowed grass was in the air. A sunbeam fell on a patch of grass nearby and dozens of gnats... or no-see-ems as some call them... rose into the air in a wild mating frenzy. We didn't mean to eavesdrop on this romantic undertaking, but couldn't help overhearing one impassioned couple as they began this short-lived ritual.

(ANNOUNCER exits and the CURTAIN RISES on NATE and KATIE Gnat upstage center. Placing their hands in their armpits and flapping their arms up and down to imitate wings, THEY flutter to downstage center.)

NATE

(... breathlessly)

Well! Hello there!

(KATIE ignores HIM)

NATE

I said Hi!

KATIE

Were you talking to me?

NATE

Yes I was.

KATIE

I wish you wouldn't. Can't you see I'm just trying to get some sun?

NATE

You're what?

KATIE

Can't you see I'm trying to work on my tan?

NATE

Trying to work on your tan?

That's not what we're here for. We're here to ... well you know. And we've only got about 20 minutes while the sun lasts to do it.

KATIE

Oh! You mean that mating thing.

I'm not the kind of girl to do that sort of things with strangers.

NATE

With strangers! Look around. Do you see any male gnats that you know?

KATIE

Well, no.

NATE

That's because we all just hatched. We're all strangers.

Anyway, my name is Nate Gnat. What's yours?

KATIE

I'm Katie Gnat.

(THEY shake wingtips)

NATE

See. Now we're no longer strangers.

KATIE

Well I'm just not into those "one night" ... that is "20-minute"... stands.

I'm looking for more of a commitment.

NATE

Commitment?

Hell! I get one shot. Then I'm spent and fall to the earth and die.

Now that's a commitment.

KATIE

I just don't know... and I do have a kind of headache.

NATE

Look. If we don't skip all this small talk and the sun fades, we'll both have a lot more than a headache. We will both be gone and have done nothing to perpetuate the gnat species.

KATIE

But if we both just hatched we might have the same parents. We might be brother and sister. That would be incest.

NATE

That's ridiculous! Look around. There are so many mating gnats that the chances of our having the same parents is miniscule. And look... we even have different colored eyes.

KATIE

Well I don't know. We could have different colored eyes because of that dominant and recessive gene thing.

NATE

Look! Will you or won't you? We're running out of time. And as the old expression goes "There are a lot of other flies in the sky".

KATIE

You haven't caught anything have you? I mean you haven't been seeing a lot of those other flies in the sky have you?

NATE

Hell no! I just hatched when you did. And I only get one try ... as I told you ... before I fall to the earth and die. Can't we get on with this?

KATIE

(... prudish)

Well I suppose so ... If we must. How do we proceed?

NATE

It's supposed to be instinctive.

KATIE

Instinctive?

NATE

Yeh! You know "What comes naturally".

KATIE

Well it doesn't come naturally for me.

NATE

(HE pauses - rolling his eyes)

I never would have guessed!

KATIE

OK, Mr. Naturally Instinctive ... how **do** we do it?

NATE

Well...ah.

KATIE

Well...ah...what?

NATE

(... hesitating)

Oh, hell! I don't know either!

Let's watch and see what the others are doing.

KATIE

They seem to be flying into each other.

NATE

Yeh! They're kind of bumping together.

Let's try it. You fly over there and I'll fly over there ... and we'll fly at each other and bump.

KATIE

OK!

(THEY wave their underarm-wings to opposite sides downstage)

NATE

Ready?

KATIE

Is my makeup on all right? I do want this to be a special moment.

NATE

(... exasperated)

You're fine. Just fine. Trust me.

When I count to three let's go.

One... two...

KATIE

Wait!

NATE

What now?

KATIE

Promise you'll respect me in the morning.

NATE

Respect you in the morning? It's curtains for me as soon as we do it.

I won't be around in the morning.

KATIE

Promise?

NATE

(... moaning)

What?

KATIE

Promise?

NATE

(... more exasperated)

OK! OK! I promise!

Let's get on with it already!

(pause)

One... two... THREE!

(NATE and KATIE face each other and run to downstage center where they bump together)

NATE

(... spinning around in death throes, falling to the stage and saying very dramatically)

I am spent. But I die in peace knowing that a new generation of gnats will carry on.

(NATE drops his head and dies)

KATIE

(... pausing and looking around while shrugging her shoulders)

IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

CURTAIN