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First Things First

A comedy

Derek Benfield

Samuel French — London
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CHARACTERS

Sarah, an appealing young lady with a romantic imagination

Pete, a pleasant middle-aged man with a fondness for marriage

Margot, a formidable possessive mother in her sixties

George, a good friend to have in a crisis

Jessica, an attractive wife with a secret or two

Alan, a good looking man in his forties with an eye or two for a girl or two

These unlikely events take place in Pete's and Sarah's house in the suburbs of a big city

ACT I A Friday evening in the summer

ACT II A few minutes later

Time—the present

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(See also page ii)

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Look Who's Talking

Off the Hook!

Over my Dead Body

Panic Stations

Post Horn Gallop

Running Riot

Second Time Around

Touch and Go

Two and Two Together

Up and Running!

Wild Goose Chase

ACT I

The sitting-room of Pete's and Sarah's house in the suburbs of a big city

Nobody about. Then the telephone rings, abruptly. After a moment, Sarah runs in quickly and goes to answer it. She is a pretty, appealing young lady with a romantic imagination

Sarah Hallo? Ah—Isobel! *I was just going to call you! I'm afraid something's happened and I won't be able to make it tonight. (She sighs, regretfully)* Yes. *I'm disappointed too. I was looking forward to it. But I—* I had such a silly accident. I tripped and fell, and sprained my ankle. *(Suffering suitably)* Yes—it's agony! I can hardly put my foot down!

A car is heard pulling up outside. Sarah reacts to it and hastily ends her conversation

Sorry, Isobel—I'll have to talk to you later! Bye!

Sarah hangs up, looking a little shame-faced and runs quickly (and without difficulty) to the sofa. She lies down, puts her leg up and settles down with a magazine, the brave invalid

Pete walks in from the hall. He is a pleasant, attractive man in his middle years. He is carrying a wrapped bottle of wine, his laptop and the evening paper. He does not see Sarah, puts his things down, takes off his coat and goes back into the hall to hang it up. He returns at speed and stops, staring at Sarah in surprise

Pete You're not supposed to be here!

Sarah looks up from her magazine, a little hurt

Sarah I live here.

Pete Yes, darling, I know you live here. But tonight I thought you were going to be elsewhere. So what are you doing over there?

Sarah I'm lying down. With my leg up. *(She resumes her reading)*

Pete I thought you'd be in the bath by now. *(He goes to sort out his things)*

Sarah Well. I'm not.

Pete No. I can see that. You're lying down. With your leg up.

Sarah Yes. Reading a magazine. (*She turns a page, elaborately*)

Pete Well, hadn't you better get a move on? You're due there soon.

Sarah (*calmly*) I can't get a move on.

Pete Why not?

Sarah Because plans have changed.

Pete (*returning to her*) You can't change plans at the last minute! Isobel's expecting you.

Sarah Yes. I know.

Pete So don't just lie there! Go and get dressed. (*He looks at his watch*) And perhaps you'd better cut the bath because there isn't time now.

Sarah I can't.

Pete Can't cut the bath?

Sarah Can't get dressed. (*She turns another page*)

Pete You know what Isobel's like. She does like you to make an effort.

Sarah (*suffering suitably*) I can't make an effort...!

Pete (*with a smile*) You're very defeatist tonight. Can't get dressed. Can't make an effort. You said you were looking forward to Isobel's party.

Sarah I was. But now I'm not going. (*She sulks a little*)

Pete You said you were going this morning. Darling, you fixed it weeks ago!

Sarah Well, now I've unfixed it.

Pete (*playfully*) I see. You're in one of your moods. Is that it?

Sarah What moods? I don't have moods.

Pete Yes, you do. You're in your sulking, sorry-for-yourself mood. All right—why aren't you going?

Sarah (*dramatically*) Because I've broken my leg!

Pete Oh, darling! You never said! (*He goes to her, sympathetically*)

Sarah You never asked.

Pete peers at her leg for a moment

Pete Where's the plaster?

Sarah There isn't any plaster.

Pete A broken leg and no plaster?

Sarah (*losing heart*) Well ... it's not exactly broken...

Pete (*with a smile*) I see. You're exaggerating. You're in your exaggerating mood as well as your sulky, sorry-for-yourself mood.

Sarah It's not my leg anyway! It's my *ankle*!

Pete Which one?

Sarah (*indicating*) This one! The one that isn't in contact with the floor!

Pete And you've broken it?

Sarah Well ... it's not exactly broken...

Pete So you haven't broken your leg and you haven't broken your ankle?

Sarah No... (*Defensively*) But I've *sprained* it! And that's why I can't go to Isobel's party.

Pete But she's expecting you.

Sarah Not any more.

Pete She was this morning.

Sarah Well, she ... she rang me up. So I told her.

Pete You managed to reach the phone then?

Sarah avoids his eyes, guiltily

Sarah Mrs Trundle passed it to me.

Pete (*indicating the telephone*) And then put it back again.

Sarah Yes...

Pete (*peering at her ankle*) It doesn't look very swollen.

Sarah It soon will! In half an hour it'll be up like a balloon!

Pete (*alarmed at the prospect*) Really? Good lord...!

Sarah (*the drama queen*) I expected a bit of sympathy...

Pete Yes, of course you did, darling! I'm so sorry. (*He sits beside her, puts her leg on to his lap, and smiles comfortingly*) There we are. That better?

Sarah (*uncertainly*) H'm...

Pete So—er—how did you do it, anyway?

Sarah Do what?

Pete Sprain your... (*He indicates her ankle*)

Sarah Ankle?

Pete Yes.

Sarah hesitates. Pete grins

You haven't forgotten, have you?

Sarah No, of course I haven't forgotten!

Pete So ... how did it happen?

Sarah I ... I tripped over the Hoover.

Pete holds her look for a moment, finding this a little hard to understand. Then he chuckles

Pete You didn't, did you?

Sarah Yes.

Pete Tripped over the Hoover?

Sarah Yes!

Pete Why were you using the Hoover? We pay Mrs Trundle to do that.

Sarah I didn't say I was using it. It was there. And I tripped over it.

Pete So it was Mrs Trundle's fault? She went off and left the Hoover in the walking way.

Sarah No. It ... it wasn't in the walking way.

Pete Where was it, then?

Sarah hesitates again

Sarah In the cupboard under the stairs.

Pete (*amused*) How did you trip over the Hoover when it was in the cupboard under the stairs?

Sarah I was looking for something!

Pete In the cupboard?

Sarah Yes. And it was right at the back and I couldn't reach it. So I moved the Hoover out of the cupboard so I *could* reach it. And while I was reaching it I ... I forgot all about the Hoover. So when I turned to come out of the cupboard I ... (*She peters out*)

Pete Tripped over the Hoover?

Sarah Yes... (*Defensively*) It's an easy thing to do!

Pete Had you been drinking?

Sarah Of course I hadn't been drinking! It was the middle of the afternoon.

Pete Well, I would have thought that a vacuum cleaner was rather a large item to trip over if you were sober.

Sarah I didn't notice it.

Pete Did you call the doctor?

Sarah No. Why?

Pete I just thought you might have wanted to get a professional opinion before deciding that it was sprained.

Sarah I should know if it's sprained or not! It is *my* ankle!

Pete Yes. Yes, I know it is, darling. A very nice ankle. (*He studies her very nice ankle for a moment*) Doesn't seem to be swelling up yet.

Sarah It soon will! It's only a matter of time. Aren't you going to offer me a whisky or something?

Pete You don't usually drink whisky.

Sarah And I don't usually sprain my ankle! It might have helped relieve the pain...!

Pete (*concerned*) Oh, darling—you never told me you were in pain...!

Sarah Of course I'm in pain!

Pete Right, then! Whisky it is. (*He gets up, carefully replacing her leg on the sofa, and goes to pour a whisky*) You should have said. You were being so brave I didn't realize that pain was on the agenda.

Sarah You don't mind, do you?

Pete About you drinking whisky? Of course not! Not if you're in pain.

Sarah About me not going to Isobel's!

Pete (*returning with the whisky*) Well, it does seem a pity not to go just because you've twisted your ankle. (*He hands the whisky to her*)

Sarah I haven't just twisted it! I've sprained it! (*She takes a generous sip, and reacts to its biting flavour*) You're trying to get rid of me, aren't you?

Pete Don't be daft! We've only been married six months. (*He chuckles and goes to unwrap the bottle of wine that he brought in*)

Sarah takes another generous sip of whisky and tries to appear casual

Sarah Are you doing anything special tonight?

Pete I'm not going to Isobel's party if that's what you mean!

Sarah So what *are* you doing, then?

Pete Oh—er—nothing, really.

Sarah You're not going out, then?

Pete No, no, I—I'm staying in, but—

Sarah Well, don't stay in on *my* account! (*She takes another swig of whisky*)

Pete (*a little surprised*) No. Right... (*He finishes unwrapping the bottle of wine*)

Sarah (*with great importance*) You've brought home a bottle of wine I see...

Pete Oh, this. Yes. I picked it up in Tesco's on my way.

Sarah We've got plenty of wine in the house already.

Pete Have we? Oh, well. Never mind, eh? The more the merrier. (*He laughs*)

Sarah But perhaps *that* bottle is a *special* bottle?

Pete (*looking at the bottle casually*) H'm. Yes. It is quite good, actually.

Sarah So what is it that makes you pick up a bottle of "quite good" wine from Tesco's and necessitates me being out tonight?

Pete I didn't say you had to be out—

Sarah Well, this morning over breakfast you kept asking if I was going to Isobel's party.

Pete (*returning to her*) I was showing interest, that's all.

Sarah You asked me three times!

Pete Did I? Well, that shows what a considerate husband I am. Always concerned for your welfare. (*Indicating her ankle*) Still doesn't seem to be swelling up...

Sarah It's bigger than it was! Soon it'll be *huge*!

Pete Really? Good lord...! (*He gives her ankle a doubtful look*) Feeling a bit better now though, I expect?

Sarah What?

Pete Your ankle! After the whisky. Must have made *some* difference, surely?

Sarah (*reluctantly*) Well—yes, I suppose it has ... a bit. But it hasn't gone completely!

Pete No, no. Still—that's a step in the right direction, isn't it? (*He smiles at her, optimistically*) Perhaps it was just a temporary twinge.

Sarah (*deeply affronted*) A temporary twinge?!

Pete Yes. Maybe the sprain has righted itself. Or perhaps it was just cramp.

Sarah It was not just cramp!

Pete Still, it would be a pity to miss Isobel's party if your ankle's feeling a bit better. Why don't we give it a try?

Sarah Give it a try?!

Pete Just a few steps around the sofa.

Sarah Around the sofa?!

Pete That's not very far. You're not doing the course at Aintree.
(*Encouragingly*) Come on—up you get! You can do it! (*He starts to help her up*)

Sarah gives him a long-suffering look

Sarah I'm glad you're not in the medical profession. You wouldn't be famous for your bedside manner! (*Now she is on her feet*)

Pete There you are! Now you're upright.

Sarah I may be able to stand, but it doesn't mean that I can walk!

Pete You only have to walk slowly. Just one step at a time. See how you get on. OK? Right—off we go! Left, right! Left, right! Left, right!

With Pete supporting and assisting her, Sarah reluctantly takes a few unsteady steps, slowly at first and then gradually gathering speed as they circle the sofa like competitors in a three-legged race. Having achieved the objective, Sarah falls dramatically back on to the sofa. Pete smiles at her triumphantly

There! You see? I knew you could do it. So now you *can* go to Isobel's party!

Sarah (*glaring at him*) You *are* trying to get rid of me tonight, aren't you? I knew you were up to something!

The doorbell rings. Pete reacts in alarm

Pete There's the doorbell!

Sarah Yes.

Pete *Our* doorbell!

Sarah Well, don't sound so surprised. You must have heard it before.

Pete But I'm not expecting anyone! Not *now*...

Sarah (*immediately suspicious*) You mean you *are* expecting someone later?

The doorbell rings again

You'll have to answer it!

Pete Why?

Sarah Because it's my mother.

Pete (*wildly*) Your mother's not coming here! Not tonight! You were going out! What's your mother doing outside the front door?

Sarah Waiting for you to open it.

Pete But why is she out there?

Sarah Because I rang and told her about my injured ankle and she said she'd come over and bandage it. She used to be a surgeon. Or had you forgotten?

Pete You don't need a surgeon to bandage an ankle! I'm perfectly capable of bandaging my own wife's ankle.

Sarah Then why didn't you do it instead of dragging me to my feet and making me gallop around the sofa?

Pete You didn't exactly gallop.

The doorbell rings again

Sarah She's getting impatient.

Pete She always is...! (*He whispers*) Look—if we keep quiet she might go away.

Sarah Pete! She's my mother!

Pete Even so.

Sarah (*severely*) Go and answer the door.

Pete Yes. Right. (*He starts to go, then looks back at her*) But as soon as she's bandaged your ankle she's back on her bike!

Pete goes into the hall

Sarah remembers her whisky, thinks her mother might disapprove, finishes it off, gets up and runs quickly to put the glass down. Then she returns and settles herself on the sofa in suitably pathetic mode

Margot marches in, with Pete in her wake. She is a powerful, confident woman in her sixties. She sees her suffering daughter on the sofa, stops and gasps in a somewhat theatrical manner

Margot Sarah! You poor darling! (*She hastens across to her*)

Pete She's only sprained her ankle. There was no need for *you* to come charging over here.

Margot Charging? You make me sound like a bison.

Pete (*ruefully*) Yes...

Margot Let me see the extent of the damage. (*She examines Sarah's ankle*) Does that hurt?

Pete No.

Margot She can speak for herself! Sarah?

Sarah Well—just a little...

Margot (to Pete) You see? The poor girl is obviously in agony and putting a brave face on it. (She continues her examination) It doesn't appear to be broken...

Pete I told you it wasn't!

Margot (looking at him, coldly) I thought you were in advertising and therefore unfamiliar with medical matters?

Pete She's twisted her ankle, that's all!

Margot Typical male reaction. (To Sarah) I may have to prepare a poultice.

Pete She doesn't need a poultice! A couple of paracetamol and she'll be as right as rain. Then she can go off to Isobel's party as planned.

Margot Isobel?

Sarah Fortescue.

Margot (ominously) I've heard of her... (She tries to recall)

Sarah She was one of my bridesmaids.

Margot I knew it was something that I'd tried to put out of my mind...

Pete (to Sarah) Darling, Isobel will be very disappointed if you don't go.

Margot And I shall be disappointed if she does! It's out of the question. Bedrest is essential.

Pete Bedrest? For a sprained ankle?

Margot starts to sort out a bandage and scissors and things from her bag

Margot How did this unfortunate incident occur? Were you pursuing her?

Pete Of course I wasn't pursuing her! I was at work. She tripped over the Hoover.

Margot (appalled) The Hoover?! (She looks at Sarah, inquiringly)

Sarah Yes...

Margot Has Mrs Trundle tendered her resignation?

Pete No, no! Sarah wasn't using the Hoover at the time.

Margot I should hope not! Carpet-sweeping is the prerogative of Mrs Trundle. (To Sarah) If you weren't using the Hoover, how was it that you tripped over it?

Pete (enthusiastically) What a very good question! (He grins at Sarah)

Sarah What does it matter how I tripped over it? I thought you were here to give medical assistance, not to criticize me!

Pete Yes! If you're not going to help you may as well go home. (He tries to urge her on her way)

Margot I have no intention of going home until I have dealt with this emergency.

Pete It's not exactly a world-shattering event. It's a twisted ankle. (Playfully) Perhaps you'd better tell her how it happened, darling?

Sarah (glaring at him) It doesn't matter how it happened!

Pete Yes, it does! If your mother's going to give you the benefit of her medical expertise she'll need to know how you came to fall over a vacuum cleaner.

Margot I can only assume that Mrs Trundle had left it in the walking way.

Pete Oh, no. No. I don't *think* it was in the walking way, was it, darling?

Sarah gives him another severe look

Margot Then where was it?

Pete Where was it, darling?

Sarah (*inaudibly*) In the cupboard under the stairs...

Margot I can't hear you!

Sarah (*a fraction louder*) In the cupboard under the stairs...

Pete (*to Margot, helpfully*) In the cupboard under the stairs.

Margot How on earth could you fall over the Hoover when it was in a cupboard?

Sarah hesitates

Pete Shall I tell her, darling?

Sarah No!

Margot Ah! You were *hiding* in the cupboard! Just as I thought. (*To Pete*) You *were* pursuing her. And she sought refuge in a cupboard. I might have guessed.

Pete But I wasn't here, Margot, so if anyone was pursuing her it must have been the window cleaner. (*He glances at his watch*) Will you excuse me a minute? I need to make a quick phone call. Shan't be long!

Pete takes out his mobile as he darts out into the garden

Margot watches him go, balefully

Margot He was always very secretive. When I first set eyes on him I knew there was something secretive about him. (*She starts to bandage Sarah's ankle*) You're far too tolerant. You should listen to *me*—and learn!

Sarah But I *do* listen to you. And I *have* learned. (*Proudly*) And today I'm taking action!

Margot Not a moment too soon!

Sarah sets out her mounting suspicions stage by stage

Sarah After all, he does seem very keen for me to go to Isobel's party tonight...

Margot Exactly! Even though you're suffering under the burden of a physical handicap.

Sarah Over breakfast he asked me *three times* if I was going...

Margot Only a guilty man would ask a question three times.

Sarah (*delivering the coup de grâce*) He even brought home a bottle of "quite good" wine...

Margot Proof beyond doubt! He's got an assignation!

Sarah loses heart a little and tries to dismiss the idea

Sarah And yet he did say that he was staying in tonight...

Margot Staying in—but not necessarily alone! And then you tripped over the carpet sweeper and put the cat among the pigeons. So now he's gone to telephone whoever it is to prevent them arriving here when you were unexpectedly present!

Sarah That does seem to be the likely scenario. So perhaps I don't need to feel guilty...

Margot Guilty? *You?*

Sarah Yes. I'm afraid I have a confession to make. (*She plucks up courage, and confesses*) I didn't fall over the Hoover.

Margot smiles, delightedly

Margot I thought as much! I am an experienced physician and could detect no serious sign of damage. Clever girl! I'm proud of you!

Sarah (*losing heart again*) And yet I can't really believe that Pete would be unfaithful to me. Not so *soon*...

Margot There's only one way to find out.

Sarah Sorry?

Margot Put on a brave face and go to Isobel's party! I'll take you in my car. That's the way we'll find out what he's up to.

Sarah But if I'm at Isobel's party how will I know what he's up to?

Margot (*as if to a child*) You won't be at Isobel's party for long. We will return home early—and catch him in flagrante!

Sarah gives this a moment's thought

Sarah But if I *do* catch him in—er...

Margot Flagrante?

Sarah Yes. If I do—I shall have to divorce him...

Margot And about time, too!

Sarah But we've only been married six months...

Margot Six months too many! (*She packs up her scissors and things*) Quickly now! We must waste no more time.

Sarah (*surveying her bandage; bleakly*) But why do I need a bandage if I haven't really hurt my ankle?

Margot You are such an innocent! A stranger to deception. It is a most endearing quality. It is your bandaged foot that will help us to retain the initiative.

Sarah (*realizing*) Ah—yes—of course!

Pete enters from the garden, not looking too happy

Margot notices

Margot You seem a trifle downcast. Was your telephone call not a success?

Pete There was no reply. He must already be on his way.

Margot *He?* (*Aside to Sarah*) The situation is worse than we thought...!

Sarah *Who* must be on his way?

Pete (*reluctantly*) It's no good. I shall have to tell you. But it was *supposed* to be a secret...

Margot Married men shouldn't have secrets from their wives.

Pete Yes, Margot. I know.

Margot Especially if they've only been married six months!

Sarah *What* was supposed to be a secret?

Pete Well ... about George coming here tonight.

Sarah Coming *here*?

Pete Yes...

Margot *George*?!

Sarah He was Pete's best man, Mummy. Surely you remember?

Margot (*remembering*) Ah—yes. I remember his speech at the wedding. Far too flippant. And punctuated by vulgarity.

Sarah (*to Pete*) You mean *that* was why you didn't want me to be here tonight? Just because George was coming?

Pete Yes.

Margot So why did you have to telephone him if you were seeing him tonight?

Pete Because I wanted to put him off and arrange to see him tomorrow instead.

Sarah So it ... it was only *George* you were meeting tonight?

Pete Of course!

Margot A likely tale...!

Pete I'll try him again in a minute. He's never very far from his mobile.

Margot Well, you don't have to bother.

Pete I must! After all—tonight I must be here to look after my wife. (*He gazes at his wife with husbandly affection*)

Sarah (*deeply moved*) Oh, Pete...! (*Impulsively, she starts to get up to go to him, forgetting her injury*)

Margot hastily reminds her

Margot Ankle...!

Thus reminded, Sarah instantly limps, almost collapses, and is caught and supported by her mother. Pete goes to her, heavy with concern

Pete Perhaps you'd better go and lie down, darling. Rest your ankle. I'll make you some soup.

Margot Your soup will not be required.

Pete I make very good soup.

Margot Your brave little wife of six months has made a decision.

Pete Has she? (*To Sarah*) Have you? (*To Margot*) What decision?

Margot (*impressively*) She is going to Isobel's party.

Naturally, Pete is a little surprised by this volte-face

Pete But what about her ankle? You said bedrest was essential.

Margot She absolutely refuses.

Pete Refuses bedrest?

Margot You should be proud of her. She is determined—in spite of her injury—not to disappoint her friend. And *I* shall go with her.

Pete I didn't know you were invited.

Margot I *shall* be!

Pete Oh. Well—in that case... (*He cheers up*)

Margot You seem relieved to be rid of us.

Pete No! No—of course I'm not! Never! No! But if you *are* going I needn't put George off, need I?

Margot If it *is* George you're expecting...

Pete You've got a very suspicious mind, Margot!

Margot I shall just go into the kitchen and get some aspirin. (*She starts to go*)

Pete (*hopefully*) Oh, Margot! Do you have a headache?

Margot No, I do not! But your wife has injured her ankle and may require pain relief if the party should become boisterous.

Margot goes out to the kitchen

Sarah turns to Pete, rather puzzled

Sarah Why didn't you *tell* me that George was coming here tonight? I began to think that you were up to something.

Pete Yes, I know you did! But, you see—it was supposed to be a secret.

Sarah You shouldn't have secrets from your wife!

Pete I know. Margot *told* me! But this isn't *my* secret, it's *George's* secret.

Sarah (*a little put out*) I thought George and I were friends. *Why* didn't he want me to know about his visit?

Pete I don't know. He didn't say. But he sounded in a bit of a state on the phone, so whatever it is that he wants to tell me about it's obviously a *personal* problem and I suppose he'd be embarrassed if *you* were here when he told me.

Sarah So *that* was why you asked me three times if I was going out tonight? So you could be sure that George could tell you all about — whatever it is — in private?

Pete Yes. Of course.

Sarah (*intrigued*) Do you think it's something strange?

Pete Oh, no. I shouldn't think so. George isn't a strange sort of person.

Sarah It must be pretty important, though, if he doesn't want *me* to know about it. Oh, dear—poor George...! Fancy having a problem like that...

Pete But we don't know what his problem *is* yet, do we?

Sarah No. But we can *imagine*...! (*She imagines, vividly*)

Margot enters from the kitchen with aspirins aloft

Margot Right, then! Come along, Sarah! Best foot forward! (*She helps Sarah to her feet*)

Pete Don't you mean *worst* foot forward? (*He laughs*)

Sarah looks back at Pete as she and her mother go

Sarah See you later, darling! Give my love to George. (*She remembers*) Oh, no! He mustn't know that *I* know he's here!

Margot looks puzzled, and supports Sarah as they go into the hall. Sarah limping extravagantly, Margot glaring back at Pete, suspiciously

Pete Have a good party!

Margot and Sarah disappear

Puzzled by this turn of events, Pete goes to the window to watch them departing. He waves, cheerily, and goes to pour himself a whisky

Outside, a car starts up

Pete notices that Sarah's glass is no longer beside the sofa where she had been sitting. He picks it up, puzzled as to how it got there. The doorbell rings

Pete puts down the whisky glass and goes out into the hall

Pete (off) George! Good to see you! Come on in!

George comes in from the hall. He is an agreeable man, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but a good friend. Pete follows him in, anxiously

Did you *see* anyone outside?

George I saw an old lady helping an invalid into a car.

Pete Didn't you speak to them?

George I don't know any invalids.

Pete Yes, you do.

George Do I?

Pete It was Sarah!

George Your...?

Pete Wife. Yes!

George considers this for a moment

George I didn't know Sarah was lame. I've never noticed it before.

Pete She's never *been* lame before, you idiot!

George Oh, I see. A recent injury. It was lucky she didn't see me. You told me she'd be out tonight!

Pete She *is*. But she very nearly wasn't!

George (puzzled) Why was she limping?

Pete She fell over the Hoover and twisted her ankle.

George Ah! So now she's going to hospital?

Pete No. To a party.

George A party? You mean ... a sort of invalids' convention?

Pete No, no! An ordinary party.

George Won't she feel a bit out of place? Her being lame and all that.

Pete (laughing) They're friends of hers! I'm sure they'll accept her temporary immobility.

George Oh. That's all right, then. (He smiles, happy for lame Sarah)

Pete And the "old lady" was my mother-in-law.

George It wasn't!

Pete Yes. Sarah's mother. Margot.

George Oh, I've met *her*!

Pete Yes. She remembers! (Going to George, sympathetically) Oh, poor George... Here I am rattling on about my mother-in-law! (He takes George by the shoulders, reassuringly) I'm so sorry, old friend ...

George H'm?

Pete You poor old thing. Come and sit down. (He assists George to the sofa and settles him down) There! OK? Comfortable?

Hungry for More?

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