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Relatively Speaking

A comedy

Alan Ayckbourn

Samuel French — London
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RELATIVELY SPEAKING

First presented by Peter Bridge at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, on 29th March 1967, with the following cast:

Greg	Richard Briers
Ginny	Jennifer Hilary
Philip	Michael Hordern
Shelia	Celia Johnson

Directed by Nigel Patrick
Designed by Hutchinson Scott

The action of the play takes place during a summer weekend in London and the country

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INTRODUCTION

In general, the people who liked this play when it was first seen remarked that it was “well constructed”; those that didn’t called it old-fashioned. If the latter is true, then I suppose it’s because, as the song goes, I am too. As to whether it’s well constructed, well, in a way I hope it is, since I did set out consciously to write a “well made” play. I think this is important for a playwright to do at least once in his life, since, as in any science, he cannot begin to shatter theatrical convention or break golden rules until he is reasonably sure in himself what they are and how they were arrived at.

And this knowledge is really only acquired as a result of having plays produced, torn apart and reassembled by actors and held up to public scrutiny for praise or ridicule. I suppose I am extremely lucky, writing for a small theatre company as I did for so many years, to have had almost a dozen plays put through this very process before reaching the age of thirty. Not only this, but to have had to fight all the limitations of a small theatre—the number of actors available, difficulties of staging, even lighting complications—and, most important, being aware that if my play didn’t at least break even at the box office, we’d all be out of a job on Monday. I wrote, in a sense, to order, and there was no harm in this, since the order was always of a technical nature and dealt only minimally with content. But there is no sharper lesson for a dramatist than to find himself sharing a dressing-room with an actor for whom he has written an impossible quick change.

I wrote this play originally as a result of a phone call from the late Stephen Joseph, a truly remarkable man of the theatre, without whose unrelenting deadlines this would never have been written and to whom I dedicate the play, sadly, but with great affection. He asked me then simply for a play which would make people laugh when their seaside summer holidays were spoiled by the rain and they came into the theatre to get dry before trudging back to their landladies. This seemed to me as worthwhile a reason for writing a play as any, so I tried to comply. I hope I have succeeded.

ALAN AYCKBOURN

ACT I

SCENE 1

London, Sunday 7a.m.

A bed sitting room furnished by someone young, slightly zany and very feminine. A few posters on the walls, a doll or so, female bric-a-brac

Two doors lead off—one to the bathroom, the other is the front door of the apartment. A series of elaborate screens in one corner of the room conceals the kitchen area. Other furnishings include an easy chair, a couple of upright chairs, a folding table, a chest of drawers and a single divan bed

The curtains are drawn back a fraction allowing a shaft of morning light into the otherwise darkened room

At the start Greg is in bed, though only discernible as a mountain of bedclothes

The phone rings. Again. And again. Running water sounds from the bathroom but no one answers

Then an arm snakes out from under the bedclothes, gropes for the phone and eventually draws the receiver back with it under the bedclothes

Greg (*muffled*) Hallo. Three four six seven. Hallo, Hallo. (*He emerges from the bedclothes*) Hallo. Who is that? Hall—

The caller has evidently rung off sharply. Greg eyes the telephone suspiciously. He replaces the receiver and sits up properly. He looks around him. Blinks. He starts to get out of bed but, realizing he is naked, he wraps the loose top sheet around himself. It makes a rather elaborate loin cloth. He rises and, crossing to the window, draws the curtains. More splashing from the bathroom. He catches sight of himself in the mirror

(*Gravely*) The return of Sabu. Anybody seen an elephant?

The phone rings again, Greg frowns, turns and moves to the phone. Thinks. Lifts the receiver

(*In a disguised Indian voice*) Hallo, this is three four six seven, can I help you please. (*Pause. In a normal voice*) Hallo. Three four six seven. Who is that? Hall— (*He hangs up slowly. After a moment's thought he moves determinedly towards the bathroom*) Ginny! Ginny! (*He treads on something sharp*) Ginny—aaaah! (*He hops about*)

Ginny (*off*) What?

Greg returns to the bed, sits, and twists his foot to examine the injured sole of his foot

(Off) Greg? (She sticks a tousled head round the door) Greg?—Oh. Did you call?

Greg No.

Ginny What are you doing?

Greg Just reading my fortune.

Ginny Was that the phone?

Greg When?

Ginny Just now?

Greg (pausing slightly) No.

Ginny Oh. You sure?

Greg (still studying his foot) According to this I'm going to meet much trial and tribulation but will eventually find true love and marry a girl with a birthmark on her left thigh. Nobody I know.

Ginny Nor me.

Greg I'll keep a look out.

Ginny It's not a birthmark. It's a beauty spot. (She disappears into the bathroom again) Kettle should be boiling. I put it on.

Greg Good. (He stares at the phone again)

Ginny Make the tea, darling, or I'll never be ready. The alarm didn't go off. As usual.

As he talks Greg is absently fishing under the bed with his feet

Greg Don't usually need one in this bed. It's so narrow one of us falls out automatically as a rule. We ought to market it. (His feet have now found a pair of smart black men's slippers. He rises and crosses U R to the kitchen area. The slippers are evidently far too large for him. They make loud slapping noises on the floor as he walks. He disappears behind the screens) What time's your train then?

Ginny (off) Eight twenty-four.

Greg (out of sight—in a loaded tone) Oh well. Have a good time, won't you?

Ginny, after a slight pause, appears in the doorway

Ginny Greg.

Greg (putting his head round the screens) Yes?

Ginny Stop it.

Ginny exits to the bathroom

Greg (grimaces and disappears too) Oh hell, no.

Ginny What?

Greg (out of sight) More of them.

Ginny (an anxious head around the door) What?

Greg (appearing with a bunch of flowers) Bloody flowers. All over the place. In the sink here as well.

Ginny (offhand) Oh, those.

Greg Where are you working these days, for heaven's sake, Kew Gardens?

Ginny I like them.

Greg So do I—in their place. But they're moulting all over everything in here.

Ginny (*extending a naked arm*) Give them to me. I'll put them in the bath.

Greg (*giving her the flowers*) Fine. Plant some water lillies while you're there.

Ginny (*off*) Have you made the tea?

Greg Just about. (*He returns behind the screen for a second*) Aaagh! Petals in the kettle. (*He emerges from behind the screen with two mugs and a teapot. He places these on the table*)

Ginny appears at the bathroom door clad in her underclothes and pulling on a dressing gown

Ginny Hallo, lovely. (*She moves to him below coffee table*)

Greg Watcher, gorgeous. (*He kisses her lightly*)

Ginny Will you miss me today?

Greg (*slight pause*) Mmmmm?

Ginny I said will you miss me today?

Greg Miss you? Me? No, I'll be having a great time. Action packed, simply thrilling day. Parties, parties all the way, what? (*A merry military laugh*)

Ginny I'll miss you too.

Greg (*nodding but seeming unconvinced*) Mmmmm. (*He turns and plods back towards the kitchen area*)

Ginny glances after him, gives a shrug and disappears once again into the bathroom

Greg stops in his tracks abruptly. Stands for a second as if listening for something, stares at his feet and then proceeds on his way

Ginny (*off*) My God. Look at the time. I'll never make it.

Greg returns, this time with the sugar basin and a half-filled bottle of milk. He stops again and stares hard and long at his feet

Ginny enters, brushing her hair

I must have some tea, I'm— (*Taking in Greg*) What's wrong?

Greg Nothing. I got the idea someone was following me, that's all. (*He crosses to the coffee table and puts down the milk and sugar*)

Ginny My God! My husband—!

Greg Could be—

Ginny (*with a dramatic look at the front door, moving to Greg as she speaks*) Oswald. How did you find out?

Greg (*clutching Ginny to him*) No, sir—I insist. Shoot us both if you're going to shoot—

Ginny I love him, Oswald, I love him!

Greg (*backing U L with her*) We'll die together, I tell you. Go on shoot—shoot, damn you! BANG!

They both collapse on the bed in a mock death scene and giggle. Greg kisses her. They lie in each other's arms for a second

Ginny (*semi-apologetically*) I'm going to miss my train.

Greg Who cares?

Ginny (*sitting up and breaking from him slightly*) No. I can't. (*She rises, moves down to coffee table and sits R of it. She pours the tea*)

Greg, after a second, reaches for the cigarettes. He lights one and then, holding the packet in his hands, studies it intently. A pause

Greg (*turning his attention to her*) Let me guess what you're thinking about.

Ginny (*passing him tea*) You'll have a job. Here.

Greg (*moving down to L of the table*) Ta. I'll bet you were admiring my slippers.

Ginny Your slippers?

Greg (*sitting L of the table, displaying his feet*) Look.

Ginny What a daft idea.

Greg Oh. You weren't?

Ginny Sorry. No.

Greg Oh.

Ginny I didn't know you'd got any.

Greg Ah. That's just the point.

Ginny What?

Greg That is just the point.

Ginny (*looking at him, amused*) Honestly.

Greg (*toasting her in tea*) Cheers.

Ginny I'll miss you.

Greg Will you?

Ginny Did you think I wouldn't, Greg?

Greg Depends on how much you live it up, I suppose.

Ginny With my parents? Don't make me laugh.

Greg Then why go?

Ginny It's only one day. I'll be back tonight.

Greg One day? It's half a weekend.

Ginny I haven't seen them for ages.

Greg Ah. Duty.

Ginny Partly. I'm fond of them too.

Greg Would I like them?

Ginny Yes—I think so.

Greg Good. Can I come?

Ginny Yes, you must.

Greg Now. With you.

Ginny For the hundredth time. I've told you they're not expecting you. I can't just bring someone down out of the blue. They'd never forgive me.

Pause. Greg rises and moves to the bathroom. He turns. Looks at her

Greg I'm very taken with these slippers, I must say. What do you think of them?

Ginny What?

Greg These. Did you like them?

Ginny They're all right. Why?

Greg I just wondered what you thought of them. That's all.

Ginny Well—they're just—slippers, aren't they?

Greg Yes. That about sums them up. (*He sits on the bed*)

Pause

Ginny (*getting a little fed up now*) Am I supposed to have done something?

Greg shrugs

Greg?

Greg I don't know. Have you?

Ginny I don't know. You're the one that's carrying on.

Greg Me? I'm just quietly sitting here, that's all.

Ginny Doing your best to annoy me.

Greg Nonsense.

Ginny Oh yes, you are.

Greg (*taunting*) Now why should I want to annoy you? Tell me, why should I want to do that?

Ginny Oh go to hell. (*She rises and crosses to the recess DR to fetch her dress; then turns*) I think your bedroom slippers are simply bloody marvellous.

Greg Thanks.

Ginny returns with her dress. Greg rises and marches towards the bathroom. He has abandoned his slippers by the bed. Ginny looks at him and laughs

(*Turning*) Mmmm?

Ginny What do you look like?

Greg What's wrong?

Ginny Talk about me having birthmarks. You've got one.

Greg Where?

Ginny (*pointing to his bottom*) There.

Greg That's not a birthmark. That's a scar. This bottom has seen active service, I'll have you know.

Greg goes into the bathroom

Ginny smiles and starts dressing

(*Off*) Oh for crying out loud! What is going on?

Ginny What?

Greg (*off*) This bath is full of flowers.

Ginny (*pausing in her dressing*) Yes, I put them there. I said I was going to.

Greg (*off*) You put one bunch in the bath. That makes five altogether.

Ginny (*innocently*) Does it really?

Greg appears in the doorway festooned with dripping flowers

Greg Five. (*He counts the other three bunches already displayed there*)
Five—six—seven—eight—Where do they come from?

Ginny Those are the ones you brought me.

Greg Mine are the two shilling bunch, I know. Whose are these? Mmmm?

Ginny Well, you know that little man who sells flowers on the corner of the road—the one who has the stall?

Greg No.

Ginny Well, there's a little man at the corner of this road that sells flowers on a flower stall and he was selling them off cheaply—yesterday evening—Saturday—end of the week. I thought I'd buy a bunch for the weekend and he said I could have five bunches for the price of two. I couldn't refuse, could I?

Greg No.

Ginny They were probably stolen.

Greg From the Queen Mother's garden.

Ginny (*lamely*) Yes.

Greg As long as I know. (*He turns as if to go back in, then to her again*) Oh, by the way. Where did the other two come from?

Ginny Oh, he gave me those as a present.

Greg I see.

Greg returns to the bathroom

During the next section Ginny finishes dressing and starts to make-up in the mirror

Greg wanders in and out of the bathroom, dressing as he does so

Ginny (*calling*) Want some more tea?

Greg (*off*) Please. Tell me. What makes your parents so frightened of meeting strangers?

Ginny They're not. It's just that they're old-fashioned, I suppose. They like to do things properly.

Greg (*emerging*) Don't you think they'll approve of me?

Ginny pours two cups of tea and milk and sugars them

Ginny Of course they will. My father's, well—he's a bit difficult, I suppose. You know, he wants the best for me, at least what he thinks is the best for me.

Greg I am the best.

Ginny I know that. But I've got to convince them, haven't I? And anyway, my mother gets into an awful panic if people arrive when she's unprepared. (*She moves up to mirror below the bed and starts to make-up. She takes her tea with her*)

Greg comes out of the bathroom. He now has on his trousers and carries his socks and shirt and tie

There's your tea.

Greg Thanks. (*He moves to the table, sits and puts on his socks*)

Ginny What's the time?

Greg Twenty to.

Ginny (*screaming*) I'm going to miss it.

Greg Take a taxi.

Ginny (*making up frenziedly*) I knew it.

Greg I'll phone for one.

Ginny Damn—damn—damn.

Greg I said I'll phone for a taxi.

Ginny You'll have to.

Greg continues to put on his socks

Well go on!

Greg When I've got my socks on.

Ginny Oh. You're no use at all.

Greg (*casually*) Who lives at the Willows, Lower Pendon, Bucks?

Ginny (*scattering her make-up then recovering*) How did you know that?

Greg Who lives there?

Ginny (*moving down beside him*) Where did you find that address?

Greg Sounds very grand. The Willows, Lower Pendon—

Ginny Have you been going through my things?

Greg No.

Ginny Then tell me where you got that address from. I want to know.

Greg It's written on here. (*He holds up the cigarette packet*) Look. The Willows, Lower Pendon, Bucks. Anyone we know?

Ginny (*moving away to the mirror again*) No.

Greg (*rising*) Who?

Ginny (*turning*) My parents.

Greg (*moving UL*) Ah. Well, you may have a lousy memory for all I know. I mean I could never be called a devoted son, my parents will back me up on that, but at least I can remember where they live.

Ginny (*flaring up defensively*) I wrote it down for someone at the office—a girl, but she forgot to take it. She knows them because we went to school together. She wanted to write to them. All right?

Greg I believe you.

Ginny Quite sure?

Greg Yes.

Ginny Quite?

Greg Yes. Shut up.

Ginny takes a swig of tea

Ginny You make tea like liquorice as well. I don't know why I put up with you. (*She moves past him towards the kitchen area*)

Greg (*penitently*) Tell me something.

Ginny What?

Greg Why do you put up with me?

Ginny Well.

Greg Well?

Ginny Maybe for the same reason you put up with me. (*Smiling, gently*) You're a fantastic lover, if that's any consolation to you. (*She goes into the kitchen area*)

Greg (*to himself*) That's nice. (*He picks up the slippers, regards them. Sits R of the table*)

Ginny returns, having diluted her tea. She moves below him to sit L of the table. Just as she is about to sit Greg drops the slippers on to her chair

Ginny Now, if we order a taxi in about five minutes, that should get me to

the station with about ten minutes to spare. Don't forget I've got to buy my—aaaah. (*She sits on the slippers. Reacts by jumping straight up again, spilling her tea in the saucer and slopping some on to the table*) Oh, God! (*She sees the slippers*) Oh, big joke. (*She throws the slippers on the floor*) Hell, what a damn stupid thing to do. What's got into you?

Greg (*penitent again*) Sorry. (*He has risen too*)

Ginny I should think so. Look at this. I'll have to get a cloth. (*She moves to the kitchen, then turns back*) Listen, if you're sick of me say so.

Greg sits unhappily R of the table, his back to her

Well, we can't go on like this. It's daft. Isn't it?

Greg (*muttering*) If that's how you feel—

Ginny How I feel! That's marvellous. Look, I don't know what it is, but I hope you'll have got over it by tonight, that's all. I've got quite enough to worry about without being messed around by you.

Greg (*wheeling sharply*) And what the hell do you think you're doing to me?

Ginny (*taken aback*) What?

The phone rings. Ginny continues to look at Greg for a moment. Then she answers the phone, crossing above him

Hello . . . yes . . . no, no. . . I'm afraid you have the wrong number . . . yes . . . goodbye. (*She rings off*)

Greg rises and moves to the alcove

What did you mean just now?

Greg (*collecting and returning with a battered zipper bag*) I'd better pack up.

Ginny Greg—?

Greg Work it out during your jolly weekend at the Willows, Lower Pendon—

Greg goes into the bathroom

Ginny Greg?

Greg (*off, sullen*) Get lost.

Greg returns, cramming some of his belongings into his zipper bag, his shaving kit etc. and a dirty shirt he has collected from the bathroom. He dumps his bag on the chair R. and finishes packing it

Ginny Don't forget your beloved slippers, will you?

Greg Oh, those.

Ginny (*picking them up and holding them out for him*) Here.

Greg I don't want them, they're no use to me.

Ginny Oh for heaven's sake! Take them.

Greg What size are they, as a matter of interest?

Ginny How should I know?

Greg sits and starts to put on his shoes, which he has retrieved from under the chair R

Greg It'll be written on them somewhere, have a look. On the instep.

Ginny Tens it says, Why?

Greg No good to me, I take eights. See if they fit you.

Ginny That's rather stupid, isn't it?

Greg What is?

Ginny Getting tens. I mean if you take eights—

Greg I didn't get them.

Ginny Who did?

Greg No idea. My slippers are eights.

Ginny Well, whose are these?

Greg I don't know. I just found them lying about. (*He finishes tying his shoes*)

Ginny Where?

Greg Under your bed.

Pause. Greg watches her. Ginny sits, slowly, on the bed

Our bed. Or somebody's bed, anyway. That one, there. Perhaps it belongs to the bloke who owns the slippers.

Ginny So that's it.

Greg (*rising and wandering right D R and then slowly up towards her*) It was rather odd really. When I got up just now I was a bit dozy, you know, and I did what I do at home—I fished with my feet under the bed for my slippers. One of my habits, that is, one of my idiosyncracies—it helps me to recognize myself when I'm half asleep. I always think that's important, don't you? That the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning is to make sure you know who you are. I have a terror of that, losing my identity in the night. Some people are frightened of burglars breaking in. With me, it's stealthy midnight brainwashers. (*He sits beside her on the bed*) Anyway, I did this fishing with my feet business, and I thought to myself, steady lad, you're in for a shock. They won't be there. This is her flat you're in. Don't panic now. You're the same person you were when you went to sleep. Only the bed has changed. And then, the blow. A pair of alien slippers attached themselves to my toes. I can tell you that was an experience I wouldn't care to go through again. It could have split my personality right up the middle. Did you know that? Very nasty.

Ginny You really do jump to conclusions, don't you?

Greg In those slippers I do.

Ginny (*rising and going to the window*) You really do jump to conclusions.

Greg Now and again. Like wondering why, when you pick up the phone, you say yes to someone and then no. I can't quite work that out.

Ginny How do you mean?

Greg Just now. (*He rises and moves down L*) What did the person calling say when you answered the phone?

Ginny I can't remember.

Greg Whatever they said, you said yes. Did they say, is that three four five seven?

Ginny (*breaking away from him*) They might have done. Something like that. What's it matter?

Greg No, they couldn't have done. Or you'd have said, no this is three four six seven.

Ginny Where is this getting us? I'm in a hurry. (*She starts to move as if to her make-up*)

Greg (*stopping her*) Wait, this is interesting. On the other hand, did they say, is that two four six seven and you thought they said three four six seven. Is that it?

Ginny (*sitting on the chair R of table*) Maybe. I misheard them probably.

Greg (*moving in to L of chair L*) So they thought they'd got the right number?

Ginny Yes—no, they didn't!

Greg They must have done because you said yes. I mean, if I ring someone up and when they answer I say is that two four six seven and they say yes, I'm rather inclined to take their word for it, aren't you?

Ginny He soon realized his mistake anyway.

Greg It was a him, was it? What did he say?

Ginny (*tiredly*) I don't know. He said, is that Jack or something.

Pause

Greg I see. Jack. You said yes, and he said is that Jack? (*Moving away D L*) Poor old Jack. There's something definitely wrong with Jack. Whatever happened to Jack, I wonder?

Ginny Maybe he said Betty, I don't know. He said is that somebody-or-other and I said no.

Greg Yes. Let's settle for Betty.

Ginny Anything so long as you're happy.

Greg I should think Jack would be a lot happier too. I wonder who it could have been. Perhaps it was that funny little bloke who has a flower stall on the corner. He sounds as if he's a bit confused, poor old soul.

Ginny All right? Satisfied? Happy? All settled? Good.

Greg Thank you. I'll get you a taxi, shall I?

Ginny Oh, thank you.

Greg moves up to the bedside table and picks up the phone. He gets the number from the pad and dials

You don't trust me at all, do you?

Greg (*mock cheerfully*) I shouldn't let it worry you.

Ginny Well, it does. Because you get unbearable.

Greg It might just be me and my simple mind. (*He rises and rescues some shoes from under the bed*) Oh, hallo . . . yes, could I have a taxi please? Straight away. Forty-one Redbury Square. Yes. My name is Miss Whittaker. That's right. I'll be outside waiting. I'm wearing a blue dress and a white coat. Bye (*He hangs up*)

Ginny (*moving to him by the table and putting her arms round him*) You're mad, do you know that you're a complete lunatic?

Greg Um.

Ginny We must make a resolution, never, never to say goodbye when we've just had a row, no matter. We must make it up first.

Greg Okay.

Ginny You know, I was thinking—the first time I ever say you, remember?

Greg It was only a month ago. I'm not the one with the lousy memory. Malcolm's party.

Ginny That's right. I saw you sitting there and I thought—him. I want to get to know him. He looks interesting. He looks different from the rest of this lot. And I looked at you and I smiled and you scowled back at me—ever so sweetly. And I thought he doesn't like me. I'll make him like me. So I chatted you up.

Greg And I thought who the hell's this garrulous bird, twittering away here sixteen to the dozen?

Ginny (*releasing him*) I wasn't as bad as that.

Greg What? (*Moving DR to his bag*) Inside ten minutes you were telling me about your unhappy experiences. I didn't know whether to kiss you or give you half a crown.

Ginny Oh, happy times. (*Turning back to the mirror and scooping up her belongings into her handbag*) Is the taxi here yet?

Greg You'll be lucky. (*He moves to the window*)

Ginny (*moving to the bathroom*) I'll have to do my nails on the train.

Ginny exits to the bathroom

Greg No taxi.

Ginny (*off*) Darling, could you see if I've got any polish remover in the top drawer? It's a small white bottle.

Greg Okay. (*He attempts to open the top drawer. It seems to be jammed*) It's stuck.

Ginny (*off*) Oh, it often does that. Pull it from underneath.

Greg Fiendish cut-price oriental furniture—(*He goes to open the second drawer down. He pulls too hard. The drawer and all its contents are scattered over the floor*) Hell!

Ginny comes in abruptly when she hears the noise. She is in the middle of doing her hair. She carries the brush

Greg stands surveying the contents of the drawer. About five or six expensive boxes of chocolates

Ginny Clumsy! I— (*She pulls up short*)

Greg Developed a sweet tooth?

Ginny Oh, those—

Greg Yes. (*He bends and starts to pick them up*) Who sold you these, then?

Ginny No one. They're samples. Free samples. I know a girl you see, who works in a chocolate place. And she gets them free. Only she's dieting. So she gives them to me.

Greg I thought you were dieting?

Ginny Yes, I am. Only not as much as her though.

Greg (*decidedly unconvinced*) I see.

Ginny (*sensing this*) Well—where else did you think they came from?

Greg Lots of explanations spring to mind. The most charitable one would be to say that they were left over from my predecessor.

Ginny Who?

Greg You know. The man you've forgotten all about. Remember.

Ginny Oh, that was years ago. No. (*She turns to the mirror to finish her hair*)

Greg I see. (*Continuing to tidy up*) You never say much about him, do you?

Ginny I told you.

Greg Not much.

Ginny It's all forgotten. I've—forgotten what he looks like even.

Greg Where's he gone then?

Ginny Back to his wife, I expect. I don't know.

Greg The older man. Must be nice to be with someone your own age, isn't it? You two couldn't have had much in common. Did he give you lectures on the Boer War? (*He refits the drawer and closes it*)

Ginny Don't get bitchy.

Greg Well—

Ginny (*turning to him*) Greg—what would you have done, if you'd ever met him?

Greg (*meaning it*) I'd have hit him. Hard.

Ginny I believe you would.

Greg Well, I'm damned glad for your sake he walked out on you, that's all.

Ginny He didn't walk out on me. I walked out on him.

Greg (*over-sympathetically*) Of course.

Ginny (*slightly riled*) I did. (*She moves to the alcove for her coat*)

Greg (*soothingly*) Yes, I'm sure you did. I was just thinking though, how often have you met someone who's been walked out on? I mean, I must know dozens of people all of whom have at one time or another walked out on someone. But I've very rarely met any of the people that they've walked out on. (*He sits on the bed*) Don't you think that's very odd? Where do all these poor jilted people go to, that's what I want to know? They can't all be floating in the rivers, they'd be clogged up by now. Bit like elephants when they die or flies in winter time, don't you think?

Ginny reappears carrying her coat, which she places on chair R

Ginny I really wouldn't know.

Greg Why did you walk out on him?

Ginny (*sitting on chair R*) I had my reasons.

Greg Oh?

Ginny Look, I'm not going to tell you so you may as well shut up.

Greg All right. (*He shrugs*) All right.

Ginny I don't see why you should be so interested, anyway. I don't give a damn about your past life.

Greg (*smiling angelically*) Ah—but my life didn't begin until I met you.

Ginny (*sarcastically*) Oh, yes. (*Springing up and moving to window*) Where the hell is that taxi?

Greg He'll ring the bell when he gets here.

Ginny Not if he's looking for a man in a blue dress and a white coat he

won't. (*Going to him and ruffling his hair, then moving as if to cross to him*)
Lunatic man.

Greg (*grasping both her hands*) Mmm. You know? (*He rises*) I've been thinking—it might be a good idea if we got married—pretty soon.

Ginny When—now?

Greg No.

Ginny Oh, good. Going to say, I'd have to go and change my dress again.

Greg No. Seriously.

Ginny When did you suddenly get this idea?

Greg I thought it might be a good thing.

Ginny (*releasing his hands and stepping back, looking at him*) I take it you're proposing to me?

Greg (*going to the window, uncertainly*) Yes, I suppose I am really. If you look at it that way.

Ginny Either you are or you aren't.

Greg (*turning*) Yes, I am.

Ginny I see. I'm just going out—actually.

Greg The taxi won't be here for a second. It doesn't take you that long to make your mind up, does it?

Ginny I'm afraid it does. (*Pause. She sits on the bed*) If you're serious, I don't know what to say. I love you very much, more than I've ever loved anybody, I think. And I think I'll probably say yes, one day. But not at the moment.

Greg I see.

Ginny Greg, have you really thought about this? I'm sorry to ask you—but you're not asking me away for a dirty weekend or something. Or even a dirty month.

Greg A dirty great life time. I know.

Ginny Who have you known apart from me? How many other girls?

Greg Well—

Ginny I mean really known—you know what I mean.

Greg Well—I—well—

Ginny I'm the first, aren't I?

Greg (*injured*) If it's that obvious—

Ginny It doesn't make any difference to me. But what about you? For all you know, compared with someone else I might be the biggest bitch on earth.

Greg You're not. (*Slightly anxious*) Are you?

Ginny Be bad luck if we married and then you found out, wouldn't it?

Greg What do you want me to do? Chase round? Knock on doors? Take a census?

Ginny I just want you to be sure, that's all.

Greg I'm sure.

Ginny All right.

Greg I know what I'm doing, don't worry.

Ginny Fine. Good. (*She rises and picks up her handbag from the table*)

Slight pause

Greg (*going to chair R*) There's no chance that you'll have made up your mind in a couple of minutes, is there?

Ginny Why?

Greg Well, I thought if I could come down with you now and see your parents, I could ask—

Ginny No Greg!

Greg It's only that—

Ginny No.

Greg But—

Ginny No, no, no.

Greg looks downcast. Ginny moves to him

(Soothingly, kissing him lightly) Darling—darling—I can't—

The doorbell rings

Hell, there's the taxi. I'll have to run. (Breaking from him and gathering up her things) Do you want to come and see me off?

Greg doesn't reply but mooches up to the window

I'll be back about seven. You can come round and let yourself in if you like.

The doorbell rings again

(Muttering) I'm coming.

Greg I don't want to worry you, but that's not the taxi driver.

Ginny It isn't?

Greg Not unless he's come round without his vehicle. There's no cab out here.

Ginny Oh. *(She crosses quickly to the door)* I'll see who it is.

Greg *(intercepting her)* I'll go.

Ginny No, it's all right—let me—

Greg I'll go. *(He has his hand on the door handle barring her way)*

Ginny No.

Greg *(pushing her back gently but firmly with one hand and opening the door)* Won't be a second.

Ginny *(panicky)* But Greg!

The doorbell rings

Greg Wait there.

Greg goes out, leaving the door ajar

Ginny stands uncertainly, crosses to the window, looks out nervously, back to the door and peers out

The phone rings

Ginny jumps. She peers through the door again. Seeing Greg is occupied she hurries to the phone, picks it up and speaks in a low voice

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