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SF PERUSALS

Sex Cells

Anna Longaretti

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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SEX CELLS was first produced by Anna Denton for Coy Content at the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London in October 2013. Executive producers were Joe Denton and Mark Denton. Original music by Saskia Rothstein Longaretti.

The performance was directed by James Barry and designed by Tina Gardiner, with lighting, sound and stage management by Claire Bradley. The casting director was Annie Rowe, scenic artist Magnus Irvin, assistant director Niall Phillips, assistant stage manager Danielle Hurley and production assistant Caroline Milsom. The cast was as follows:

LILY . . . . . Jean Perkins
SYLVIE . . . . . Alison Pargeter
JANICE . . . . . Kate Russell-Smith
TIFFANY . . . . . Serena Giacomini
MR CAUSEWAY . . . . . Tom Butcher

CHARACTERS

LILY, 65. Her dress is shapeless and nondescript and her hair is pinned to keep the curl in. She wears pop socks and changes into slippers when she gets to work.

SYLVIE, 39. French *(*with an accent*)*, slim build, smartly dressed and immaculately groomed.

JANICE, 38. She has a Northern accent, is unintentionally dishevelled (as the main objective was to look glamorous) and looks like she is wearing clothes that she bought when she was younger and slimmer. Her massive handbag is always overflowing.

TIFFANY, 29, slim, Essex girl fashion and accent.

MR. CAUSEWAY, 55. A beanpole of a man. He is old-fashioned in his dress and manner. He wears a thick ribbed cardigan with pockets. He is hardly ever without a cup of tea on the go.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The author would like the words of *Sex Cells* to be said as written

All characters use the correct pronunciation of Aphrodite, ie. 'Af-roh-dy-tee.'

The brackets at the end of some sentences indicate what the character could go on to say (usually when the dialogue is fast-paced). Therefore, these can be vocalised or not.

The set can be made to work how best suits, but the author has some items that can be hired for a run: a realistic baby, sex toys, labels for boxes, screens and keyboards plus five office chairs. Please contact Samuel French for more information.

The music that was written for the original production is optional. Please contact Samuel French for more information.

An interval is optional.

TIMELINE

Act One

Scene 1 End of July
Scene 2 Beginning of August
Scene 3 Mid August
Scene 4 End of August
Scene 5 Beginning of September
Scene 6 Mid September

Act Two

Scene 1 End of September
Scene 2 Beginning of October
Scene 3 Mid October
Scene 4 Beginning November
Scene 5 Mid December

CHARACTER NOTES

LILY
Keeps her emotions in check and tries not to feel too much. She is uncomfortable with intimacy and any physicality; she has lived without it for a very long time. Her humour is a coping mechanism. She is brusque and even caustic but her heart is in the right place. She dislikes the fact that Sylvie displays her emotions with abandon. Her feelings towards Tiffany are motherly and protective but she would never give advice – she doesn't feel that she is in a position to give anyone advice. When forced to face reality, her intelligence helps her cope.

SYLVIE
Is a dreamer and perfectionist who wants to maintain control. She needs to present a front to the world that she herself can believe in. Her isolation comes not only from the fact that she is from another country, but that she can't do what she is biologically 'meant to'. She is surrounded by people trying to enhance their sex lives just for the fun of it and often feels like she is the only person in the world who remembers that the sex act is meant for procreation. Having spent so long thinking about her own need she is totally unprepared when the baby arrives and she sees that the baby's need is greater than hers.

JANICE
Can't catch up with anything in her life – there's a desperation about her. She feels guilty for needing time away from her kids and for envying Tiffany's carefree existence. In some ways she is relieved to have Sylvie, whose predicament helps remind her that she has a lot to be grateful for. She listens to endless rows at home so she'd do anything to stop one from kicking off at work.

TIFFANY
Is the most present of all of the women. She is not living in a dream world, has weighed up the pros and cons of what having a child means and knows it's not for her. She has a "live and let live" outlook on life. To fulfil her need to be loved by a man is her overriding aim. She does get let down, but is never down for long: life is for living. The relationship she has with Lily is uncomplicated and easy-going.

MR. CAUSEWAY
Is measured in everything and has weathered years of loneliness. He has a shedload of facts at his disposal that he has no trouble remembering. He could have done something more suited to his intelligence, but a lack of self-worth got in the way. Not only is he in total admiration of Lily's forthrightness, but as someone who has been starved of 'being looked after', no one could appreciate Lily's food parcels more. He feels that he alone 'gets' how good she is, and this knowledge sustains him in his unrequited love.

For Saskia

What joy you have brought to my life

With love and gratitude to Mark,

for helping to make my dreams come true

ACT ONE

Scene One

(A dingy call centre, present day.)

(The stage is split into three parts.)

(The central and largest area is the CALL CENTRE. There are four cubicles or cells where operators answer questions from customers wanting to buy sexual aids. Each cell has a chair, a ledge (which serves as a desk), a screen (on the fourth wall maybe) and a keyboard (which doubles up as a telephone keypad) and an operator headset (single). There is a red light above each cell which flashes when a call is waiting to be answered, and is lit for the duration of the call. Each operator has a button on the keyboard which answers or ends a call. A wall chart shows that Lily is 'sales person of the month' continuously from January to June. Upstage is a set of coat hooks plus tea- and coffee-making facilities on a counter top that houses a sink. A logo on the back wall reads 'Aphrodite'.)

(When the women are not answering the phones they are processing the orders that come in online or sorting through 'returns'. They do this at a table which has a box of latex gloves on it and various sexual aids. An Aphrodite catalogue is available in each cell, for reference purposes.)

(There is a door upstage left which leads to an off-stage corridor leading out onto the street.)

(The section stage right is the BATHROOM.)

(The bathroom consists of a wash basin, the back of which is on the fourth wall, and there is an imaginary mirror above it. Upstage of this is the door to the toilet cubicle.)

(Stage left of the call centre is a door which leads into Mr Causeway's OFFICE, which is almost always open. There is a hatch in the wall of his office which opens onto the call centre.)

(The office is full of box files and general office paraphernalia plus a switchboard, desk, two chairs, notices and rosters which are pinned to the notice board.)

(There are boxes of stock in differing sizes, and have differing labels. They can change between scenes to show the passing of time.)

(The play starts in darkness.)

(Just before each character speaks here, the red light above their cell flashes. As they hit the keyboard to answer the call, the red light burns steadily and the monitor lights up to partially illuminate the character's face. This happens one at a time with each character plunging back into darkness after their opening line is delivered.)

LILY. Aphrodite, goddess of sexual rapture, how can I help?

SYLVIE. Aphrodite, goddess of sexual rapture, 'ow can I 'elp you?

TIFFANY. Aphrodite, goddess of sexual rapture, how can I help you?

JANICE. Aphrodite, goddess of sexual rapture, how may I help you?

(The women are seated in the cells and are wearing the headsets.)

(Lights up on **LILY**.*)*

(She is knitting.)

LILY. The Clitoral Stimulator is twenty-five ninety-five… It's your basic G-string but with rotating pearls… Comfortable? Oh very, I'm wearing mine as we speak… Oh I don't think you'll have a problem on that front… How many? …I'd say about ten a day… You just jiggle about a bit.

(Lights up on **SYLVIE***, who is more preoccupied with her diary than the caller.)*

SYLVIE. Banana, strawberry, chocolate, chocolate mint… What?… The biggest one, king size… *(flat)* Fourteen inches, really?… No thanks, this is the night that I am washing my hair—

*(***SYLVIE** *hangs up.)*

(Irritated) Idiot!

(Lights up on **TIFFANY***.)*

TIFFANY. Wait a sec. *(She flicks to the right page in the catalogue.)* The Venus Guy Trap has perfume with pheromones, lubrication oil with pheromones, hair spray, fake tan and some vajazzle crystals in the shape of a heart, it's well cool… It's dear but the crystals are them Swarovski *(has trouble saying it)* them really posh ones—

(Lights up on **JANICE***.)*

JANICE. Jim! What you doing ringing this number?… What?

(She picks up her mobile and sees it was on silent.)

Oh! Sorry, I had it turned off for assembly… They're on top of the tumble dryer. Turn them inside out just in case they're still wet, *damp*! They may be a bit damp, I've got to go love.

(Lights up on **MR. CAUSEWAY***'s office)*

(We see him sitting at his desk, bent over a mountain of paperwork.)

(All the women speak at once, creating a cacophony of noise.)

TIFFANY. Forty-one pounds… Can I have the long number on the card? Seven, six, five, eight. And the expiry date?… Security code? …so that's three Titivators and a Teasey Maid, they'll be with you by Thursday. Ask for Tiffany if you've got a problem. Sweet.

JANICE. Aphroditê, goddess of sexual rapture, how may I help you? Yes, sir, the anti-bacterial toy cleaner, small or economy? Two hundred and fifty or six hundred mill… Great, do we have your details on our system?… What's the code?… Thanks, goodbye.

SYLVIE. Aphroditê, goddess of sexual rapture, 'ow can I 'elp you?… The Enlarger is a very popular item, but then the Lust Buster Vacuum pump is very powerful, it depends on what you need?… No, I meant that it enhances the normal erection… Oh fine.

LILY. I tell you what, I can put some anal lube in with the Double Mini Dong and that will take it up to sixty-nine pounds which entitles you to free delivery… Can I have the long number on the front of the card? Six, five, one *(numbers under her breath)* and the expiry date?… And finally, the three digits on the back of the card. Lovely speaking to you, dear. I'm Lily if you need any help in the future.

*(***LILY** *goes out the back to collect a returns box.* **SYLVIE** *watches her go – she is brimming with excitement.)*

SYLVIE. I could do with that kind of commission at the moment.

*(***JANICE** *nods in agreement.)*

And I never see her wearing any new clothes—

JANICE. I know, those dresses are so out they're almost in.

*(***TIFFANY** *goes to the returns table and dons a pair of Latex gloves ready to examine the returned goods.)*

*(***SYLVIE** *uses the fact that* **LILY** *and* **TIFFANY** *are out of earshot to have a private conversation.)*

SYLVIE. I have a special reason.

*(***SYLVIE** *strokes her tummy.)*

JANICE. Are you?

*(***SYLVIE** *gives an excited nod.)*

SYLVIE. I know I'm supposed to wait but I can tell you.

JANICE. Please god this time, eh?

SYLVIE. I saw some beautiful knitwear at the weekend. I didn't buy it, I'm not going to make that mistake again.

JANICE. I bought knitwear for Trudy. What you want is machine washable.

SYLVIE. I don't care about being practical.

*(***LILY** *enters and puts a returns box on the table.)*

TIFFANY. We were just talking about you.

LILY. I thought my ears were burning.

*(***TIFFANY** *looks at* **LILY**.*)*

TIFFANY. They're not red or nothing, Lil.

LILY. It means you're being talked about, Tiffany, and people don't talk about you unless there's something worth talking about.

TIFFANY. I hate being talked about.

LILY. They're not talking about you, dear.

TIFFANY. I flippin' hope not.

JANICE. We were discussing your sales technique.

LILY. I only sell 'em what they want.

*(***TIFFANY** *takes a realistic pink dildo from under the returns table and glances at the complaint letter that accompanies it.)*

JANICE. *(mild complaint)* Did the man who rang up for the Fetish Fantasy Door Swing want the Prince Albert as well? I don't think so.

LILY. *(matter-of-fact)* Well, he was obviously heading that way. He's probably getting it pierced as we speak.

*(***TIFFANY** *waggles the dildo.)*

TIFFANY. Ouch! *(Pause)* 'Ere, Sylvie wants to know why you always wear the same old clothes, Lil?

*(***SYLVIE** *swivels round in her chair.)*

SYLVIE. No I don't.

LILY. Does she now?

SYLVIE. I was just passing the conversation.

TIFFANY. I wasn't trying to land you in it—

LILY. Didn't think I was on your radar, I am flattered.

JANICE. *(diffusing)* We're only envious, aren't we, Sylvie?

*(***SYLVIE** *peruses a baby catalogue.)*

TIFFANY. I like finding *bargains* for 'em.

LILY. We are providing non-essential items, Tiffany, it's not like running down to your local Tesco and buying toilet paper and milk.

TIFFANY. I don't go Tesco, I'd have to get the bus. Anyway I've got Lidl's at the end of my road.

JANICE. I try to make them feel special but it doesn't make any difference.

LILY. They can smell the desperation, Janice.

JANICE. God, is it obvious?

TIFFANY. Oh, do me, do me, how do I come across?

LILY. You're bright, airy and vapid, which makes you easy to talk to, I suppose. You do alright don't you?

TIFFANY. *(thrilled)* Aw that's nice. Now do Sylvie, then someone should do Lily.

SYLVIE. She doesn't think of them as people.

*(***JANICE** *stands up quickly.)*

JANICE. Who wants coffee?

*(***JANICE** *proceeds to make four coffees.)*

(At the sound of food or drink, **MR. CAUSEWAY** *never wastes time. He pops his head out of the hatch.)*

MR. CAUSEWAY. Wouldn't say no.

JANICE. I probably shouldn't have any coffee, I'm not getting much sleep, but—

*(***MR. CAUSEWAY** *enters the call room.* **LILY** *and* **TIFFANY** *raise their hands to accept.)*

TIFFANY. You havin' one, Sylv?

*(***SYLVIE** *ignores her.)*

LILY. *(to* **SYLVIE***)* Hello? She's making it in the contraption. *(To* **JANICE***)* You're making it in the contraption aren't you?

JANICE. Yes.

SYLVIE. What? No, not today.

LILY. It was your idea to get a cafeteria in the first place.

JANICE. Milk and sugar, Lily?

LILY. What's up then? *This* one not good enough now? She probably wants the one George Clooney advertises.

JANICE. Lily?

LILY. You know how I take it, Janice, don't get your knickers in a twist.

SYLVIE. Caffeine reduces muscle activity in the fallopian tubes that carry eggs from the ovaries to the womb and can double the risk of miscarriage.

*(***MR. CAUSEWAY** *winces and goes back to his office, pronto.)*

LILY. Well I did ask.

MR. CAUSEWAY. I'll take my coffee in here.

*(***SYLVIE** *takes a silent call.)*

TIFFANY. I could take you shoppin' Lil.

LILY. Spare me.

TIFFANY. I'm wicked at shoppin', all me mates say so.

LILY. I don't waste my money.

JANICE. We don't waste a thing in my house, we can't afford to.

LILY. Have you got a place where you keep elastic bands and string?

*(***TIFFANY** *laughs.* **JANICE** *looks on in disbelief.)*

TIFFANY. Jokin' in't ya?

LILY. I do. And buttons and zips, tin foil, old sheets. I haven't bought a cleaning cloth in years.

TIFFANY. Do you really keep string? That's hilarious, I can just/ [imagine]—

LILY. – Not laughing when you come to me for money for your you-know-what, are you?

*(***TIFFANY** *gasps.* **SYLVIE** *turns her back.* **LILY** *turns to* **TIFFANY**.*)*

How many times is it now?

TIFFANY. Shhh, you know what I'm like, it's an accident.

LILY. An accident. You can't call *three* an accident.

TIFFANY. Shut up.

*(***MR. CAUSEWAY** *enters the call room to wash his mug.)*

MR. CAUSEWAY. What accident?

LILY. Nothing, we were just talking about how some people get a prang very easily *(looks at* **TIFFANY***)* and others hardly ever get pranged at all, *(looks at* **SYLVIE***)* weren't we Tiff?

TIFFANY. Err?

JANICE. *(disparaging)* You should take precautions, or are you always drunk?

TIFFANY. I do, but they don't always work and guys don't like, you know… *(looks at* **MR. CAUSEWAY**, *embarrassed)* the other.

JANICE. *(sarcastic)* Oh well, if *men* don't like it!

TIFFANY. I just said it wouldn't make no difference.

LILY. Have you ever thought how you'd do less damage if you got pranged up the bumper?

*(***TIFFANY** *clasps her hand over her mouth and* **JANICE** *laughs involuntarily.* **SYLVIE** *tries to ignore the whole topic.)*

MR. CAUSEWAY. I know from bitter experience what it's like to be rear-ended.

*(***TIFFANY** *laughs out loud.)*

TIFFANY. Do you, Mr. Causeway?

MR. CAUSEWAY. Oh yes, Tiffany, and it wasn't a laughing matter, I can assure you. I was but a learner.

TIFFANY. Right.

MR. CAUSEWAY. It nearly put me off for good, but it taught me to be cautious and fortunately it hasn't happened since.

TIFFANY. Shame.

MR. CAUSEWAY. Yes. What?

TIFFANY. I meant shame it happened an' that.

MR. CAUSEWAY. Well now you know for yourself, having just had the same experience. Anyway, how can you gauge financially whether it's better to be pranged up the rear end or head-on? Surely the odds are equal? Either way you shouldn't drive whilst drunk, Tiffany. Even one drink can be too many if you are susceptible to alcohol.

*(***TIFFANY***,* **LILY** *and* **JANICE** *give each other knowing looks.)*

TIFFANY. Yes, Mr. Causeway.

MR. CAUSEWAY. It impairs judgement and slows reactions. You may not think it does, but it's a proven fact that it does.

TIFFANY. No, Mr. Causeway.

MR. CAUSEWAY. I suggest that if you intend going out for a good time, don't take the car. You won't be having a good time in the morgue, will you? Have you ever driven, Lillian?

LILY. Put it this way, I know the theory, but I haven't done it in years. Not since much past me wedding night if you must know.

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