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SF PERUSALS

Two and Two Make Sex

A Comedy

Richard Harris and Leslie Darbon

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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TWO AND TWO MAKE SEX

First produced by Ray Cooney, Productions Ltd.
at the Cambridge Theatre, London
on 30th August 1973
with the following cast of characters—

George	Patrick Cargill
Clare	Jane Downs
Nick	Richard Beckinsale
Jane	Barbara Flynn
Ruth	Diana King
Mr Bowers	Terence Alexander

The Play directed by Jan Butlin
Setting by Hutchinson Scott

The action takes place in the drawing-room of George and Clare Williams' house in Highgate, and Jane Bowers' bedsitter in Holland Park

ACT I Scene 1 Wednesday evening, late summer
Scene 2 The following morning
Scene 3 The following Wednesday evening

ACT II Scene 1 Wednesday evening, two weeks later
Scene 2 The following Saturday morning

Time—the present

TWO AND TWO MAKE SEX

ACT I

SCENE 1

The drawing-room of George and Clare Williams' house in Highgate, and Jane Bowers' bright and sunny bedsitter in Holland Park. Wednesday evening, late summer

The drawing-room, which occupies the larger area, is an elegant room, with an alcove at the rear. This alcove is on a small raised area which has steps leading down into the main room. Outside the alcove is a suggestion of a hallway. There are large french windows leading out onto the garden, with the suggestion of a terrace outside; a telephone on a table, a drinks cabinet, a sofa, occasional tables and chairs, a drinks table

The bedsitter is on a raised platform, with a door in the rear wall and, outside, the suggestion of a hall with stairs leading down. On the door is a coat hook. An alcove leads from one wall to the unseen kitchen and bathroom. There are a double bed, a cabinet with a reading lamp, and a mirror above, shelves jam-packed with books, a small record-player, a large inflatable white plastic chair and, on the floor next to it, a telephone. Above the bed is a large poster advertising a Spanish bullfight. The room is very untidy, scattered with books and crockery

As the CURTAIN *rises, only the bedsitter is illuminated*

Nick sits on the bed, quickly taking off a huge pair of silver-painted Tuf Boots. He stands, pulls back the bedcovers, thrusts the boots deep into the bed and pulls the covers over them. He is quickly tidying the bed when Jane enters, wearing a topcoat. She reacts on seeing him, clearly not expecting him to be there

Jane You're not supposed to *be* here.
Nick (*holding up a placating hand*) I'm just going.
Jane If *you* think you can spoil my evening . . .
Nick Never entered my mind.
Jane (*sarcastically*) Ho-ho.

Jane looks at him for a moment then exits through the alcove

As soon as she has gone, Nick reaches under the bed and pulls out a long blue-and-white football supporter's scarf and a rattle. He hangs the scarf on the door-hook, winding it round several times to make removal difficult,

looks at the rattle, not sure where to put it—and rams it amongst the books on a shelf

Jane returns, now minus the topcoat

Nick puts on a pair of tatty tennis shoes

And don't come back before ten o'clock.

Nick I could stay out all *night* for all the good it'll do you.

Jane (*putting her face close to him*) Try me.

Nick What would he tell his wife?

Jane How do you know there *is* a wife?

Nick There's *always* a wife. He'll be on the phone to her this very minute—making an excuse about where he'll be tonight—*betcha.*

Jane You haven't got anything to bet *with.*

Nick Lend us a bob.

Jane (*almost exploding*) Why do I put up with you?

Nick (*with a flat smile*) Because you need me.

Jane *Need* you?

Nick And because you need me you resent me.

Jane *Despise.* (*She vaguely begins to tidy the room*)

Nick And so what do you do? You find someone to taunt me with—someone who, in your eyes, is my exact opposite.

Jane *Right.* A very sensitive human being.

Nick (*generously*) It's just a phase you're going through. I *understand.* And because I understand it won't work.

Jane What won't work?

Nick You trying to make me jealous. (*He grins*)

Jane looks at him scornfully and exits through the alcove with a plate piled with orange peel and a quart bottle of beer

(*Calling after her*) Me—jealous—ha! (*He quickly reaches up, swings the bullfight poster round to reveal a sign which reads "Trespassers Will Be Violated"*)

Jane enters

Nick moves quickly from the poster

Jane Then why don't you go to your pathetic evening class?

Nick I'm collecting my books. (*He collects up a pile of paperbacks to prove his point*)

Jane You're trying to ruin my evening with George.

Nick (*seizing on it almost maniacally*) Ah! *George,* is it? (*He struts around, doing what he fondly believes to be an imitation of a "George"*) Good Old George—I can see him now—coming through that door—bowler hat—bunch of flowers—bottle of plonk—crippled with arthritis and riddled with guilt. It's perfectly obvious to me that he's—he's . . .

Jane The word you're searching for is "mature".
Nick If he's so mature—why haven't you told him about *me*?
Jane Because he's a very sensitive human being.
Nick There's no need to make excuses.
Jane (*angrily*) Will you please *go*!
Nick (*oh-so-calm*) On my way. (*He almost goes but turns*) And another thing—lend me ten P for the bus?

Jane picks up her handbag to hurl at him

Nick scarpers through the door, closing it behind him

Jane fumes for a moment, then glances at her watch and quickly resumes tidying the room. She collects up a tray of used crockery and exits to the kitchen. There is a loud crash and she enters, sees the scarf on the door, moves to unravel it

Jane Pathetic. You really *are* pathetic.

Jane crosses to the cupboard unit to open a door and push in the scarf. A mountain of junk tumbles out. It includes a set of chest expanders, an artist's palette and oil brushes. She is ramming it all back in when the doorbell rings. She freezes momentarily, then checks herself in the mirror, moves to the door, sees the poster, jumps up on the bed to swing it round to reveal the bullfight advertisement. The doorbell rings again as she jumps down from the bed, hurries to the door, composes herself, then opens the door calmly

George is standing in the doorway. He wears a bowler hat, three-piece suit. Both hands are behind his back

Their initial conversation is bright but desperately strained

George Not too early, am I?
Jane (*looking briefly at her watch*) Twenty-five to seven. Perfect.
George Only we did *say* half past six.
Jane That's what I mean—twenty-five to seven. Perfect.
George I suddenly had awful visions of you—you know—dashing home from the office—tidying up . . .
Jane Oh, no. I'm a very tidy person. By nature. Won't you—er . . .? (*She indicates "come in"*)
George Thank you. (*He comes in*)

Jane closes the door

For *you.*

He pulls a small bunch of flowers from behind his back. She takes them, reaches up, kisses his cheek

For *us.*

With the other hand he produces a bottle of red wine. He bends to kiss her, remembers, removes his hat; then kisses her cheek

Jane (*of the flowers*) I'll—put these in water.

Jane exits through the alcove

George looks around: clearly it's the first time he has been here. He puts his hat on the bed and then, rather furtively, presses the bed to test its springiness

Jane puts her head round the door

Do make yourself comfortable.
George Thank you.

Again little smiles

Jane exits

George perambulates somewhat, putting the wine down on the cupboard unit. And then catches sight of himself in the mirror. He quickly checks his appearance, paying particular attention to what he fears might be a receding hairline. He starts pulling a bit of hair forward with his fingers

Jane enters with the flowers in a pot

Immediately his hand moves from his head and sweeps along a row of the books

I notice you read.
Jane (*a shade too fast*) Oh yes—avidly. (*She is clearly edgy about the books*)
George They say you can tell a great deal about people by the books they read.
Jane (*putting down the flowers*) Yes.
George Let's see what I can find out about *you.* (*He taps various books*) *Astronomy For Beginners.*
Jane I've always been keen on the stars . . .
George *Sheepdog Training.*
Jane I've always been keen on animals.
George The *Kama Sutra.*
Jane I've always been keen on . . . I think I must have borrowed that one.

They "laugh". George continues to run his finger along the row of books—stops—pulls out the blue and white football supporter's rattle—looks at her and gives the rattle a couple of slow twirls

(*A little "laugh"*) I don't always read. Sometimes I watch football.
George Do you really?
Jane Yes: I love it.
George Which team do you support?
Jane Queens Park Rovers.

George Rangers.
Jane Yes. (*She remembers*) Glasses.

Jane exits quickly to the alcove

George replaces the rattle and takes out a slim paperback next to it.

George (*calling*) I say—this looks interesting—*The Psychology of Human Relationships.*
Jane (*off*) Oh—yes—fascinating.
George (*flipping at the book*) D'you think I might borrow it?
Jane (*putting head round the alcove*) Sorry?
George (*holding up book*) This.
Jane (*misconstruing*) Oh—yes. *Please* sit down.
George Thank you.

Jane's head disappears. George moves across, slipping the book into a pocket. He almost sits on the bed, but changes his mind and moves to the low plastic chair—looks at it dubiously, raises it off the ground. Clearly it is the first time he has met one

(*About to sit, calling*) I must say you've made it very comfortable here. (*He sits in the chair and immediately nearly topples over backwards. He rolls about, regaining his balance*)

Jane enters carrying two glasses and a bottle opener

George immediately gets up ("rolls out" is probably a better way of putting it) and takes the opener from her. He takes up the bottle but somehow doesn't quite get round to opening it

("*Off-hand*") You're quite sure it's—all right—you know—my coming here?
Jane How long have we known each other?
George Two months.
Jane (*taking his arm*) Two months. And this is the first time you've been here. That's what makes it all right. *More* than all right.

She kisses him briefly. He moves to sit at the foot of the bed, pats the bed for her to sit next to him. She does so. He looks at her terribly sincerely, still using the bottle opener vaguely

George You know, what's so—marvellous—about our relationship is that we know so little about each other—and yet so much.
Jane That's what makes it—*us*—different. *I* know just enough about *you*—and *you* know just enough about *me*. Any more and it wouldn't be . . .

She searches for the right word, looks into his eyes for help, so that they are staring at each other

George (*helpfully*) Us?
Jane Yes—that's it—that's exactly *it. Us.*

George Us.
Jane Yes.
George (*continuing his help*) *Other* people . . .
Jane But we're *not* other people . . .
George We're *us.*
Jane We're *you.*
George And *me.*
Jane No questions.
George No demands.

A moment

God, it's marvellous.

He finally pops the cork from the bottle. Jane fetches the two glasses and returns to sit at his feet on the floor. He pours wine into the glasses, puts the bottle on the floor. They toast each other

Jane Here's to British Rail. You missing your train.
George And here's to British Weather. You forgetting your umbrella.

They sip their wine. She cradles her head into his lap. He somewhat tentatively reaches down to stroke her hair

Jane George . . .
George Yes, Jane?
Jane George . . .?
George Yes, Jane?

Suddenly she sits upright, knocks back her wine and is clambering up to kiss him passionately, forcing him back on the bed. His right arm jerks upright as he tries not to spill his wine. He lets out a yell. She releases him suddenly and sits upright

Jane (*with her head turned away*) I shouldn't have done that.
George No, I understand . . .

He reaches deep into the bed and pulls out Nick's boots. They both stare at them for a moment

Jane I told you: I watch football.
George (*very sincerely*) I understand.

She takes the boots delicately from him and pushes them under the bed

Jane That's what I *mean* about you—you're so—understanding. So—*mature.*

He knocks back his wine and takes her hand

George The last thing I want you to think is that our—affair—is just a—physical thing.
Jane That's exactly how *I* feel.
George It hasn't been easy . . .

Jane I know . . .
George There *have* been times . . .
Jane I know there have . . .
George But there's more to life than just—the body.
Jane Much more.
George Jane?
Jane Yes, George?

For a brief moment they are looking at each other. And then, in a sudden explosion of activity, George is on his feet pulling off his coat—Jane is moving round to pull back the bedcovers, in doing so, knocking George's hat to the floor. George pours her a glass of wine—can't find his own glass so swigs directly from the bottle—so that they are drinking—undressing—helping each other to undress—with much more effort than actual result. The effect should be of comic confusion rather than sexiness. So that George is minus coat, waistcoat, tie—Jane minus blouse and skirt. He is about to take off his trousers but sees that she is sitting on the bed taking off her shoes, so he does the same.

George (*about to pull off a sock*) I haven't phoned my wife.
Jane Phone?
George To say I'd be late home.
Jane George, she's your wife.
George I'll do it straight away.
Jane Yes, that's a very good idea. George—I can't—I mean I wouldn't . . .
George I'll phone her now.
Jane I just couldn't, not if I thought she'd be worried about you . . .
George How could I have been so thoughtless.
Jane You do understand don't you?

He hobbles across to the telephone, kneels, and dials as Jane exits through the alcove to reappear a moment later pulling on a housecoat. George finishes dialling. We hear a telephone ringing out

The immediate area around the telephone in the drawing-room is spotlighted: the rest of the room remaining in total darkness

George cups the receiver, turns, looks at Jane. They blow little kisses at each other

Clare enters to take up the telephone in the drawing-room

Clare Hello.

Immediately George uncups the receiver. Jane sits on the bed

George Is that *you*, Clare?
Clare Yes of course it's me, George.
George The thing is, I don't want you to worry. (*He turns and gives a confident little nod to Jane*)
Clare I'm not worrying, George: why should I worry?

George Yes of course you are. The thing is—look, I'm awfully sorry—I'm going to be late.
Clare I know you are.
George *Yes.*
Clare You phoned to tell me half an hour ago.
George Yes. The thing *is*—I'm with this client. The car broke down—and British *Rail*—well I mean, it's absolutely absurd.
Clare George.
George Yes, Clare?
Clare I'm *not* worried. I *know* you're going to be late. I'll expect you when I see you. 'Bye. (*She replaces the receiver. Stands for a moment, hand on receiver. Then, she sighs*)

The drawing-room light fades

Meanwhile, George shoots a quick glance at Jane who is studiously looking elsewhere and then—as though still having a telephone conversation.

George ("*concerned*") Oh. I see. I'd completely forgotten. Yes of course I will. No. Yes. As soon as possible. Good-bye, Clare. (*He hangs up*)

Jane, hearing the change of tone in his voice, stands up

I'm afraid I've made a terrible mistake.
Jane What kind of mistake.
George I don't know how to tell you.
Jane Try.
George There are people coming to dinner. An important client and his wife. In half an hour.
Jane You must go.
George Yes.

For a moment they stand looking at each other. Then they start to dress—at almost the same rate as they undressed

I feel so *guilty.*
Jane Of course you do—she's your *wife.*
George I mean about leaving *you—here—alone.* Would you mind passing me that shoe?
Jane This one?
George Thank you.
Jane There'll be other times.
George Me going home to a wife and you having no-one.
Jane I've always known the situation. (*She turns her back on him*) Zip.

He quickly looks down at his zip-fly, but realizes she means the zip of her blouse. He zips her up

You've never lied to me, have you?
George Never.
Jane And *I've* never lied to *you,* have I?
George Not once.

Jane Then that's all that matters.

She pulls a long hair from his coat. He stares at it

George But I *worry* about you.

They both attempt to inspect his clothing minutely

Jane Then you mustn't.
George I'll try.
Jane If you worry, it will *show*. And if it shows, your wife will find out. And if she does, there'll be no more—*us*. Because I couldn't—and neither could *you*, could you?
George No. Is my tie straight?

She adjusts his tie and then sniffs his shoulder. He immediately slaps a hand to the shoulder

What is it?
Jane Oh. (*She sniffs*) Scent.
George (*worried*) Anything? (*He sniffs*)
Jane Not a trace. You must go.

She leads him to the door

And promise me you won't worry.
George Promise.
Jane For *her* sake.

They kiss briefly

George Lunch on Friday—same place?
Jane Super.

She opens the door. He almost goes, but turns

George You *do* understand—about tonight.
Jane I respect you for it.

Again he almost goes

And George.
George Yes?
Jane Remember—it would ruin everything if she ever found out.
George Don't worry, she'll never know.

A flurry of blown kisses and George exits

Jane closes the door on him, leans against it, and slowly puffs air from her cheeks

The lights dim in the bedsitter and simultaneously the drawing-room lights come up

Clare is at the drinks cabinet, fixing two drinks. Ruth sits, lighting a cigarette.

Clare carries the drinks over, hands one to Ruth. They sip the drinks. A moment. Ruth is clearly waiting for Clare to say something

Clare George is having an affair.
Ruth *George?*
Clare Why the surprise? You of all people. You must get a thousand letters a week saying more or less the same thing. "Dear Aunt Ruth. My husband is having an affair and what the hell do I do about it?"
Ruth Not exactly thousands. And certainly not about George.
Clare He's a very attractive man.
Ruth Very.
Clare To a great many women George would be—well—quite a catch.
Ruth A catch indeed.
Clare Then why shouldn't he?
Ruth What?
Clare Have an affair.
Ruth Who are you trying to convince—you or me?
Clare I *am* convinced. (*Slight pause*) I think . . . Yes, of course I am.

A moment

Ruth Are you confiding in me as a friend—or consulting me as a specialist?
Clare As a friend.
Ruth Ah.
Clare But only because you're a specialist.
Ruth All right. You think George is having an affair.
Clare Yes.
Ruth I'll need a little more to go on than that.
Clare (*as though reading aloud*) All right, I'll write you a letter. "Dear Aunt Ruth. *My* husband is a changed man."
Ruth In what way?
Clare "In many ways. First, there's his vest."
Ruth What *about* his vest?
Clare He's stopped wearing one. Apart from the first six months of our marriage, he's *always* worn a vest. Winceyette, with buttons.
Ruth *George?*
Clare He has what he calls a British Chest. It rumbles.
Ruth How fascinating.
Clare Not when you're lying in bed next to it it isn't. Secondly, there's his running.
Ruth His running.
Clare Round the park. "Six months ago he got breathless just *looking* at the lawnmower and now he goes running round the park. In a yellow tracksuit and black and white training shoes." Frankly he looks like a cross between George Raft and a decrepit canary. "Then there's the sauna bath."
Ruth He goes to a sauna bath.
Clare No, he wants to *install* one. *Here.* In the garden. (*She points*) "Then there are the gramophone records."

Ruth He's always been rather fond of Oscar Hammerstein.

Clare Not any more. Look here, Clare, he said: "Why don't you pop out and get something with it? Something by that lady, Alice Cooper."

Ruth And *did* you?

Clare I went the whole hog. (*She shows Ruth a record*) Four young men called The Spew.

Ruth I assume they were out on parole.

Clare Quite.

Ruth Does he play it?

Clare I caught him *once*. There was a look of blank amazement on his face.

Ruth I'm not surprised.

Clare As soon as he saw me he started to hum—and give him credit, it's not easy humming to someone shaking a corrugated iron sheet. (*She knocks back her drink, sighs, takes Ruth's glass and replenishes both*) "My husband is clearly trying to impress someone and since he gave up trying to impress *me* years ago, it therefore follows he has someone else in mind. And more than likely in *body*." (*She hands Ruth her glass*) Cheers. (*She drinks*)

A moment

Ruth "Dear Reader. You omitted to mention one very important detail. How *old* is your husband?"

Clare Forty-nine next birthday—but don't you dare tell him I said so.

Ruth Precisely. George is purely and simply undergoing what is known in the trade as The Virility Crisis. Or putting it another way—he's afraid of growing old.

Clare He *can't* be growing old. *I'm* not.

Ruth He's a man, he's forty-eight, and he's suddenly aware of it. I bet he even combs his *hair* differently.

Clare No—but he *has* grown the most amazing side-whiskers.

Ruth Well there we are. The time-honoured middle-aged man's little game. "Redistribution of Visible Assets." I'll even bet he's thinking of changing his car.

Clare It's being delivered next week.

Ruth A sporty little broom-broom, no doubt.

Clare An MGB. (*With an awful thought*) An MGB and no vest. He'll *freeze* to death.

Ruth Well—there's my answer, Clare. George has reached the virility crisis. It happens to *all* of them. I know. It happened to my husband.

Clare (*knowing full well*) And what did *he* do about it?

Ruth (*sighing*) Found himself a little dolly and ran off with her.

Clare And *you're* telling *me* not to worry.

Ruth I'm telling you that George is exhibiting well-worn symptoms but it doesn't necessarily follow that he'll do any more than run round the park and build himself a sauna bath.

Clare Then how about *these* symptoms? For the past two months he's been coming home late every Wednesday with the most ridiculous

excuses about where he's been. And it's not as if I *ask* him. He comes bursting through that door, brandishing a huge bunch of flowers, chuntering nineteen to the dozen. Every Wednesday the same thing. Today was absolutely typical. He starts off by mumbling something about a problem over breakfast . . . phones at ten to say he *might* be late—phones again at three to say he *will* be late—by six o'clock he's got a world *crisis* on his hands. If *that's* not another woman, I don't know what *is*. (*After a slight pause, touched*) Poor George. He will *try* so hard. (*Rather sheepishly*) I even marked his socks.

Ruth Marked his *socks*?

Clare So that I'd know if he'd taken them off. (*With a weak smile*) Evidence.

Ruth shakes her head, smiling ruefully. Clare sighs

Ruth Clare, you want my professional advice—ask him. Bring it out into the open.

Clare I couldn't.

Ruth (*with a shrug*) That's what I'd tell my readers.

Clare But I'm *not* one of your readers.

Ruth Thank you.

Clare You know what I mean. I'm not words on a page, I'm someone you've known for years. (*A moment*) He's not the only one who's finding out he's not young any more.

Pause

Ruth Right. So. You're not absolutely *sure* there's someone else, are you?

For a moment Clare seems about to argue

Clare (*eventually*) No.

Ruth Then let's assume he's putting out warning signals. That he's saying—look, pay more attention to me or something *might* happen.

Clare I *do* pay attention to him.

Ruth Perhaps not the right sort.

Clare We've been married twenty *years* . . .

Ruth Exactly. Marriage is like a bath. The longer you lie in it, the colder it gets.

Clare And so it needs—(*She mimes turning a tap*)—topping up?

Ruth Better *your* hand on the tap.

Clare Perhaps *I* need topping up too.

Ruth (*smiling*) Perhaps you just need a bigger bath. (*Indicating her glass*) May I?

Clare Please do. You may be right. Warning signals. Yes, I'll improve myself. (*She nods absently*)

Ruth fixes herself a drink

Ruth (*smiling to herself*) He'll look rather dashing in a sports car. (*She drinks*)

Clare And his yellow tracksuit.

Ruth With his whiskers blowing in the wind.
Clare He's a very attractive man.

Slight pause

Ruth How *is* your personal life?
Clare You mean . . .?
Ruth Yes.
Clare Well—it's not exactly the raging fire it *was*—but there's still the odd glow amongst the embers.
Ruth So fan the flames a little.
Clare Fan the flames and run the bath.

We hear the sound of a car arriving and stopping

(*Worried*) You've just called in.
Ruth (*laughing*) Don't worry—I know exactly what he thinks about *me.*
Clare For a chat.
Ruth What?
Clare A chat. You just called in for a chat.
George (*off, calling*) Darling, I'm home!

George enters, carrying a huge bunch of flowers

Clare (*brightly*) Ah, there you are, darling. Ruth's here. She just dropped in for a chat.
George (*harrassed*) What?
Clare (*pointing with her glass*) Ruth.
George Oh.
Ruth Hello George. (*She smiles sweetly*)

Clare carries the drink across to Ruth. As she does, George stands looking at them suspiciously. But he assumes a big smile as Clare returns

Clare Drink?

George smiles at her, but as she mixes his drink, he whispers

George What's *she* doing here?
Clare (*brightly*) She was just passing and thought she'd drop in.
Ruth For a chat.
George (*to Clare*) What *sort* of chat?
Clare Oh—you know—just a chatty sort of chat.

She hands him his glass. He realizes that he still holds the flowers

George For you.

She takes them, kisses him, behind his back indicating the flowers to Ruth as if to say, "you see?"

Clare Darling—you shouldn't have. (*She sniffs them and puts them down*
George A little coming home present.
Ruth A little Coming Home *Late* Present.

George ("*laughing*") Yes. (*With a hiss*) What is she *doing* here?

Clare flicks something from his coat shoulder. Immediately his hand goes to it

What's wrong?

He moves quickly to examine himself in the mirror. Ruth and Clare exchange a quick glance

Clare I thought I noticed a little tear.
George Tear? There? Never. It's a snare. In the material. I'll phone that damned tailor first thing in the morning.
Clare It's probably just a loose cotton.
George That's no excuse. There's too much of this shoddy workmanship about nowadays. (*He drinks quickly*) That's why I'm late. You get in a car and it doesn't *work*—you get in a train and it doesn't *go*—and the *food*—my god—they call that *food?*
Ruth *Do* they?

He glares at her, then knocks back his drink, pours himself another one

George Did you get my phone call?
Clare Now let me think . . . (*She feigns trying to remember*) Yes—yes—I think I *did.*
George Good.
Clare As a matter of fact, I got all *six* of them.
George Yes—well—you know—I like to keep you informed—things being as they are—rushing about—up down up down—I thought—you know—ring Clare—keep in touch—don't want her to worry.
Ruth How very considerate.
Clare It's amazing you found time to have the car repaired.
George Car.
Clare Message Number Six. "With this client—car broke down . . ."
George Not *my* car—*his* car.
Clare Oh, you went in *his* car.
George Yes of course. Didn't I say?
Clare It was the one thing you forgot to mention.
George How silly of me.
Ruth How *is* the property business?
George (*stiffly*) Fine. And how's the Agony Column?
Ruth Flourishing, I'm sorry to say.
George Sorry? I thought you were at your happiest meddling in other people's affairs.
Ruth ("*smiling*") Sweet.
George Who are we today—Sister Goodheart or Auntie Ruth?
Ruth Neither actually. (*Smiling*) Madame Zenda.
Clare The Stars and *You.*
George ("*impressed*") Oh, that's *you* as well, is it? I read you only yesterday as a matter of fact—and you were absolutely right. I *did* get a letter. From my *son.*

Ruth Where *is* he now?
George Don't you know? Rub a bit of Windowlene on your crystal ball. (*He lights a cigarette*)
Ruth You've never forgiven me, have you?
Clare Don't start him on *that* one.
George What's there to forgive? I'm delighted. What father *wouldn't* be?
Ruth He simply asked my advice. He wanted to see the world.
George And *you* said: "Why not? It will broaden your mind." And how is he *doing* it? Sitting cross-legged, halfway up a mountain in the Himalayas, staring at some Indian vicar's *feet*.
Ruth (*calmly*) Make your point, George.
George My point, Sister Bigmouth, *is* that if my son wanted to study chiropody, why couldn't he do it at an English University like everyone *else* does?
Ruth Do they?
Clare George has this thing about higher education.
George Not as high as the Himalayas. George has this *thing* about other people meddling in his family affairs. (*Sweetly*) Are you staying for dinner?
Ruth Unfortunately I have a prior engagement.
George Too bad.
Clare That reminds me—dinner. Excuse me.

Clare exits

George Don't hurry your drink. (*He thrusts Ruth's glass into her hand*)
Ruth George—have you ever wondered why you're so rude to me?
George It's something I never question.
Ruth Perhaps you should read Freud.
George Perhaps I will. Just as soon as I've (*He mimes*) waved you and your revolting cigarettes good-bye.

Ruth finishes her drinks, stands, collecting up her handbag. She looks at him for a moment

Ruth (*in a very different tone of voice*) George. I *understand.*

She momentarily squeezes his arm. He looks down at her hand and then back up again with total incomprehension

Clare enters at almost the same moment

I must go. (*She moves to the door*)
Clare (*moving with Ruth*) I'll give you a ring.
Ruth Do.

Ruth and Clare exit

George (*disparagingly*) *Freud.* (*With a change of tone*) *Freud.* (*He takes the paperback book from his pocket and sits down, opens the book at random. After a moment*) Fascinating. Absolutely fascinating.

Clare enters

Clare What is?
George This book.

As Clare moves in we see that she is holding a pair of carpet slippers

The Psychology of Human Relationships.
Clare What made you buy that?
George Buy it? Err—I just happened to be browsing through this bookshop--in Cambridge—you remember I told you I've been to Cambridge today—and I thought—that looks very interesting. So I bought it.

As he speaks he slips the book behind the cushion at his back, while Clare gets on her knees and pulls off his shoes

What are you *doing*?
Clare Putting on your slippers.
George *I* can do it.
Clare No, no, no . . .

He stares down as she puts on his slippers but it is obvious she is far more interested in his socks

It's the least I can do. Hard day in the office—*and* in Cambridge—car, train, food . . .
George (*amazed*) What are you doing with my *socks*?
Clare I was just thinking how well they fitted you.
George Almost like a glove.
Clare Mitten. Let me get you another drink.

She goes and fixes him another drink. He stares down at his slippered feet

George Incidentally—guess who phoned today?
Clare You.
George Yes. No—phone *me*—in the office. (*He beams*) Old Jack.
Clare (*flatly*) Good Old Jack.
George He's coming down in a couple of weeks. I invited him for lunch. Saturday the fourteenth.
Clare Couldn't you have said we're busy?
George Not Old *Jack*. We haven't seen him for *ages*. (*She gives him the drink*) Anyway, I thought you liked him.
Clare He makes passes at me.
George That's what I thought you *liked*.
Clare What I *don't* like is the sight of the pair of you, half-drunk, tears in your eyes, singing those awful rugby club songs. (*She mimes holding a pint and, in macho-bass, sings one of the awful songs she's talking about*)

George takes up the song happily, but stops and:

George (*sighing*)They don't write songs like that any more.
Clare Oh, I don't know.
George Anyway--he's coming on the fourteenth. Put it in your diary.

A moment

Clare George?
George Yes?
Clare I was wondering. How would you feel about a bigger *bath*?
George What!?

He looks at her in blank amazement

The lights dim in the drawing-room and simultaneously come up in the bedsitter

Jane sits at the head of the bed, knees up. She hears someone whistling in the hallway and immediately slides down into a languorous lying position, one hand behind her head, gazing dreamily up at the ceiling

Nick enters. He carries a pile of books and is whistling somewhat inanely. He pulls a key from the lock, stuffs it into a pocket, moves across to dump the books carelessly on the cupboard unit. He glances briefly at Jane who studiously dreams up at the ceiling. He sees the pot containing George's flowers, takes it up

Nick Huh!

He puts down the pot, and whistles his way out through the alcove. Only now does Jane turn her head in his direction, but looks sharply back at the ceiling as he enters, swigging from a bottle of milk

I've had a great idea. Can't fail. Rodney Marsh Hairgrips. I can see it now. Every footballer in the country wearing a Rodney Marsh Hairgrip. Blue—with *his* signature. In gold. (*He leans close to her*) You've got to admit, it's a winner.

Jane Like all your ideas.
Nick The only reason for my failure to date is general apathy on the part of The Great British Public.
Jane Talking of general apathy—what have you *done* today?
Nick You know perfectly well. I've been to my evening classes.
Jane And what are we on *this* week?
Nick Ah! Your apparent lack of memory is due, purely and simply, to a sub-conscious rejection of my thirst for learning.
Jane You think so.
Nick Definitely.

Throughout the following, she takes up the books he brought in, and one by one tosses them at him after glancing at the title. He gathers them and defends himself at the same time

Jane Since I've known you, your thirst for learning has taken in—*Food Reform for Health Nuts—Car Maintenance for Owner-Drivers—Japanese Flower Arrangement—The Use and Care of the Automatic Sewing Machine*—and *now*—which brings us back to the sub-conscious rejection bit—*Advanced Psychology. Not*, you notice, Psychology. *Advanced* Psychology yet.

Nick (*smug*) What you are exhibiting now is a typical pattern of aggression. That is, a manifestation of The Will To Power—as according to Adler—or a projection of The Death Impulse—as according to Freud.
Jane (*with face close to his*) Nick?
Nick Yes?
Jane *Knickers.*

Jane exits through the alcove

Nick grimaces after her, then quickly starts to search the bed for his boots

Jane appears in the alcove, holding the boots at arm's length

Looking for *these*?
Nick *Me?* What? Huh!
Jane Pathetic. You really *are* pathetic.

Jane drops the boots disdainfully and exits

Nick moves quickly to take up the boots and examine them

Jane returns

Nick quickly puts the boots down

Nick Have a nice time then?
Jane (*sarcastically*) I thought you'd never ask.
Nick I knew how disappointed you'd be if I didn't.
Jane Thank you: I had a *wonderful* time.
Nick Good.
Jane I take it we're eating out?
Nick You mean *George* didn't feed you?
Jane We had better things to do.
Nick Very *good.*
Jane I'm glad you approve.
Nick Anything in particular.
Jane Amongst *other* things, we had a deep and meaningful discussion.
Nick God, he sounds like Harold Wilson. In fact I bet he *looks* like Harold Wilson.
Jane I'm hungry. Where're we going? (*She opens the door, starts to exit*)
Nick (*going after her*) I thought we'd go to this little Greek place I found. Bags of atmosphere. Wonderful food. You'll like it . . .

Nick reaches the door, scowls into the room, then follows Jane off

The lights come up in the drawing-room.
Clare, in a sexy housecoat, is at the open french windows
Clare (*turning in to the door*) It's all right—you can go now—it's dark.

George enters. He wears his yellow tracksuit and his training shoes

George (*"jogging"*) Whatever you may think, Clare—I am not ashamed of being seen.
Clare Off you go then.
George I am simply—limbering—*up*. (*He jogs towards the french windows*)
Clare George—do stay away from Wakefield Crescent.
George That ridiculous woman—calling the police.
Clare She was *frightened*, George.
George And that policeman—I *ask* you—a breathalyser test.
Clare Wouldn't it have been awful if your tracksuit had turned green?
George (*glaring but with dignity*) Please run my bath.

George jogs out through the windows

Clare waves him good-bye, and stands at the windows. After about ten seconds, we hear the sound of two dogs barking angrily, and George shouting at them

Clare (*shaking her head sadly*) Oh dear. (*She moves to sit in the chair George sat in earlier. Uncomfortable, she reaches behind the cushion and brings out the book. She looks at it*) Psychology. (*She shakes her head slightly and flips at the book. Suddenly her attention is drawn to the inside cover*) Holland Park Bookshop? He said *Cambridge* . . . (*She quickly flicks through the book and opens it at the back cover*) Stolen from Nicholas Craig. Seven two seven, oh seven four five . . .? (*She frowns, sits for a moment, then closes the book. She sits looking ahead*)

Jane and Nick enter the bedsitter. She is furious. He is slightly drunk

Jane Little Greek place. A fish and chip shop run by a Cypriot.
Nick The gherkins were good.
Jane Bags of *atmosphere*.
Nick Well—at seventy-five the two, you can't complain.
Jane *I* paid, *I* can complain. Isn't it about time you got a *job*? (*He undresses, throwing clothes around untidily*)
Nick I wrote for one only last week.
Jane Managing Director of I.C.I.
Nick That's what is known as Positive Thinking.
Jane Apparently *they* didn't think so.
Nick I can't understand it. My references were marvellous.
Jane A letter from your mother does not constitute a reference.
Nick She said some very nice things about me.
Jane (*very angry now*) I really don't know what I see in you.
Nick Come off it—you're fascinated by me—you always have been.
Jane I must have been mad, falling for a line like that. (*Brightly*) "Let's start a commune" he says.
Nick It was a very good idea.
Jane You didn't say it was going to be just you and *me*—in *my* flat.

Nick It's a start. (*By now he is down to red underpants and Mickey Mouse vest*)
Jane You're totally irresponsible.
Nick Not *totally*.
Jane And you *really* wonder what I see in George?

In the drawing-room, Clare looks at the book, gets up, moves to the telephone

Nick Have you ever thought that inside every boring old George there's an exciting young Nick just waiting to get out?
Jane And have *you* ever thought that inside every boring young Nick there's another Nick—even *more* boring?
Nick What you are exhibiting now is a typical case of Transference?

Clare, after hesitating, starts to dial slowly, referring to the back cover of the book

Jane Nick, if you give me any more of that psychoanalytical crap, I'll . . . I'll—(*taking up pot of flowers*)—I'll transfer these clothes right out of the window.

Nick exits through the alcove, smiling sweetly

Nick (*as he goes*) I *understand* . . . I *understand* . . .

Jane glares impotently down at the pot. The telephone rings. She snatches it up

Jane Doctor Nickel-arse Craig's Psychiatric Clinic. Nutcase Number One speaking.
Clare (*into the receiver*) I beg your pardon?
Jane Doctor Nickel-arse Craig. Psychiatrist—psychoanalyst—psychopath. You name it, he'll analyse it.
Clare So sorry. I must have the wrong number. (*She hangs up, stands for a moment, then moves back to sit, staring down at the book*)

At the same time, Nick enters with a towel

Nick Who was that?
Jane Wrong *number*.

Jane snatches the towel from him, shoves the pot into his hands, and exits through the alcove

Nick puts down the pot, looks from it to the telephone

Nick Bloody *George*.

At this moment, George staggers in through the French windows. He is exhausted

Nick gets into bed in vest and pants

Clare (*brightly*) Had a nice run?

George is too breathless to reply, try though he might. He crosses to pour himself a drink. As he does, we see a great rip in the seat of his tracksuit

Nick turns the poster round to reveal the "Trespassers Will Be Violated" side

George sees that Clare has his book

George (*breathlessly guiltily*) What are you doing with my book?
Clare Just—you know—having a little read (*Brightly*) Did you know that whistling was a sign of virility?
George (*guilt uppermost*) That's *my* book—*my* book . . .
Clare (*nervously*) Yes, all right, George—don't worry—I'll—run your bath.

Clare exits, still looking at George rather nervously

George slumps exhausted into a chair, wincing when his backside makes contact

Nick in bed, leans across for his cigarettes, sees something on the floor, reaches down to take up George's hat. He looks at it, looks inside

Nick (*reading*) George Williams. George *Williams. Right,* Mister Williams. (*He gives the hat a Karate-chop and rams it on his head, sits with arms crossed*)

Jane, in nightgown, enters. She reacts on seeing the hat, but chooses to ignore it. She gets into bed

At the same time, Clare enters the drawing-room, still looking at George doubtfully

George sits, chest heaving. Clare sits. For a moment there is silence: Jane and Nick sitting up in bed—Clare and George sitting in chairs. Then, at the same time but to varying effect, George and Nick begin to whistle

SLOW CURTAIN

SCENE 2

The same. The next morning.

The lights come up in the bedsitter.

An alarm clock is ringing—muffled, but loud enough to wake a sleeping person. Jane, in bed with Nick, stirs and raises her head from the pillow. With an effort she manages to stagger out of bed in search of the alarm clock. She looks in the cupboard, behind the books, shifts the flower pot, etc., before turning to Nick and shaking him.

Jane Where have you put it?

Nick does not move a muscle. Jane gets on her knees and pokes under the bed, searching. After a moment, she pulls out the suitcase and takes out one of those enormous alarm clocks that are about ten inches in diameter. She switches it off and leans over Nick

Wake-Wakey. The Great British Public is waiting to be bowled over by your brilliance.

She crosses to the curtained off corner wardrobe and takes out the clothes she needs for the day. She sees clearly that Nick has no intention of shifting himself

Incidentally, Mr Psycho-analyst. Did you know that the inability to rise early is a sign of a waning sexual urge?

Jane exits to the kitchen

A moment

Nick shoots out of bed like a rocket and follows Jane

The lights cross fade to the drawing-room

Clare sits, in housecoat, pouring coffee. George enters, minus jacket, clearly aching in every limb. He sits painfully

George I shall sue. That's what I shall do. Sue.
Clare You can't sue a dog.
George It's *owner*.
Clare You must have done something to upset it.
George Creatures like that shouldn't be roaming the streets at night.
Clare That's what that lady in Wakefield Crescent said about *you*.
George Stupid woman. (*A thought*) It was *her* dog. A savage reprisal.
Clare You're so *emotional* lately, George.
George I am not emotional, I am scarred. Permanently scarred.
Clare It adds character.
George You're absolutely right. It's the one thing I've always wanted: a characterful backside.
Clare I'm the only one who'll ever see it. (*A moment*) Aren't I?
George That is not the . . . (*Changing his tone*) Yes of course you are, darling. Absolutely right. I'm being ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous. I don't think I want any coffee. (*He stands*) I think I'll get off to the office. (*He gets into his jacket which was lying across a chair*)
Clare (*helping him*) I can't find your hat anywhere.
George My hat—it must be . . . (*Suddenly*) My *hat*. (*He pulls away, stares at her*)
Clare Yes, George—your *hat*.
George I don't want you to worry—*please*—don't worry.
Clare Perhaps you left it somewhere.

George I haven't *been* anywhere—*nowhere.*
Clare You've been to Cambridge.
George Cambridge? (*Quickly*) Yes. I left it in the car.
Clare I've already looked in the car.
George Why? I mean why should you look in the car? What made you do *that*?
Clare (*worried by his "neurosis"*) Because every morning, I give you your hat. It's a sort of ritual. You *like* your hat. It's your full-stop.
George Full-stop? (*Suddenly*) Did you look in the boot?
Clare The *boot*?
George Please. Look in the boot.
Clare (*worried, but pacifying*) Yes of course I will, darling. Now stop *worrying.*
George *I'm* not worrying. It's just that I don't want *you* to worry.
Clare (*as though to a child*) All right George—I'll—look in the boot.
George Don't worry, Clare, don't worry. I don't understand, I had my head, I must have had my hat.

Clare exits, distinctly worried

As soon as Clare has gone, George goes to the telephone and dials quickly. The bell rings in the bedsitter

The bedsitter lights up

Jane is making up before the mirror. She crosses to answer the telephone

Jane Hello?
George (*with a hiss*) I must see you.
Jane Who *is* this?
George (*with a hiss*) *George.*
Jane (*looking towards alcove*) See me?
George Stay where you are—I'll be straight round.

George slams down the receiver. Jane looks at the telephone, worried, then lowers it

After a moment Jane exits through the alcove

Clare enters the drawing-room

George still has his hand on the receiver. He snatches it up again

Yes, I'm still here. You have? Good. I'll be straight round. (*He rams down the receiver*)
Clare It isn't there.
George No of course it isn't. I just phoned the Lost Property Office. At the station. *They've* got it. I must go there immediately.
Clare But it's only a *hat*, George.
George It may only be a hat to *you*, but to me, it's a lost hat. And lost hats are hard to find.

George exits haughtily. Clare exits after him

Jane and Nick enter through the alcove. He is wearing George's hat, with a flower sticking from it

Nick *Sausages?*
Jane (*taking up her purse*) Pork.
Nick *Now?*
Jane I'm doing—Toad in the Hole.
Nick (*delighted*) My favourite.
Jane Yes—I want to get it prepared before I leave for the office.
Nick Specially for *me*?
Jane Yes.

Jane gives him money, takes the hat from his head, hangs it on a doorhook, and exits to the alcove. Nick exits, taking down the hat en route and ramming it on his head. He closes the door

Clare and Ruth—carrying a briefcase—enter the drawing room

Ruth Your husband nearly ran me down.
Clare (*her mind elsewhere*) He couldn't find his hat.
Ruth Came out of that drive like a madman. *Hat?*
Clare It seems to be on his mind.
Ruth (*with an edge*) Not on his *head.*
Clare Yes. (*Suddenly*) Why are you here?
Ruth (*slightly taken aback*) What? I was on my way to the office, I—just thought I'd pop in—after our little chat last night—see if—well, if anything had *happened.*

Clare looks at her for a moment, then moves to pick up George's book

Clare (*about to refer to the book, then changing her mind*) I think I might have misread the whole thing.
Ruth Misread? (*She looks at the book*)
Clare George's—(*waving the book*)—goings-on.
Ruth (*carefully*) In what way?
Clare I don't know. (*She looks at the book*) Perhaps two and two *don't* make four. Perhaps they make six.
Ruth What are you *talking* about?
Clare Well—perhaps it *does* add up—George's—goings on—but not in the way we *thought* it did.
Ruth (*not with it*) I'm sorry—it's rather early in the morning and I haven't had any coffee . . . (*She pours herself a cup of coffee*)
Clare —I think he might be ill.
Ruth (*nodding*) It's all that running.
Clare (*shaking her head*) In the head.
Ruth You mean . . .?
Clare (*nodding*) I think he might be having treatment.
Ruth *George?*

Clare If he *was*—you know—*ill*—it would account for a lot of things, wouldn't it?
Ruth But he would have *told* you.
Clare Not necessarily. And yet perhaps in a way, he *has:* perhaps that's why he keeps telling me not to worry. (*She sits, looks at the book*)
Ruth Look—if there's anything I can *do* . . .
Clare Should I get in touch with him?
Ruth Who?
Clare The psychiatrist.
Ruth You *know* who he is?
Clare I—happened to find out. (*Uncertainly*) Perhaps it was deliberate. A *clue.* A cry for help. These things often happen, don't they? (*She guides Ruth to the door*)
Ruth (*positively*) If *you* think George is having treatment and can't tell you, then it's perfectly reasonable for you to have a—well, a quiet word—with his—psychiatrist.

Clare and Ruth exit

The doorbell rings in the bedsitter. Jane answers it

George enters breathlessly

Jane What's wrong?
George My hat—I left my hat.
Jane (*relieved*) Oh—your *hat* . . .

She reaches up behind the door. The hat has gone. George moves nervously into the room

George It's little things like that she notices. She was a journalist, you know.
Jane (*with a sudden bright thought*) The thing is—I sent it to the cleaners.
George The *cleaners*?
Jane It'll be ready tomorrow . . .
George But I must have it today—I'm at the Lost Property Office collecting it—she *knows* I am.
Jane Tell her—tell her it got dirty. I mean—stuffed in with all those suitcases.
George (*starting to argue, then changing his mind*) You're right. There are some filthy travellers in this world—*she* knows that. (*Convinced*) It's at the cleaners. (*He kisses her cheek*) I must go.
Jane So must I.
George I'll give you a lift. (*He opens the door*)
Jane Thanks.

Jane exits. George makes to go after her, but sees the "Trespassers" notice, stares at it briefly, and then exits, still puzzling over it

Ruth and Clare enter the drawing-room

Ruth (*collecting her briefcase*) Darling, I must fly—but you *will* let me know . . . ?
Clare Of course I will.
Ruth Thanks for the coffee—and don't *worry*.

Ruth exits

Nick enters the bedsitter, still in the hat, brandishing a package

Nick (*calling*) Sausages! (*No answer*) Jane? (*He looks into the alcove*) Well I like *that*. (*He shrugs, tosses the package onto the bed and moves to sort through his book collection*) I'll do it m'self . . . (*He takes a book from the shelves and moves away, flicking through it*) Toad In The Hole . . .

In the drawing-room, Clare moves to the telephone and dials

(*Reading the book*) Toad In The Hole. "First catch toad. Place toad in hole . . ." (*He hurls the book away*)

The bedsitter telephone rings. Nick lifts the receiver

Hello?

Clare (*tentatively*) Is that Doctor Nicholas Craig?
Nick (*grinning, but deep-voiced*) The same.
Clare I'm terribly sorry to trouble you, doctor: it's about my husband.
Nick Is it?
Clare I'm—Mrs George Williams.
Nick George . . . ? (*He takes off the hat, looks inside it, stuffs it back on his head*) Oh yes, Mrs Williams?
Clare I understand you're treating him?
Nick Did *he* say that?
Clare No. It was in your book.
Nick Book?
Clare I mean I think he left it as a sort of *clue*.
Nick Which particular book would it—
Clare (*referring to the book*) *The Psychology of Human—*
Nick *—Relationships.* (*With a satisfied smirk*) So *that's* where it went.
Clare That's how I found your number. The thing is, doctor—I know it's unethical—but he *is* my husband—and I'm worried about him.
Nick I bet you are.
Clare Tell me: is it serious?
Nick Serious enough.
Clare Poor George. (*Firmly*) I want to help.
Nick (*playing the full "doctor" now*) Now you mustn't worry, Mrs Williams. He'll pull through. But there's no doubt that he needs careful handling. Which is why I'm glad you phoned.
Clare Perhaps I should come and see you.
Nick Good—*good* . . .

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