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Outside Edge

A Play

Richard Harris

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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OUTSIDE EDGE

First presented at the Hampstead Theatre, London on the 24th July 1979, and by Eddie Kulukundis at the Queen's Theatre, London, on the 11th September 1979, with the following cast of characters:

Miriam	Julia McKenzie
Roger	Richard Kane
Bob	John Kane
Dennis	Julian Curry
Maggie	Maureen Lipman
Kevin	Ian Trigger
Ginnie	Susan Carpenter
Alex	Martin Wimbush
Sharon	Natalie Forbes

The play directed by ROBIN LEFEVRE

Setting by Grant Hicks

The action takes place in a cricket pavilion

Act I A summer's day. About 1 p.m.
Act II About 5.30 p.m.

Time—the present

ACT I

A Cricket Pavilion. About 1 p.m. on a fine summer's day

The pavilion is a wooden structure, nothing grand, in need of a coat of paint. There is a drinks bar with a wooden shutter, rolled down, and a counter from which teas are served. Behind the counter is an opening to the unseen kitchen. Two high stools are at the counter. In front of the bar a folded trestle table leans against the wall. Between the bar and the counter is an elderly piano on which stands the odd cricket trophy. On the wall by the bar is a clock, and on the other side a pay phone. Above this is a notice-board, and next to it a door leading through to the changing-rooms. On another wall is a dart-board with darts, and below it some folded wooden chairs. Steps lead down from a somewhat vandalized verandah to the grass area below. On each side of the steps are wooden benches, and on the front wall to one side is the scoreboard. On one bench is a bucket of whitewash, a splattered marking-up stick and an old pair of whitewash-splattered wicket-keeping gloves. Beyond the wall with the scoreboard a wooden door leads off to the car-park. Beside this door is an upstand water-pipe with hose attached. The hose extends off towards the pitch (*See plan on p. 75*)

When the CURTAIN *rises the stage is empty for a moment and then Roger enters from the changing-rooms, looking at the team list which he pins up on the board. Roger is a rather pale, shortish, stocky man in his late thirties. Although very boyish, his voice is surprisingly deep and resonant. He's rather inclined to address people much like the young subaltern addressing the troops. He wears khaki shorts with bulging pockets, a white shirt and sandals with rolled-down socks. A folded daily newspaper sticks out of his back pocket*

Having pinned up the notice, he checks his watch and then moves over to put the clock forward five minutes or so. He pulls a piece of paper from his shirt pocket—this is his "list". He exits towards the pitch cheerfully, shoving the list back into his pocket

After a moment, Miriam enters from the car park. She is loaded down with two cardboard boxes containing groceries, loaves, etc., and backs on, having pushed open the swing gate with her behind. Miriam is about thirty-five. She has a good face and figure but does nothing to glamorize herself. No make-up, hair pulled back in a bandeau. A simple summer frock, not new. To all appearances, a somewhat daunting air of efficiency. She is, in fact, incredibly shy. She lugs the boxes straight through and exits into the kitchen, humming cheerfully

Roger enters from the pitch, turns off the water tap. He pulls out his list, frowns down at it, then becomes aware of Miriam's humming

Roger (*calling*) Miriam!
Miriam (*off*) Here I am darling, don't panic.

Roger moves inside

Miriam enters and takes a cardboard box of crockery from beneath the counter and puts it on top

Roger You know it isn't on. It just isn't flippingwell on.
Miriam (*busying herself*) What isn't?
Roger What? Oh—thingy—wassisname—Alex.
Miriam He hasn't let you down again, has he Roger. I don't know, it's so unfair.
Roger Touch wood, of course he's playing—don't say things like that, Miriam, please—I'm scraping the barrel as it is. (*Looking at his list*) Cups, broken, three.
Miriam (*pointing into the box*) Cups, replaced, three.
Roger When?
Miriam I told you—this morning.
Roger Sorry. Couldn't have. (*He points*) It's on my list.
Miriam Sorry darling—twice. Once when I woke you with your grapefruit and the weather forecast and once when I was driving you here. Sorry darling.

Miriam beams brightly at him and goes into the kitchen

Roger You don't half mess me about at times, Mim, I don't make out this list for fun, it is all down to me you know, all this. (*He pulls out a stub of pencil and crosses out "cups" from his list*)

Miriam enters from the kitchen with a tea towel

Miriam What about Alex?
Roger Mm? Oh—he volunteered to help me roll the pitch. One o'clock, promise. I don't know why I bother at times, really I don't. (*He pulls the paper from his pocket and moves to sit on the steps to read from it*)

Miriam comes out from behind the counter, goes to the piano, lifts the lid, takes out a key hidden there, moves to unlock the bar door and puts her head inside momentarily checking

(*During this*) The point I'm trying to make is that they've got no right saying they'll be here if they've got no intention of being here. I'm here, why can't they be here?
Miriam Tell them.
Roger (*reading*) The dry weather is expected to continue.
Miriam I've told you the forecast.
Roger Temperatures will reach around twenty degrees centigrade, falling to twelve degrees overnight.
Miriam You're always going on about making a stand at the wicket; all right, make a stand in here. Tell them.
Roger Winds fresh to strong, dying away by mid-afternoon.
Miriam Why should everything be left to you? It's so unfair.
Roger Further outlook continuing dry with perhaps the chance of rain later tomorrow.

Pleased, Roger gets up and puts the paper down on the bar counter. Miriam returns to busy herself behind the tea counter

Mim—if I start laying down the law, half of them won't turn up at all. All I can do is what I do now; ask for volunteers. And they do, let's face it, they do volunteer.

Miriam It's just that they never show up. (*With her sudden overbright smile*) But I show up, don't I, darling? Every week, I show up.

Roger Ah yes! But then—you're the captain's wife.

Miriam Oh I see.

Roger Fair do's, Mim. (*He mimes a forward defensive stroke*) I love you. Okay, fair enough?

Miriam And I love you.

He moves to the counter and leans across it and she leans across from behind it and they mime a rather chaste little kiss with their faces not actually touching. He soon moves away again

Roger The truth is, if you weren't here, it just wouldn't be the same. Couldn't be. And you know why, don't you?

She takes up a rubbish bin and moves out to pick up the odd piece of rubbish from the verandah and grass

Miriam We're very lucky: we like being together.

Roger There's that, yes—(*he stares out over the pitch*)—but not only that, Mim. Teams *want* to come here and play us, you know, Mim—not only because of the game, but because of your teas. Your teas are talked about throughout the entire South Western League, d'you know that?

Miriam Not the *entire* South Western League, surely?

Roger Cross my heart. As for my side of things—all right, okay, fair enough—maybe I do take on more than my fair share, maybe I should get more help—but we're not talking about chaps at school you know Mim, we're talking about grown men pretty much set in their ways. I start laying down the law about fatigue duties and I destroy everything I've built up over the past two years. What's twenty degrees centigrade in whatsit?

Miriam Umm ...

Roger I mean, crumbs Mim, last year we didn't even have this place and now I'm really getting my feet under the table, there's no knowing where it could lead to: premier league, winter tours, who knows? Sometimes I lie awake at night, just thinking about it.

Miriam So do I.

Roger It's a team, Mim. A fighting unit if you like and I'm the captain.

Miriam moves inside and behind the tea counter as he continues, staring out over the arena

It's me who controls whether we win or lose and I want to win, Mim, no point else. There's this very fine balance. It's all psychology, which means tact and diplomacy and ... (*Suddenly he clicks his fingers at her as he remembers*) Thingy, whatsit, notice.

Miriam Please don't do that, Roger, you know I don't like it. (*She dutifully reaches under the counter to produce a white cardboard sign*)

Roger takes it. It reads "Ladies First Door on Right". He hangs it on a hook on the changing-rooms door

Roger Right. I'll get on with the marking up. (*He snaps his fingers at her*) What's next from your side of things? (*He moves outside*)

Miriam Toilet requisites—and do say something about them stealing the soap Roger, *please.*

Roger pulls on the white-splattered gloves from the bench

And it's sixty-nine.

Roger (*frowning*) What?

Miriam Degrees Fahrenheit.

Roger Super!

Roger takes up the bucket and stick and exits cheerfully in the direction of the wicket. Miriam takes a box into the kitchen, reappears moments later with two bars of soap, a double roll of Andrex and an aerosol spray and exits, humming "I can give you the starlight", into the changing-rooms

Bob enters from the car-park, looking decidedly furtive. He looks towards the wicket as he hurries into the pavilion, glances around to make sure no-one is there, moves quickly to the phone, and dials, bending low to read the numbers. Bob is in his late thirties. A slim, restless man who smokes far too much, bites his nails and is generally guilt-ridden. Wherever he is, he feels he shouldn't be. He wears glasses and casual clothing which though not new was expensive originally.

As he waits for the phone to be answered he lights a cigarette with lighter. Eventually he presses in his two pence

Bob (*brightly*) It's me, hi ... At the club—you know— cricket ... You know me, never give up. Anyway, you phoned ... Sorry? ... No, not really, she was in the bedroom drying her hair, but maybe it isn't such a good idea to phone me, not at home, not for a while anyway, you know what she's like ... Sorry? ... No of course you don't know what she's like, I mean *I* know what she's like and she gets a bit upset obviously. Well, she is my wife after all. (*His face clouds*) I can't come round this afternoon, why, what's happened ...?

Miriam enters through the changing-rooms door, flitting with the spray

Bob presses himself against the wall, unnecessarily cupping the receiver and giving Miriam a wave. She smiles, mouthing "Sorry", and continues her way across to the tea counter, pausing to spray into the bar

("*Quietly*") What d'you mean, face to face, why can't you ... no, I am not losing my temper, I'm ...

Bob turns to look at Miriam behind the counter and grins hugely and she mouths, pointing to herself, "Would you prefer me to go out?" He shakes his hand and grins wildly that she should think such a thing necessary

Miriam, anyway, goes into the kitchen

(*Back to the phone*) No of course I don't mind you ... It's just that ... Pardon? ... No I am not trying to start an argument I'm supposed to be playing cricket. I've told Ginnie I'm playing, I've told Roger I'm playing, if I turn round now and say I can't play, what excuse can I give? ... No of course the game isn't more important than ... Half-past two.

Roger (*off, calling*) Miriam!

Bob Hang on ...

Bob hurries into the changing-rooms, closing the door so that the cord is stretched across from the phone inside the door. Roger returns with the bucket, puts it on the bench and moves inside the pavilion, holding the splattered gloves up in front of himself like a surgeon. Miriam comes out of the kitchen

Roger Didn't I see Bob come in here just now?

Miriam I think you'll find him on the other end of that piece of wire.

Roger turns to look as Miriam moves out from behind the counter

I'll see you later.

Roger (*in near panic*) What d'you mean, where're you going?

Miriam I shan't be long, I'm going to the greengrocer's.

Roger Why?

Miriam Because you were going and somehow I don't think you'll get round to it.

Roger I mean why can't someone else go?

Miriam Because there's no-one else here, is there?

Roger There's him.

Miriam You'll need him. (*Searching her handbag*) Did you take the keys?

Roger No.

Miriam Are you sure?

Roger Don't patronize me, Miriam.

Miriam (*moving behind him and patting both his pockets*) I'm not patronizing you, darling, I'm looking for the car keys—and, oh, listen I think I've found them.

She delves into his pockets to sort out keys and money as he stares irritably at the messy gloved hands he holds before him

Roger What about thingy, Shirley, she could do it.

Miriam Shirley isn't coming, they're looking at houses.

Roger Then Whatsit could have done it, good God, it's on his way.

Miriam Then you should have *asked* him, shouldn't you darling? (*For the first time, she shows a slight flash of irritation and digs deeper into his pockets*)

Roger (*wincing*) But I need you here, Miriam. I mean—what if something turns up?

He wriggles away from her, crossing his legs, and she digs deeper into the pockets

Miriam Will you please—keep—still ...

Bob comes out of the changing rooms and sees them, and—pleased at the chance of a diversion—deliberately pretends to misconstrue, with a big grin

Bob Hello hello hello, go out and come in again, shall I?

Bob replaces the receiver as Miriam extracts her hands—one holding the keys, the other holding some coins and screwed-up banknotes. She takes two pound notes and the loose change and shoves the rest back in the pocket

Miriam Roger's being difficult again.
Roger I am never difficult. Bob, am I difficult?
Bob I heard you were a bit of a pushover myself. What's it all about?
Miriam (*with bright smile*) How d'you mean, a bit of a pushover?
Bob (*grinning, winking*) Ask him.
Miriam (*even more brightly*) Do I *have* to ask you, Roger?
Roger (*waving her away*) Off you go then, woman, chop chop.
Miriam (*posivitely beaming*) Please don't do that, Roger you know how it upsets me.
Roger (*clapping his hands*) Go on, go on, off you go ...
Miriam I'm going, darling, I'm going ... (*She smiles at Bob and moves quickly outside, only now showing a little of her frustration*)

Roger scuttles across to beckon her

Roger Mim ... love you.
Miriam Love you too, darling.

Bob sneaks a quick look at his watch

Miriam exits round the side of the pavilion by the car-park

Roger returns to Bob

Bob Bloody good woman you've got there, Rog.
Roger What!
Bob Bloody gem.

Roger looks around the room vaguely, trying to remember what he is supposed to be doing

Roger Mind you ...
Bob What?
Roger Sorry?
Bob Mim ...
Roger Not half ...
Bob Don't seem to have the knack m'self.
Roger Luck of the draw, if you ask me.
Bob (*suddenly depressed*) What a mess I've made of my life. And it's not just my life, is it?
Roger You know what *I* think, Bob?
Bob No?
Roger I think we should get this table up. (*He moves to stare down at the trestle table, leaning against the rear wall*)
Bob Right! Where d'you want it?

Roger continues to stare at the table

Roger That's a point. Tell you what. Best wait till Mim gets back, we'd only be messing up her system. (*Totally decisive*) Leave it. (*He does his finger-snapping-pointing bit*) Roller.

Bob I thought it was Alex's turn this week?

Roger Swore blind, and where is he?

Bob He always swears blind.

Roger (*slapping his hands together*) All set, then?

Bob Well I would, Rog, only I've got a bit of trouble. I mean, I would, you know I would.

Roger What d'you mean, trouble? Don't say it's your bloody back again, I've got you down at number three. (*He goes to stare at the team list as if to prove the point*) Look, there you are, in writing. B. Wiley, number three.

Bob moves to stand next to him, staring at the list, lighting another cigarette

Bob Oh well. Now then. I'm not keen on that, Rog, not number three. You know me, four or five topweight.

Roger If I had to put my life on a man going in at number three and making a job of it, you know who that man would be, don't you?

Bob Coupla years ago maybe.

Roger *Now*. You are all right are you, I mean, your back?

Bob Oh yes, no trouble there, Rog, I feel in really good nick, you know what I mean? Really good nick. (*He flexes his shoulders to prove the point*)

Roger Super.

Bob (*staring at the list again*) And you really want me in at number three.

Roger I really want you in at number three. (*He claps a gloved hand on Bob's back*) You being the only genuine all-rounder in the side.

Bob (*sighing*) Yeah.

Bob turns and moves away, and Roger sees the whitewash on the back of his coat. He looks down at his gloves and puts them behind his back

Roger No more problems then, old mate?

Bob Only one, I can't play, not today, sorry.

Roger But you said you were all right.

Bob I said my back was all right. (*Shiftily*) No. It's Ginnie.

Roger *I* see.

They move outside

Bob Oh come on Rog, I know you've never liked her but ...

Roger Oh, why won't she let you play?

Bob It's not that who said it was that? No. She's not well. As a matter of fact, she's in bed. I just don't think I can leave her. Not all day.

A moment. Roger regards his gloves and sighs heavily

Roger Got a fag have you, Bob. I've given up.

Bob quickly pulls out a packet of cigarettes and offers one to Roger, who indicates the messy gloves. Bob puts a cigarette into Roger's mouth and lights it for him

Bob How long since you gave up?
Roger Nearly two weeks.
Bob Wish I could. Forty a day now.
Roger Willpower, I suppose. Mind you, Mim gave up at the same time which helped. (*He peels off the gloves and takes the cigarette from his mouth*)
Bob I feel rotten, you know that, Rog.
Roger Bad, is she?
Bob Pretty bad. Temperature and everything. I mean, you know women, they don't go to bed unless they're—you know.
Roger Because the thing is Bob, I've only got eleven. You don't play and I'm down to ten because I'm not borrowing, I'm not—I'm not borrowing one of their lot, not after the way they carried on last time, oh no. They could offer me Ian Bloody Botham and I wouldn't have him. I wouldn't Bob, I mean it.
Bob I know you wouldn't.
Roger I wouldn't.
Bob (*increasingly shifty*) I left it till this morning because I thought she might pull herself together but if anything she's even worse. That was who I was phoning just now, the doctor. Just sort of—you know. (*He sits on a bench*)
Roger What is it–flu?
Bob Er—more like a heavy cold.
Roger (*sitting next to Bob*) Here's what you do, then. You fetch her here, in the car, nice and warm, couple've blankets, nice drop of sunshine, clear her head do her the world of good, Mim'll look after her, give her a ring, see what she says ... (*He tries to drag Bob inside to the phone*)
Bob Well, I would do, Rog, but you know Ginnie, she might take it the wrong way, she's a bit funny like that. I really feel I should go back and look after her and—that's that really.

Bob moves to the steps. A moment, then Roger puts his arm around Bob's shoulders chummily and guides him so that they are both looking out over the pitch

Roger Flipping heck I quite understand, Bob—of course I do. If she's not well she's not well, not your fault, these things happen. Mim was ill once, I seem to remember. But I'd just like to say one thing. One last thing. Which is, I've come to depend on you. Out there I mean. That's all. We'll miss you. That's all. Especially with this lot coming set on thrashing us all round the park after what we did to 'em last year. It'll be a battle, that's all mate, and I would've liked you out there alongside me. Still. We'll be all right, my old mate.
Bob Christ, Rog, I feel terrible.
Roger No no no—we'll make out. Always have always will.

There is the sudden sound of someone whistling

Dennis!

Dennis enters from the car park. Dennis is in his mid-forties: tall, hair cut to disguise a thinning patch, face a little too florid from too many large whiskies

at too many lunchtime sessions with prospective customers. Secondary modern school self-made sales manager with an "improved" accent. Too improved. His clothing is a little too sharp, includes a light blue denim cap. He carries a sports bag. When he first appears, he looks decidedly seedy: but seeing the other two, he braces himself and steps up breezily

Dennis Afternoon skip, afternoon old boy. (*Holding up his bag*) Any chance of a knock, is there?

Roger, his arm still around Bob, regards Dennis with a mixture of surprise and delight

Roger I thought you couldn't play this week?

Dennis Truth is, I suddenly thought to m'self, good God, what do I want with trailing round looking at houses? So I said to her, look love, you want to look at houses, you're quite capable of looking at the bloody things by yourself. So—(*with his big smile*)—if I'm too late for a knock, fair enough, bit of umpiring, whatever you fancy.

Roger rejects Bob and moves across to take Dennis's bag

Roger How d'you fancy a knock at number three?

Dennis (*withdrawing his bag*) Ah. Well ...

Roger Five?

Dennis (*letting Roger take the bag now*) Anywhere you fancy, old boy, you're the guv'nor.

Roger Five it is then. Super. Smashing. Good old Dennis.

Roger moves cheerfully inside, putting the bag on the floor and going to the board to strike out Bob's name and insert Dennis's. Dennis nips inside after him, popping a sweet into his mouth, a habit of his, and winking at Bob. We sense an immediate current of dislike between these two men: nothing in particular, purely instinctive

Dennis What's this then?

Roger (*writing*) Bob can't play.

Dennis Oh that's a bit of bad; not like you to let the side down, Bob, old boy.

Bob It so happens that my wife is rather ill. Well, a bit poorly.

Dennis A likely story.

Bob (*quickly, guiltily*) Waddaya mean, a likely story?

Dennis *I* think the beautiful Virginia is giving you a bit of stick—(*with a gross wink*)—send her round to your uncle Dennis, old boy, I'll soon have her straightened out. You've got to train 'em, you know. Not only do they expect it, they like it.

Bob Do they, do they really.

Dennis Ask Rog, he's got it all nicely organized haven't you Rog?

Roger (*staring at the list*) What? Oh. Yes.

Bob Ginnie is ill and five minutes ago *you* weren't playing either. (*He stubs out his cigarette violently into an ashtray*)

Dennis Don't get so aeriated, old boy—just pulling your leg, that's all, just pulling your leg. So then—what's on the agenda?

Bob The roller.
Dennis Ah. (*He stares out at the pitch*) Roller. Just the three of us, is it?
Bob No, just the two of you, I'm off.
Dennis Right then. Just have a quick jimmy riddle. (*He starts to exit into the changing-rooms then turns*) Oh yes—Rog—I've had a word with my contact and we can have all the equipment we need at ten percent below cost—pads, gloves, bats, the lot. (*He touches his nose*) Fixed it.

With another wink at Bob, Dennis exits to the changing-rooms

Roger Good old Dennis. Saves us a fortune, you know.
Bob Yes he has mentioned it.
Roger Yes, well, thanks for letting me know, Bob, you'll be off now, will you? (*He shoos Bob towards the door*)
Bob The thing is, Rog, I mean, it's not *definite*. I mean, another hour and she could be fine—(*he starts to move towards the board*)—and I'd quite fancy a knock at number ...
Roger (*guiding him towards the door*) Look, old mate, you pop off and look after her—you'll be much happier knowing we're not depending on you—okay? Super.

Dennis breezes in, zipping up his fly

Dennis Right!
Bob (*moving outside*) Yes—well—good game then, Dennis.

Dennis gives him a confident thumbs-up

Might see you later then, Rog, quick pint or something.
Dennis If you happen to bump into a brand-new BMW round the corner in the car park, please don't—it's mine. (*He gives Bob a big wink*)
Roger (*snapping into action*) Smashing, cheers Bob. (*To Dennis*) Where was I?
Dennis Roller.
Roger Ah yes. The roller.

Roger and Dennis stare out towards the dreaded roller. Bob moves dejectedly away

Bob Pity about the weather though.
Roger What?
Bob Forecast reckons rain. Still. What do they know?

Slightly cheerier, Bob exits to the car-park

Roger moves out on to the grass and stares fearfully up at the sky. Dennis, pleased at the thought that rain might stop play, whistles cheerfully for a moment

Dennis Any of the girls here yet?
Roger Sorry?
Dennis Mim here, is she? (*He lounges on a bench*)
Roger Er—she's—er—gone to get the thingies, the salad whatsits. You know, the wajamacallems, the sandwiches.

Roger dashes inside to take up the newspaper. Dennis mimes a creaky stroke of the bat

Dennis Just one thing, Rog, I know I haven't been doing too well with the old bat just lately but I really think I'm through all that, I really think I've found the answer, you know what I mean?

Roger (*reading*) "Further outlook continuing dry". What's he talking about? Flip. Flip, flip, *flip*. (*He drags his list out of his pocket, stabs a finger at it*) "Off-licence, Bob". I knew it, he was supposed to collect the beer. I dunno, some of these blokes, their women go down with something and they fall to pieces. (*Decisively again*) Right! You get the beer, I'll sort this lot out, okay?

Dennis Just the beer, is it?

Roger Quick as you like, there's still that roller. (*He moves towards the steps, but stops*) Super!

Roger hurries inside and into the bar, closing the door, still studying his list

Dennis stands dejectedly for a moment, then pulls himself together and starts to move to the car-park

Kevin enters moodily, followed by Maggie. Kevin is thirty. He is short, with long hair and a drinker's stomach which is constantly forcing a rift between trousers and shirt. Dress him how you like and he would never look tidy. His mood swings between world-weary resignation and fantastic enthusiasm. He carries a scruffy cricket bag with an airways sticker on it. Maggie is twenty-eight, and half a foot taller. She wears great big glasses for her genuine short sight, a red gash of lipstick, hair piled high on her head, an elderly box-shouldered fur-coat and high wedge shoes. Most of the time her hands remain firmly thrust into the deep coat pockets. She has a flat North London accent. A big untidy woman who is somehow extremely sexy—it is the way she carelessly arranges her limbs. She has been married to Kevin for only a year and underneath all the surface banter, they adore each other

They meet up with Dennis, Maggie looking around, screwing up her nose as she focusses, clearly not having been here before

Dennis Afternoon old man. (*To Maggie, appraisingly*) Good afternoon.

Maggie Oh ... (*She focuses on him*) Hello.

Kevin Hello, Den. This is Maggie. (*He jerks a head*) Dennis.

Maggie Hello.

Dennis Well well well, pleased to meet you at last. Come to watch, have we?

Dennis is even creepier with women—always trying to impress and always failing

Kevin Silly cow, look what she gets herself up in. (*He slumps on a bench and pulls up his socks*)

Maggie (*to Dennis*) I hate draughts, don't you?

Kevin Draughts? What's she on about, draughts?

Maggie If you're sitting in a field, you're bound to get draughts.

Kevin Ask her what she's on about, will you?

Maggie He's not talking to me.

Dennis Oh I see—bit of a tiff.
Kevin Bit of a tiff? I'll bloody brain her. You know what she said? Go on—tell him what you said, I dare you.
Maggie I said—I thought it would go further.
Kevin She thought it would go further. (*He shakes his head and mumbles his way inside*) I even had to carry me own bag. What sort of woman is that, I ask you? I give up, I do, I give up.

Kevin exits into the changing-rooms

Maggie shrugs her great square shoulders at Dennis, who cannot quite make her out—like a lot of people who make the mistake of thinking that her slow rather emotionless voice and myopic gaze means that she is a bit dumb

Dennis Look—if there's anything I can do.

He takes her hand paternally. She looks down to the hand then back up at him

Maggie How d'you mean?
Dennis Well—you know—I hate to see a young couple ...
Maggie Oh no, he'll be all right. He's just irritable 'cos he's missing his beer, that's all.
Dennis Well there we are then you see ... (*He pats her hand*) I'm just going to pick it up.
Maggie What?
Dennis The beer.
Maggie No, he's off it: that's why he's missing it. Tell you what though, you can bring us back a bottle of wine.
Dennis *Mais certainement: le vin rouge?*
Maggie Yeah, white wine, German if you can. Here, I'll give you some money.
Dennis (*holding her hand and patting it again*) Give it to me later.
Maggie All right then, thankseversomuch.

Dennis moves away towards the car-park, digging out his new car keys, and whistling "I'm in the mood for love", suddenly inspired by this statuesque young woman who has husband trouble. He exits

Maggie watches, nose wrinkled, as Dennis moves away. She moves slowly into the pavilion, looking around, pushing her glasses up her nose, dabbing her nose with a tissue and pulling the coat even tighter around herself. She sees the piano, moves to it, raises the lid, bends down low over it and thumps out a tune, one finger at a time

Kevin comes out of the changing rooms minus his bag and, pointedly ignoring her, moves to examine the team list

Maggie stops playing

I think it's colder in here.
Kevin Don't—waste—your—breath.
Maggie I'm not wasting it, I'm watching it turn into steam—look ... (*She puffs out air through great rounded red lips*)
Kevin (*keeping his back to her*) I'm not talking to you.

She takes the darts from the dartboard and throws them expertly

Maggie Suit yourself.
Kevin In fact I'm not talking to you ever again.
Maggie My mum'll be pleased, she said you were a little twerp and I agree with her.
Kevin But before I never talk to you again, I'll just say this ... (*He moves to her menacingly so that they are chest to face*) *You* don't mess about with my cooking ... *I* don't mess about with your cement.

She sticks her tongue out at him, then suddenly has her arms around him, still with her hands in the coat pockets

Get off, you silly great cow.
Maggie Let me give you a cuddle, cheer you up.

He exaggeratedly fends her off as she is towering over him, the coat spread wide. He takes up one of the bar stools to defend himself

Kevin Get off, will you! I'm supposed to be the demon bowler—how can I dish out me off-spinners when I've been crushed to death in that lot ...
Maggie Come here, you little teddy-bear, you ...

She grabs the legs of the stool and forces it down so that she and Kevin are face to face and he seizes her coat threateningly

Kevin How many more times, I cannot stand violence!

She kisses him

The bar shutter is raised, and Roger appears behind the drinks bar

Roger Afternoon all. (*He seems unaware of their struggle*)
Kevin Oh hello, Rog. (*To Maggie*) This is Roger, he's the captain so a bit of respect.
Maggie Oh. Hello.
Kevin This is Maggie. I told you she was big, didn't I?
Maggie I'm not that big, am I?
Roger Err ...
Maggie Anyway, he likes me big. Don't you, you know you do.

She advances on Kevin, and he backs away

Kevin Get off, you great ... Get her off, Rog, she'll ruin me spinning finger.
Roger What I need—is a hand with the roller.
Kevin (*staring out towards the pitch*) The roller. I thought Alex was down to do the roller?
Roger He was but he he hasn't turned up.
Kevin Typical.
Maggie What's the roller?
Kevin (*sitting on a stool at the counter*) It's a great big heavy round thing that flattens everything in its path—a bit like you as a matter of fact. Here, Rog, she's bigger than I am, why can't she do it?
Roger Err ...

Maggie I don't mind. (*She moves myopically towards the steps, pushing back her sleeves*)
Roger Oh. Would you really?
Maggie Will if you like.
Kevin She would an'all, the great soft tart. (*He points a warning finger at her*) Don't you dare, you'll hurt yourself.
Maggie Ooo I love him, don't you just love him? Come here, I wanna give you a kiss. (*She sweeps Kevin off the stool as though he were an infant, arms and legs around her*)
Kevin Don't keep picking me up, woman!
Maggie Well, let me have a baby, then.
Kevin I don't want a baby.
Maggie Suit yourself. (*She drops him back onto the stool with a bang*)
Kevin (*sighing*) Maggie ...
Maggie Go on, go and roll your rotten pitch!

Kevin shrugs and, rubbing his behind, moves out and exits towards the pitch

(*Shouting after him*) And don't go on about buying me a cocker spaniel. I don't want a cocker rotten spaniel!

She stands, hands in pockets, glowering moodily as Roger comes out from behind the bar, holding his list

Roger Tell you what—if you want to do something, you could, er—you could—(*aware of her glowering*)—um—yes, well, Mim'll be back soon. (*He hurries after Kevin*) Wait for me, Kev!

Roger exits to the pitch

Maggie lounges on a bar stool, digging out a tissue to wipe her nose. She is doing so when the phone rings. She wrinkles her nose towards it, focusing. Unhurriedly she looks around, then moves unhurriedly across to the phone, rather like a giraffe in slow motion, and takes up the receiver

Maggie (*on the phone*) Hello? ... No it isn't it's Maggie who's that? ... Who? ... Don't think so, I'm the only one here at the minute ... Yes, all right, I'll tell him ... Bye.

During the above, Miriam enters carrying a box full of lettuces, cucumbers, etc. She moves into the pavilion, makes to go into the kitchen, but becomes aware of Maggie and turns

Miriam (*brightly*) Hello. I'm Miriam, Roger's wife, who are you?
Maggie Oh hello, I'm Maggie.
Miriam Maggie?
Maggie Kevin's wife. (*She holds out a hand at chest height*)
Miriam Oh—*Maggie*—I'm so sorry. How nice to meet you at last.

Miriam extends a hand and they shake hands

Maggie I've heard all about you.
Miriam That's nice. I hope.
Maggie All about you and your fantastic spreads.

Miriam (*somewhat disappointed*) Well—you've chosen a super day. We thought he was hiding you away or something.
Maggie Now why would he want to do that?
Miriam Just a—figure of speech actually, I didn't ...

Maggie replaces the bar stool Kevin was fending her off with

Maggie Saturdays I usually get on with the house.
Miriam Yes, Kevin said. You haven't been there long, have you?
Maggie Not long, no. That's why I don't mind him playing his silly cricket. Gives me a chance to get on.
Miriam They are inclined to get under your feet, aren't they?
Maggie Specially when they're as little as he is. Little but perfect. Oooo, I love him.

Miriam smiles weakly: embarrassed as she always is when dealing with anything that might spank of the physical

Miriam (*moving behind the counter*) Would you mind if I got on?
Maggie I'll give you a hand if you like.
Miriam Would you mind? I mean, it's not compulsory.
Maggie Whatever you fancy, keep me out of mischief, won't it?
Miriam Super. (*She starts to guide Maggie behind the counter*)
Maggie Oh yeah, some woman phoned. She thought I was you—Jilly is it?
Miriam Jilly? Ginnie would it be—Bob's wife?
Maggie That's it, Bob's wife. She said to tell him he's left his bag behind.
Miriam Isn't he here?
Maggie Dunno—is he?
Miriam He was—I expect Roger's organized him into doing something energetic. Would you like to take your coat off first?
Maggie No not really. I suffer terrible from the draught.
Miriam Oh. That's nasty for you.
Maggie Once it goes to me chest I've had it. I'd wear a vest, but he'd only tear it.

Miriam smiles weakly

Maggie and Miriam exit to the kitchen. Dennis staggers round the corner under the weight of two crates of beer. He moves into the pavilion, looking out towards the pitch with a brave smile indicating "look, I've got the beer" and staggers inside, as Miriam comes out of the kitchen, moving to take up the box of salad from the counter

Miriam Well now, Maggie, if you'd like to be doing this salad ... (*She sees Dennis and moves to helpfully open the bar door for him*)
Dennis (*breathlessly*) Hello Mim, old love.
Miriam Let me give you a hand

She holds the door open and stands to one side as he staggers behind the bar, puts down the crates and comes out again, mopping palms with his handkerchief and smiling bravely

Dennis Two down, four to go.
Miriam I didn't think you were playing this week, Dennis.
Dennis (*winking*) Couldn't do without me, could they?

He puts an arm around her, squeezes her, and makes to plant a kiss on her brow—which embarrasses her beyond belief, so that she pulls away from him but tries to make it light

Miriam Steady the buffs, I'm a married woman.

She moves towards the counter and he moves after her, hands outstretched, and speaking in a cod-french accent

Dennis Of course you are, and you're crazy about me, you know you are.

He catches up with her and puts his arms around her, tickling her. She giggles, trying to pull away

Maggie enters from the kitchen

Caught in the act!
Miriam (*disengaging herself with a bright smile*) This is Dennis. He's in carpets.
Maggie We've already met. Can you get things wholesale?
Dennis That depends, doesn't it, Mim?

He squeezes Miriam with his leery smile and she holds her bright smile, but disengages herself

Maggie Is this the salad you want washing?
Miriam I'm so sorry, I was helping Dennis with the beer.
Maggie Oh. I'll get out of your way then, shall I?

Maggie takes up the box and goes back into the kitchen

Dennis (*referring to Maggie*) Be warm enough d'you think?
Miriam I wish you hadn't done that, Dennis. I know it's just a bit of fun and everything but—I just can't cope with things like that. I don't know why, I sort of . . . (*Annoyed with herself*) Oh God, listen to me.

He looks at her, then—as Good Old Dependable Uncle Dennis—pulls out cigarettes and offers her one. Sorely tempted, she almost takes it, then waves it away

Dennis Bit tense are we, old love?
Miriam I'm fine, fine. (*Her bright smile returns and she snaps back into action*) Oh well, best be getting on, I suppose.
Dennis (*in an impersonation of Roger*) No time for idle chatter, things to be done, chop chop.

Miriam offers the best smile she can manage and goes behind the counter, as Dennis moves outside, lighting a cigarette

Miriam (*calling*) Oh—if you see Bob, will you tell him Ginnie rang.
Dennis Bob? He's been and gone, old love.

Hungry for More?

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