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The Safari Party

A Comedy

Tim Firth

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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THE SAFARI PARTY

First presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in the Round, Scarborough, on 20th April 2002, transferring to open the new Hampstead Theatre, NW3, on 5th March 2003, with the following cast:

Daniel	Daniel Casey
Adam	Daniel Crowder
Esther	Christine Moore
Lol	John Branwell
Bridget	Amanda Abbington
Inga	Helen Ryan

Directed by Alan Ayckbourn
Décor by Michael Holt
Lighting by Kath Geraghty

Subsequently produced at the Library Theatre, Manchester on 15th April 2005 with the following cast:

Daniel	Drew Mulligan
Adam	David Partridge
Esther	Sue Wallace
Lol	Claude Close
Bridget	Lindsay Allen
Inga	Jenifer Armitage

Directed by Roger Haines
Décor by Judith Croft
Lighting by Nick Richings

CHARACTERS

Daniel, mid 20s

Adam, Daniel's brother, mid 20s

Lol, 50

Esther, Lol's wife, 50

Bridget, Lol's and Esther's daughter, 21

Inga, early 60s

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in three different households on a single evening

ACT I THE HORS D'OEUVRES
Daniel's and Adam's kitchen

ACT II THE ENTRÉES
Lol's and Esther's conservatory

ACT III DESSERT
Inga's outhouse

Time — the present

NOTE: INTERRUPTED SPEECHES

A speech usually follows the one before it BUT:

When one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked /.

e.g. **Bridget** If I hear the word “single” / in ——
Esther Oh, for God’s / sake ——

*Other plays by Tim Firth published
by Samuel French Ltd*

The End of the Food Chain
A Man of Letters
Neville's Island

To Jack, Joe and Georgia
Three wild animals of the county

ACT I

HORS D'OEUVRES

The kitchen of Daniel's and Adam's house

The room has two doors with corridors leading from them: one leads to the front door, the other back into various sculleries and pantries and other –ies. The kitchen is bare. The ripped lino floor (with gaffer tape over the rips) shows the ghosts of now-deceased furniture: a rectangle of totally different lino where the range was, four indentations and a relatively cleaner rectangle where a table once was. A fluorescent strip light hangs from the ceiling. One end has dropped a few inches

When the play begins, Daniel and Adam, two lads in their mid-twenties, stagger in from the indoor (i.e. the pantry) corridor at either end of a flatpack from MFI. Daniel has on a rugby shirt and looks as though he uses it on Saturday afternoons. Adam has on a skin-tight dance-branded top (with the words “2-Kinky” on it) and looks as though he uses it on Saturday nights. He is making the sound of a drum and bass track with his mouth

Daniel and Adam dump the flatpack on the floor and kneel by it

Adam OK. What are we gonna do first? Make the meal, or make the table?

The front doorbell sounds from the corridor

Daniel Who's that?

Adam The guests.

Daniel (*bouncing up*) Oh y'r kidding.

Adam I told y'.

Daniel Oh shit man, you are *kidding*.

Adam (*ripping the flatpack open*) I saw them coming up the Ridgeway. I told / y' —

Daniel Oh for fff——

Adam It's OK. We've got time. (*He produces a sheet of instructions from the flatpack*) Grab these.

Daniel “Got time”? They'll be in the yard.

Adam (*handing the instructions sheet to Daniel*) Grab the / bloody ——

Daniel They'll be ... (*He goes quiet; dead seriously*) I can't do this.

Adam Now then.

Daniel I've never put a bastard table up in my life.

Adam OK. First of all, stop swearing. This is not a couple who are gonna appreciate swearing.

Daniel (*quietly*) We can't make the table.

Adam It cost nine quid.

Daniel (*calm, calm*) They're in the yard.

Adam (*getting the parts of the table out of the flatpack*) It cost nine quid.

Daniel They're in the / yard.

Adam Nothing that cost nine quid can be hard. Now *take*. (*He pulls a large plastic see-through bag of screws and nails out of the flatpack*)

Daniel (*looking at the instructions*) Oh, it's eleven stages.

Adam What?

Daniel It's eleven stages, man. The instructions are eleven stages and look, even the bloody little stick-figure man's having trouble.

Adam Give it / here ——

Daniel Look at him.

Adam Just / give ——

Daniel Stage seven is him in a pub bitching about how hard the table is to put up.

Adam (*snatching the instructions from Daniel*) *Dan*. These are people who've bought a barn conversion. They are not going to give a gardening contract to a couple of lads who sit there going "shit bugger bloody".

Pause

(*Reading*) "Stage one. Ensure you have all fifty-eight screws and fittings."

The doorbell goes

Get me a hammer.

Adam starts to nail one pine leg into place using a screw and the other pine leg as a hammer

Daniel They're gonna think we're not here.

Adam You just — (*thrusting a table leg at Daniel*) get it started.

Daniel There was something else. Before they arrived, to do, that we ... *The meal*.

Adam (*heading for the front door corridor*) What did I say their names were?

Daniel (*running in front of Adam*) They are coming round here to eat / a ——

Adam It's not a meal. It's just the hors d'oeuvres.

Daniel Oh well that's all right. Hoo. For a moment there I thought we were up shit creek.

Adam (*trying to get round Daniel*) There's loads left in the freezer from the funeral.

Daniel What?

Adam Dan, don't make this harder / than ——

Daniel Let me give you a report from the freezer, OK? Six pieces of rock hard cheddar cheese and an ice lolly. OK, now even on *Ready, Steady, Cook* ——

The doorbell rings

Let them ——

Adam Stop it.

Daniel —— think we're out. Seriously.

Adam Move.

Daniel I mean what the hell — g ... (*He winces for the words*) Why are we having people round for a meal when you an' me don't eat anything that hasn't got a smiley fisherman on the box?

Adam Y'know, I thought that. When she asked, I was about to say, "We don't really do dinner parties." An' then I thought, "You've got a massive paddock, haven't you?" An' then I thought, "Maybe we *do* do dinner parties".

Ratt-tatt-tatitty-tat; knocking at the front door

Adam gives a little smile to seal the point, then disappears towards the front door

Daniel looks at the debris. He scuttles over and kneels by it. He gives the leg two hits

We hear the distant voice of Lol Voysey, off

Daniel panics, gives a little whine, bundles the table pieces up and scuttles off with them

Lol Voysey enters the room. Lol is fifty, in a light-coloured suit. His waistline is slightly colonial

Lol Oh-h the ... (*He looks round*) Ohh-hh. (*He laughs in approval*) Oh-hh-ho ho ho.

Adam enters

(Turning and beaming at Adam) D'you play golf, Adam?

Adam Sorry?

Lol It's Shell ...? What's it, y'r surname?

Adam Shellmedine.

Lol D'you play?

Adam Well, pitch and putt.

Lol Oh ho ho. *(Muttering)* We'll put *that* right. *(He holds his hand out for it to be shaken)* Lol, sorry. Lol Voysey.

Adam Lol.

Lol And this — is Bridget.

Bridget enters. She is a girl just turning twenty-one or so, in jeans and T-shirt

Bridget *(waving to Adam)* Hey. *(To Lol)* Guess what?

Esther *(off)* Lol.

Lol Oh, not again. Are y' serious?

Esther *(off)* Lol.

Lol exits down the front door corridor, cursing under his breath

Adam is left with Bridget

Adam Sorry, are you ... *(He points loosely to where Lol was)* ... ?

Bridget "I — am Bridget."

Adam *(gesturing in hope)* Daughter ... ?

Bridget Did y' like that? That little pause? Normally only used by magicians introducing their assistants. *(Producing a packet of cigarettes and a lighter)* Have y'got an ashtray?

Adam *(looking round)* Oh. Er ...

Bridget Don't worry. I'll go outside. Terrible habit.

Adam No no, s'fine. I'll, er ... *(He points where he's heading — the indoor corridor — and heads there)*

Bridget Have you been?

Adam hangs back. Bridget nods at his "2-Kinky" T-shirt

Adam Oh, yeah. Well not often. It's fifteen quid.

Bridget Cheap for a club.

Pause

Adam I'll, er ... *(He points to the indoor corridor and follows the point again)*

Adam exits

Bridget lights up her cigarette, looking round. She exhales

Esther bustles in. She is fifty, well-built, in slightly glam damage-limitation evening dress. One leg is higher than the other due to a problem with her shoes — she has lost the heel from one of them

Esther Bridget. *Bridget, put that out.*

Bridget *(coolly, prepared for this)* They smoke.

Esther What?

Bridget Y'know there's alarms that don't react as fast as you.

Esther How d'you know they smoke?

Bridget Mum / just ——

Esther Look I don't want to get into an argument about this, but I remember what I thought when I first saw Pam and Arnold's daughter smoking, and that impression has never ——

Adam enters with the ashtray, a beanbag and a fold-out director's chair. He gives the ashtray to Bridget and puts the beanbag and chair down during the following

(Seeing Adam) Adam! Listen I hope you don't mind—it's not thrown your catering, bringing Bridget? Had you catered very specifically for five?

Adam *(after a slight pause)* Nn-n-no.

There is a loud clang, off

Daniel *(panicked; off)* Adam-m?

Esther We weren't expecting her back this week.

Bridget *(nodding in the direction of Daniel's shout)* Is he all right?

Lol strides in carrying the heel of Esther's shoe

Lol There we go. One snapped-off heel.

Esther *(sotto voce, through gritted teeth)* Dnnn't make a bggg fusss of ittt.

Adam Oh God, did it go down the grid? Y'didn't get any rat poison on y'r hand?

A slight frisson. Adam realizes there's a slight frisson

Esther (*suddenly smiling*) D'you get many rats?

Adam Well ... Y'know — (*he shrugs*) countryside. Y'r never more than ten foot from a rat.

Lol and Esther smile. And slightly look around, as if to check

Lol Same as golf. Same as my line of work. Except there y' have to make deals with them. Ha.

Pause

Esther Is this *all* left to you, then? To run?

Adam (*looking round*) "Sparkbrooke"? / Well ——

Esther Oh God! (*Putting her hand to her mouth*) Sorry. You just say "Sparkbrooke" like it's ...! (*Shaking her head*) "The Shellmedine brothers of Sparkbrooke Farm". (*She beams*) *Pride and Prejudice*.

This causes a little pause

Lol Sorry to hear about y'r dad.

Another slightly awkward pause

Adam (*pointing to the lack of chairs*) Chairs.

Adam exits down the indoor corridor

Bridget Can I just say here and now, one word is banned from this evening.

Esther Bridget ——

Bridget If I hear the word "single" / in ——

Esther Oh for God's / sake ——

Bridget Either in connection with "Are you?" or "Bridget is", I will be down that sodding drive ——

Lol *Bridget.*

Esther *Bridget.*

Bridget Because I am not "single". Am I?

There is a pause. This comment lands on the floor and glows

Esther I asked if the farm was his.

Bridget Yes, in such a way he could practically see the thought-bubble of me being carried over the threshold.

Lol Oh, don't be so bloody / sensitive.

Esther He could not.

Adam enters with an old office swivel chair and another fold-out director's chair

Adam Sorry about the ... *(He gestures at the assortment of chairs)* Most of the furniture was just falling to pieces.

Esther Really?

Adam Dad wouldn't chuck anything. I mean the table that was in / here —

Esther God, yeah.

Adam *(stopping dead)* Sorry?

There is a slight, awkward pause

Lol Don't worry, mate. She always starts cheering before the orchestra's finished.

Esther I was just agreeing, Lol. *(To Adam)* We've got a new table, you see. For our conservatory. I mean to be honest we built the whole conservatory round it.

Daniel enters with the bottle of wine and glasses (an odd selection, including a Coke-branded glass, one with a Silver Jubilee design, one with the Road Runner on it) carried tray-like on the table top which now has a large piece missing. He has a slightly bloodied bandage on his hand

Daniel *(sotto voce, slightly cowed)* OK. What's everyone having?

Lol Oh, now would you look at that.

Daniel *(stopping dead)* Sorry?

Lol See, no disrespect to Pam and Arnold, but they want a tray? They go off to John Lewis and pay sixty quid for a piece of hardboard with flowers painted on by some Korean copying bits of the National Trust catalogue, / and —

Bridget *(sotto voce)* Dad.

Lol And what is a tray? *What* is a tray? Come on, what *is* a tray?

Daniel feels he's being pinned for an answer. He buckles. Everyone looks at him

(Triumphantly, indicating the tabletop) It's a piece of wood that you bloody carry things on.

Pause

Esther Have you read *Pride and Prejudice*?

Daniel (*suddenly panicked*) I didn't realize I had to. Has everyone else?

Esther No, we're in it! I'm saying, this is *Pride and Prejudice* we're sitting in here. A farmhouse kitchen. Two strapping young lads ...

Bridget This — is Bridget. Does y'r heating go up at all?

Daniel looks at Bridget

Adam This is Daniel.

Lol D'you play golf, Daniel?

Daniel Are y'cold?

Esther Bridget's used to the heat. She's been in Portugal.

Adam (*to Daniel*) D'you wanna get the fire? Is it in the log shed? (*He points down the front door corridor*) D'y wanna / see — ?

Lol Also, if y've any orange juice or something?

Adam Oh right, d'you not ... ? You're not driving? No, obviously / you —

Esther Lol doesn't. (*Breezily*) Drink.

There's a slightly frosty pause. Adam has driven into a corner he now needs to reverse out of sharpish

Adam Actually I might've moved the fire in during lambing. (*To Daniel*) D'you wanna get the ... (*Nodding*) For Lol?

During the following, Daniel exits down the front door corridor; Adam exits down the indoor corridor

Esther (*as they go*) See you just ... (*Waving her hand*) Phrases like “during lambing”, you just drop them in, and for us ...

They've gone

(Turning on Bridget) What the bloody hell are you playing / at?

Lol What are you playing at?

Esther Are you trying to make a point, here?

Lol It's cold in the country. This is how they live.

Esther Bridget?

Lol You're the first, can I just point out, to jump down my throat if I make a comment about how the French still crap in holes in the ground.

Bridget I say it because I'm cold. You say it because you hate the French.

Esther What?

Lol God. Y'know —

Esther Your father doesn't hate the French.

Lol There's a word for people who turn into the bloody racism police after they've had a fling with a foreigner.

Bridget Is it "enlightened"?

Esther Your father is not a racist.

Lol Name me one occasion / where I ——

Bridget Last week. In the *Golden Dragon*.

Lol When?

Bridget When the waiter asked if you wanted wine and you said, "You already took our order, mate. At least I think it was you."

Lol (*holding his arms wide*) Where's the problem?

Daniel returns with a battered old electric fire, complete with a fake log effect on the front, and an extension cable

Esther Here we are!

Lol (*holding his arms out*) Where's the racism / in ——?

Esther (*sotto voce*) Lol.

Daniel unrolls the extension cable during the following. The conversation carries on at whisper-level

Bridget (*smoking*) I cannot describe the colour blue to you if you can't see it.

Lol (*screwing up his face*) What?

Bridget And it's not a "fling". Is it?

This comment lands on the carpet and glows

Daniel plugs the log fire in and turns it on. The little whirring convection motor starts and makes the fake logs appear to glow

Esther (*suddenly louder*) I can't tell you the joy, Daniel ... Hasn't it, Lol?
Waking up in a morning, hearing your tractors going up and down the Ridgeway.

Daniel smiles politely and hands out wine. Bridget ends up with the Road Runner glass; Adam has the Coke glass; Esther has the Silver Jubilee glass

Smelling that lavender in the air. Now — (*she gestures*) all this with the lambing. I've got this amazing picture now of two young lads suckling lambs in front of a fire.

Daniel Right. Did y' get it from that antiques shop?

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