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SF PERUSALS

SHIRLEY VALENTINE

A Play

by Willy Russell

SAMUEL FRENCH

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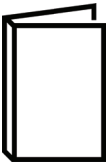
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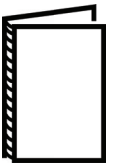
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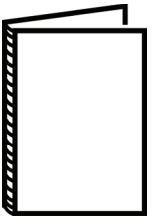
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Willy Russell's career spans more than four decades; born in Liverpool in 1947, he left school at fifteen, became a women's hairdresser, part-time singer/songwriter before returning to education and becoming a teacher.

Russell's breakthrough work, commissioned by Liverpool Everyman, *John Paul George Ringo...and Bert* transferred to the West End winning Best Musical - Evening Standard and London Theatre Critics Awards.

Two of Willy's best-known plays have female protagonists, *Educating Rita* (Olivier Award for Best Comedy and *Shirley Valentine* (Olivier Award – Best New Comedy & Best New Actress, Tony Awards, Broadway – Best Actress). Both became successful films – Julie Walters and Pauline Collins who played the roles on stage received Oscar nominations as did Willy Russell for the screenplay of *Educating Rita*.

Blood Brothers, (Laurence Olivier Award, Best New Musical, 1983), played for twenty-four years becoming the third longest running West End musical. Major foreign productions include a two-year run on Broadway, with recent productions in South Africa and Korea and current productions in Australia and Japan. The UK tour is still playing to packed houses.

Our Day Out, originally written for TV, about a school outing, has been adapted for the stage as *Our Day Out – The Musical*. Premiered at Liverpool's Royal Court in 2010 to rave reviews it was revived a year later for another sell-out season.

The critically acclaimed novel, *The Wrong Boy* was published in 2000 and translated worldwide.

For further information please visit willyrussell.com

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SHIRLEY VALENTINE

First presented in London by Bob Swash at the Vaudeville Theatre on 21 January, 1988, with the following cast:

SHIRLEY Pauline Collins

Directed by Simon Callow
Designed by Bruno Santini

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I Scene One The kitchen of a semi-detached house. Evening
ACT I Scene Two The same. Three weeks later

ACT II A Greek island

ACT I

Scene One

The kitchen of a semi-detached house. It is a well established kitchen, bearing signs of additions and alterations which have been made over the years. It is not a highly personalized palace of pitch pine and hanging baskets but nevertheless has signs of personality having overcome the bleakness of chipboard and formica. It is quite a comfortable and reassuring place.

Specifically the kitchen contains—apart from the obvious cooker, fridge etc.—a door which leads out of the house, a wall with a window, a dining-table and chairs.

As the curtain rises **SHIRLEY** *is beginning preparations for cooking the evening meal—this includes opening a bottle of white wine from which she pours a glass. Throughout the following scene she sets a table for two, as she prepares, cooks and finally serves one of the truly great but unsung dishes of world cuisine—chips and egg.*

SHIRLEY Y'know I like a glass of wine when I'm doin' the cookin'. Don't I, wall? Don't I like a glass of wine when I'm preparing the evenin' meal? Chips an' egg!

She takes a sip of wine.

I never used to drink wine. It was our Millandra who started me on this. She said to me, she said, "Mother! Mother, nobody drinks rum an' coke these days. Everybody drinks wine now." Kids. They know everything, don't they? Our Millandra was goin' through her slightly intellectual phase at the time. Y' know her, an' her mate—Sharron-Louise.

Because it was all white wine an' Bruce Springsteen at the time. Y' know the pair of them stopped goin' down the clubs in town an' started hangin' out in that bistro all the time. Y' know, where the artists go. They seen, erm, what's-his-name one night, erm, Henry Adrian, yeh. Apparently Sharron-Louise got his autograph. And breakfast as well, I believe. Anyway, the pair of them are out of that phase now. And am I glad. Because y' know the two of them'd sit at the table for hours an' all's you'd hear from the pair of them was— "It was great. It was great. Was a laugh, wasn't it?" Then they'd both go back into trance for half an hour an' you'd suddenly hear— "It was brilliant last night. It was more than brilliant. It was mega brill." "Yeh, it was, it was double fab, wasn't it?" And d' y' know, no matter how long they sat there, you'd never get to know what it was that was double fab an' mega brill.

Pause.

Maybe it was the breakfasts! Mind you, I do miss them, the kids. Our Millandra shares a flat with Sharron-Louise now. An' our Brian's livin' in a squat. In Kirkby. I said to him, I said, "Brian, if you're gonna live in a squat, son, couldn't y' pick somewhere nice. Y' know, somewhere like Childwall?" "Mother," he said to me, "Childwall is no place for a poet." 'Cos that's our Brian's latest scheme, y' see. He's always got a scheme. This one is—he's become Britain's first-ever busker poet. What's he like, wall? The language. "I hate the fuckin' daffodils / I hate the blue remembered hills." He's loop the loop. Mind you, I'm glad he's given up archery. Oh God, look at the time. What am I doin' sittin' here talkin' and *he*'ll be in for his tea, won't he. An' what's he like? My feller. What's he like, wall? Well, he likes everything to be as it's always been. Like his tea always has to be on the table as he comes through that door. If the plate isn't landin' on the table just as his foot is landin' on the mat, there's ructions. I've given up arguin'. I said to him, once, I said, "Listen, Joe. If your tea isn't on the table at the same time every night it doesn't mean that the pound's collapsed y' know,

or that there's been a world disaster. All it means, Joe, is that one of the billions of human bein's on this planet has to eat his tea at a different time." Well, did it do any good? I could've been talkin' to that. Couldn't I, wall?

Pause.

I always said I'd leave him when the kids grew up. But by the time they'd grown up there was nowhere to go. Well, you don't start again at forty-two, do y'? They say, don't they, they say once you've reached your forties life gets a bit jaded an' y' start to believe that the only good things are things in the past. Well, I must have been an early developer, I felt like that at twenty-five. I'm not sayin' he's bad, my feller. He's just no bleedin' good. Mind you, I think most of them are the same, aren't they? I mean they're lovely at first. Know, when they're courtin' y'. Y' know, before you've had the horizontal party with them, oh they're marvellous then. They'll do anything for y'. Nothin' is too much trouble. But the minute, the very minute, after they've first had y' —their behaviour starts to change. It's like that advert, isn't it? I was watchin' it the other night—y' know, Milk Tray Man. Oh, he's marvellous, isn't he? Y' see him, he dives off a thousand foot cliff an' swims across two miles of water, just to drop off a box of chocolates. An' y' learn from that that the lady loves Milk Tray. And that the lady's been keepin' her legs firmly closed. Because if she hadn't, if he'd had his way with her he wouldn't go there by divin' off a thousand foot cliff an' swimmin' through a ragin' torrent. He'd go by bus. An' there'd be no chocolates. If she mentioned the chocolates that he used to bring he'd say "Oh no. I've stopped bringin' y' chocolates, babe, 'cos y' puttin' a bit too much weight on." D' y' know, when y' think about it, Cadbury's could go out of business if women didn't hold back a bit. I don't hate men. I'm not a feminist. Not like Jane. Jane's my mate. Now, she's a feminist. Well, she likes to think she is, y' know she reads *Cosmopolitan* an' says that all men are potential rapists. Even the Pope. Well, Jane does hate men. She divorced her husband, y' know. I never knew him, it was

before I met Jane. Apparently she came back from work one mornin' an' found her husband in bed with the milkman. With the milkman, honest to God! Well, apparently, from that day forward Jane was a feminist. An' I've noticed, she never takes milk in her tea. I haven't known Jane all that long, be she's great. She's goin' to Greece for a fortnight. Next month she's goin'. God, what will I do for two weeks? She's the only one who keeps me sane. Jane's the only one I ever talk to, apart from the wall—isn't she, wall? She is. I said to her this mornin', "Jane, I won't half miss y'". You know what she said to me? "I want you to come with me."

She laughs.

Silly bitch. Hey, wall, wall, imagine the face on "him". Imagine the face if he had to look after himself for two weeks. Jesus, if I go to the bathroom for five minutes he thinks I've been hijacked.

She takes a sip of her wine.

Oh, it's lovely, that. It's not too dry. Some of it'd strip the palate off y', wouldn't it? But this is lovely.

She takes another sip and savours it.

It's nice. Wine. It's like it's been kissed by the sun. "He" doesn't drink wine. "He" says wine is nothin' but a posh way of gettin' pissed. I suppose it is really. But it's nice. Know what I'd like to do, I'd like to drink a glass of wine in a country where the grape is grown. Sittin' by the sea. Lookin' at the sun. But "he" won't go abroad. Well, y' see, he gets jet lag when we go to the Isle of Man. An' I wouldn't mind—we go by boat. We've been goin' there for fifteen years—he still won't drink the tap water. He's that type, Joe. Gets culture shock if we go to Chester. See, what Jane says is, he's entitled to his own mind an' that's fine. If he doesn't wanna go abroad, well that's up to him. But that shouldn't stop me goin'. If I want to. An' I know Jane's right. I know. It's logical. Dead logical. But like I said to

her, "Jane, y' can't bring logic into this—we're talkin' about marriage." Marriage is like the Middle East, isn't it? There's no solution. You jiggle things around a bit, give up a bit here, take a bit there, deal with the flare-ups when they happen. But most of the time you just keep your head down, observe the curfew and hope that the cease-fire holds.

Pause.

'Course, that was when Jane handed me the time bomb. She's only gone an' paid for me to go, hasn't she? She handed me the tickets this mornin'.

She goes to her bag and produces an air ticket from which she reads.

"Bradshaw. S. Mrs. BD. Five-eight-one. Twenty-third of June. Nineteen hundred. From Man. to Cor." Jane said she didn't want to go on her own. She'd just got the money through from the sale of their house. Well, how the hell could I tell her it was impossible? I'll... I'll give her the tickets back tomorrow. She'll easily find someone else to go with her. I shouldn't have taken the bloody tickets off her in the first place. Well, I tried to like, tried to expl...to tell her it was impossible. But y' know what feminists are like. If something's impossible, that's the perfect reason for doin' it. Hey, wall, it'd be fantastic though, wouldn't it? I just lay his tea in front of him an' I turn away all dead cas, an' say "Oh, by the way, babe—I'm just poppin' off to Greece for a fortnight. Yeh. I just thought I'd mention it so's y' can put it in y' diary. You won't mind doin' y' own washin' and cookin' for a couple of weeks, will y'? There's nothing to it, doll. The white blob on the left of the kitchen is the washin' machine an' the brown blob on the right is the cooker. An' don't get them mixed up, will y', or y' might end up with socks on toast." Some chance, eh wall? Some chance.

She returns the ticket to her bag.

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