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Intimate Exchanges

A Related Series of Plays

Alan Ayckbourn

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Info@SamuelFrench.com

1-866-598-8449

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INTIMATE EXCHANGES

First produced at the Stephen Joseph Theatre-in-the-Round, Scarborough, on 3rd June 1982 with the following cast of characters:

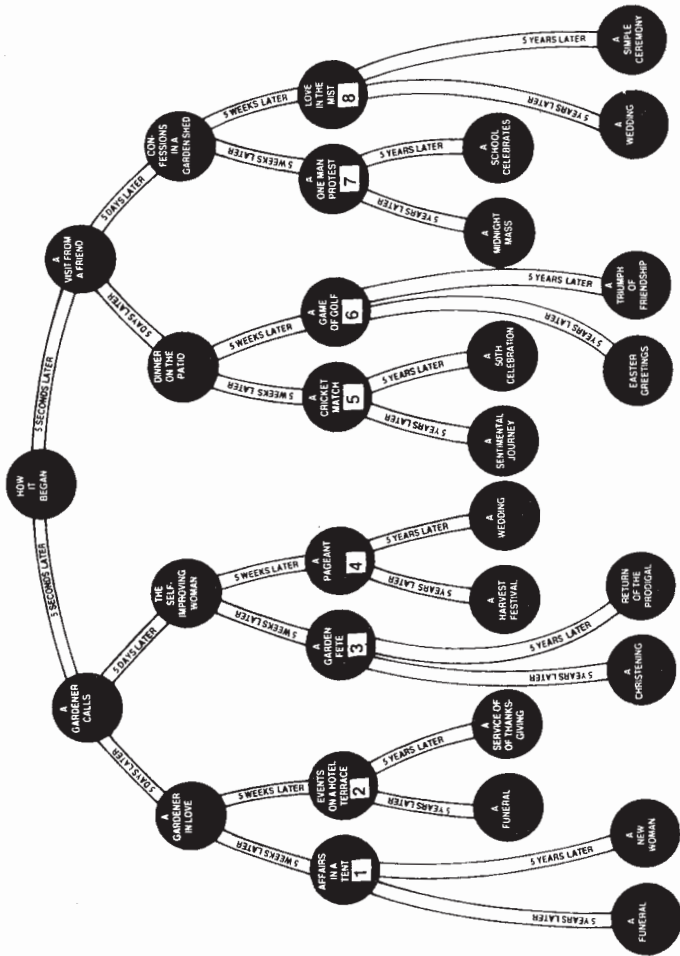
Celia	}	Lavinia Bertram
Rowena		
Sylvie		
Josephine, Celia's mother		
Irene Pridworthy		
Miles, Rowena's husband	}	Robin Herford
Toby, Celia's husband		
Lionel		
Joe, Lionel's father		
Reg Schooner		

Directed by Alan Ayckbourn
Designed by Edward Lipscomb

Subsequently produced at the Greenwich Theatre on 11th June 1984 and the Ambassador's Theatre on 13th August 1984, with the same cast, director and designer

INTIMATE EXCHANGES

A related series of plays



Volume II

Volume I

INTIMATE EXCHANGES

Volume 1

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Volume II of *Intimate Exchanges*, containing the four plays on the right-hand side of the plan, is available from Samuel French Ltd.

Scene 1 Toby and Celia's garden
Five years ago in June
Scene 2 The same. Five days later
Scene 3 Any one of several places
Five weeks later
Scene 4 A Churchyard. This year

AUTHOR'S NOTE

These plays were written originally for a cast of two. They could of course be performed by a larger cast but the end result would, in my view, be infinitely less satisfying. Similarly with choice of alternatives; it's possible to do just one version but far less theatrically exciting. If, for some unavoidable reason, a decision is taken to mount only one alternative, or one alternative with a larger cast, or even several alternative versions with a larger cast, I would be grateful if the audience could be informed of my original preferences. This would serve (a) to explain why the plays are so idiosyncratically constructed and (b) to let people know what they've missed.

A.A.

**INTIMATE EXCHANGES is a related series of plays
totalling eight scripts**

This is the First

AFFAIRS IN A TENT

CHARACTERS

APPEARING IN THIS SERIES OF SCENES

**Celia
Lionel
Sylvie
Toby
Miles
Irene**

HOW IT BEGAN

Toby and Celia's garden. Since this set will cover all possible seven scenes during the first half of the play, it will vary only in that occasionally we may wish to feature one area more prominently than another. In total, though, it is a well-kept garden which has been left, over the past few years, to go very much to seed. A garden which gives children great opportunities for play and most adults huge feelings of guilt that it isn't tidier. There is a small paved area at one side, the patio, bounded by a low wall which presumably leads directly off the lounge of the house. There is a garden table on this but no chairs. The table, it would appear, has been left out all winter. On it is an empty coffee cup, a packet of cigarettes and a lighter. A lumpy lawn, some of it may even have been flower beds at one time, leads to a garden shed at the bottom of the garden. Beyond that and unseen is a fence. And beyond that again playing fields. From this direction, throughout this scene, occasional shouts of children are heard

All the garden belongs of course to the house, although this is in fact a bungalow. Or sometimes, as it is more grandly known, the Headmaster's Cottage. It is modern, built by Toby's predecessor within the grounds of Bilbury Lodge, Preparatory School for Boys and Girls. It is a mild, sunny June day—in fact, Monday June 14th. The summer term is underway

In a moment, Celia, a rather worried-looking woman in her mid-thirties, comes out of the house. She has on her working-clothes with a scarf tied round her head. She is evidently involved in some heavy domestic cleaning work

Celia (calling back into the house) They must be in the shed. I'll have a look. . . . Listen, Sylvie, you carry on up in the loft. I'll join you, all right? (She listens then calls) Sylvie . . .

There is no reply

Celia shrugs, then stands for a moment on the patio to catch her breath. She's obviously been overdoing it more than she realizes. She squints into the sun and breathes the fresh air for a moment. She then looks at herself and cursorily brushes some of the dust off her clothes. She mops her brow with her forearm. Glad of the rest, she now goes to move off towards the shed. Her eyes light on the cigarette packet on the table. She hesitates, stopping in her tracks. She deliberates. Should she or shouldn't she weaken to temptation?

In fact, at this point, we reach the first of our alternatives. Throughout the play, the action will sub-divide as the characters are faced with alternative choices of action. Initially, the choices are smaller. Should she break her rule and have a cigarette before 6 pm?

A GARDENER CALLS

Celia (*weakening*) Oh, what the hell. (*She snatches up the cigarettes and lighter, lights one and perches on the edge of the table. She inhales. It has obviously been some hours since her last cigarette and it is a pleasurable experience*)

The doorbell rings from within the house

(*Irritably*) Oh, no. (*Calling*) Sylvie, could you see who that is? If you're not in the loft. (*She waits*) Sylvie?

The doorbell rings again

Oh. (*She takes a final puff on the cigarette, then calls*) Sylvie. Oh, for heaven's sake. (*She grinds out the cigarette rather crossly, as she says*) All right then, I'll go. I'll go.

Before she can do so, Lionel Hepplewick comes on to the patio from the house. In his early thirties, he has the healthy complexion of a man who spends much of his life in the open air. Whilst being both pleasant and subservient in his manner, he has at the same time a secretive air of someone who knows more about you than he should

Lionel Good afternoon, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia Oh, Mr Hepplewick. Nice to see you.

Lionel (*to Sylvie, presumably somewhere behind him*) Thank you very much. (*To Celia*) I hope this is not inconvenient?

Celia No, no. Sylvie and I were just—er—spring cleaning. Well, something of the sort.

Lionel Midsummer cleaning. (*He smiles*)

Celia (*laughing*) Yes, yes. (*Slight pause*) Heavenly day.

Lionel Oh, yes.

Celia I hope it stays like this.

Lionel Yes.

Celia After that winter.

Lionel Yes. It'll stay like this till Thursday.

Celia Will it?

Lionel You'll get a bit of a cloud then late afternoon, maybe a spot of rain. That'll have cleared up by Friday. A bit breezy Saturday, but Sunday'll be a real scorcher.

Celia Really, really.

Lionel That's just my guess, mind you.

Celia You ought to do the weather forecasts on the television.

Lionel makes a scornful noise

Anyway, excuse the mess. Now what can I do for you, Mr—Lionel, isn't it? Yes, of course it's Lionel.

Lionel I just come round like I promised, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia Like you . . . ? I'm sorry, I . . .

Lionel Oh, you may not remember. A few weeks ago, at the end of last term you may recall, we were talking—yourself, Mr Teasdale and me—and you mentioned then, if I should have any spare time, I should come up and have look at your garden.

Celia Yes, of course. It was a little while ago.

Lionel Now I've got the cricket pitches marked and the outfields mown, I thought I'd just come up and have a look. If that's all right.

Celia Yes.

Lionel Mr Teasdale said it would probably be all right.

Celia (*without enthusiasm*) Yes, of course. Well. There it is.

Lionel Yes.

Celia Neither of us are particularly garden-minded, I'm afraid.

Lionel (*impassively*) No.

Celia We love sitting in them, getting all the benefits. We both loathe any kind of hard work, I'm afraid. Still, what do you think?

Lionel (*after staring for a moment*) That's a useful shed.

Celia Oh, yes. The shed. That's a mess too, I'm afraid. It was put up by our predecessors, the last Headmaster and his wife, Mr and Mrs Cowlshaw. Now he was a very keen gardener, Mr Cowlshaw. He'd have been before your time.

Lionel Oh, yes.

Celia Yes, your father would have been school caretaker then, wouldn't he?

Lionel He would, yes.

Celia He's still well, is he—er—Joe? Is Joe keeping fit?

Lionel Very well, thank you. He's still got his knee troubles but he's a fine old man.

Celia Oh, yes. Is he coping without your mother?

Lionel Just about.

Celia Still, it was a long illness.

Lionel It was a very long illness. It was a relief to see her die, I don't mind saying.

Celia Yes.

Lionel (*holding out his hand and clenching his fist*) She was like that when she died.

Celia Was she? Was she? (*Slight pause*) Like what exactly?

Lionel Like the size of my hand, she was. Fifteen stone woman shrunk down to that.

Celia Oh, dear.

Lionel The size of that.

Celia Yes, yes.

Pause

Well . . .

Lionel Yes, we can do something with this, I don't doubt.

Celia Would you like to take a look round?

Lionel Thankyou very much.

Celia I mean, there isn't much. What you see is what we have. I'll make some coffee. Would you like some coffee? Or tea? There's tea.

Lionel Cup of tea would be very pleasant, thank you, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia Right. Tea. I won't be a moment. (*She begins to move inside*)

Lionel Be all right for me to go in the shed, will it?

Celia Yes, help yourself. It shouldn't be locked.

Celia goes into the house

Lionel prowls around the garden, tutting a little, as he examines it more closely. As he reaches the bottom of the garden, he sees someone beyond the hut in the playing field

Lionel (*calling*) Afternoon, Mr Coombes. Very well, thank you. . . . She's just gone in the house. Did you want to speak to her? . . . Right, just as you like. (*He watches whoever it was he was talking to walking away, with a slight look of contempt. He then starts to pace the garden out and appears to be doing calculations in his head*)

Sylvie comes out of the house. She is a young, fresh-faced awkward girl but not unattractive. Like Celia, she is dressed for heavy housework

Sylvie She says do you want sugar in your tea?

Lionel Just a minute, just a minute. Fifteen, eighteen. . . . (*He finishes*) Do I what?

Sylvie Mrs Teasdale, she says do you want sugar in your tea?

Lionel Three, yes. Three sugars.

Sylvie Right, three. (*She begins to go in*)

Lionel You could have told her that.

Sylvie What?

Lionel I say, you could have told her I took three sugars. You know well enough I take three sugars.

Sylvie No, I don't. How should I know you take three sugars? How am I supposed to know?

Lionel Because you do.

Sylvie Nothing to do with me. Take boiled eggs in it as far as I'm concerned.

Lionel You knew. (*He resumes his calculations*) Eighteen times four . . . four eights are thirty-two . . . four ones are four. . . .

Sylvie Seventy-two.

Lionel Carry three. Four and three are seven. Seventy-two.

Sylvie Seventy-two, I said.

Lionel I'm not listening to you. You can't even count sugar.

Pause. Sylvie watches him

What are you up to in there, then? Clearing away the Headmaster's empties, are you?

Sylvie Mind your own business.

Lionel Bet he gets through a few bottles in a week.

Sylvie What are you supposed to be doing anyway?

Lionel I'm going to work on this, aren't I?

Sylvie Can't wait to see that.

Lionel Tidy it up a bit for her.

Sylvie You were going to do my mum's front, you never did.

Lionel It's only two square feet. Not worth it.

Sylvie Still needs doing.

Lionel Concrete it over. Have done with it.

Sylvie Great gardening tip that is. (*She looks towards the field*) Is that Mr Coombes walking along there?

Lionel Yes. Looking for his wife in the bushes, I wouldn't doubt.

Sylvie Who's she with now?

Lionel Anyone's guess. They say at the Squash Club there are more bookings for her than there are for squash courts. Everyone's had her.

Sylvie Have you had her?

Lionel I haven't.

Sylvie Then it's not everyone, is it?

Lionel I don't play squash, do I? If I want her, I've only got to buy a racket. Anyone with a racket can have her.

Sylvie Better buy yourself one.

Lionel Can't afford squash rackets.

Sylvie Yes, you can. You're just mean. You won't spend nothing, will you? Not on anybody. Not even on yourself.

Lionel Not on you, certainly.

Sylvie Wouldn't want you to, don't worry.

Lionel Are you going to get my tea?

Sylvie Two sugars, then.

Lionel Three.

Sylvie We going out Friday or not?

Lionel I don't know.

Sylvie Last week you said we were.

Lionel I don't know what I said last week.

Sylvie Only if we're not, I'd like to make other arrangements, that's all.

Lionel (*unimpressed*) Suit yourself.

Sylvie Are we or aren't we?

Lionel Let you know.

Sylvie When?

Lionel Soon.

Sylvie Because I want to make other arrangements. That's all. I've got arrangements to make.

Lionel I bet.

Sylvie I have. If you don't want to take me, I'll go with someone else. Someone my own age.

Sylvie goes inside

Lionel (*muttering*) Get out of it. (*He resumes his calculations*) Couple of bags of that, then. (*He opens the shed door*) Now, what have we here. . .

(*Mimicking*) I want to make arrangements, that's all. (*He picks up an implement*) Half a shovel. Better than none. Weedkiller. Need a bit of that round here. Wheelbarrow. No wheel. It's like Kew bloody Gardens in here. (*He picks up an old gin bottle full of some liquid*) Another of his empties. Well, we could start by chucking all that away. (*He comes out of the shed and closes the door*)

Celia comes out of the house with two mugs of tea

Celia It's an awful muddle in there, isn't it?

Lionel Just a bit.

Celia You don't mind a mug, do you? That's yours. Sylvie said you didn't take sugar.

Lionel (*impassively*) Ta.

Celia Well, what do you think?

Lionel I'll need to buy in a bit.

Celia What sort of bits?

Lionel Tools, seed, bit of fertilizer, that sort of thing.

Celia There are tools in the shed.

Lionel Useless.

Celia Really?

Lionel No use at all.

Celia Oh, dear. I don't know what to suggest for the best. It's a problem.

Lionel No problem. You'll have to buy some more, that's all.

Celia No, it's not that. I just don't know, at the moment, if it's going to be worth buying things. You see, it's—well, it's rather awkward, I don't know how to put this. . . .

Lionel If you're a bit short, I could probably get them cheaper.

Celia No, it's not that at all. Though that would probably be welcome. You see, I'm not sure—we're not certain how much longer we're going to be here. There's a possibility my husband may be moving on.

Lionel Moving on.

Celia Yes.

Lionel I see.

Celia It's not certain but . . .

Lionel You'll be moving with him?

Celia Probably. Yes, of course. Possibly. As I say, it's all quite vague.

Lionel I see.

Pause

Celia So. We don't really know. (*A pause*) I wish we did. (*A pause*) I mean, I don't really want to discuss it. Not at all.

Lionel No.

Pause

Celia I mean, I don't think people really appreciate the pressures that a Headmaster sometimes undergoes. I mean, there are the parents. And the children. And the staff. (*A pause*) And his family. They all—mount up. Inevitably. Especially a private school like this. He's also got the Board

breathing down his neck. And most of them are—well, they don't understand about teachers.

Pause

Lionel They're dedicated people. Teachers.

Celia They are. They are. (*Slight pause*) Most of them. (*A pause*) It's the family, you see. That's always the first thing to suffer. All the pressures bottle up at work and he brings them home with him and unbottles at home.

Lionel Yes.

Celia (*to herself*) Literally.

Pause

Lionel Well, I—

Celia It's also a terrific strain on me, you see. Because I've so very few people I can talk to. I mean, if you're the Headmaster's wife you just can't afford to be too familiar, you know. Otherwise you get involved in all the politics. School politics, I mean. (*A pause*) So I'm afraid the poor old Headmaster's wife never has much of a shoulder to cry on. (*She laughs*) Still . . .

Pause

Lionel I think you could do with some crazy paving.

Celia I'm sorry?

Lionel Bit of crazy paving would look nice.

Celia Oh, yes. Possibly.

Lionel If it's well laid. You got to lay it well. It's got to be properly laid.

Celia Yes, of course.

Lionel So you don't know if you're going or not then?

Celia No.

Lionel Or if your husband's going or not?

Celia No.

Lionel What do you suggest then?

Celia I don't know. I don't know what to suggest. I don't want you to go to any trouble.

Lionel No trouble.

Celia What do you suggest?

Lionel Me?

Celia What do you think would be best?

Lionel Well. Without particularly knowing all the circumstances, I'd say, perhaps you should take a chance that you'll be staying even if your husband isn't staying. And let me go ahead.

Celia You think so?

Lionel You'll be sorry, won't you, if you're sitting here this time next year looking at the same old mess.

Celia True.

Lionel You'll be glad of me then.

Celia I would.

Lionel I'll come up two or three evenings a week during the summer.

Occasional weekend perhaps. Keep an eye on things for you.

Celia Yes, maybe you're right.

Lionel It wouldn't be expensive. Once you've got your tools.

Celia No.

Lionel Just the labour, then.

Celia Quite.

Lionel Sweat's not expensive.

Celia No.

Lionel (*draining his mug*) Good cup of tea.

Celia Thank you. Assam.

Lionel True enough.

Celia All right. So what are we going to do with all this mess?

Lionel Well, I've got a few ideas. If you like, I'll do you a little sketch plan.

How it might look.

Celia Oh, splendid.

Lionel You can always chuck it away if you don't like what you see.

Celia No, I'm sure I'll be guided by you.

Lionel I hope so.

Celia I'll just be so grateful if someone can sort it out. I've sat here staring at it day after day. You just carry on.

Lionel It's a joint effort though. After all, it's your garden. You're the one who's going to sit in it.

Celia Yes, of course.

Lionel Your garden. Your money. My sweat. Fair exchange.

Celia Yes. (*She laughs rather nervously*) Well, I hope you don't have to sweat too much.

Lionel Right then. If you'll excuse me, I have the gym to see to.

Celia That your little boy?

Lionel Gymnasium.

Celia Oh, of course.

Lionel Lock it up. I'm not married.

Celia Ah. So when will you start?

Lionel Straightaway, if it suits you. I'll clear out your shed and get that restocked. That's the first thing.

Celia You'll keep receipts, will you?

Lionel Oh, yes.

Celia Of anything you buy. For tax. I don't think we can claim back gardening tools. . . .

Lionel You'll get your receipts.

Celia (*confused*) It's not that we don't . . . of course. Well, back to midsummer cleaning. Do you want to cut through that way? (*She indicates past the shed*) Or come through the front?

Lionel (*indicating the former*) That way, if I may.

Celia Of course. Well, goodbye then, Lionel. (*She gathers up their mugs*)

Lionel Goodbye, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia Celia. Do call me Celia, if you want.

Lionel Well, maybe. Maybe.

Celia You don't mind me calling you Lionel?

Lionel No, I don't mind that. Cheerio then.

Celia Cheerio—Lionel.

Celia goes into the house

Lionel stands staring after her for a minute

Lionel (*at length*) Well, now. . . . (*He stands in the middle of the garden apparently doing further calculations*)

Celia (*off, angrily*) Look, don't put that on there, Sylvie. Use a tiny bit of nouse, girl. That is clean washing, Sylvie, isn't it?

Sylvie (*off*) Yes, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia (*off*) You know the word clean, do you?

Sylvie (*off*) Yes, Mrs Teasdale.

Celia (*off*) You can be so stupid, stupid, Sylvie. Now look at them. Look at this.

Sylvie (*off*) Yes, Mrs Teasdale.

Lionel listens to this for a second, then, amused, moves away to the bottom of the garden

Celia (*off*) Thank you so much. That's better. Now, will you put that out the back in the dustbins, not on the washing. That will be much more helpful. Off you go.

Sylvie comes out of the house. She is carrying an armload of old paint tins which are very dusty and congealed

Sylvie (*aloud*) Yes, Mrs Teasdale. (*Muttering*) Stupid old cow.

Lionel You do as you're told.

Sylvie You still here?

Lionel Just going.

Sylvie Well?

Lionel What?

Sylvie Have you decided? Are you coming on Friday or are you not?

Lionel considers for a moment

(*Impatiently*) Well?

EITHER he says:

Lionel Well. No, I don't think I am.

Sylvie What?

Lionel I said, I'm not taking you. Sorry.

Sylvie Why not?

Lionel I'm afraid I've made other arrangements.

Sylvie What other arrangements?

Lionel Personal. Sorry.

Sylvie You promised me you were going out with me.

Lionel Then you've been labouring under a false impression, haven't you?

Better start sweetening somebody else's tea.

Sylvie Who is she then?

Lionel Never mind.

Sylvie Who is she?

Lionel Bye-bye.

Sylvie Lionel, who is she?

Lionel You'll find out, no doubt.

Lionel goes off round the back of the shed

Sylvie You bet I will. You bet. (*She stands, angry and impotent for a second, still clutching her armful of tins*) I'll bust her bloody head in, too, when I find her.

Sylvie storms off towards the dustbins

The lights fade to a Black-out

To: A GARDENER IN LOVE (page 15)

OR he says:

Lionel Well. I tell you what. I'll come on one condition.

Sylvie What's that?

Lionel You stop messing me about.

Sylvie What do you mean?

Lionel All these other arrangements of yours.

Sylvie I'm free to do what I want.

Lionel Not if you're with me, you're not.

Sylvie I don't have to give up my other friends just because——

Lionel You do if you're with me. Take it or leave it. Only make up your mind because, quite possibly, I'll be making other arrangements of my own.

Sylvie (*sulkily*) You can take a jump then.

Lionel Fair enough. Cheerio then. (*He moves away*)

Sylvie Just a minute then.

Lionel Well?

Sylvie It's two way this, is it? If I don't make other arrangements, then you won't?

Lionel Right.

Sylvie No one else.

Lionel No.

Sylvie All right.

Lionel See you Friday then.

Sylvie Yes.

Lionel (*turning as he goes*) Don't worry. You'll be OK. I got plans for you.

Lionel turns and goes

Sylvie Oh yes? What plans? (*To herself*) What plans? (*She moves thoughtfully to the dustbins with her load*)

The Lights fade to a Black-out

To: THE SELF-IMPROVING WOMAN (page 107)

A GARDENER IN LOVE

The same. Five days later. It is the morning of Saturday, June 19th and is another sunny day

There are now two garden chairs by the patio table. On one of them sits Toby Teasdale, a rather crumpled red-faced man in his early forties. He sits with his paper and a cup of tea. He is smoking and coughing as he reads. He also mutters occasionally at various items he comes across. At the other end of the garden there is the occasional clump and bump from the shed. Although, at present, we are unable to see who is in there—whoever it is, is very busy indeed trying to establish some order. The odd item is tossed out into a growing pile of rubbish in the middle of the garden. Toby occasionally glares in the direction of this distraction

After a while, Celia comes out of the house carrying a teapot and a milk jug. She tops up Toby's cup

Celia I wish you'd have something to eat.

Toby (*muttering*) I don't want anything to eat.

Celia A piece of toast. Anything.

Toby I do not require anything to eat at all, thank you very much indeed.

Celia All right.

The sound of a clump from the shed. They both stare

Toby What is he doing in there? Have we any idea?

Celia He's trying to tidy it up.

Toby Does it need tidying up?

Celia Of course it does.

Toby Are we a family in need of a tidy shed?

Celia You can hardly get in there.

Toby When's he going to do something about the garden? I thought we were paying him for the garden. He's been here three days. He hasn't come out of that shed yet.

Celia He has to get organized first.

Toby He's a useless oaf. Not a patch on his father. Do you know, he marked out the first team cricket pitch and made it a yard short. A whole yard. Bloody ball whistling round their ears. Nearly killed the openers.

Celia Well, cricket.

Toby You'd better watch it. If he gets his measurements wrong here, you'll have flower beds straight through your living-room. (*He examines his cup*)
What's this?

Celia Tea.

Toby I didn't want any more tea.

Celia Well, you've got it. (*Studying him*) I'm sure half your trouble is you don't eat. I'm sure if you ate, you wouldn't . . . you wouldn't feel so awful in the mornings. (*Pause*) What were you doing in the night? You were banging around for hours. (*Pause*) What were you up to?

Toby What?

Celia What were you doing in the middle of the night?

Toby I was answering, if you must know, in polite terms, a call of nature.

Celia Well, you were up for hours.

Toby I do beg your pardon. I didn't realize I had a time limit.

Celia Hours and hours.

Toby Perhaps you could hang a stop watch on the cistern. I'll try and speed things up for you.

Celia Don't be so unnecessary.

Toby If I'm not allowed to spend my leisure in my own toilet . . .

Celia God, the quantities you must drink. I dread to think how much useless liquid you take in.

Toby Every bit of liquid I take in is vital. I don't drink any liquid unless it's absolutely essential and that includes this damn tea so take it away.

Celia Gallons and gallons of Scotch and beer and cigarettes. Look at you. The Headmaster.

Toby Is this because I won't have a piece of toast? Is this a sort of verbal version of forcible feeding?

Celia You'll die eventually. You know that, don't you? You'll carry on like this, year in, year out, putting nothing inside you that's remotely good for you and one day, that'll be that. You'll just fall down and explode and drop dead.

Pause

You said you were going to cut back, anyway. You promised Miles. You promised me.

Toby I have cut back.

Celia You have not cut back at all.

Toby I've cut back as much as I intend to.

Celia You had at least three whiskies last night.

Toby Three whiskies? What the hell's wrong with having three whiskies?

Celia Probably more for all I know. You were in the pub before you came home.

Toby All right, I had one there. That's fair enough. That's four.

Celia I bet you had more than one. You never had one.

Toby All right five. We'll call it five then.

Celia Large.

Toby Obviously large. No point in having a small one, is there?

Celia Well, it's too much, Toby. It really is.

Toby I'll be the judge of when it's too much.

Something is lobbed out of the shed to add to the pile

What the hell's he doing?

Celia They won't give you a second chance, you know. The Board of Governors. I mean, Miles really had to argue for you, Toby. He really did. And he's the Chairman. He's not supposed to do that. He's supposed to be impartial. I mean, Miles Coombes is the only really good friend you've . . . They were actually on the verge of voting to advertise for a new Headmaster. That awful Irene Pridworthy. She said really horrid things apparently. About you. Did you know that? Terrible things. I don't want people saying things like that about my husband.

Toby I don't really want to enter into a discussion about Irene Pridworthy's views. I really don't. She's not a woman to be listened to on any topic. Irene Pridworthy should have been held down at a very early age and had rat poison thrust up her nose. That's all I have to say about Irene Pridworthy.

Celia That's precisely what I mean, Toby. Now that's supposed to be a Headmaster talking. You're supposed to be inspiring. You're supposed to lead people. I mean, all this rat poison up noses. It's so negative. You used to be a positive man, Toby, you really did. I mean, when I used to hear you talk in the old days, I was really so excited by you. All your plans and what you wanted to see happen in education, in our own school, in the country. Now you don't seem to want anything except to stuff things up people's noses. What's happened to you, Toby? Is it me? Tell me if it's me. It probably is. It usually is.

Toby I don't think we want to get into all this first thing in the morning, do you?

Celia It's the only time of day when we stand the slightest chance of talking at all. When you're—coherent. I may as well say it.

Toby If we talk, you'll get over-excited. Then I will probably get angry and break something. And then you will start crying and that will make me feel rotten so I'll go off and have another five whiskies. And the only one who'll get any fun out of that little lot will be the chap in the shed.

Celia Do we always have to shout? When we talk.

Toby Apparently.

Celia We didn't shout in the early days, did we?

Toby We didn't talk to each other in the early days. I think that's half the trouble really. If people stopped talking to each other, there wouldn't be any misunderstandings.

Celia We never talk at all. I don't know what you're talking about.

Toby Yes, we do, Celia, we do. Well, we sort of half-talk, that's the trouble. We don't say whole things. We say half things. Because we're frightened the whole thing might be too much for the other one to swallow. So then I go away thinking, what on earth did she mean by that? Did she mean what I thought she said? If she did mean what I thought she said, then I'm deeply, deeply hurt. Only of course, you didn't mean that at all. You meant something completely different. Only you didn't say it. So you'd have been better off saying nothing in the first place.

Celia That's wonderful stuff for the sixth form, Toby, but I'm afraid I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about.

Toby There you are. Absolutely proved my point. Look, Celia, you go and

wash up or something. I'll be off in a minute. I'll get out of your way. I've a staff meeting at eleven.

Celia (*looking at the tea*) You're not going to drink this then?

Toby No.

Celia Sylvie's washing up, anyway.

Toby Sylvie?

Celia Yes.

Toby Does she come on Saturdays?

Celia She missed Wednesday because of her mother.

Toby That's your problem, I think. Nothing to do. People in there doing your washing-up. People out here clearing out your shed.

Celia If I thought you meant half the things you said, I'd pour this tea over your head, I really would.

A clump from the shed

He's working very hard anyway.

Toby He's probably not working at all.

Celia Of course he is.

A clump from the shed

Hark at him.

Toby He's just so stupid, that's him blundering round trying to find his way out.

Celia We've agreed he's going to put a lot of crazy paving down. I hope you approve.

Toby I honestly don't give a damn if he covers the whole bloody area in owl's vomit. I'm not going out there anyway.

Celia sniffs

Oh God, Celia, don't start.

Celia I do try, Toby.

Toby Yes, I know, I know, I know.

Celia (*openly weeping*) It really is all over, isn't it? It really is.

Toby I don't know.

Celia I'm going to have to go away. I'll have to.

Toby If you think that's best.

Celia I'll take the children somewhere for a bit. Probably finish up at my mother's. God, what an awful thought.

Toby I thought you got on well with her.

Celia Yes, I do. But I don't really want to sit listening to her telling me how history repeats itself. And then we'll start discussing whether it is that the women in our family all marry men who are drawn to drink or whether it's we that drive them to it.

Toby Look, I don't want to hurt your feelings again unnecessarily, Celia, but there are a whole load of more important reasons than you and your mother, why a man should turn to drink, I can tell you.

Celia Yes, all right. You tell me, what are they?

Toby OK. You want a few? You want just a few of them? Here we go.

Number one: I think the whole of life has become one long losing battle, all right? That's the first reason I'm drinking. Number two: I find myself hemmed in by an increasing number of quite appalling people all flying under the flags of various breeds of socialism, all of whom so far as I can gather are hell bent on courses of self-reward and self-remuneration that make the biggest capitalist look like Trotsky's Aunt Mildred. Number three: On the other hand, we have the rest of the country who don't even have the decency to pretend that they're doing it for the benefit of their fellow men. Ha ha. They're just grabbing hand over fist the most they can get for the minimum of effort by whatever grubby underhand means they can muster. Number four: We have half the men going around looking like women and half the women looking like men and the rest of us in the middle no longer knowing what the bloody hell we are. Number five: And the few remaining women who don't look like men are busy ripping their clothes off and prancing around on video cassettes and soft porn discs trying to persuade us that sex can be fun. Fun, for God's sake. So can World War Three. Number six:—are you still with me?—We now have a police force that according to my paper anyway, is more dishonest than the people we're paying them to arrest. Don't, for God's sake, ask them the time, just hang on to your watch. Number seven: They've started this filthy floodlit cricket with cricketers wearing tin hats and advertisements for contraceptives on their boots. Number eight: You can no longer walk through the centre of any town anywhere in this country without being set upon by thousands of bald tattooed Neanderthals. Number nine: You can't get a hotel room in London for love nor money because they're all booked up by hordes of bloody foreigners in black berets busy wiring up suitcases full of bloody explosives to blow the rest of us up. And Number ten: whisky very, very shortly is going to be ten quid a bottle. Have I made my point, Celia?

Celia I don't know what to say when you get like this. I just don't know.

Celia hurries indoors

Toby stares at his paper for a second and then slams it down

Toby I'd suggest they brought back hanging only they'd be sure to hang all the wrong people. *(He rises)*

Sound of a clump from the shed

Toby walks down the garden and dodges an item, an old chest expander, which is thrown out onto the pile. He then leans into the shed

I say, Hepplewick. *(He coughs because of the dust inside)* It's all right, don't come out. I hate to tear you away from our shed. When you're finished, I'd like that second eleven outfield mown. We've a first round house match on it on Monday. I don't want them wasting hours hunting for the ball around leg slip. Just get it mown, all right? *(He moves away and examines the pile of rubbish finally picking up the chest expander)* Do you know, I think this used to be mine. *(He tests it, but finds it altogether far too heavy-going)*

Sylvie comes out of the house with a polythene bag of rubbish from the kitchen pedal bin

Toby stops as he sees her

Sylvie (with a slight smirk) Morning, Mr Teasdale.

Toby Morning, Sylvie.

Sylvie passes him. Toby is as unimpressed by Sylvie as Sylvie is by Toby

Sylvie (indicating the chest expander) I didn't know you went in for that, Mr Teasdale.

Toby I don't. It's my wife's.

Sylvie Oh.

Sylvie moves off to the dustbins

Toby crosses to the patio and picks up his paper

Toby (calling) Celia. Celia, I'm off now. Cheerio. (Muttering) If you can hear me or not. And I'm sure you don't give a damn anyway. (He moves back down the garden, passing Sylvie on his way)

Sylvie Goodbye, Mr Teasdale.

Toby Goodbye, Sylvie.

Sylvie Mind how you go, won't you?

Toby looks at her suspiciously, then goes off round the back of the shed

Sylvie stops by the pile of rubbish and studies the contents

Clattering from inside the shed

Didn't see you at the dance last night then?

More clattering from inside the shed

I went with Pete Bartlett. (Pause) Well, he asked me. Couldn't refuse.

Another clump

I take it your other arrangement, so called, didn't include the dance then? Doesn't whoever it is dance, doesn't she? Eh? Got a wooden leg, has she?

A piece of junk flies past her

Maybe she's very old, is that it? Your age, is she? Can't get about without her sticks, poor old thing. Never mind. You'll be good company for each other. Darby and Joan Hepplewick. (She picks up the chest expander) Here, try this, I should. Do you good.

Lionel comes out of the shed, very hot and grimy

Lionel What you on about?

Sylvie Morning.

Lionel Wouldn't try that. You'll get them caught in the springs.

Sylvie At least I got something.

Lionel Bloody mess in there.

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