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SF PERUSALS

The Blue Room

Freely Adapted From Arthur Schnitzler's La Ronda

by David Hare

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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PRESENT

NICOLE KIDMAN · IAIN GLEN

IN THE DONMAR WAREHOUSE PRODUCTION OF

THE BLUE ROOM

FREELY ADAPTED FROM ARTHUR SCHNITZLER'S LA RONDE

BY DAVID HARE

DESIGNED BY
MARK THOMPSON

LIGHTING BY
HUGH VANSTONE

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY
PADDY CUNNEEN

SOUND BY
SCOTT MYERS

GENERAL MANAGEMENT
STUART THOMPSON

TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR
GENE O'DONOVAN

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER
DAVID HYSLOP

PRESS REPRESENTATIVE
BONEAU/BRYAN-BROWN

DIRECTED BY
SAM MENDES

CHARACTERS

The girl	(Irene)
The cab driver	(Fred)
The au pair	(Marie)
The student	(Anton)
The married woman	(Emma)
The politician	(Charlie)
The model	(Kelly)
The playwright	(Robert)
The actress	
The aristocrat	(Malcolm)

Schnitzler's *Reigen* was said by its author to be 'completely unprintable' and was therefore distributed only 'to be read among friends' in 1900. Its eventual premiere was closed down by the police in Vienna in 1921, and the actors in its first Berlin production the same year had to endure a six-day trial on charges of obscenity.

In 1950 Max Ophuls made his famous film, starring among others, Gerard Philipe, Danielle Darrieux, Jean-Louis Barrault and Simone Signoret. Ophuls adapted the text with extreme freedom, and introduced the figure — not in Schnitzler — of the all-seeing ringmaster, played by Anton Walbrook. ("What am I in the story? I am in short any of you. I am the incarnation of your desire to know everything.") Since the success of that film, the play is better known as *La Ronde.*

The Blue Room is written to be performed with only two actors playing all the parts. It is set in one of the great cities of the world, in the present day.

Literal translation by Julian Hammond

1. THE GIRL AND THE CAB DRIVER

(Darkness. Music. You have the impression of the stage opening up, as if it were expanding. You begin to see a GIRL, sitting on a bench, smoking a cigarette. As the stage grows around her, it becomes clear she is under a scrubby tree by the side of a street. She looks 18, like an amateur, in a short black leather skirt and shoes, but she also has an odd self-confidence. A CAB DRIVER walks past. The girl lifts her arm.)

GIRL. Hey. *(The CAB DRIVER stops. A silence.)* What? What did you say?

CAB DRIVER. I didn't say anything.

GIRL. I thought you said something.

CAB DRIVER. No.

GIRL. What made me think you just spoke? *(She puts out her cigarette.)* Do you want to come home with me?

CAB DRIVER. Do I want to go home with you? Go *home*? Why would I want to go home with you? *(She is impassive, not responding.)* Where is your home?

GIRL. Quite near.

CAB DRIVER. Where?

GIRL. South.

CAB DRIVER. I'm not going south.

GIRL. We can take a taxi.

CAB DRIVER. *Take* a taxi. I drive a fucking taxi.

GIRL. Is it yours?

CAB DRIVER. It's mine.

GIRL. I mean, does it belong to you? *(He turns to go.)* So?

CAB DRIVER. I haven't got any money. I just spent the lot on sushi.

GIRL. So?

(The CAB DRIVER looks at her a moment.)

CAB DRIVER. Right, I've heard about you, you're new. Aren't you?

GIRL. New-ish.

CAB DRIVER. How long?

GIRL. A week.

CAB DRIVER. You enjoying it?

GIRL. Once or twice.

(He looks at her, tempted.)

CAB DRIVER. How far is this place of yours?

GIRL. It's ten minutes by cab.

CAB DRIVER. Oh look, forget it. Ten minutes? No. Forget it. I have to work. I've made nothing tonight. And I'm not doing it in the car. It's the first rule of driving. I never do it in the car.

GIRL. Give me a kiss.

CAB DRIVER. Here?

(She takes his hand and leads him quickly to a darker place across the street.)

GIRL. Now give me a kiss. *(She kisses him. It's magical, suspended for a moment. They stay in each others' arms. It is dark in the street and deserted.)* The kiss is the best bit. I like the kiss best.

CAB DRIVER. It's still too far.

(He looks at her. They start to walk towards the river. As they go down by the riverside, it is very beautiful, the reflection of the water thrown high against the wall.)

GIRL. What do you think? Do you think you'll always want to drive a cab?

CAB DRIVER. Shall we just stick to what we're doing?

(She throws a glance at him.)

GIRL. What I want ... what I really need is someone long-term.

I need someone ambitious.

CAB DRIVER. Long-term I'd make you jealous.

GIRL. Oh yeah?

CAB DRIVER. Sure.

GIRL. Why?

CAB DRIVER. I'm irresistible. Women can't resist me.

GIRL. Watch out. It's dark down here. One foot wrong and you're in the river.

CAB DRIVER. I'd love to be in the river.

(She smiles. He tries to push her up against the wall.)

GIRL. Let's do it on the bench. There's one over there.

CAB DRIVER. Let's do it here.

GIRL. Watch out, or we'll both be in the water …

CAB DRIVER. Great …

GIRL. We'll both be in the water.

(Music engulfs them. The lights go out. A projected slide reads: THREE MINUTES.)

• • • • •

(Light returns. The GIRL is lying on the ground. The CAB DRIVER is kneeling beside her, his hands on his knees.)

GIRL. It would have been better on the bench.

CAB DRIVER. On the bench. Off the bench. Up the fucking wall. What's the difference? Up you get.

GIRL. Hey, where you going?

CAB DRIVER. Back to work. *(Suddenly he reaches down with unexpected tenderness and pulls her up. He smiles.)* I told you. I've done no business tonight.

(He begins to leave.)

GIRL. What's your name?

CAB DRIVER. Oh no, I'm not telling you my name.

GIRL. My name's Irene.

CAB DRIVER. Irene, well!

GIRL. What's yours? *(They both smile. He turns to go.)* Hey listen ...

CAB DRIVER. What?

GIRL. Come on.

CAB DRIVER. What? What are you asking?

GIRL. Come on. I didn't want any money. Really. I didn't. But, please: give me some money.

(He looks at her a moment.)

CAB DRIVER. It went on the sushi. I'm not an idiot, Irene.

(He goes.)

GIRL. I'll be here tomorrow.

2. THE CAB DRIVER AND THE AU PAIR

(At once the sound of Elvis Presley. A slow ballad is being amplified very loudly and resonantly inside a neon-lit dance hall. Suddenly a door opens. Warm colored light falls across a darkened space, and onto the CAB DRIVER and the AU PAIR as they come on a wave of good humor into a darkened storeroom, next to a dance hall. She is young, with a foreign accent and wearing a dress which is subtly too small for her.)

CAB DRIVER. Show me. Go on. Show me again.
AU PAIR. You won't get it.
CAB DRIVER. I will get it. You wait. I will get it.

(Move by move, she demonstrates an intricate jive maneuver. She does it beautifully. He copies, learning.)

AU PAIR. I do that.
CAB DRIVER. Uh-huh.
AU PAIR. I do that. Then I do that.

(He gets it. They laugh together at the neatness of it.)

CAB DRIVER. It's great.
AU PAIR. By the way, what are we doing in here.
CAB DRIVER. Escaping the dance.

(He laughs and goes to the door.)

AU PAIR. Do you know my name? Can you even my name remember?
CAB DRIVER. Can I your name what? Go on, then, tell me. If it's so important.
AU PAIR. Marie. And you?

CAB DRIVER. Fred.
AU PAIR. I can't call you Fred.
CAB DRIVER. Why not?

(He closes the door. Pitch dark. She is wary.)

AU PAIR. It's so dark. My God, look how dark it is.
CAB DRIVER. Girls say they're scared, but what are they scared of?
AU PAIR. The dark. They're scared of the dark.

(He lights a match and makes a big arc with it.)

CAB DRIVER. This way, my dear. *(She smiles, slightly charmed. He lights a cigarette with the match, then pulls at a string above his head. A bare light bulb comes on. We are in a dusty storeroom. Cardboard boxes, not much else.)* Why not tonight? Just tell me, why not?
AU PAIR. Because.
CAB DRIVER. Girls all say "because." I don't know what "because" means.
AU PAIR. It means because.
CAB DRIVER. Because it's Tuesday? Because we've only just met?
AU PAIR. Just because.
CAB DRIVER. Because you don't fancy me? It's hardly likely, is it?
AU PAIR. Why not?
CAB DRIVER. Well, just look at me.
AU PAIR. It's so dark I can't see you.
CAB DRIVER. So it can't be that, then, can it? *(She looks away, not responding.)* What's the problem? I promise you, I won't tell anyone.
AU PAIR. Oh, that's great. That's a real come-on ...
CAB DRIVER. What's wrong with that?
AU PAIR. That makes me feel really sexy. What a great line! "I won't tell anyone"!

CAB DRIVER. Well, no-one'll know. *(She throws a sideways glance at him.)* So do you want to go back?

AU PAIR. Not yet.

(It's a concession. He cheers up.)

CAB DRIVER. Girls all say no.

AU PAIR. Girls do?

CAB DRIVER. I mean I'm not saying …

AU PAIR. All girls say that?

CAB DRIVER. I'm not saying … I'm not saying you're just any old girl. But the way I can tell you're a girl is because you say no.

AU PAIR. What do you think the reason is?

CAB DRIVER. I don't know.

AU PAIR. Why do you think I say no?

CAB DRIVER. Tell.

(She looks at him a moment.)

AU PAIR. Because of the risk. That's why. Why should I risk? That's the reason. It's not safe anymore. I'll only risk if …

CAB DRIVER. If what?

AU PAIR. If it means something. If I'm to risk, it has to mean something. *(He takes her in his arms and they kiss. But she pulls away.)* So?

(The CAB DRIVER doesn't reply for a moment or two.)

CAB DRIVER. It means something. I promise.

AU PAIR. Does it? Does it really mean something? *(They go down together on a bed of cardboard, which crushes beneath them. He pulls again at the light string.)* I can't see your face.

CAB DRIVER. What's my face got to do with it?

AU PAIR. Let me see your face.

(She takes his face between her hands. Music engulfs them. Darkness. The projected slide reads: NINE MINUTES.)

• • • • •

(Near dark. A streak of ambient light hits only the CAB DRIVER. The two of them are still where they were.)

CAB DRIVER. Well there we are. *(He seems content.)* We can't lie on boxes all night. *(He lights a match for a cigarette, which they share.)* It's worth doing. Don't you think? For the cigarette. It's worth doing for the cigarette alone.

(The AU PAIR stretches.)

AU PAIR. Oh God.
CAB DRIVER. Oh God, what?
AU PAIR. Tu es un animal.
CAB DRIVER. That's right.

(She turns and looks at him.)

AU PAIR. Fred ...
CAB DRIVER. What? What, Fred?
AU PAIR. Tell me ... Tell me what you feel.
CAB DRIVER. What I feel?
AU PAIR. Yes.
CAB DRIVER. I've just shown you what I feel.

(There is a pause.)

AU PAIR. Frederick, tell me. Put into words.
CAB DRIVER. You know what I feel.
AU PAIR. Then kiss me.

(He stops and kisses her. The sound of Elvis grows again in the distance. It's romantic. Then he breaks.)

CAB DRIVER. I mean, I don't know. Feel's a big word. *(He gets up and pulls at the light string. She is looking at him from the floor. Then he pulls her up to her feet. She stands, adjusting her*

clothing.) What are we going to do? Are we going back to the dance?

AU PAIR. If you like.

CAB DRIVER. I don't know. I'd like to go back but I'm sort of confused. To be honest, you've sort of confused me.

AU PAIR. Have I? How did I do that?

CAB DRIVER. I don't know. If I knew, then I wouldn't be confused. I knew where I was, now I don't. I don't like that. I don't like the feeling.

AU PAIR. No? *(He takes a step away.)* Well, I have to go.

CAB DRIVER. What.

AU PAIR. Yes. I have to get back. I'm treated like a servant. By the whole family. I have the cats to feed, the dogs, the humans. I'm a slave.

(The CAB DRIVER frowns, lost.)

CAB DRIVER. How are you going to get home?

AU PAIR. I'll walk.

CAB DRIVER. You can't walk. It's dangerous. At this time of night. Don't you want a lift. *(She doesn't answer. He raises his voice.)* I don't get it. What am I meant to say? What do you want me to say? I'm offering you a fucking lift. *(She smiles, and makes to go. He follows her, better-humored.)* And what does that mean? What does the smile mean? *(She smiles at him again.)* I'd like a dance. Can we have one more dance, please? I mean, if we don't, isn't it just a bit brutal?

(She looks at him.)

AU PAIR. Yes, Fred.

(The sound of the music grows. The CAB DRIVER closes his eyes and starts moving his hips.)

CAB DRIVER. You've taught me something. You've taught me something tonight. *(He points toward the lone chair in the room.)* Look, sit down. I'll get us a beer. We can dance in here.

AU PAIR. I don't have long.

CAB DRIVER. I won't be long. *(He opens the door. The crowded room glows with color and warmth.)* Don't you go now.

AU PAIR. I won't.

CAB DRIVER. Well, don't.

(He turns uncertainly and goes into the dance hall. The AU PAIR sits alone.)

3. THE AU PAIR AND THE STUDENT

(The kitchen of a modern house in a well-off area of town. It is modishly decorated with stainless steel hooks from which hang a faultless batterie de cuisine. There are gray venetian blinds on the gleaming windows. At a big butchers' block table in the center of the room the AU PAIR is sitting in a blue blouse and slacks and stunning blue slippers writing a letter. It is plainly very hot. After a few moments the STUDENT appears at the kitchen door. He has a book in his hand. He is in fashionable jeans and a T-shirt. He is extremely nervous.)

STUDENT. What are you doing?
AU PAIR. Writing a letter.
STUDENT. I see. Who to?
AU PAIR. A man I met at a dance.

(The STUDENT does not move.)

STUDENT. It's so hot. It's so unbelievably hot. It's never this hot at this time of year. There's nobody left in town. Am I the only person still working? They didn't take you to the country?
AU PAIR. No.

(She has stopped writing, but has not moved from the table.)

STUDENT. What's coolest? Vodka? Do we have vodka?
AU PAIR. We ran out. Your father drank the lot.
STUDENT. It's him insisted I read law. It's a family tradition.
AU PAIR. The drinking?
STUDENT. The law. *(He does not acknowledge the joke.)* It's all right. I'll just have some water.
AU PAIR. There's the tap.
STUDENT. Can you get me a glass? (*It is clear he expects her*

to do it for him. She gets up, gets a glass from the cupboard, then goes to the tap, and turns it on. They are both running with sweat.) Let the water run, so it's really cool. *(The water overflows from the glass into the sink. She keeps it running.)* Who called?

AU PAIR. I'm sorry?

STUDENT. I heard the bell ring.

AU PAIR. Did you? When?

STUDENT. Earlier.

AU PAIR. When?

STUDENT. This morning. I've been up there so long I lose all track of time. I was expecting a friend.

AU PAIR. No friend. Here.

(She has taken the glass across to him and put it in his hand. He panics.)

STUDENT. I'll take it upstairs.

(He goes out. She goes to the mirror and adjusts her clothing, improving the line of her breasts against the shirt. She pours herself a glass of water. Before she can turn, the phone rings. She answers it.)

AU PAIR. Yes? You want another one? *(There is a slight pause.)* No. You come down.

(She drinks her own glass of water. Then gets a third glass from the cupboard and pours a fresh glass. As she finishes, he appears at the door, without a book.)

STUDENT. Thank you. So, excellent. You're enjoying it here? You get on with my father?

AU PAIR. Very well.

STUDENT. My mother likes you. You relate to my mother. Which is always important. I've found.

AU PAIR. Here.

STUDENT. She's an interesting woman, don't you think?

AU PAIR. Who?

STUDENT. My mother. *(She hands him a fresh glass and their hands touch once more.)* Thank you. *(He takes it and she moves away.)* Do we do things differently here? *(She doesn't answer.)* Come here, Marie.

AU PAIR. Sir.

STUDENT. Not sir. Nobody's called sir anymore. God. I hate that idea. Those days are gone.

AU PAIR. Sir?

(She has moved closer to him.)

STUDENT. Please. I just wanted ... I was looking at the shirt. Considering you ... I know you have no money. Or we pay you so little, rather. And you have such nice things. Can I see it? Please?

(He takes the lining between finger and thumb.)

AU PAIR. What's wrong with it?

STUDENT. Nothing. It's the most beautiful blue.

AU PAIR. Sir?

STUDENT. I mean it. I'm telling the truth. *(He puts his arm round her waist and draws her to him. She leans back as he unbuttons her blouse a little and kisses her chest.)* Your skin is beautiful. It's white.

AU PAIR. Now that's just flattery.

STUDENT. Nothing wrong with flattery, is there?

AU PAIR. No. Flattery is no harm

(She sighs under his kisses.)

STUDENT. What a beautiful sound ...

AU PAIR. Sir ...

(He has suddenly dropped to her feet, still nervous.)

STUDENT. And what beautiful shoes. Blue as well. What do you call them? Indigo?

AU PAIR. Cobalt.

STUDENT. Are they ... I mean, what I'm asking, did you get them from the same shop?

(He has wrapped himself round her knees.)

AU PAIR. Sir, if the doorbell rings ...

STUDENT. The bell won't ring.

AU PAIR. At least close the shutters.

(He goes across and pulls the blinds. The hot afternoon light slats through from outside, their faces in darkness. He looks at her from across the room.)

STUDENT. Why are you shy?

AU PAIR. You think I'm shy?

STUDENT. Anyone who looks like you has no reason to be embarrassed. If I looked like you, I wouldn't be shy. If I smelt like you. *(There is a pause. Neither of them move.)* The other evening, the bathroom door wasn't closed. You'd fallen asleep in the bath.

(They look at each other, not moving.)

AU PAIR. I'm ashamed.

STUDENT. I've seen you already. I'm half-way there, I'm already half-way there ...

(He moves quickly across and pushes her decisively onto the butcher's block. Then he climbs on top of her. He starts to pull her skirt up, clambering over her.)

AU PAIR. What if the bell rings, what if your friend comes ...

STUDENT. My friend won't come ...

AU PAIR. What if he does?

STUDENT. Let him ring. Don't go to the door. Just leave him. Don't go to the door.

AU PAIR. Down a bit. What if he comes? What if your friend

comes?

STUDENT. He won't come.

(Music engulfs them. Darkness. The projected slide reads: FORTY-FIVE SECONDS.)

• • • • •

(The music stops. The doorbell rings insistently.)

STUDENT. Shit! Oh, shit, shit, shit! *It rings again.)* Can you go? Go and look through the letterbox.

AU PAIR. What?

STUDENT. It may just be a beggar.

AU PAIR. You're joking.

STUDENT. I'm telling you: go and take a look.

(The AU PAIR pulls down her skirt and goes out. The STUDENT pulls up his trousers and opens the blinds. The light is liquid now, yellow. The AU PAIR returns.)

AU PAIR. Whoever it was, they've gone.

STUDENT. Are you sure?

AU PAIR. Of course I'm sure.

STUDENT. Do you think it was my friend.

(He seems restless. The AU PAIR doesn't notice and moves toward him again.)

AU PAIR. Well, we'll just never know.

(He looks down.)

STUDENT. I'm going to get a coffee.

AU PAIR. What?

STUDENT. I think I'd better go. I think I'd better be going. I'm going to the café. *(The AU PAIR just looks at him.)* I mean it. If my friend calls ...

AU PAIR. He won't call ...

STUDENT. If my friend does call …
AU PAIR. He won't.

(There is a pause. The STUDENT is quite angry.)

STUDENT. If he does. I am saying, Marie, *if* he does … if he does, please tell him where I am. Which will be in the café. *(He pauses a moment.)* I mean, if you could do your job.
AU PAIR. Sir.

(They stare at each other.)

4. THE STUDENT AND THE MARRIED WOMAN

(The STUDENT's bedroom. It's evening. A classic student tip, the walls maroon and festooned with posters of rock stars. The bed is covered in garish, disorderly sheets. There are books, records, discarded clothes, a dartboard. The student comes in, throwing down a load of books and a plastic bag, tearing off his clothes, grabbing a clean shirt and a pair of trousers. He stuffs his discarded clothes under the bed. From the plastic bag, he takes out a bottle of cognac and a foil-wrapped container, which he opens. Inside are a selection of frozen hors d'oeuvres: vol au vents, little meatballs, prawns on sticks. He fussily moves them around on the little tray to make them look more impressive, then sets them down beside the cognac. He takes a swig from the bottle.)

(As he does so, the doorbell rings outside. He goes to the bedroom door, opens it, listens. Someone has got to it before him. So he sits down in a chair with a book, trying to look casual. The MARRIED WOMAN comes in. In her early thirties, she has tried to disguise her arrival by wearing extremely tight trousers, a big shapeless coat, a scarf wrapped round her head and dark glasses. She looks like a cross between Jackie Onassis and the Invisible Man. She stands a moment with her left hand on her heart, as if mastering an overwhelming emotion.)

MARRIED WOMAN. My God!
STUDENT. I know. I'm sorry.
MARRIED WOMAN. That was terrifying.
STUDENT. I know.

(He gets up to move towards her, but she presses herself with her back to the door.)

MARRIED WOMAN. I never want to do that again.

STUDENT. No.

(She stands, recovering.)

MARRIED WOMAN. I thought … if I came, your house would be empty. You promised.

STUDENT. Yes. I didn't think. The au pair. *(He takes a step towards her.)* It's all right, I know for a fact, she doesn't read the papers.

MARRIED WOMAN. I should hope not. I can stay five minutes.

(She moves quickly across the room. The STUDENT clears the chair of assorted student garbage and cleans it quickly with his hand. She sits. He frowns slightly.)

STUDENT. The problem is, I can't actually see you …
MARRIED WOMAN. What
STUDENT. I mean with the glasses.
MARRIED WOMAN. Oh.

(She takes her glasses off.)

STUDENT. And the scarf.

(He takes off her scarf. She does not resist.)

MARRIED WOMAN. What's wrong?
STUDENT. It's the first time we've ever been alone.

(He inclines his head to kiss her but she moves a step away.)

MARRIED WOMAN. You asked me to visit you. I'm visiting. You simply don't understand …
STUDENT. No …
MARRIED WOMAN. The press in this country …
STUDENT. Oh the press yes …
MARRIED WOMAN. They have no values. They have no re-

spect.

(The STUDENT frowns, murmuring assent.)

STUDENT. Absolutely disgusting.

MARRIED WOMAN. It's so ridiculously hot in here!

STUDENT. That's because you've got your coat on.

MARRIED WOMAN. Then take it off. *(He comes round behind her and unbuttons her coat. He takes it to put it on the chair with her other things.)* Is this your room?

STUDENT. It is.

MARRIED WOMAN. Is this where you work? I shan't come again. And now I must go.

STUDENT. Emma!

MARRIED WOMAN. I mean it. I really do mean it. I'm friends with your parents, for God's sake.

STUDENT. So?

MARRIED WOMAN. We go skiing together.

(He looks at her a moment.)

STUDENT. Do you want a brandy?

MARRIED WOMAN. Yes. But get me some water first.

STUDENT. I'm sorry?

MARRIED WOMAN. A glass of water. You do have a kitchen, don't you?

STUDENT. Yes. *(He hasn't moved.)* Have a brandy instead.

(The MARRIED WOMAN watches as he pours cognac into a tooth-mug.)

MARRIED WOMAN. I thought I could do it and I can't.

STUDENT. Why? Isn't this what we want. We're together. We're in a room. For once without your husband's eyes boring into us ... *(At once he retracts.)* All right, sorry, I shouldn't have mentioned him ...

MARRIED WOMAN. You aren't married. You understand

nothing. *(The STUDENT gives her the brandy.)* I was coming up the stairs, I saw myself …

STUDENT. Emma, I know how unhappy you are.

MARRIED WOMAN. Do you?

STUDENT. Yes, I do. I know your husband's world. Politics! My God! How could anyone be happy … someone of your intelligence, your sensibility … how could you be happy in a world of presentation and lies? *(The student is suddenly angry.)* What do you think this is? Some squalid assignation?

(She looks at him, directly.)

MARRIED WOMAN. What is it, then?

STUDENT. This is love. *(He nods slightly at his own admission.)* Jesus. I mean, this is it. It's love. I'm in fucking love. I can't live without you. It's true. Maybe I sound naive. Well I am. I am naive. *(The MARRIED WOMAN has taken a vol au vent from the foil container.)* Life's not a rehearsal. We're only here once.

MARRIED WOMAN. And how many women have you said that to?

STUDENT. Well, none. At least since I met you.

MARRIED WOMAN. Ah well, that's something … *(They both smile.)* Anton, you promised …

STUDENT. What did I promise? What did I promise exactly?

(There is a pause.)

MARRIED WOMAN. Take off my clothes.

(He fumbles a moment.)

STUDENT. Let me just … how does this …

MARRIED WOMAN. Let me do it, all right?

(He gets off the bed. She is wearing a body stocking under her clothes.)

STUDENT. What are you wearing?

MARRIED WOMAN. It's a body stocking. Madonna wears them. *(She gets into the bed in the body stocking.)* My God, it's cold in here.

STUDENT. It'll warm up quickly.

MARRIED WOMAN. Well that's rather up to you, isn't it? *(The STUDENT, undressing, is disturbed by this remark. The MARRIED WOMAN has undressed under the sheets.)* Come, come to bed, Anton.

STUDENT. I'm coming ...

MARRIED WOMAN. There's a smell of honey ...*(He gets into the bed, taking her in his arms.)* Oh Anton ...

STUDENT. Emma ...

(Music engulfs them. Darkness. The projected slide reads: 0 MINUTES.)

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(The MARRIED WOMAN is sitting at the side of the room. The STUDENT is in the bed.)

STUDENT. It's my fault. I'm sorry. It isn't you. I knew this would happen. Emma? *(She doesn't reply.)* I read an article.

MARRIED WOMAN. An article?

STUDENT. Some of the most famous men in history have had this particular experience.

MARRIED WOMAN. Ah.

STUDENT. Churchill. Regardless. Julius Caesar. *(The MARRIED WOMAN is frowning slightly.)* I'm not saying it makes me feel better. It doesn't. As you say, it doesn't matter, but even so.

MARRIED WOMAN. No. Though to be fair, you did promise me you wouldn't do anything and you've stuck to your promise ...

STUDENT. Emma ...

MARRIED WOMAN. This man is as good as his word!

STUDENT. That isn't funny.

MARRIED WOMAN. No one can say you didn't warn me.

STUDENT. What is this? Is this some sort of joke?

MARRIED WOMAN. No, for goodness' sake. It's just ... do we have to be so bloody serious?

STUDENT. No, of course not.

MARRIED WOMAN. I didn't think it happened with young men, that's all. I thought it happened with clapped-out older men. Or men who haven't got any shagging left in them.

(The STUDENT frowns, trying to ignore this sudden vulgarity.)

STUDENT. Another thing, I tell you, I met this stockbroker. He'd had to wait fifteen years for the woman he loved — she was married, or something. And when they did finally get to be together, they just lay side by side. For six whole nights, they did nothing. They just cried.

MARRIED WOMAN. Both of them?

STUDENT. They cried for joy.

MARRIED WOMAN. Do you think that's true of all stockbrokers, or just this one, because ...

STUDENT. What is this?

MARRIED WOMAN. I think I may avoid stockbrokers in future. If all they can offer is communal weeping.

(He is suddenly raising his voice.)

STUDENT. Honestly, this whole thing seems to have cheered you up in some way...

MARRIED WOMAN. Not at all...

STUDENT. In some obscure way, you seem in very good spirits.

MARRIED WOMAN. I'm not.

STUDENT. I thought women were meant to reassure men on these occasions.

MARRIED WOMAN. Are they?

STUDENT. I thought they were meant to put it lightly aside and make them feel better.

MARRIED WOMAN. So?

STUDENT. I'm feeling worse.

(She relents a little, going across to reassure him.)

MARRIED WOMAN. Look, it's fine. We're friends. We're ...

what's that word? Comrades.

STUDENT. Oh for God's sake!

MARRIED WOMAN. You said it first. You said it! "Let's be comrades" you said …

STUDENT. Did I?

MARRIED WOMAN. I couldn't believe it, I'd never met anyone who used that word seriously. *(She suddenly changes tack.)* And now I have to go …

STUDENT. Emma, please …

MARRIED WOMAN. I have to!

STUDENT. Just stay five minutes. Please!

MARRIED WOMAN. All right, but only … only if … you make me a promise.

STUDENT. What promise?

MARRIED WOMAN. Trust me.

(There's a pause.)

STUDENT. What do I do.

MARRIED WOMAN. Trust me. I know more than you. Lie completely still. *(He lies back. She stands at the end of the bed.)* That's it. If you move, then I leave. Just lie. Lie.

(She stands above him, about to solve the problem. Music engulfs them. Darkness. The projected slide reads: THIRTY-TWO MINUTES.)

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(Darkness. Silence.)

MARRIED WOMAN. Oh my beautiful boy. *(The MARRIED WOMAN turns on the light.)* What time is it?

STUDENT. *(looking at his watch.)* Eight.

MARRIED WOMAN. Eight, my God!

(She wraps the sheet round herself and starts urgently to gather up her things.)

MARRIED WOMAN. I know it. I just know it.

STUDENT. Know what?

MARRIED WOMAN. Tonight. Tonight will be the night when for once he comes home early. Where are my shoes?

(The STUDENT has got out of bed and holds out her shoes.)

STUDENT. Here.

MARRIED WOMAN. You don't get it, do you? You don't understand. This could be the end for both of us.

STUDENT. Why?

MARRIED WOMAN. Because I'm a hopeless liar, that's why. I'm hopeless.

STUDENT. Then you'll have to get better.

MARRIED WOMAN. And all this for you, for a man like you. Here, give me a kiss. *(They embrace, she holding her clothes, then she runs into the bathroom, very happy.)* A hopeless liar, and hopelessly shy. *(She closes the door. He starts to pull on some trousers, then stops and goes to eat several hors d'oeuvres. She speaks from inside the bathroom.)* Anton!

STUDENT. Yes?

MARRIED WOMAN. *(off.)* Thank God we didn't just cry. *(He smiles contentedly.)* How will it be? When I see you across a room one day?

STUDENT. What do you mean, one day? We're meant to be at the rally tomorrow.

MARRIED WOMAN. *(off.)* What rally?

STUDENT. We're all going. Your husband's speaking at the rally.

MARRIED WOMAN. *(off.)* I won't go. Are you mad? *(She reappears. She grabs at some hors d'oeuvres as she finishes dressing.)* I couldn't possibly. I'd never survive.

STUDENT. I'll see you tomorrow.

MARRIED WOMAN. It's out of the question.

STUDENT. Then the day after. Get here by six.

MARRIED WOMAN. Can I get a cab on the street?

STUDENT. Sure. It's a deal. The day after tomorrow. Be here at six.

MARRIED WOMAN. There's no deal. We'll discuss it tomor-

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