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SF PERUSALS

If I Were You

by Alan Ayckbourn

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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IF I WERE YOU was first presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough on October 17th, 2006. The performance was directed by Alan Ayckbourn, with sets by Roger Glossop, lighting by Mick Hughes. The cast was as follows:

JILL RODALE . . . . . Liza Goddard
MAL RODALE . . . . . John Branwell
SAM RODALE . . . . . David Hartley
CHRISSIE SNAITH . . . . . Sakia Butler
DEAN SNAITH. . . . . Andrew Brookes

CHARACTERS

JILL RODALE - early 40's

MAL RODALE - Jill's Husband, 40's

SAM RODALE - thier son, 15

CHRISSIE SNAITH - their daughter, mid 20's

DEAN SNAITH - Chrissie's husband, late 20's

SETTING

The action takes place in the Rodales' comfortable, conventional home. This also serves as an equivalent view of a local showroom of the BFRS Retail Furniture Warehouse.

ACT I
Just before seven a.m.

ACT II
The next morning

TIME

The present.

ACT I

Three of the rooms in the Rodales' comfortable, conventional home. Just before seven a.m.

First, a view of part of the upstairs (carpeted) master bedroom including a double bed, accessible from either side and a dressing table with stool. One door leading to the en suite bathroom and, ideally, another door to the rest of the house. Second, a view of the downstairs (carpeted) sitting-room including a sofa, coffee table and armchair. All angled to face the (unseen) TV screen. A single doorway to the rest of the house. Third, a view of part of the (lino tiled) eating area of the kitchen, including a table, a section of the fitted units, a sink and a dishwasher, though neither the stove nor the fridge which are out of sight. This room has one door leading to the rest of the house and ideally another, the back door. Overall the house has a tidy, almost unlived in, appearance. Such furniture as we see is well maintained and could indeed be new. There's a feeling that we could be looking at one of those furniture showrooms with their separate room layouts. Which, later on, is what all this occasionally becomes

The bedroom and the sitting-room are in virtual darkness. In the kitchen, the morning sun is just beginning to glow through the blinds. In the bed is **Mal Rodale***, a man in his forties.* **Mal** *is currently fast asleep. Beside him, his wife* **Jill***, a year or so younger, is already awake silently counting the seconds till the alarm goes off. In a moment, it does.* **Jill** *cancels it. A beat. Then with a quiet groan, she swings her legs out of bed, sitting for a moment in her nightdress, orientating herself. She heaves herself to her feet and walks blearily to the door.*

Jill. (*as she goes; softly; routinely*) Mal… Mal… wake up, now. Time to wake up.

A grumpy muttering sound from **Mal***, still half-asleep under the covers. He does not move.*

Jill *goes off, sighing.*

A silence. Then a muttered oath from the bathroom.

(*off; with a cry*) Oh, for God's sake! Mal!

A clatter as the lavatory seat goes down.

(*off*) Is it so much to ask? I mean…

The lavatory flushes.

A moment later **Jill** *returns, pulling on her dressing gown.*

(*sliding her feet into her slippers; to herself*) Is it so much to ask? Every single morning … (*addressing the still inert* **Mal** *without looking at him*) Mal! Wake up, Mal.

More indecipherable, disgruntled muttering from **Mal**, *under the bedclothes.*

(*appearing to understand him*) Yes, well I keep telling you, you shouldn't drink so much, should you?

Jill *draws back the curtains. The room brightens considerably as the morning light floods in.*

Mal. (*shocked by this*) Aaah!
Jill. (*unmoved*) Time to get up.
Mal. (*massaging his head*) Ooooh! Aaaaah!

Jill *starts to pad out of the room.*

Jill. (*as she goes; calling*) Sam! Wake up, now! Time to get up!

Jill *exits.*

After a second, **Mal** *sits up in bed and groans. He seems in some discomfort but this is the way* **Mal** *feels every morning first thing and he's used to it. He swings his legs out of bed and groans again, sitting in his T-shirt and shorts.*

Meanwhile, **Jill** *enters the sitting-room and, crossing to the windows, draws the curtains here as well. The room brightens.*

(*as the light hits her eyes*) Ooooh! (*She studies the view for a second.*)

From upstairs in the bedroom **Mal** *begins his early morning throat clearing ritual.* **Jill** *hears this through the ceiling. She's used to hearing it but nonetheless she looks up, sighs and moves back to the door.*

(*as she goes; calling*) Sam! Sam! Time to get up!

Jill *goes out.*

Mal *stands and moves to the bathroom, still continuing his loud throat clearing.*

Mal *goes off.*

Simultaneously, **Jill** *enters the kitchen.*

(*as she enters; calling back though the door*) Sam! Come on! Wake up! Time to get up!

Jill *picks up the electric kettle and empties it into the sink. Upstairs in the bathroom the sound of the lavatory seat slamming up again. More throat clearing from* **Mal**, *off.* **Jill** *starts to fill the kettle from the tap. Simultaneously, offstage from the bathroom,* **Mal** *noisily relieves himself.* **Jill** *replaces the filled kettle on its stand. She locates two mugs and gets a couple of tea bags from a container in the cupboard. She places these ready in the mugs by the kettle. She seems to run out of energy at this point and stands totally motionless, staring at the kettle for several seconds waiting for it to boil.*

After a moment, **Sam**, *their son of fifteen, enters the kitchen. He is half into his school clothes, still barefoot, carrying a bundle of his remaining clothes and his school bag.*

(*coming out of her trance; seeing* **Sam**) Oh, good. There you are.

Sam *makes a loud snorting noise in his nose (apparently a subconscious version of his father's own ritual), dumps his stuff on the table and repeats the noise as he goes off again, presumably to the other part of the kitchen.*

(*as* **Sam** *goes*) Don't do that, Sam. You sound like your father.

Upstairs, **Mal** *now has on his white work shirt and boxer shorts. He clears his throat again. He is searching for his socks which he finds on the floor, his side of the bed. He sniffs them cursorily and, finding them satisfactory, sits on the bed and pulls them on, clearing his throat once more as he does so.*

Sam *appears in the kitchen with a soft drink from a newly opened can. He puts the can down and sits, snorting again.*

Sam!

Sam. (*unrepentant*) Sorry. (*He belches as a result of his drink.*)

Jill *sighs. It is a losing battle.* **Sam** *finishes dressing, taking alternate swigs of his drink.*

In the bedroom, on his bedside table, **Mal***'s mobile rings.* **Mal***, still with one sock on, glances at it and answers it.*

Mal. (*into the phone*) What is it, Sandra? … (*He listens and frowns.*) How ill? … Yes, but how ill is ill, Sandra? … (*He clears his throat.*) Listen, Sandra, this happens every time there's a—— … oh, yes, it does, my love … yes, it does … it does …

As he talks, **Mal** *goes off, clearing his throat again.*

In the kitchen, **Jill** *starts laying out a single breakfast place, cereal bowl, etc.*

Jill. Aren't you going to eat anything?

Sam. Mum, can you sign something for me? (*He searches his bag.*)

Jill. You need more than a fizzy drink …

Sam *locates a crumpled school parental permission form in his bag.*

Sam. Here. You need to sign it.

Jill. What is it?

Sam. Just something to sign. (*He finishes putting on his shoes.*)

Jill *starts to study the permission form.*

Mal *returns to the bedroom. He has managed, despite continuing his phone call, to get dressed a bit more. He is now searching for something he can't seem to find.*

Mal. (*into the phone; as he enters*) …yes, and you know perfectly well how much I require you there today, Sandra, you know that… I feel let down, my love … well, that's certainly—— … well, that's certainly—— … well, that's certainly the impression I … Sandra, every bloody time an audit's due from Head Office … no, I'm not … I'm very sympathetic … *very* … that's not what I'm saying, Sandra … no …

Mal *goes out again.*

Sam *is all but dressed now.*

Jill. (*still reading the form*) Shakespeare?
Sam. (*casually*) It's nothing.
Jill. You're going to be in Shakespeare?
Sam. Probably. Maybe. Can you sign it, please?
Jill. Don't let your father see this, will you?
Sam. No, you can sign it.
Jill. (*reading*) A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Sam. (*still ultra casual*) It's nothing.
Jill. What is it? More of this acting, you mean?
Sam. (*rising*) Probably won't even get in it.

Sam *pads off in his stockinged feet.*

Jill (*doubtfully*) Well … I don't know. You know how your father feels about all this acting, Sam.

The kettle has boiled.

Jill *pours water on the tea bags and then goes to fetch the milk.*

Meanwhile, **Mal** *returns to the bedroom, still on the phone. He now has on his suit and one shoe. Locating the other one finally, under the bed, he sits, putting it on with one hand as he talks.*

Mal (*into the phone as he enters; slightly more irritably*) … yes, I am … yes, but only when it's genuine, Sandra … well, I'm sorry I don't think it is, my love … I'm sorry … no, I'm sorry, I don't … Sandra, listen … I know all about what women go through, don't bloody give me that, Sandra, I'm married to one, aren't I? …

Jill *returns with a half-full bottle of milk.*

Jill. (*calling through the doorway*) Mal! Tea's here!
Mal. (*into the phone*) … listen … there's no point in getting hysterical, is there …?
Jill. (*calling again*) Mal! Tea!
Mal. (*into the phone*) … listen, I'm not arguing—— (*yelling irritably through the door*) All right! I'm coming. (*angrily; into the phone*) … look, just you get your arse into work, Sandra … or you can forget the job altogether, all right? You have been told, girl. Take that as an official warning, Sandra. (*disconnecting the phone*) Bloody woman.

Mal *leaves the bedroom in a bad temper.*

Jill *has finished making the tea. She pours the rest of the milk into a jug and finishes laying out the breakfast place with cereals, sugar, etc.*

Sam *returns with his shoes.*

Jill. (*as she busies herself*) So what made you want to do this?
Sam. (*sitting*) What?
Jill. This Shakespeare? What made you want to do Shakespeare?
Sam. (*putting on his shoes*) Just for a laugh. She asked me, that's all.
Jill Who did?
Sam. Mrs Easterly. She said would I be in it, like, you know.
Jill. Mrs Easterly. Which one's Mrs Easterly?
Sam. English teacher.
Jill. Oh, yes. Tall woman, red hair.
Sam. Yeah.
Jill. The young one. Quite attractive.
Sam. (*shrugging; a bit too casually*) Wouldn't know.
Jill. Are you doing it up at the school, then?
Sam. No, in the Gardens. It says there.
Jill. What Gardens?

Sam. Up at the Manor. Hadforth Manor Gardens. It says it all there.
Jill. (*impressed*) Oh, those Gardens. I didn't know they had a theatre there.
Sam. Open Air. On the grass. Look, just sign it, Mum. I have to bring it back by tomorrow at the latest——
Jill. (*seeing* **Mal** *through the door*) Oh, there you are.

Mal *enters the kitchen. He is now fully dressed for work in his suit, shirt and tie plus briefcase.*

Jill *immediately picks up the permission form from the table.* **Sam** *simultaneously rises as he sees his father and moves away.* **Mal**, *still angry, sits at the table without a word and starts to serve himself with cornflakes. Neither of the men acknowledges the other.* **Sam** *moves to the door. He has left his drinks can on the table.*

Don't leave that there, Sam. In the bin. How many more times?

Sam *shrugs, takes the can and puts it in the bin. He hovers in the doorway behind his father, signalling to* **Jill** *about the form.*

Time for toast, this morning, have you, Mal?

Mal. No.

Mal *is suddenly aware of Sam behind him and then of the piece of paper in* **Jill***'s hand.*

What's that, then?

Jill. What?
Mal . That in your hand?
Jill. Nothing.
Mal. What is it? Give it here. (*He holds out his hand.*)

Jill *hesitates.* **Sam** *shakes his head at her. Torn,* **Jill** *finally hands the form to* **Mal**. **Mal** *reads it. Silence.*

What's all this then?

Jill. It's just …
Mal. (*turning to look at Sam*) You want me to sign this?

Sam *stares at him.*

You must be joking.

Sam. It's just for fun. For a laugh.

Mal. A laugh? There might be time for a laugh when you get your school work right. Judging from your reports of late there doesn't appear that much to laugh about, does there? (*ripping up the form*) No way.

Sam *stares at Mal, then without another word walks out of the door leaving his school bag behind.*

Silence. **Jill** *gathers up the scraps of paper.*

Jill. (*close to tears*) You don't make things any easier, do you, Mal?

Mal. Shakespeare! Poncing about in tights like a fucking fairy …

Jill. Mal, don't start! Now, don't start!

Mal. (*shouting through the door*) We've got one daughter, we don't want another one, thank you!

Jill. Mal, stop it! Calm down!

Sam *storms into the sitting-room and throws himself into the chair. We now see just how upset he is. He sits, trying to recover.*

Both of you. Between you. I can't take much more.

Mal. (*slightly calmer*) I've got problems at work …

Jill. Yes. Well, stop taking them out on him!

Slight pause. **Jill** *recovers herself.*

What's the problem at work, then? Another one?

Mal. Nothing.

Jill *waits.*

We got the Head Office visit at the end of this week. And bloody Sandra's phoned in sick. Again.

Jill. (*supportively*) Oh, she's worse than useless, isn't she?

Mal. I told her, if she's not careful she won't have a job. It's common knowledge, they're downsizing. Closing branches here, there and everywhere. Slightest excuse.

We could be next. We're on the list. I know for a fact, we're on the list.

Jill. You said.

Mal. Now him and his Shakespeare! Last in his class, bottom of everything …

Jill. Well, that doesn't always follow. So were you at school, weren't you?

Mal. That's beside the point. That's no excuse for him.

Jill. I was. I was bottom of everything.

Mal. That's the reason you have kids. So they can do better than you did. That's the only reason we have them, isn't it?

Jill. (*a bit confused by the logic of this*) Well …

Pause.

Mal. Well, there's always Chrissie.

Jill. (*grimly*) We've got two children. Like it or not.

Mal. We never had a problem with her, did we? I mean, once we got over the disappointment of her being a girl, never had a problem.

Mal *eats for a second.* **Jill** *sits silent.*

Never argued with us. Always did as she was told.

He eats.

Worked hard at school, didn't she? Top of her class, she was. Could have done anything. If she'd wanted to.

He eats.

Met Dean. Fell in love. Perfect couple. Got pregnant. Happily married.

He eats.

What she always wanted. Husband. Baby of her own. Grandchild for you. What you always wanted. Happy ever after. Fairy tale ending.

Jill *is silent.*

Isn't it?

Jill. Don't be late now, will you?
Mal. We got it right with her, didn't we? So why can't we get it right with him, eh?
Jill. He's all right.
Mal. He's not all right. He's not right at all. Why isn't he kicking a ball around? Same as other lads? Chasing girls.
Jill. You know he doesn't like balls, he never has done …
Mal. Well, he should do. He's a boy, for God's sake …
Jill. He takes after me. I don't like balls. I've never liked balls.
Mal. Prancing around in a park in tights … What sort of thing's that for a lad to be doing?
Jill. It might not be in tights, we don't know …
Mal. It's Shakespeare, isn't it? They all wear bloody tights. Bunch of shirt lifters.

Mal'*s mobile rings.*

Anyway, he's not doing it and that's final! I'm not having a son of—— (*glancing at his screen*) Oh, I'd better take this. Just a moment.
Jill. (*sourly; in an undertone*) Yes, you'd better take it …

He gets up and moves to the door.

Mal. (*into the phone*) Yes? … Yes … (*mouthing to* **Jill**) Just a minute…work.
Jill. Yes.

Mal *goes out.*
Jill *stands unhappily.*

(*sadly*) Oh, dear. (*She looks as if she might cry.*) Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

She takes up her own mug of tea and sits at the table. **Sam** *is still slumped in the sitting-room.*

Mal *enters the sitting-room, talking on the phone.*

Mal. (*into the phone*) … look, I've told you before, love, if you're going to phone me, then don't ever——

Mal *sees* **Sam** *and stops talking abruptly.*

Sam *immediately rises and walks straight past* **Mal** *and out of the room.*

Listen, Sam, I——

But **Sam** *has gone.* **Mal** *lowers his voice.*

(*into the phone*) It's all right, just someone— (*listening*) Yes, I said … I said, I would … I *said* … Why should I say it, then? … I said it … I did, I said! … When? … When did I ever do that? … I've never done — *never* … Come on, don't get like that again … I've got enough problems, love …

Mal, *pacing, becomes increasingly agitated. He's having a hard time. His increased pacing causes him to leave the room again. He goes out.*

Simultaneously, **Sam** *enters the kitchen to collect his bag.*

Jill. Sam.

Sam *picks up his bag and makes to leave.*

Sam. Don't just leave without … Please.
Sam. (*turning in the doorway*) I really hate him, you know. I hate him so much.
Jill. No, you don't, not really, you're just—
Sam. I'm leaving, Mum. As soon as I can, I'm getting out…
Jill. Now, don't be silly, you can't, Sam, you've got exams coming up …
Sam. I've got to get away from him. You want to come with me, you can.
Jill. Sam, he's having trouble at work at the moment, he's—
Sam. Too bad!
Jill. He doesn't mean half of it, he—
Sam. And I hate the way he's treating you.
Jill. Me?
Sam. You know.
Jill. What?
Sam. You know.

Pause.

Mal *enters the sitting-room again. He throws his mobile angrily into the sofa. He mouths a silent curse.*

Sam. What you doing protecting him, Mum? Always protecting him.
Jill. He's my husband, Sam.
Sam. (*sarcastically*) Great!

At this point **Dean**, *late twenties, also in his work suit and tie, bounces in.*

Dean. (*cheerfully*) 'morning, all.
Jill. 'morning, Dean. He's in the other room on the phone.
Dean. Right. I'll rout him out. 'morning, Sammy boy. (*aiming a series of shadow punches at* **Sam***'s head and body*) Pow! Pow! Boof! Pow! Pow!
Sam. (*not reacting; deadpan*) 'llo.

Dean *goes off again.*

Jill. Listen, bring another form home tonight. I'll sign it for you. He need never know. They'll let you have another one, won't they?
Sam. I don't know.
Jill. Come on, Sam. We'll rise above it. We have before, haven't we?
Sam. He's not worth it, Mum. Not at all.

Sam *leaves.*

Jill *stands.*

Jill. (*despairingly*) Oh, men! Bloody men!

Impulsively, she rushes out.

Dean *arrives in the sitting-room to find* **Mal.**

Dean. 'morning!

Mal *continues to stare at his phone.*

You fit then?

Mal. Right.

He picks up his phone from the sofa and starts to leave.

Dean. (*sensing* **Mal's** *mood*) OK?
Mal. Whatever you do for them, Dean, they're never satisfied, are they? Always wanting more. Whatever you do, it's never enough. You try your best, you work your bloody balls off for them, it's still not enough. You found that out yet, have you?
Dean. Well …
Mal. (*as he goes*) Give it time, son, give it time …

Mal *leaves the sitting-room and* **Dean** *follows.*

Jill *enters the bedroom. She has a glass of water. She sits at the dressing table and finds a couple of headache tablets which she pops from their tinfoil into the glass. She watches them dissolve, in one of her trance-like states again.*

Mal *comes into the kitchen, followed by* **Dean.**

(*picking up his briefcase*) Right. Just a tick.

Mal *puts the briefcase on the table, opens it and starts rifling through some papers.*

Dean. (*surveying the half eaten cornflakes*) This yours? You haven't finished your cornflakes.
Mal. Not this morning.
Dean. Oh, I couldn't do that. I always need something to start the day. You know, cooked, like.
Mal. What? Egg and bacon?
Dean. And the rest. Sausage. Mushrooms. Fried bread. Baked beans. Black pudding. Fried potatoes …
Mal. Yes, all right, that's enough …

He concentrates on his task for a moment.

What, every morning?
Dean. Couldn't start the day.
Mal. You're lucky. You must burn it up.
Dean. I do. (*indicating the cornflakes*) Can I finish these?
Mal. If you want. (*giving up his search*) No, I don't seem to have it …

Dean. (*sitting and starting to eat*) What's that?
Mal. Invoice from those carpet suppliers. Be somewhere around. I'll find it. (*puzzled*) Funny, I'm sure I had it …

In the bedroom, **Jill** *swallows the contents of her glass in one. Under the next, she makes the bed.*

Mal *re-checks his briefcase once more.*

Chrissie cooks all that for you, does she? Every single day?
Dean. Except Sundays. Then I do it. My turn. Boiled eggs.
Mal. Fair enough. She doesn't mind, then?
Dean. No. Bit tough on her when she was morning sick, but normally …
Mal. How is she, my little girl? How's my Chrystal, then?
Dean. Great.
Mal. Looking after her, I hope?
Dean. You bet.
Mal. Little Liam OK?
Dean. Magic. He's magic.
Mal. That's what I like to hear.

Jill, *once she has finished the bed, sits to study herself in the dressing table mirror, pulling at the skin on her face, not liking what she sees.*

Mal, *downstairs, is going through his briefcase contents once again.*

Dean. Big game Saturday, then. (*He finishes his cornflakes.*)
Mal. Oh, yes.
Dean. All hanging in the balance, isn't it?
Mal. I'll be there, don't worry.
Dean. Wouldn't miss it, eh?
Mal. (*giving up his search*) No, Sandra must have filed it. God knows where it is if she's filed it …
Dean. Got a match myself on Sunday. For the Heroes. Last of the season. Hadforth Heroes! Hey! Hey! Hey!
Mal. Still in the first fifteen, then?
Dean. What? Come on! Could they do without me, could they heck?
Mal. I don't know. After that last game …
Dean. It was in touch. Fly half was a yard over the line.

Mal. Yeah … yeah … yeah …
Dean. (*squaring up to* **Mal**; *mock aggressively*) Yeah.
Mal. (*doing the same*) Yeah? Take you on, any day, kid.
Dean. Watch yourself, old feller. Best wait for your mates.
Mal. Come on, then.

Mal *takes up his briefcase and starts to leave and then stops again in the doorway.*

Under the next, **Jill** *gets up and leaves the bedroom, taking the glass with her.*

(*patting his pockets*) Now — do I have the bloody car keys? — I am getting old, you're right. (*locating them in a pocket*) Yes, I do. Oh, Dean, by the way … I may need you to — you know — cover for me again, this lunchtime. If you don't mind.
Dean. No problem.
Mal. I need to sort this out. I'm going to have to sort it out with her today.
Dean. No problem.
Mal. (*affectionately*) Thanks, mate. You're about the only one I can trust, you know that, Dean.
Dean. I'm here for you.
Mal. She's a lucky girl, our Chrissie. I hope she knows. (*He pats* **Dean** *on the shoulder.*) Got herself a diamond, hasn't she?
Dean. That's me. Girl's best friend, me. (*As they leave*) You up for a pint after?
Mal. I'll need several. Sandra's off sick again, as well …
Dean. Sandra? Not again!
Mal. Bloody women …

Mal *and* **Dean** *leave the kitchen.*

A pause. The house is silent.

Jill *enters the sitting-room. She picks up the TV remote control and points it at the (non-visible) set. A very upbeat announcer's voice is heard.*

TV voice. (*brightly*) And now coming up shortly, it's time to catch up on the latest goings on at——

Jill *immediately mutes the sound on the TV. The screen continues to flicker. She straightens one or two cushions, inspects the floor critically and leaves the room.*

In a moment, she enters the kitchen. Moving a little like a sleepwalker, she starts to clear away the empty cornflakes bowl, the cereal packets, milk, sugar, mugs, etc. She stacks the dirties in the dishwasher under one of the units. She wipes the table, gives a final look round and goes out again.

The lights change. We are now in the BFRS furniture showroom. The same layout although the items and areas are lit more dramatically with spotlights. The TV stops flickering. There is a background drone of showroom muzak.

Mal *and* **Dean** *enter, in full customer service mode. They both wear earpieces and lapel mics clipped to their suits plus name badges,* **Dean***'s with simply his name,* **Mal***'s with "Store Manager" under it.*

Mal. (*as they enter, already under pressure*) … OK, the best short term solution, Dean, is as follows. You stand in for Charlie, here in Beds and Bedding, and I'll keep an eye on Kitchens and Fittings *and* man the office. We'll just have to pray there's not a run on white goods 'cos if there is, we're in deep shit, mate. I'll pull Mary out of Lighting and put her onto Loose Fittings. That'll leave Bald Ron to cope on his own but beggars can't be choosers. Then we've got Big Debbie, God help us, covering Tiles, Rugs and Floor Coverings and she barely knows what day of the week it is anyway, the dozey bitch, but that's the best we can do in the circumstances. All right, got that?

Dean. (*a little confused*) I'll stay here, then, shall I?

Mal. Don't move. Bloody Charlie. Why did his wife choose today?

Dean. I suppose she couldn't help going into labour, could she? I mean——

Mal. Why couldn't she hold the thing in for another three days, till after the audit? I'll give you a call on the radio. Good luck, mate.

Mal *steps through what was, until now, the invisible "wall" between the bathroom and the kitchen areas.*

(*As he goes; into his lapel mic*) Hallo, George. Yes? Well, you've got me, I'm afraid, George … Sandra's not here this morning … she called in sick. What's your problem, George, and I hope it's life-threatening, mate, because I don't have time to waste, not this morning …
Mal *goes out through the kitchen door.*

Dean *stands for a moment, in charge of the bedding department. He straightens the cover on the bed proprietorially.*

Dean. (*spotting a customer*) Yes, Madam? Can I be of some assistance?

Dean *goes out adopting his dazzling sales smile.*

The lights change back to normal and the muzak stops. The TV flickers again.

Jill *enters with the vacuum cleaner. She plugs it into the wall and listlessly starts to vacuum the already spotless carpet. She continues this for some time, giving the impression that she could probably have continued the task for a lot longer, having little else to do*

At this moment though, **Chrissie**, *her daughter, mid-twenties, enters and stands in the doorway.* **Jill**, *concentrating on her task, is unaware of her for a moment.*

Chrissie. (*above the noise of the vacuum*) Mum? (*trying again a little louder*) Mum! (*a third try, even louder*) Mum!

Jill *finally sees* **Chrissie.**

Jill. Oh, hallo, love.

Under the next, **Jill** *switches off the vacuum cleaner and starts to pack it away.*

Chrissie. Am I early?
Jill. Sorry?
Chrissie. I'm not too early, am I?
Jill. No, I don't think so. Why?
Chrissie. I said I'd be round. Yesterday. We arranged — girls' outing. Remember?

Jill. Oh, yes. Sorry.
Chrissie. Only you're not dressed. I thought I might be… a bit early. We said we'd go down the shops, remember.
Jill. Oh, yes.
Chrissie You all right, Mum? You look terrible.
Jill. Well, I haven't — you know — done my … I'll make us some coffee. Then I'll get dressed.
Chrissie. I'll do that. I left Liam out there. You wouldn't believe it, the minute I get him out of the house, put him in the car, he falls asleep. I think that's what I should do at nights. Drive him round and round the block. (*taking the vacuum*) Here, I'll take that.
Jill. (*releasing the vacuum*) I can manage. You still wouldn't get any sleep though, would you? Not if you're driving …
Chrissie. Joking, Mum, I was only joking.
Jill. (*as they go*) Well, I never know when you're serious, Chrissie, and when you're not, these days.

They go out, **Chrissie** *carrying the vacuum.*

As they do so, the scene changes back to the showroom. The lighting changes and the muzak kicks in again.

Mal *enters the bedroom whilst simultaneously* **Dean** *enters the kitchen. There is an even greater sense of impending emergency.*

Mal. Dean, what the hell are you doing in Kitchens, man? I told you to stay in Bedding!
Dean. Sorry, Mal, Enid from Fitted Units, she was looking for you.
Mal. You've left Bedding completely unmanned, Dean.
Dean. There's a phone call——
Mal. — someone could just have strolled in and made off with a king-size.
Dean. — for you, she said. Urgent.
Mal. I couldn't even get you on the radio. What's happened to your radio, Dean? Don't say it's gone down again?
Dean. No, I was in Kitchens, looking for you. You know the radios are rubbish in Kitchens… it's the aluminium … Look, Mal, Enid from F.U., she says there's a phone call for you. A Mr Perkins from Eversley — she said he sounded quite agitated …
Mal. (*moving back through the bedroom*) God, who'd be the manager …?

Dean. He said he's hanging on till he gets satisfaction. He'll only talk to you.
Mal. What's his name again?
Dean. Mr Perkins from Eversley.
Mal. Oh, it's that bastard again, is it? I'll soon sort him out, don't worry …
Dean. Now, Mal, don't lose it, mate. It never pays to lose it, Mal … Not with a customer.
Mal. Some of them need thumping. (*as he goes*) And I've had this one up to here.

Mal *exits.*

Dean *makes to follow.*

Dean (*calling*) Someone'll be with you in just one minute, Sir …

Dean *hurries off after* **Mal.**

The scene changes back again.

Jill *enters the kitchen with a mug of coffee. She sits.*

In a moment, **Chrissie** *comes in and joins her.*

Chrissie. No, I say … I was up every ten minutes last night with him.

Pause. **Chrissie** *stares at her mother, aware she is in a state.*

They say you should leave them to cry, don't they? I've tried that. You just lie there listening to them crying all night. Either way, you never get any sleep.

Pause.

Still they say boys are worst, don't they? Sam was the same, wasn't he? I remember he was.

Pause.

Yes, boys are worst. Till they get older, then you can scarcely wake them up at all, can you? Dean, he'll sleep through anything, Dean will. Sleeps straight through

Liam. All he ever says is "Oh God" and just turns over, you know. Men!

Pause.

Mind you, Dad used to get up sometimes, didn't he? For us? Even for me, he did. I mean, I know he used to for Sam early on but … that was different. Sam was always a bit special. But I remember Dad quite clearly. I couldn't have been more than … but I still remember him. If I'd had a bad dream or something. Standing by the bed. Always made me feel so safe. Knowing he was there. It's all right, Chrystal, any monster gets in, he'll have to deal with me first. (*reflecting*) He's always called me Chrystal. Why'd he start calling me Chrystal, do you know?

Jill (*softly*) He never cared for Christine.

Chrissie Well, no, I don't care for Christine either. But I'm not sure Chrystal's much better, are you? (*She laughs.*)

Jill *suddenly gets up and hurries from the room.*

Mum?

Chrissie *stands at a bit of a loss. This is evidently an ongoing situation.*

Now, where did I put my coffee? (*spying it on an offstage unit*) Oh, yes.

Chrissie *picks up* **Jill***'s own mug and goes in search of her mother.*

(*going out*) Mum?

As she goes, the lights cross-fade to the showroom. Muzak once more.

Mal *comes into the sitting-room area.*

Mal. (*as he enters; into his lapel mic; irritably*) What is it now, George? Listen, mate, it's your problem, you bloody deal with it, George!

Dean *hurries on into the bedroom.*

Dean. How did you get on, then? With Mr Perkins?

Mal. Oh, I sorted him out. He won't ring again in a hurry.
Dean. You got rid of him, then. How'd you manage that?
Mal. I told him to eff off. He says he's going to complain to Head Office.
Dean. Head Office? That's in Düsseldorf.
Mal. I don't care any more, Dean. His original order's gone missing, as well. Don't know where the hell it is. His word against mine, as things stand. I've been through Sandra's filing but there's no record of a hard copy …
Dean. Be on her computer probably.
Mal. If you fancy trawling through her spreadsheets you're a better man than I am. I tried ringing her but she's not answering. I've half a mind to go round there and throw a brick through her window …
Dean. — er — Mal …
Mal. What?
Dean. Are you still — you know — going off for — your lunch? Only it's five past.
Mal. Oh, God, I'll have to phone her. No way I can leave here now, is there? (*He stabs a button on his phone.*) And, Dean, there's an old bugger asleep on that Cherry Wood queen-size in the main window. He's been there half the morning. This isn't a bloody doss house.
Dean. Right. I'll kick him off.

Dean *goes.*

Mal *connects his phone.*

Mal. (*into the phone*) Hallo, love… listen, I'm sorry, I'm not going to be able to make it after all, love, not this lunchtime … (*a little taken aback by the reaction*) … no … well, so am I, love … So am—— … so am I … yes, well, no more than I am, love … I see … yes, I see … oh, no … no, we can't have that, can we? … We don't want that, no … not my little Trixie, no … (*under pressure*) … listen, I'll — I'll be there in ten minutes, then … yes, I promise … ten minutes. Yes … 'bye-bye, Trix … yes, I will ... love you, darling … yes, I love you … and I love you … 'bye. (*closing the phone*) Oh, shit! (*calling*) Dean! Dean, mate! I have to go out, after all …

As **Mal** *goes off through the kitchen, the lights change back to the house and the muzak fades.*

Jill *comes into the bedroom and sits in front of her dressing table mirror. She has been crying and now tries to repair the signs with a little basic make-up.*

Chrissie *appears in the doorway, having followed her up the stairs. She still holds their two coffee mugs. She puts* **Jill's** *mug down on the dressing table.* **Jill** *instinctively moves something under it to protect the surface.* **Chrissie** *sits on the bed and watches* **Jill** *for a second.*

Chrissie. (*at length*) We need to talk about this, don't we?

Silence. **Jill** *does not react.*

(*gently*) We do, Mum. I'm sorry, I know you don't like to, but we do.

Jill. Nothing to talk about, really.

Chrissie. It's affecting us all.

Jill *shrugs hopelessly.* **Chrissie**, *almost subconsciously, rubs her shoulder.*

What about Sam? Don't you care what it's doing to Sam?

Jill. (*softly*) Do you think I'd still be here if it wasn't for Sam?

Chrissie. There must be something we can do… You're my mother. I hate to see you like this. You look terrible.

Jill. Chrissie, saying that doesn't really help, love.

Chrissie. Sorry.

Jill. He's having an affair, Chrissie. That's all. It's what a lot of men do when they get — to a certain age. They feel — they need — you know — to re-establish themselves.

Chrissie. Re-establish themselves? What does that mean?

Jill. Ones like your father, anyway. Ones who can't bear to think of it gradually slipping away …

Chrissie. Well, Dad's still attractive. Fairly. He's not lost it. Much.

Jill. No. And he's out there now, isn't he, proving to himself he hasn't? All the same, he's not the man he was.

Chrissie. How do you mean?

Jill. He was … (*after a pause; smiling a little*) Then I'm not the woman I was, either. Look at me now.

Chrissie. You still look——

Jill. No, I don't. You said. I look terrible.

Chrissie. You know I didn't mean——
Jill. And you're quite right, Chrissie. It's six of one, my love. Not all him.

Pause.

Chrissie. Who is she, do you know?
Jill. Oh, some tottie from the make-up counter at Debenhams, I don't know. I don't care, really.
Chrissie. Well, you should care. I'd care. If Dean went off and started doing that, I'd … (*She rubs her shoulder again.*)
Jill. Chrissie, you still love Dean. There's a difference.
Chrissie. (*a beat*) And you don't love Dad?
Jill. I don't know. Not much. Not really. Not just because of this. That's just a symptom. We've — gone our different ways, you know. As you do.
Chrissie. (*unhappily*) I can't bear to think you don't love each other. You're my parents.

Jill *shrugs hopelessly.* **Chrissie** *sits miserably on the bed.*

Jill. It happens, darling. Nothing special.
Chrissie. (*unhappily*) We are though. We're special. I think we are. We were. We used to be.
Jill. We'll still be here for you, darling. Even if we separate. You know that. For you and Sam. Your dad would kill for you. You know he would. If you asked him to.
Chrissie. I know. (*rubbing her arm again*) I don't think that would be a lot of use just at present.

Jill *has been observing* **Chrissie***'s gesture.*

Jill. What's wrong?
Chrissie. What?
Jill. You all right? You keep rubbing your shoulder. Is it worrying you?
Chrissie. No, not really. Didn't even know I was doing that…
Jill. What happened? You strained it?
Chrissie. (*dismissively*) No, it's just a bruise. Nothing.
Jill. Is it hurting then? You keep rubbing it.
Chrissie. No, I just — my shoulder — I banged it on something — nothing.
Jill. Let me see.

Chrissie. No, it's nothing.
Jill. Want some arnica?
Chrissie. No, honestly. It's nothing.
Jill. I've got some arnica. Sure?
Chrissie. It's fine.
Jill. You had that bruise the other week, didn't you? On your other arm.
Chrissie. I'm a mother. When you're a mother you're always banging into things, aren't you? Comes with the job.
Jill. (*unconvinced*) Does it?

She stares at **Chrissie** *for a second.*

I see. I'll get dressed then.

Jill *goes out.*

Chrissie *sits for a second. She rubs her arm again abstractedly.*

Chrissie. (*half to herself*) Better check on Liam …

Chrissie *collects up the two coffee mugs and goes off. As she does so, the lights cross-fade to the showroom. Muzak once more.*

Mal *comes from the kitchen.*

Dean *comes from the sitting-room .*

Mal. (*as he enters*) Where have you been now?
Dean. I got called away. There was a little bit of a crisis.
Mal. Crisis, where?
Dean. In Garden Furniture. George — he had a bit of a breakdown. Mrs Armitage sent him home.
Mal. Sent him home? She's no authority to do that. There's another hour yet.
Dean. Well. To be fair, Mal, I don't think she had a choice. He was sitting under one of the umbrellas, just crying, you know. Didn't look so good for the customers. No option really.
Mal. Should have dressed him as a bloody gnome, no one would've noticed the difference. (*He starts to move off.*)
Dean. By the way — it's a girl, apparently.
Mal. What is?

Dean. Charlie. His wife had a girl.
Mal. (*sourly*) Lucky him. God! Roll on closing time.

Mal *marches off through the sitting-room.*

Dean. Seven pounds, three ounces … apparently. Right.

Dean *goes off through the bedroom door.*

The lights change back to the house and the muzak fades.

Chrissie *comes into the kitchen still with the two coffee mugs. She now starts to rinse and dry these.*

After a second, **Sam** *enters, still in his school clothes.*

Sam. Oh.
Chrissie. Hallo.
Sam. You, is it?
Chrissie. This'll be me.
Sam. Where's Mum?
Chrissie. Getting dressed.
Sam. Oh. (*glancing briefly at his watch*) Right.

He dumps down his bag and goes off to the fridge.

Chrissie. You right, then?
Sam. (*off*) OK.
Chrissie. How's school?
Sam. (*off*) OK.
Chrissie. (*continuing with her task*) Good.

Sam *returns with a can of soft drink. He sits and watches her.*

Sam. That your baby out there, is it?
Chrissie. That's the one.
Sam. It's turning blue and choking, did you know?
Chrissie. (*unmoved*) Oh, dear. Yes, he does that round about this time of day.
Sam. Thought you'd like to know.
Chrissie. And his name's Liam. For the hundredth time.
Sam. Liam. (*He considers.*) That's mail backwards. Did you know that?

Chrissie. Yes.
Sam. You should write on him, "please forward".
Chrissie. (*mirthlessly*) Oh, ha-ha-ha.
Sam. If his surname was Layor. L – A – Y – O – R, Liam Layor. Then he'd be Royal Mail backwards.
Chrissie. So he would. Only his name's Snaith.
Sam. H-tians. Liam H-tians. Not as good, is it? Sounds Dutch. Maybe you should consider changing your name. For the sake of the child.
Chrissie. Maybe you should consider changing your jokes. For the sake of my nerves.
Sam. (*getting up*) See you, then.
Chrissie. See you.

Sam *moves to the door, leaving the can on the table.*

He runs into **Jill**, *now dressed, who enters.*

Sam. Hi, Mum.
Jill. Hallo, Sam … Had a good day?
Sam. Great.

Sam *goes out.*

Jill *sees the can on the table.*

Jill. (*calling him back*) Sam! Back!

Sam *reappears.*

In the bin. Please.
Sam. Sorry.
Jill. How many times do I have to say it?

Sam *returns and puts the can in the bin.*

I think he's just waking up, Chrissie.
Chrissie. Yes, it's nearly time for his feed … I'll give him something.
Sam. A food parcel.
Chrissie. You'll get a clip round the ear in a minute.
Jill. He's been very good. Not a squeak all day.
Chrissie. He's saving it for later.

Chrissie *goes out.*

Jill. Did you bring another form?
Sam. Form?
Jill. You know, the permission form? For the Shakespeare?
Sam. Oh, yes. Hang on. (*He puts down his bag and rummages through it.*) No point though. He'll never let me do it, will he?
Jill. He need never know.
Sam. He'll find out. Good news is — we had the auditions today with Mrs Easterly and — ta-ra — I got the part I wanted …
Jill. Did you? Oh, good.
Sam. She said I was right for it and I was. I was brilliant. Here. (*handing* **Jill** *the form*) Hide it from him this time.
Jill. I'll sign it now. Got a pen?
Sam. Somewhere. (*He produces a pen.*) Just sign there and the date.
Jill. (*doing so*) Right. If you'd — like me to help you with your words or anything …
Sam. (*surprised*) Oh, well, thanks.
Jill. Just take you through them, you know. If you want.
Sam. May take you up on that, Mum. Maybe tomorrow. See you later … (*He makes to leave.*)
Jill. Sam …
Sam. Yeah?
Jill. Do you know yet if you'll be wearing tights?
Sam. What?
Jill. Only I think it would be easier for your dad if you weren't having to wear tights …
Sam. No, I won't be wearing tights.
Jill. You won't?
Sam. It's not that sort of part.

Sam *goes.*

(*off*) Goodness me, sister! Are you going to put that huge thing into his little tiny mouth?
Chrissie. (*off*) Look, Sam, just sod off, will you!
Jill. (*hurrying out*) Now, now, now. Stop that, you two. Sam! Stop teasing your sister …

Jill *goes off*

As she does so, the lights cross-fade to the showroom

Mal *enters through the sitting-room.*

Mal. (*as he enters*) Right, that's it. Closing time. We're off.

Dean *comes on through the bedroom.*

Dean. Pub time, then?
Mal. Queen's Head, here we come. And I tell you, if Sandra's not here tomorrow … I left her a message on her machine. Be here or die. Come on, then. Are you fit? First one's on me.

Mal *goes out through the bedroom.*

Dean. (*following him*) You're on. (*fumbling for his mobile*) I'd better phone Chrissie, tell her to hold my dinner.

Dean *goes out after* **Mal.**

The lights cross-fade back to the house.

Jill *enters the sitting-room, where the TV is still silently flickering away.* **Jill** *is drawn to something happening on the screen. She stops to watch.*

Jill. (*as she watches, to herself*) Oh. There now. Oh.

Chrissie *enters after a moment.*

Chrissie. What you watching?
Jill. Oh, you know …
Chrissie. (*recognising the programme*) Oh, yes.

They both stand watching.

Jill. Ha! I guessed that, didn't you?
Chrissie. Yes.
Jill. Him and her.
Chrissie. Yes.
Jill. Bound to happen.
Chrissie. Sooner or later. He sleeps with anything that moves. He does.
Jill. (*frowning*) Yes.

Chrissie. Sorry.

They watch some more.

In the kitchen, **Sam** *enters with a self-made sandwich in one hand and his copy of* A Midsummer Night's Dream *in the other. He is absorbed in the text in between mouthfuls. He sits at the table.*

The two women continue to watch the screen during the next.

Chrissie. Why do you always watch it with the sound down, Mum?
Jill. I think it's more interesting.
Chrissie. You can't hear what they're saying, though.
Jill. Most of the time you can tell.
Chrissie. I suppose.
Jill. Leaves you free to get on with other things, then, doesn't it?
Chrissie. I suppose so. Dean just phoned. They're in the pub. Surprise! He'll meet me here on his way home.
Jill. Hope he doesn't intend to drive.
Chrissie. No, it's usually me. (*at the screen*) Oh, God, look, she's going to catch them at it this time, isn't she? She'll chop 'em both up with a meat axe if she catches them, won't she? About time she did. It's been going on long enough. These two. I can't believe she doesn't know by now.
Jill. She knows. She's known for ages.
Chrissie. You reckon?
Jill. You always do. You know it, the minute they start.
Chrissie. Oh, look at that. They always cut away to something else, don't they? Just when things are getting interesting.
Jill. Well, it's early evening.
Chrissie. Yes.
Jill. Mind you, later on, they don't cut away soon enough, in my opinion. You want to sit down?
Chrissie. Might as well.
Jill. (*as they sit*) Get Sam his tea in a minute.
Chrissie. Get his own, can't he? His age?
Jill. Him? If I don't get him something, I doubt he'd eat at all.
Chrissie. You ought to get a job, Mum. You really ought to. Hanging around here all day on your own. No wonder

you get depressed. I know I keep saying it, but you ought to get out.

Jill. Yes, you're probably right. I think I've lost my nerve, you know. You realize it's been fifteen years since I did a proper job? I mean, I don't count the part-time ones, I mean a *proper* job. You know, proper.

Chrissie. Well …

Jill. I was good you know. Had a good future. They told me. The youngest Personnel Officer they'd ever appointed. Not even called that now, is it? Human Resources, or something. It was all your fault.

Chrissie. Me?

Jill. If you hadn't come along …

Chrissie. Don't blame me. I'm going back. Soon as he's in nursery school. I'm back to work. I'm not hanging around.

Jill. Unless you decide on a second.

Chrissie. We'll see.

Jill *looks at her for a moment.*

Jill. Listen, if there's anything you want to talk over, Chrissie. You know …

Chrissie. Yes, OK.

Jill. I'm here.

Chrissie. OK.

Silence.

(*at the screen*) Oh. Look at that. They're at it again.

Jill. I'm amazed she has the energy.

They watch for a second.

Chrissie. It's nothing I can't cope with, don't worry, Mum.

Jill. There's always something you can't cope with, love.

They continue to watch the TV.

In a moment, **Dean** *enters the kitchen through the back door.*

Sam *is still reading at the table, mouthing the words silently.* **Dean** *is slightly drunk.*

Dean. (*cheerfully*) 'evening. 'evening, Sammy boy! (*aiming a series of shadow punches at* **Sam***'s head*) Pow! Pow! Boof! Pow! Pow!
Sam. (*continuing to read, without looking up*) She's in the other room.
Dean. What you doing? Homework?
Sam. Just reading.
Dean. What's this, then? Dirty book, is it?
Sam. Pretty dirty. Shakespeare.
Dean. Shakespeare! Bloody hellfire! (*as he goes*) Shakespeare! Who does he play for, then?

Dean *goes out again.*

Sam *continues to read.*

Jill. (*at the screen*) I always like this one. He makes me laugh.
Chrissie. He's even funnier when you can hear what he's saying.
Jill. You can tell from his face, though, can't you?

Dean *appears in the sitting-room doorway.*

Dean. Right. I'm here.
Chrissie. (*without turning*) Hallo.
Jill. Hallo, Dean. Mal with you?
Dean. Putting the car in the garage. What are you watching, then? (*staring at the screen*) Oh, this rubbish. You coming?
Chrissie. In a minute. It's nearly over, this.
Dean. You've got the sound down. Why've you got the sound down?
Chrissie. Mum prefers it with the sound down.
Dean. You can't hear it with the sound down, can you?

Dean *takes up the remote and points it at the TV.*

Chrissie. Dean! What are you doing?
Dean. Teletext. Want to see the scores, do you mind?
Chrissie. Mum's watching this.
Jill. (*muted*) Doesn't matter.
Chrissie. (*angrily*) No, come on. Give it here. Dean!

Dean *evades her grab for the remote.*

Dean. Oh, look at that! Three – nil.
Chrissie. Sorry, Mum.
Dean. (*switching the TV back*) There you are! Back to normal. (*He tosses the remote on to the sofa beside Jill*)
Chrissie. (*giving up*) Come on, then. I'll drive.
Dean. I'll drive.
Chrissie. Not with Liam in the car, you're not.
Dean. Give us the keys …
Chrissie. I'm driving. Look at you, practically falling over…
Dean. I am not. Listen, don't make out I'm drunk.
Chrissie. (*kissing* **Jill**) 'night, 'night, Mum.
Dean. Don't tell me I'm drunk, girl, when I'm not.
Chrissie. (*moving to the door*) Come on then …
Dean. No, that really pisses me off, that. When you talk like that.
Chrissie. (*embarrassed by his behaviour*) Dean! Come on, please!
Dean. No, do you know that? It really pisses me off.
Jill. Don't talk to her like that, Dean.
Dean. What?
Jill. She's your wife. Don't talk to her like that. Show her a bit of respect.
Dean. You just keep out of it, mother-in-law. Please? This is just between us, if you don't mind most awfully.

Jill *is silent. Despite the jokey nature of the previous exchange, there is an atmosphere in the room.*

Thank you. So much. (*to* **Chrissie**) Come on, then, wife of mine. Let's collect his lordship, shall we?

Dean *goes out.*

Chrissie *stands awkwardly.*

Chrissie. (*still embarrassed*) It's just talk. He doesn't mean it.

Chrissie *fumbles through her bag for her car keys.*

Jill. I hope he doesn't.

Jill *rises and moves to* **Chrissie**. *She hugs her, nearly catching her daughter off-balance.*

Chrissie. (*wincing*) Ow!
Jill. Sorry. Forgot.
Dean. (*off*) Come on, then! If you're coming. We want our dinner.
Chrissie. See you tomorrow, eh?
Jill. See you tomorrow. And we will do the shops. Promise.

Chrissie *goes out.*

Jill *moves back into the room. She sits, deep in one of her trance-like states.*

In a moment, **Mal** *enters the kitchen. He has his briefcase and a takeaway.*

Sam *is still sitting at the table reading, totally absorbed.*

Mal. Hey, Sam. Listen——

Sam *rises at once and makes for the door.*

Listen, son, I'm sorry about this morning, I was probably——

But **Sam** *has gone.*

(*angrily*) Don't fucking walk away from me when I'm talking to you! (*slamming the takeaway on the table*) Jesus!

In the sitting-room **Jill**, *hearing this, runs to the door.*

Jill. (*calling*) Sam! Sam!
Sam. (*off; as he passes the sitting-room door; yelling*) Forget it!
Jill. (*going off after him*) Sam!

Dean *appears in the kitchen doorway.*

Dean. All right, Mal?

Mal *stands, gripping the table, breathing deeply, trying to calm down.*

Problem, is there? Mal?

Chrissie *appears in the kitchen doorway, long enough to take in the tableau.*

Chrissie. We'll be in the car. Don't be long.

Chrissie *goes out again.*

Mal. She has poisoned that boy against me. Do you know that?
Dean. Jill?
Mal. He was a good boy. Gutsy. You know. Real fighter. Took on anyone. When he was five. Now look at him. Half way to — It's her. It's all her doing that. All of it.
Dean. Well …

Mal *starts to unpack his takeaway during the next and puts it to re-heat in the offstage oven.*

Mal. It's all her doing, you know. Kept giving him books for Christmas. Storybooks. Dolls.
Dean. Dolls?
Mal. You know. Toy people. He's a lad. He doesn't want all that. Then it was a doll's house. He had a bloody doll's house when he was five. Had his head stuck in it, jabbering away to himself for hours. Till I took it away, chucked it on the tip. Now it's theatre.
Dean. Theatre. Well.
Mal. Theatre. When he was born, you know, I had this dream, the way you do, you know, as a bloke does with his son, it's only natural — something a woman, she'd never understand — but you'll know what I'm talking about, Dean, I know you will, what with having Liam and that — I was determined Sam'd grow up and do things I never could. Never had the opportunity to do. Good job, not like mine you know, better than that — professional — maybe shine at some sport or other, you know. I wasn't even bothered which. Football preferably, obviously, but if not … Just so's I could point at him and say, that's my lad, there. Now, what's he doing …?
Dean. Shakespeare.
Mal. What?
Dean. He was reading it just now. Shakespeare.
Mal. Enough to break your heart, isn't it?

A car horn sounds outside.

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