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SF PERUSALS

My Wonderful Day

by Alan Ayckbourn

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

New York Hollywood London Toronto

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MY WONDERFUL DAY was first presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough on October 13, 2009. The performance was directed by Alan Ayckbourn, with sets by Roger Glossop, and lighting by Mick Hughes. The cast was as follows:

KEVIN . . . . . Terence Booth
LAVERNE . . . . . Petra Letang
WINNIE . . . . . Ayesha Antoine
TIFFANY . . . . . Ruth Gibson
JOSH . . . . . Paul Kemp
PAULA . . . . . Alexandra Mathie

It was subsequently presented at 59E59 Theaters, New York, on November 11th with the same cast. A UK tour followed in January 2010.

CHARACTERS

WINNIE (WINONA) BARNSTAIRS - nearly 9
LAVERNE BARNSTAIRS - her mother, late 20s/early 30s
THE MAN (KEVIN TATE) - 40s
PAULA - his wife, late 30s
TIFFANY - the secretary, 20s
JOSH - the friend, 40s

SETTING

The action takes place in and around Kevin Tate's house in North London on a Tuesday in November.

TIME

The present.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

It is appreciated that one of the difficulties of this play is in casting Winnie the right age. Either she needs to be played by a young actor of a similar age with all the ensuing legal and logistical problems which casting an under-age performer entails or the role may be played by a slightly older actor who is able to create a truthful and credible impression of the character's age. This, after all, is theatre! In either case, it is vital that the role is not in any way "up-aged". Winnie is a child and this play is told through a child's eyes.

The partial downstairs areas of a modern town house belonging to the Man. A Tuesday in November.

What we see is perceived through the eyes of a nine-year old girl, **Winnie (Winona) Barnstairs***, thus each area is lit as she enters it and correspondingly darkens as she leaves.*

Sometimes it will be part of the hall/living room, especially the immediate area around the sofa and coffee table. This hall is the carpeted, open plan ground floor hub of the house. Leading off it, are ways to the front door, the stairs, the office and the kitchen. Other areas skeletally represented are the office also carpeted, represented by (at least) an easy chair, a small desk and a swivel desk chair and the kitchen, represented by a table with a minimum of three chairs around it and a separate easy chair, possibly a modern style rocker.

8.30 a.m.

It starts in black-out. The house doorbell sounds. After a moment, November morning light comes up on the hall area through slatted blinds. It is still comparatively early.

The **Man** *is leading* **Laverne** *and* **Winnie** *from the front door where he has just let them in. He is about forty, still in his shortie dressing-gown and barefoot having recently got out of bed. He is unshaven and tousled and appears to have had a rough night. Laverne is late twenties, second generation Afro-Caribbean south London and heavily pregnant. With her is her daughter,* **Winnie***, nearly nine years old, a silent watchful child. She carries her school bag.*

Throughout this next exchange, the **Man** *gives both of them barely a glance, particularly* **Winnie** *whom he ignores completely. He is uneasy with children.*

Laverne. *(as they enter)* … I'm so sorry, Mr Tate, I arranged all this with Mrs Tate, you see. Last Friday. She kindly agreed I could come and clean this Tuesday instead of tomorrow. Wednesday, I have this doctor's appointment, you see …

Man. *(only half listening)* … yeah ... yeah … that's OK. No problems.

He moves away from them to the kitchen and glances in.

Laverne. … I did warn Mrs Tate on Friday that I couldn't come Wednesday, that I'd have to come Tuesday. I mean, I did offer her Thursday or even possibly Monday. But Mrs Tate seemed to think Tuesday would be more convenient ...

Man. *(calling into the kitchen)* Paula!

Laverne. … I mean, it's just for my regular check up. But I daren't miss it. They don't like it if you miss it …

Man. *(frowning)* … right, right ... *(calling, louder)* Paula!

Contenting himself there is no one there he leaves the kitchen, and moves to the office.

Laverne. *(continuing regardless, following behind him)* … it's only my regular Wednesday check, you see. I mean, I did try having them move it to Thursday but they were adamant for Wednesday and you don't like to miss them, do you? And then this morning, I had to phone Mrs Tate — oh, an hour ago, it must have been — I had to ring her on her mobile … I couldn't get no reply from this number …

Man. … no ... *(now in the office doorway, calling:)* Paulie!

Laverne. … just to warn her I'd be bringing Winnie with me as well 'cause she was feeling little bit under the weather and she wasn't really up to going to her school. Nothing serious, a little bit throaty, weren't you, darling...? Bit throaty, aren't you …?

Winnie *nods.*

Man. Oh, dear… *(He returns finally to the hall.)* Paulie! *(muttering)* It's unbelievable …!

Laverne. *(still trailing behind him with* **Winnie***)* … and Mrs Tate ever so kindly said it would be all right if I was to bring Winnie with me just for an hour or so, while I did round. Just while I was working …

Man. *(moving briskly towards the front door and yelling)* PAULIE! *(muttering)* I don't believe this …!
Laverne. Winnie's promised me she's going to sit nice and quiet, aren't you, Winnie?

Winnie *nods.*

She's got her books and her homework, she's promised me she won't be in anyone's way. It'll be all right for her to sit here on the sofa here …?
Man. What time is it?
Laverne. Just gone eight-thirty.
Man. *(going up the stairs)* I must get dressed.
Laverne. She's not here then?
Man. Who?
Laverne. Mrs Tate?
Man. Apparently not.
Laverne. Oh. Must have gone to work, then.
Man. So it would appear ...

The **Man** *goes off upstairs.*

Laverne. *(after him)* Winnie's promised she'll be very quiet ——

Upstairs, a door slams.

(*Tailing off*) — she won't disturb you ... (*turning her attention to* **Winnie**) Now, quiet as a mouse, understand? You finish that homework first, all right? Before you do anything else. You write your essay you should have done last night.

Laverne *busies herself removing both their coats, scarves, etc.* **Winnie** *sits herself on the sofa. She starts to unpack her school bag producing, amongst other things, an exercise book and various pens and pencils.*

Remember what Mrs Crackle told you to do, don't you? You're to write about "My Wonderful Day". So you write that at the top of the page first — My Wonderful Day …
Winnie. I know …
Laverne. "My Wonderful Day by Winnie Barnstairs".
Winnie. Mum …!

Laverne. Tell you what, you could write it about today, couldn't you? Instead of yesterday? Today, it might be more interesting than yesterday. You could start by saying how we came here on the bus …

Winnie. *(squirming)* Mum …

Laverne. Besides, you didn't do nothing yesterday except lie on your bed …

Winnie. I was ill, wasn't I?

Laverne. … and then you could write how we just met Mr Tate …

Winnie. Mum, I can do it! Let me do it.

Laverne. I'm just starting you off …

Winnie. I'm all right, leave me, I can do it ...

Laverne. All right, all right! I'm only helping … Use the pencil. Don't use the pen! You'll get ink on her sofa.

Winnie. I've got to use the pen …

Laverne. She thinks the world of this sofa …

Winnie. … we're not allowed to use pencil …

Laverne. … you can use pencil …

Winnie. I've got to write in pen. Mrs Crackle says we have to use pen …

Laverne. Yes, well. Just don't get ink on their sofa, will you? Mrs Tate's pride and joy this sofa …

Winnie. I won't.

Laverne. I know you and pens. All over your sheets, wasn't it? Be careful, that's all.

Laverne *goes off to hang up their coats by the front door.*

Winnie *pulls a face and then starts to write. Upstairs, footsteps are heard from the bedroom which causes her to look up briefly.*

Laverne *returns.*

Oh, isn't this a beautiful house, Winnie? Didn't I tell you, it was beautiful? Isn't it gorgeous?

Winnie. *(absorbed)* Yes.

Laverne. She's got lovely taste, Mrs Tate. Lovely little touches. You should see the bedrooms … Maybe one day, darling, we'll live somewhere like this, won't we? If I can get a nice job and if your dad starts sending the money again. Well, maybe not quite as big a place as this. But somewhere smaller, nice and cosy — tasteful — just you and me — no, well, three of us by then, won't there be? You, me, and your baby brother.

Winnie. *(staring at her mother's bump apprehensively)* Yeah …

Laverne. And when we look out of our window, we'll be looking at this beautiful bluey-green sea and the sunshine and the palm trees. And maybe little white boats bobbing about. It won't be like this, will it? Looking at the road and the houses opposite. It'll be even nicer than this.

Winnie. *(muttering)* If we go.

Laverne. What?

Winnie . *(who's heard this a number of times)* We've got to get there first, haven't we?

Laverne. We're going to get there. Don't worry, Winnie. Soon as I've had this baby, we're off, girl. We're going, I promise you. Trust me.

Winnie *doesn't answer. During the next,* **Laverne** *changes out of her boots and into her work shoes. Because of her current state,* **Winnie** *has to help her mother.*

Winnie, I mean it, trust me. Trust your mum. I've promised you, haven't I? You know what I feel about promises, don't you? You know when I promise something, I always keep it, don't you?

Winnie. Sometimes you can't.

Laverne. Can't what?

Winnie. Keep them. Promises. Sometimes you can't keep them.

Laverne. If you can't keep them, you shouldn't make them. You should never make promises you can't keep, either.

Winnie. You promised Dad.

Laverne. What?

Winnie. *(tying* **Laverne***'s laces)* When you married him. You promised Dad.

Laverne. Yes. Well. That was different. He promised me too, didn't he? Till he broke it.

Winnie. Yeah.

Laverne. I didn't break that one, he did. Anyway, we're not talking about him, not this morning. Don't get me started on him … He gets talked about enough as it is ... I must get on. I'll start on the kitchen, I think …

Winnie. You just go carefully …

Laverne. I'm all right, I'm all right. I feel fine. Another ten days yet.

Winnie. After you nearly fell over. Mrs Copthorne said to be careful ——

Laverne. When I had you I was working right up till the day before you popped out almost ——

Winnie. That was different. You weren't doing all this cleaning then though, were you? Sitting behind a desk then.

Laverne. I was right as rain. Felt perfectly fine. Now, you just get on.

Laverne *makes a move towards the kitchen.* **Winnie** *shrugs and gives up. Her mother is impossible.*

Laverne *goes out briefly but returns almost at once, attempting to tie an apron, stretched impossibly tightly around her increased girth.*

Oy! Oy! Yes, Miss! Talking of promises … what day is it today, then? *Quel jour est lui aujourd'hui?* Tuesday. *C'est mardi, n'est ce pas?* And what do we do every *mardi*?

Winnie. Oh, Mum … No.

Laverne. Tuesday is French day. We practise our French today, don't we?

Winnie. I can't. Not here!

Laverne. Yes, you can.

Winnie. What about you?

Laverne. I'm working. There's an excuse for me. No excuse for you. Day off school.

Winnie. I'm ill.

Laverne. No, you're not.

Winnie. I got this terrible throat. I can't talk in French.

Laverne. You're not ill.

Winnie. I am …

Laverne. *(still struggling to tie her apron)* Soon as we got on the bus, you forgot all about it.

Winnie. *(going to* **Laverne***'s assistance)* I didn't want to go to school, I was worried about you.

Laverne. That's very kind of you. But you worry about me in French.

Winnie. I don't know how to say it.

Laverne. Well, look it up then. You've got your dictionary with you, haven't you? If you don't know a word for something, you look it up. That's the only way you learn,

Winnie. Soon as I'm done here, I'm switching to French as well. You know what we said. We'll learn together, won't we? That's what we agreed. We both promised. We'll be glad of it later. When we get there. Very few of them speak English there, you know. My grandmother, she couldn't speak a word of English — did you know that?

Winnie. Yeah, yeah. You told me.

Laverne. *(in rather dodgy French) Ah! Ah! Ah! En français s'il vous plaît, ma chérie.*

Winnie. *(only slightly better) Oui, Maman.*

Laverne. *Bien! Bien! Je retour bientôt. Attente là, ma fille.*

Winnie. *(wearily)* Oui, Maman.

Laverne *goes off to the kitchen.*

Winnie *stares after her.*

(*to herself*) She's mad! Mad! (*after a moment's consideration*) *Elle est fou. Ma mère est une* loonie!

Winnie *continues writing. This is the first of several occasions when we see her on her own. She concentrates on her essay, writing slowly and laboriously with her pen. She takes in events occurring around her without reaction or comment, only sneaking a covert glance when she thinks no one sees her, which in general they don't. As a result, she becomes the child in the corner whom no one notices.*

(*To herself slowly, as she writes*) My … Wonderful … Day … by … Winnie …

9 a.m.

The ***Man*** *comes downstairs, now dressed. He is talking on his mobile.*

Hearing him, after a quick glance, **Winnie** *gets her head down and concentrates on her writing.*

Man. *(as he enters … on the phone, not even glancing at* **Winnie***)* … yes … yes … where are you at present, Tiffy? … What, in her office? In my office? … June's in there with you,

then? … Is she listening? … *(laughing sarcastically)* I bet … I bet she is … no, no … Paula's not here. Definitely. … I don't know, do I? … I've tried it. Dozens of times. She's not answering … no. … She talks to the bloody cleaning woman, she refuses to talk to me. … Look, we can't — Listen, Tiffy darling, we can't — Look, come round here. Hop in a taxi and come round here straight away. We can't talk on the phone — not with you in the middle of the office, can we? … Not with June ear-wigging. … No, there's no one here at present … nobody. … Look, Tiffy, just grab a taxi, darling. … Oh, yes, has it? Has it? I'll be keen to see that — see how that's turned out … Yes. ... Listen, grab a copy, bring it round with you, darling. We can have a look at it here. … Yes. See you, darling. Yes see you soon, babe … love you, precious. *(He rings off. To himself)* Right, coffee, coffee, coffee …

He goes off into the office, briefly.

Winnie *continues to write.*

(*off, from the office*) Oh, shit!

The **Man** *returns with an empty cona jug.*

(*seeing* **Winnie** *for the first time*) All right there, kid?

Winnie. *Oui, monsieur. Merci beaucoup.*

The **Man** *goes out to the kitchen, staring at Winnie, puzzled.*

Slight pause. **Winnie** *continues to write.*

Voices from the kitchen.

Laverne. *(off, from the kitchen)* … oh, no, that's quite all right, Mr Tate. You carry on in here.

Man. *(off, from the kitchen)* Won't be second, Mrs ... er … Just making some fresh coffee …

Laverne. *(off)* Would you like me to make you some?

Man. *(off)* No, no. It's all right. I'm just topping up the machine in the office …

Laverne. *(off)* I could easily make you some. It's no trouble ...

Man. *(off)* No, no. I can manage, Mrs …er ….

In a moment, the **Man** *returns from the kitchen with the jug now filled with water and a bag of fresh ground coffee. He goes off again to the office, whistling under his breath.*

Winnie *writes on. From the kitchen there is the sound of crockery clattering and cutlery clinking as* **Laverne** *tidies away. The house phone rings loudly. In the office, the* **Man** *answers it.*

(*off, on the phone in the office*) … Hallo … Brian, mate! … how did it go then? … yes … yes … no … yes … (*Bellowing with laughter*) … She what? … (*He laughs again at length*) … She didn't? … (*He gives another huge laugh. Whatever it is whoever she is did, it is evidently hilarious*) … yep … yep … *fucking* hell! ... never … fuck me — ! … hang on a tick, Brian, just a tick … Don't go away, I want to hear the rest of this …

He laughs again. The office door is heard to close. The **Man***'s laugh is heard again faintly now, muffled. From time to time we hear his laugh again through the door.* **Winnie***, who has reacted to none of this, continues to write her essay, concentrating deeply on her task.*

After a moment, **Laverne** *returns from the kitchen in kitchen gloves.*

Laverne. All right, darling?
Winnie. Oui, Maman. Je suis très content.
Laverne. Good girl. Est ce que quelques choses que tu désire, chérie?
Winnie. Non. Rien, Maman, merci.
Laverne. *(inspecting Winnie's work)* Ah. Bon! C'est bon. Bravo!
Winnie. *(instinctively covering her work with her hand)* Merci, Maman.

Laverne *makes to move back to the kitchen then, seeing her bag where she left it stops, remembering something.*

Laverne. Ah, Winnie, ma chère. Ici.

Laverne *rummages in her bag and produces a crumpled travel leaflet. In the office, the* **Man** *laughs again.*

Winnie. Quoi?

Laverne. *(putting the leaflet next to Winnie)* Là. Regardez. Martinique.
Winnie. *(without great enthusiasm)* Ah. Oui.
Laverne. C'est belle, non?
Winnie. Oui.
Laverne. *(opening the leaflet)* Tu regarde. Les montagnes … les plages … les voitures … les — *(unsure of the word)* — les palm trees — les arbres de palmes — c'est très belle, non?
Winnie. *(trying her best)* Oui. C'est trop belle, Maman.

In the office, the **Man** *laughs again.*

Laverne. *(putting the leaflet down beside Winnie)* Ici. Là. Pour tu, ma chèrie.
Winnie. *(without touching it)* Merci, Maman.

Laverne *moves back towards the kitchen.*

Laverne. Cinq minutes. Je retourne. Bien?
Winnie. Bien.

Laverne *goes.*

(*After a brief glance at the leaflet*) *Ma mère est completement* weird.

9.45 a.m.

Winnie *puts down the leaflet and returns to her writing. In the office, the* **Man** *laughs again. A pause. The doorbell rings.* **Winnie** *ignores it. After a second, it rings again.*

Laverne *comes from the kitchen. As she does so, the office door opens briefly.*

Man. *(off)* Can someone get that?
Laverne. *(calling)* Yes, I'm going, I'm just going, Mr Tate. I'll get it.
Man. *(off, calling)* Probably be Miss Cavendish ...

The office door closes again.

Laverne *goes out to the front door. In a moment she returns with* **Tiffany**, *smartly dressed for work, in her mid-twenties. She is holding the morning post which she's just picked up from the mat and a brown envelope containing a DVD which she has brought from the office.*

Laverne. *(as they enter)* Please come through. Mr Tate's just through here …
Tiffany. *(cheerfully)* Thanks. Hi, I'm Tiffany, by the way. Just in case you were wondering who you were letting through the door … I work with Mr Tate.
Laverne. How do you do. I'm Mrs — Laverne. Laverne Barnstairs. I'm the cleaner. Doing a little bit of cleaning for him.
Tiffany. Yah, jolly good. You carry on, don't let me interrupt. Through here is he?
Laverne. In the office, there. I think he's just on the phone, I think.

Another bellow of laughter from the office.

Tiffany. *(hearing this)* Yes, well, I'll — wait a — *(seeing Winnie for the first time)* — Oh, hallo. Who's this, then?
Laverne. This is my daughter.
Tiffany. Oh, isn't she pretty! Hallo, there! And what's your name?

Winnie *hesitates, uncertain how to reply.*

Laverne. Say hallo, Winnie.
Winnie. Bonjour, mam'selle.
Tiffany. *(enchanted)* Oh! *(to* **Laverne***)* Isn't that lovely? *(crouching down, to* **Winnie***)* What's your name, then?
Winnie. Je m'appelle Winnie, mam'selle.
Tiffany. Winnie! And how old are you, Winnie?
Winnie. J'ai neuf ans, mam'selle.
Laverne. Nine. She's nine next month.
Tiffany. Enchanting. Does she always speak in French?
Laverne. On Tuesdays, she does. I encourage her every Tuesday.
Tiffany. *(mystified)* Oh.

Laverne. We both do. *(to* **Winnie***)* Nous parlons le français toutes les mardis, n'est ce pas, ma petite?
Winnie. Oui, Maman. C'est vrai.
Laverne. We're not that good, but we're getting better, aren't we?
Tiffany. How brilliant. What a brilliant idea! Every Tuesday, you say?
Laverne. Every Tuesday, yes.
Tiffany. What do you speak on Wednesday? German?
Laverne. — er …
Tiffany. I think that's truly a brilliant idea. Brilliant! What a fantastic way to learn languages, isn't it? We could use a different one every day, couldn't we? Thursdays, Spanish. Fridays, Dutch ——
Laverne. Possibly, yes …
Tiffany. *(enthused)* I mean, we're generally dreadful in this country, aren't we? Never bother to learn anyone else's language, do we? And they're always learning ours.

During the next, **Tiffany** *removes her coat and goes off to the front door to hang it up.*

Laverne *takes the opportunity to smarten* **Winnie** *up a little.*

(*off*) I mean, you go to somewhere like Holland, they practically all speak English, don't they? Even little kids. Or Germany. Germany's the same. I mean, even, *even* let's face it, the French — they at least have a go. No, they all put us to shame.

Tiffany *returns, still talking.*

Golly. I really think you're on to a winner. Now all you have to do is to persuade everyone else to join in. (*to* **Winnie**) *Bon! Bien! Excellente! Encore!* Bravo!
Winnie. Merci, mam'selle.
Tiffany. Oh, she's just enchanting. So sweet. How old did she say she was?
Laverne. *(proudly)* She's just coming up to nine. She'll be nine next month.
Tiffany. You must be so proud of her.
Laverne. *(modestly)* Yes, well … I don't tell her that, though!

Tiffany. I bet her daddy's proud of her, too. *(to* **Winnie***)* I bet you're your daddy's pride and joy, aren't you?
Winnie. Non, mam'selle.
Tiffany. No? Non?
Winnie. Mon père n'est pas ici. Il depart depuis quelques mois.
Laverne. Her dad's gone.
Tiffany. Oh, I am sorry. Was he very young?
Laverne. No, but she was. The one he went off with.
Tiffany. Oh. *(realizing)* Oh, I see. I'm so sorry, I thought you meant he was …
Laverne. He was old enough to know better.
Tiffany. *(Laverne's condition)* And now you're — ? Oh dear, how difficult for you. When's baby due?
Laverne. Another ten days.
Tiffany. Oh, dear. Shouldn't you be … ? I mean … ?
Laverne. I can manage. Soon as he's arrived, we're off, aren't we, girl? Soon as he's arrived …
Tiffany. Your husband?
Laverne. No, the baby! Not my husband, not him. We're best off without him, aren't we, Winnie?

Winnie *does not reply. A short silence.*

Tiffany. So you know it's a boy, then?
Laverne. Oh, yes.
Tiffany. How exciting! And have you settled on a name yet? That's always the tricky bit. Isn't it?
Laverne. Three. I've settled on three.
Tiffany. Oh, what are those?
Laverne. Jericho, Alexander, Samson …
Tiffany. Golly!

Winnie *rolls her eyes.*

What made you chose those? Jericho? That's terribly unusual. What made you choose Jericho?
Laverne. After my grand-dad. I've chosen three, that way he gets a choice. When he's little, he can either be Jerry or Alex or Sam. Then once he grows up if he wants to, he can choose one of the big ones …
Tiffany. How frightfully sensible. So he'll have masses of choices. I wish I'd been given choices when I was little.

All I got was Tiffany Louise. Which left me with Tiffy or Tiff or Lou. Which always makes me sound like a cross between a quarrel and lavatory. *(to* **Winnie***)* What about you? Did your mummy give you a choice of names as well?

Laverne. She's just the two, she has. Winona Marguerite.

Winnie *scowls.*

Tiffany. Marguerite? Wow! That's a great one! Marguerite!

Laverne. She's not too fond of that one, are you, Winnie? I've told her she might when she grows up. When she grows into it.

Tiffany. Yes, I know what you mean. You do need a bit of a cleavage, don't you, before you start calling yourself Marguerite? It's the sort of name that goes with breasts, isn't it?

Tiffany *laughs.* **Laverne** *smiles politely.* **Tiffany** *remembers there is a child present and checks herself. A slight pause.*

(*She slaps her face.*) Sorry. Where are your family from originally?

Laverne. They came from Martinique. My mother came over with my grandma nearly thirty years ago. We're planning to go back soon aren't we, Winnie?

Winnie *again does not reply.*

Tiffany. Ah! Hence the French! La belle Martinique. All is clear. How terrific! That's off the coast of Africa, isn't it?

Laverne. No, it's in the Caribbean.

Tiffany. Oh, yes, of course it is. *(slapping herself)* Come on, Tiffy!

Laverne. Fifteen point five miles south of Dominica and twenty-three miles north of St. Lucia.

Tiffany. Oh, yes. Got it! I think I was probably thinking of Mozambique.

Laverne. No, no, not Mozambique. Martinique.

Tiffany. Or possibly Madagascar? One of those. *(laughing)* God, aren't we hopeless in this country? We don't know where anything is, do we? Not just abroad, but anywhere. You know I don't think I could even find my way to Scunthorpe.

Laverne. I don't think I could.

The two smile at each other.

Tiffany. *(laughing)* Hopeless, aren't we? Absolutely hopeless. God, when I think of the fortune my parents splashed out on my education. Honestly!
Laverne. Mine didn't.
Tiffany. Well, good for them. Save your money, I say! *(She laughs.)*
Laverne. I still don't know nothing. *(She laughs.)*

Tiffany *laughs with her.*

The **Man** *enters from the office.*

The **women** *look a bit guilty.*

Man. *(to* **Tiffany***)* Ah, you're here.
Tiffany. 'morning.
Man. How long you been out here?
Tiffany. Just a couple of minutes.
Laverne. Well, I must get on. Finish the kitchen. Excuse me.
Man. Yes, you carry on, Mrs. — er …
Tiffany. Sure you can manage?
Laverne. Oh, yes …
Tiffany. I mean, don't for God's sake don't try lifting the stove or anything, will you?
Laverne. I can manage.
Man. She can manage.
Laverne. Nice talking to you, Tiffany. See you later.

Laverne *goes off to the kitchen.*

Tiffany. See you later, Laverne.
Man. *(softly, to* **Tiffany***)* What were you doing?
Tiffany. Just chatting.
Man. *(smiling, though meaning it)* I don't pay you to chat, you know. Either of you.
Tiffany. Sorry, I thought you were on the phone.
Man. Come in here, then. We need to talk ... *(He starts to move back towards the office.)* What did you call her just then?
Tiffany. *(following him)* Who?
Man. Mrs. Whatsname? What did you call her?

Tiffany. Who, Laverne?
Man. Laverne? What sort of name's that?
Tiffany. It's her name.
Man. How do you find that out?
Tiffany. She just told me.
Man. She's worked here for ages, I've never known her name's Laverne. Laverne?
Tiffany. *(aware of* **Winnie***)* Shhh!
Man. Laverne? What sort of name's that for a cleaner?
Tiffany. *(to* **Winnie***)* You'll be all right there, will you darling?
Winnie. Oui merci, ma'mselle. Je suis très content.
Man. What's she talking in? French?
Tiffany. Yes.
Man. Why's she talking French?
Tiffany. She does on Tuesdays.
Man. Why the hell does she usually talk in French ——? *(His mobile rings. He checks it. Seeing the caller ID.)* Shit! It's her.
Tiffany. *(indicating the office, furtively)* You want to take it in there?

But the **Man** *has already answered.*

Man. Hallo, Paula … yes. … what? … who? … No, she's not here … of course she's not. … What makes you think she'd be here, for God's sake? … Bollocks … Paula, that is plain bollocks, darling … you are talking bollocks …

During the next, **Tiffany** *indicates that* **Winnie** *is in the room. The* **Man** *indicates that* **Tiffany** *should take* **Winnie** *into the office.*

Tiffany. *(under the phone call, softly, to* **Winnie***)* Come with me! This way! Come on, we can wait in here, Winnie …

Tiffany *bundles up* **Winnie**, *helping her with her belongings, and steers her into the office.*

Man. *(as this happens, pacing)* … listen, Paula — Paula — Paula — where are you now? … No … no … because I was worried … I was, I was worried. … About you, who else? … Yes, I was … I was … Paula … Paula … Quieten down, love … will you just — QUIETEN DOWN, WOMAN! *(kicking at the furniture, quieter)* Shit!!!

He moves towards the front door as his conversation starts to hot up. **Winnie** *is propelled by* **Tiffany** *into the office during the next.*

Yes! … *YES!* … Of course I was worried … well, why shouldn't I be, for God's sake? … You suddenly piss off in the middle of the bloody night, I've every reason to be fucking ——

The office door slams behind them, cutting off the **Man***'s voice.*

The **Man** *exits.*

Simultaneously, the lights change abruptly to indicate the office area.

10.30 a.m.

Tiffany *tries to make everything appear normal for* **Winnie**.

Tiffany. He's just talking with someone … He gets quite excited sometimes but you musn't worry about it. He doesn't really mean it. Not really.

A further bellow of anger, off, from the hall. Pause.

(*Indicating the easy chair*) You want to sit there, darling.

Winnie *sits obediently, still holding her possessions.*

He's a very clever person. He's brilliant. He's actually quite famous. Did you know that? Have you ever seen him? On television. He has his own programme. Have you ever watched his programme? No? Surely you must have seen him? He was actually on the front cover of the *Radio Times*. No?

Winnie. *(shaking her head)* Non, mam'selle. Je ne vois pas le TV.

Tiffany. You don't watch television?

Winnie. (*shaking her head)* Non, mam'selle. Jamais.

Tiffany. What never? You never watch it? Well, you are a funny little girl, aren't you? I thought all children watched television. Does your mother not let you watch it?

Winnie. Oui. Mais je ne l'apprécie pas.
Tiffany. What? You don't like it? None of it?
Winnie. *(shrugging)* Non. Je le trouve être ennuyeux plutôt.
Tiffany. What do you like to do then?
Winnie. J'ai lu les livres. J'effectue mon travail d'école. J'ecris parfois.
Tiffany. Ecris? Oh, you write?
Winnie. Oui, mam'selle.
Tiffany. What? Poems?

Winnie *shakes her head.*

Tiffany. Stories?

Winnie *nods.*

Is that what you were doing just now? Writing?

Winnie *nods.*

(*reaching towards her*) May I see?

Winnie *clutches the exercise book to her more tightly.*

No? Is it secret? Your special secret? Is it about private things? Do you like to keep secrets, do you? I used to have secrets when I was a little girl. Things I would never, ever tell anyone. But the important thing to remember is, if you do write them down, to make sure no one never, ever sees them except you. It's good to have secrets when you're young. Maybe, as you grow up, they're not quite as magic … (*She tails off.*) Yep.

Pause.

When I was at school, you know, I used to keep a diary. Do you keep a diary? No?

Pause.

But I never let anyone see my diary. It was my most special, special secret book. And I used to keep it locked up. With a key. Until some boy went and …

Pause

I was at boarding school, you know. Do you know what a boarding school is? It's when you go away from your home, when your parents send you away — even though they tell you they still love you — they send you away to live with lots and lots of other children. But you're there all on your own.

Pause

And to start with you feel terribly, terribly sad being away from home but in the end you get used to it. And then you even start to like the school a little bit and some of the people there become your friends. And you may even start to love some of them, just a little. But it's a different sort of love, you see. It's what I call lonely love. There's all different sorts of love, you know. Did you know that?

Winnie *nods.*

But with lonely love, you see, it can never take the place of real love, however hard you try to make it. And the saddest thing of all is that in the end maybe because of it, you even start to love your parents a little tiny bit less. Do you see?

Pause.

So don't ever, ever let your mummy send you away. Because you love her very much, don't you?

Winnie *nods.*

And I can see she loves you very much, doesn't she?

Winnie *nods. From outside the door, another yell of anger from the Man*

Man. *(off, yelling)* OH, COME ON!!!!

Winnie *stares at the door.* **Tiffany** *searches round for something to distract the child. She snatches up the envelope she has brought.*

Tiffany. *(with the tone of a frenetic children's TV host)* Tell you what. I've got a great idea. While Mummy's busy, let's you and me watch this together, shall we?

She rips open the envelope and produces a DVD. It's a commercially mass-produced copy of a corporate video labelled, Fantacity!

This is something we've just finished. It's very exciting. Would you like to watch this with me? Would you?

Winnie *nods.*

Yes! Now, how do we work this thing. It's complicated. Everything he has is complicated, nothing's ever simple. Where does this go? Oh, yes. Then we can watch it on that big screen, can't we? (*slotting the disc into the console on the desk*) Be like going to the movies, won't it? You enjoy going to the movies, don't you?

Winnie. Non, mam'selle, je ne vais pas au cinema beaucoup.

Tiffany. Non? No? Never?

Winnie. Ma mère dit qu'il coûte trop d'argent.

Tiffany. *(half to herself)* Weird kid. Weird.

She pulls out the desk chair to sit beside **Winnie**, *grabbing the remote as she does so.*

There. That's a plasma screen. Have you ever seen one that big? The man who has everything, honestly! Every gadget under the sun, he's got it.

Tiffany *points the remote. After a second the (unseen) screen lights up and there's a burst of cheesy music.* **Winnie** *stares at the screen increasingly unimpressed.* **Tiffany**, *on the other hand, is in a state of considerable excitement.*

(*Over this introductory music*) I helped him on this, you know. Mainly typing the script and a little bit with the continuity. You know, if we're terribly lucky and watch very carefully, we might just catch a glimpse of me. Ever so briefly. If they haven't cut me out. (*Indicating the screen*) There! Just look at that! Isn't it fantastic?

On the disc the music fades down slightly and the **Man***'s voice is heard.*

Man's voice. Hi! It's my pleasure to introduce a new experience in the art of living. Welcome to the amazing world of Fantacity. I'm Kevin Tate and for the next few minutes, I'd like to show you around so you can see for yourselves some of the incredible features Fantacity has to offer you — yes, and that means you, Mr and Mrs Business Person.

Tiffany. *(to* **Winnie***)* He's charismatic, isn't he? The camera adores him …

Man's voice. So, hey, tell you what, why don't you and I stroll around a little so I can point out just a few of the extra special features Fantacity has to offer.

A short peak in the music.

(*in another acoustic*) Fantacity has been described as being part business park, part shopping mall. But, you know, neither of those descriptions can do Fantacity real justice. I prefer to describe it as a place where business and retail are free to meet and integrate with the consumer. It's a place where, at the end of the day, everyone goes home happy — and for those who prefer to stay on, well Fantacity stays open 24/7, catering for your every need.

Another brief music peak.

(*in another acoustic, again*) Fantacity offers workspace such as this for the business which thinks big — right down to the smaller scale — such as this — for smaller specialist firms and for those just starting up ...

Another brief music peak. **Winnie***, already bored, is beginning to slide down in her seat.* **Tiffany** *remains glued to the screen.*

(*in yet another acoustic*) And OK, retailers, in case you're feeling neglected, how about this for floor space? Imagine how your display would look in an environment like this. Or perhaps this? Or this?

The music peaks again.

Man's voice. All right, all right, I hear you saying, it's all very well but these are just offices and shops, I can see those anywhere, any time. What's so special about Fantacity? What on earth is someone like Kevin Tate getting so excited about? Well, I'll show you. Come with me to see the pleasure side of Fantacity.

Music peak.

(*in another acoustic)* Just take a look at this.

Tiffany. *(excitedly)* This is my bit, this my bit coming up! I'm a film star!

Man's voice. Here's what really caught my attention, what definitely got the five star, gold-plated Kevin Tate diamond seal of approval. This is one of the three magnificent swimming pools Fantacity has to offer. This is the largest of them, open free to all Fantacity users — shopper or salesperson, typist or tycoon …

Tiffany. That's me! That's me! That's me! There on the sun lounger!

Man's voice. … all absolutely free! *(with a little laugh in his voice)* Though that doesn't, I'm afraid, include the young lady!

Tiffany. God! That costume makes me look huge! So fat!

Man's voice. Moving along — if I can tear you away — moving along ——

The sound track stops abruptly. There's a brief blip and then Paula's voice interrupts.

Paula's voice. *(different acoustic, briskly)* Sorry to interrupt your tour of this ghastly little development, everyone. Hallo there, my name is Paula Hammond and I'm currently married to that deceitful little shit Kevin Tate …

Winnie *sits up again and takes notice.*

Tiffany. *(aghast)* Oh, my God. It's her!

Paula's voice. … yes, that's him, the forty-something year old, seen there drooling over Tiffany Cavendish, she's the tubby, super-annuated teenager on the sunbed.

During the next, **Tiffany** *grabs the remote and feverishly fumbles with the stop button.*

But what you might also be interested to learn, dear business people, is that those two are currently fucking each other's brains out — if that is even remotely possible — considering that neither of them has a solitary brain cell ——

Tiffany. *(finally freezing the disc)* Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God!

She rushes out of the room forgetting **Winnie**.

(*calling as she goes, in panic*) Kevin! Kevin! KEVIN!

Winnie *sits for a moment, digesting what she has seen. She then takes up her note book and continues writing.*

Agitated voices outside.

11.30 a.m.

After a moment, **Tiffany** *returns with the* **Man** *following her.*

(*Pointing at the screen, in panic*) Look! It's her! She's on it! Look!

Man. *(staring at the screen)* What's she doing on there?

Tiffany. I told you, she's on our DVD.

Man. What DVD?

Tiffany. I keep telling you. The one we did for Fantacity.

Man. She can't be. *(grabbing the remote from her)* Give me that —

Tiffany. No! Don't play back any more of it!

Man. Why not? I want to see it … I want to see what that bitch has done!

Tiffany. Not in front of — *(indicating* **Winnie***, mouthing)* — the kid!

Man. *(aware of* **Winnie***)* Oh, yes. *(To* **Winnie***)* You want to sit in the other room for a minute, kid? Just while we have a look at the DVD. We just discovered it may have …

Tiffany *helps* **Winnie** *up.*

Tiffany. … adult content.
Man. Wouldn't want you to see that. Your mum might not approve. Off you go! Chop! Chop!
Winnie. *(as she goes)* Oui, monsieur. Merci beaucoup.

Tiffany *brings* **Winnie** *back to the hall/living-room area with all her gear. As she does so the lights crossfade briefly to the hall again.*

The **Man** *exits into the office during the next.*

A clinking of plates from the kitchen.

Tiffany. *(registering this sound)* Listen, darling, perhaps you'd like to sit in the kitchen with Mummy? Keep her company. Would you like to do that? Jolly good.

Propelling **Winnie** *through the kitchen doorway.*

That's it, straight through here. Good girl.

Tiffany *brings* **Winnie** *into the kitchen. The lights, again, follow them to the area. This is represented by a solid plain wood table and one or two chairs around it.*

Laverne *appears, looking weary and rather breathless.*

Brought Winnie to see you, Mummy. She thought you might be lonely.
Laverne. I hope she's not been getting in people's way.
Tiffany. No, no, no. Not at all. We've been having a lovely chat, haven't we, Winnie?
Laverne. Have you been getting under their feet, Winnie?
Winnie. Non, Maman. J'ai été tranquille comme souris.
Tiffany. She's been as good as gold.
Man. *(off, angrily)* Tiffy! Tiffy!
Tiffany. Excuse me, must get back. Masses to do.

Tiffany *hurries out.*

Laverne. Sit there then. Don't get under my feet either. I've nearly finished in here.

Winnie *sits at the table and lays out her stuff once more.*

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