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SF PERUSALS

CONFUSIONS

Five Interlinked One-Act Plays

by Alan Ayckbourn

SAMUEL FRENCH

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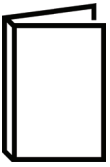
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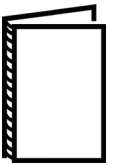
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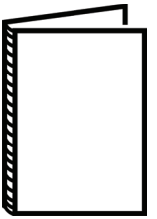
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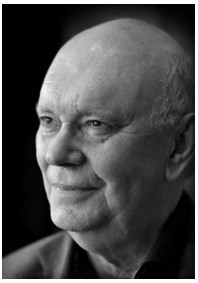
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Alan Ayckbourn has worked in theatre as a playwright and director for over fifty years, rarely if ever tempted by television or film, which perhaps explains why he continues to be so prolific. To date he has written more than seventy-nine plays, many one act plays and a large amount of work for the younger audience. His work has been translated into over thirty-five languages, is performed on stage and television throughout the world and has won countless awards.

Major successes include: *Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, Absurd Person Singular, Bedroom Farce, A Chorus of Disapproval,* and *The Norman Conquests.* In recent years, there have been revivals of *Season's Greetings* and *A Small Family Business* at the National theatre, in the West End *Absent Friends, A Chorus of Disapproval, Relatively Speaking* and *How the Other Half Loves.* In 2015, Chichester mounted a very successful revival of *Way Upstream.*

Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph theatre from 1972–2009 where almost all his plays have been first staged, he continues to direct his latest new work there. In recent years, he has been inducted into American Theatre's Hall of Fame, received the 2010 Critics' Circle Award for Services to the Arts and became the first British playwright to receive both Olivier and Tony Special Lifetime Achievement Awards. He was knighted in 1997 for services to the theatre.

Image credit: Andrew Higgins.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

These plays, although loosely linked, can of course be performed individually. When played together, it is recommended that they be presented in the order in which they appear here.

The entertainment was written originally for a cast of five (three male, two female). Obviously there are a variety of casting combinations which can be employed, depending on the actors available.

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CONFUSIONS

First presented by Michael Codron at the Apollo Theatre, London, on May 19th, 1976, with the following cast of characters:

MOTHER FIGURE

LUCY	Pauline Collins
ROSEMARY	Sheila Gish
TERRY	Derek Fowlds

DRINKING COMPANION

HARRY	John Alderton
PAULA	Pauline Collins
BERNICE	Sheila Gish
WAITER	James Cossins

BETWEEN MOUTHFULS

WAITER	John Alderton
PEARCE	James Cossins
MRS PEARCE	Sheila Gish
MARTIN	Derek Fowlds
POLLY	Pauline Collins

GOSFORTH'S FÊTE

MRS PEARCE	Sheila Gish
MILLY	Pauline Collins
GOSFORTH	John Alderton
VICAR	James Cossins
STEWART	Derek Fowlds

A TALK IN THE PARK

ARTHUR	John Alderton
BERYL	Pauline Collins
CHARLES	James Cossins
DOREEN	Sheila Gish
ERNEST	Derek Fowlds

The Plays directed by Alan Strachan
Settings by Alan Tagg

The action takes place in a living-room, a bar, a restaurant, a marquee and a park

Time – the present

MOTHER FIGURE

LUCY*'s sitting room.*

It is a suburban room, fairly untidy, with evidence of small children. There are two doors – one to the kitchen and back door, one to the bedrooms and front door.

LUCY *hurries in from the bedrooms on her way to the kitchen. She is untidy, unmade-up, in dressing-gown and slippers.*

LUCY *(calling behind her)* Nicholas! Stay in your own bed and leave Sarah alone.

The telephone rings.

LUCY *goes out to the kitchen, returning at once with a glass of water.*

All right, Jamie, darling. Mummy's coming with a dinkie...

As she passes the telephone, she lifts the receiver off the rest and almost immediately replaces it.

Mummy's coming, Jamie, Mummy's coming.

LUCY *goes off to the bedroom with the glass.*

The front door chimes sound. A pause, then they sound again.

LUCY *returns from the bedrooms.*

Sarah! You're a naughty, naughty girl. I told you not to play with Jamie's syrup. That's for Jamie's toothipegs...

The door chimes sound again.

LUCY *ignores these and goes off to the kitchen. She returns almost at once with a toilet roll, hauling off handfuls of it as she goes to perform some giant mopping-up operation.*

Nicholas, if you're not in your bed by the time I come up, I shall smack your botty.

There are two rings on the back door bell.

LUCY *goes off to the bedroom.*

A pause.

ROSEMARY, *a rather frail, mousey-looking woman, comes in from the kitchen.*

ROSEMARY *(calling timidly)* Woo-hoo!

LUCY *returns from the bedroom.*

LUCY *(calling as before)* Now go to sleep. At once. *(Seeing* **ROSEMARY***)* Oh.

ROSEMARY Hallo. I thought you must be in.

LUCY *(puzzled)* Hallo?

ROSEMARY I thought you were in.

LUCY Yes.

ROSEMARY You are.

LUCY Yes.

ROSEMARY Hallo.

LUCY Hallo. *(A slight pause)* Who are you?

ROSEMARY Next door.

LUCY What?

ROSEMARY From next door. Mrs Oates. Rosemary. Do you remember?

LUCY *(vaguely)* Oh, yes. Hallo.

ROSEMARY Hallo. I did ring both bells but nobody seemed—

LUCY No. I don't take much notice of bells.

ROSEMARY Oh.

LUCY I've rather got my hands full.

ROSEMARY Oh yes. With the children, you mean? How are they?

LUCY Fine.

ROSEMARY All well?

LUCY Yes.

ROSEMARY Good. It's three you've got, isn't it?

LUCY Yes.

ROSEMARY Still, I expect it's time well spent.

LUCY I haven't much option.

ROSEMARY No.

LUCY Well.

ROSEMARY Oh, don't let me...if you want to get on...

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY I mean, if you were going to bed.

LUCY Bed?

ROSEMARY *(indicating* **LUCY***'s attire)* Well...

LUCY Oh, no. I didn't get dressed today, that's all.

ROSEMARY Oh. Not ill?

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY Oh.

LUCY I just wasn't going anywhere.

ROSEMARY Oh, well...

LUCY I haven't been anywhere for weeks.

ROSEMARY That's a shame.

LUCY I don't think I've got dressed for weeks, either.

ROSEMARY Ah. No, well, I must say we haven't seen you. Not that we've been looking but we haven't seen you.

LUCY No. Do you want to sit down?

ROSEMARY Oh, thank you. Just for a minute.

LUCY If you can find somewhere. *(She moves the odd toy)*

ROSEMARY *(sitting)* Yes, we were wondering if you were alright, actually. My husband and I – Terry, that's my husband – he was remarking that we hadn't seen you for a bit.

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY We heard the children, of course. Not to complain of, mind you, but we heard them but we didn't see you.

LUCY No.

She picks up various toys during the following and puts them in the play-pen.

ROSEMARY Or your husband.

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY But then I said to Terry, if they need us they've only to ask. They know where we are. If they want to keep themselves to themselves, that's all right by us. I mean, that's why they put up that great big fence so they could keep themselves to themselves. And that's all right by us.

LUCY Good.

ROSEMARY And then ten minutes ago, we got this phone call.

LUCY Phone call?

ROSEMARY Yes. Terry answered it – that's my husband – and they say will you accept a transfer charge call from a public phone box in Middlesbrough and Terry says, hallo, that's

funny, he says, who do we know in Middlesbrough and I said, not a soul and he says, well, that's funny, Terry says, well who is it? How do we know we know him? If we don't know him, we don't want to waste money talking to him but if we do, it might be an emergency and we won't sleep a wink. And the operator says, well suit yourself, take it or leave it, it's all the same to me. So we took it and it was your husband.

LUCY Harry?

ROSEMARY Harry, yes. Mr Compton.

LUCY What did he want?

ROSEMARY Well – you. He was worried. He's been ringing you for days. He's had the line checked but there's been no reply.

LUCY Oh.

ROSEMARY Has it not been ringing?

LUCY Possibly. I don't take much notice of bells.

She goes to listen for the children.

ROSEMARY Oh. Anyway, he sounded very worried. So I said I'd pop round and make sure. I took his number in case you wanted to...

LUCY *is clearly not listening.*

Are you all right?

LUCY Yes, I was listening for Nicholas.

ROSEMARY Oh. That's the baby?

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY *(warmly)* Ah.

LUCY I'm sorry. I'm being very rude. It's just I haven't...spoken to anyone for days. My husband isn't home much.

ROSEMARY Oh, I quite understand. Would you like his number?

LUCY What?

ROSEMARY Your husband's telephone number in Middlesbrough. Would you like it? He said he'd hang on. It's from a hotel.

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY Oh.

LUCY Whatever he has to say to me, he can say to my face or not at all.

ROSEMARY Ah. *(Laying a slip of paper gingerly on the coffee-table)* Well, it's there.

LUCY Would you care for a drink or something?

ROSEMARY A drink? Oh... Well... What's the time? Well – I don't know if I should. Half past... Oh yes, well... Why not? Yes, please. Why not? A little one.

LUCY Orange or lemon?

ROSEMARY I beg your pardon?

LUCY Orange juice or lemon juice? Or you can have milk.

ROSEMARY Oh, I see. I thought you meant...

LUCY Come on. Orange or lemon? I'm waiting.

ROSEMARY Is there a possibility of some coffee?

LUCY No.

ROSEMARY Oh.

LUCY It'll keep you awake. I'll get you an orange, it's better for you.

ROSEMARY Oh...

LUCY *(as she goes)* Sit still. Don't run around. I won't be a minute.

LUCY *goes out into the kitchen.*

ROSEMARY *sits nervously. She rises after a second, looks guiltily towards the kitchen and sits again. The door chimes sound.* **ROSEMARY** *looks towards the kitchen. There is no sign of* **LUCY**. *The door chimes sound again.* **ROSEMARY** *gets up hesitantly.*

ROSEMARY *(calling)* Mrs—er—

LUCY *(offstage, in the kitchen)* Wait, wait, wait! I'm coming...

The door chimes sound again.

ROSEMARY *runs off to the front door.* **LUCY** *returns from the kitchen with a glass of orange juice.*

Here we are, Rosemary, I— *(She looks round the empty room, annoyed. Calling)* Rosemary! It's on the table.

LUCY *puts the orange juice on the coffee-table and goes out to the kitchen again.* **ROSEMARY** *returns from the hall with* **TERRY**, *a rather pudgy man in shirt sleeves.*

ROSEMARY *(sotto voce)* Come in a minute.

TERRY I'm watching the telly.

ROSEMARY Just for a minute.

TERRY I wondered where you'd got to. I mean, all you had to do was give her the number...

ROSEMARY I want you to meet her. See what you think. I don't think she's well.

TERRY How do you mean?

ROSEMARY She just seems...

TERRY Is she ill?

ROSEMARY I don't know...

TERRY Well, either she's ill or she isn't.

ROSEMARY Ssh.

LUCY *returns from the kitchen with a plate of biscuits.*

LUCY Here we are now. *(Seeing* **TERRY***)* Oh.

TERRY Evening.

LUCY Hallo.

ROSEMARY My husband.

LUCY Terry, isn't it?

TERRY Yes.

LUCY That's a nice name, isn't it? *(Pointing to the sofa)* Sit down there then. Have you got your orange juice, Rosemary?

TERRY *sits.*

ROSEMARY Yes, thank you.

She picks up the glass of orange juice and sits.

TERRY Orange juice?

ROSEMARY Yes.

TERRY What are you doing drinking that?

ROSEMARY I like orange juice.

LUCY Now, here's some very special choccy bics but you mustn't eat them all. I'm going to trust you.

She starts tidying up again.

ROSEMARY *(still humouring her)* Lovely.

She mouths "say something" to **TERRY**.

TERRY Yes. Well, how are you keeping then...er, sorry, I'm forgetting. Lesley, isn't it?

LUCY Mrs Compton.

TERRY Yes. Mrs Compton. How are you?

LUCY I'm very well, thank you, Terry. Nice of you to ask.

TERRY And what about Har— Mr Compton?

LUCY Very well. When I last saw him. Rosemary dear, try not to make all that noise when you drink.

ROSEMARY Sorry.

TERRY Yes, we were saying that your husband's job obviously takes him round and about a lot.

LUCY Yes.

She starts folding nappies.

TERRY Doesn't get home as much as he'd like, I expect.

LUCY I've no idea.

TERRY But then it takes all sorts. Take me, I'm home on the nose six o'clock every night. That's the way she wants it. Who am I...? *(Pause)* Yes, I think I could quite envy your husband, sometimes. Getting about a bit. I mean, when you think about it, it's more natural. For a man. His natural way of life. Right back to the primitive. Woman stays in the cave, man the hunter goes off roving at will. Mind you, I think the idea originally was he went off hunting for food. Different sort of game these days, eh?

ROSEMARY *(hissing)* Terry!

TERRY Be after something quite different these days, eh?

He nods and winks.

LUCY Now don't get silly, Terry.

TERRY What? Ah... Beg your pardon.

A pause. **TERRY** *munches a biscuit.* **ROSEMARY** *sips her orange juice.*

ROSEMARY Very pleasant orange juice.

LUCY Full of vitamin C.

TERRY No, I didn't want to give you the wrong impression there. But seriously, I was saying to Rosie here, you can't

put a man in a cage. You try to do that, you've lost him. See my point?

LUCY That can apply to women, too, surely?

ROSEMARY Yes, quite right.

TERRY What do you mean, quite right?

ROSEMARY Well...

TERRY You're happy enough at home, aren't you?

ROSEMARY Yes, but...yes...but...

TERRY Well then, that's what I'm saying. You're the woman, you're happy enough at home looking after that. I'm the man, I have to be out and about.

ROSEMARY I don't know about that. You'd never go out at all unless I pushed you.

TERRY What do you mean? I'm out all day.

ROSEMARY Only because you have to be. You wouldn't be if you didn't have to be. When you don't, you come in, sit down, watch the television and go to bed.

TERRY I have to relax.

ROSEMARY You're always relaxing.

TERRY Don't deny me relaxing.

ROSEMARY I don't.

TERRY Yes, you do, you just said—

LUCY Now, don't quarrel. I won't have any quarrelling.

TERRY Eh?

ROSEMARY Sorry.

LUCY Would you like an orange drink as well, Terry? Is that what it is?

TERRY Er... Oh no – I don't go in for that sort of drink much, if you know what I mean.

He winks, then reaches for a biscuit.

TERRY I'll have another one of these though, if you don't mind?

LUCY Just a minute, how many have you had?

TERRY This is my second. It's only my second.

LUCY Well, that's all. No more after that. I'll get you some milk. You better have something that's good for you.

TERRY *(half rising)* Oh no – thank you, not milk, no.

LUCY *(going to the kitchen)* Wait there. *(Seeing* **TERRY** *has half risen)* And don't jump about while you're eating, Terry.

LUCY *goes out to the kitchen.*

TERRY You're right. She's odd.

ROSEMARY I said she was.

TERRY No wonder he's gone off.

ROSEMARY Perhaps that's why she's odd.

TERRY Why?

ROSEMARY Because he's gone off.

TERRY Rubbish. And we'll have less of that, too, if you don't mind.

ROSEMARY What?

TERRY All this business about me never going out of the house.

ROSEMARY It's true.

TERRY It's not true and it makes me out to be some bloody idle loafer.

ROSEMARY All I said—

TERRY And even if it is true, you have no business saying it in front of other people.

ROSEMARY Oh, honestly, Terry, you're so touchy. I can't say a thing right these days, can I?

TERRY Very little. Now you come to mention it.

ROSEMARY Niggle, niggle, niggle. You keep on at me the whole time. I'm frightened to open my mouth these days. I don't know what's got into you lately. You're in a filthy mood from the moment you get up till you go to bed...

TERRY What are you talking about?

ROSEMARY Grumbling and moaning...

TERRY Oh, shut up.

ROSEMARY You're a misery to live with these days, you really are.

TERRY I said, shut up.

ROSEMARY *(more quietly)* I wish to God you'd go off somewhere sometimes, I really do.

TERRY Don't tempt me. I bloody feel like it occasionally, I can tell you.

ROSEMARY *(tearfully)* Oh, lovely...

TERRY If you think I enjoy spending night after night sitting looking at you...

He throws the biscuit down.

What am I eating these damn things for...you're mistaken.

Thirsty from the biscuits, he grabs her orange juice glass and drains it in one.

ROSEMARY That's mine, do you mind.

She rises and stamps her foot.

TERRY Come on. Let's go.

He jumps up.

ROSEMARY That was my orange juice when you've quite finished.

LUCY *enters with a glass of milk.*

LUCY Now what are you doing jumping about?

ROSEMARY *sits.*

TERRY We've got to be going, I'm sorry.

LUCY Not till you've finished. Sit down.

TERRY Listen, I'm sorry we—

LUCY *(seeing* **ROSEMARY***'s distraught state)* What's the matter with Rosemary?

ROSEMARY *(sniffing)* Nothing...

TERRY Nothing.

LUCY What have you been doing to her?

TERRY Nothing.

LUCY Here's your milk.

TERRY Thank you.

LUCY You don't deserve it.

TERRY I don't want it.

LUCY Don't be tiresome.

TERRY I hate the damned stuff.

LUCY I'm not going to waste my breath arguing with you, Terry. It's entirely up to you if you don't want to be big and strong.

TERRY Now, look—

LUCY If you want to be a little weakling, that's up to you. Just don't come whining to me when all your nails and teeth fall out. Now then, Rosemary, let's see to you.

She puts down the milk and picks up the biscuits.

Would you like a choccy biccy?

ROSEMARY No, thank you.

LUCY Come on, they're lovely choccy, look. Milk choccy...

ROSEMARY No, honestly.

TERRY Rosie, are you coming or not?

LUCY Well, have a drink, then. Blow your nose and have a drink, that's a good girl. *(Seeing the glass)* Oh, it's all gone. You've drunk that quickly, haven't you?

ROSEMARY I didn't drink it. He did.

LUCY What?

ROSEMARY He drank it.

LUCY Terry, did you drink her orange juice?

TERRY Look, there's a programme I want to watch...

LUCY Did you drink Rosemary's orange juice?

TERRY Look, good night...

ROSEMARY Yes, he did.

LUCY Well, I think that's really mean.

ROSEMARY He just takes anything he wants.

LUCY Really mean.

ROSEMARY Never thinks of asking.

TERRY I'm going.

LUCY Not before you've apologized to Rosemary.

TERRY Good night.

TERRY *goes out.*

LUCY *(calling after him)* And don't you dare come back until you're ready to apologize. *(To* **ROSEMARY***)* Never mind him. Let him go. He'll be back.

ROSEMARY That's the way to talk to him.

LUCY What?

ROSEMARY That's the way he ought to be talked to more often.

LUCY I'm sorry. I won't have that sort of behaviour. Not from anyone.

ROSEMARY He'll sulk now. For days.

LUCY Well, let him. It doesn't worry us, does it?

ROSEMARY No. It's just sometimes...things get on top of you... and then he comes back at night...and he starts on at me and I...*(She cries)* Oh dear...I'm so sorry...I didn't mean to...

LUCY *(cooing)* Come on now. Come on...

ROSEMARY I've never done this. I'm sorry...

LUCY That's all right. There, there.

ROSEMARY I'm sorry.

She continues to weep.

LUCY Look who's watching you.

ROSEMARY Who?

LUCY *(picking up a doll)* Mr Poddle. Mr Poddle's watching you. *(She holds up the doll)* You don't want Mr Poddle to see you crying, do you? Do you?

ROSEMARY *(lamely)* No...

LUCY Do we, Mr Poddle? *(She shakes Mr Poddle's head)* No, he says, no. Stop crying, Rosie. *(She nods Mr Poddle's head)* Stop crying, Rosie. Yes – yes.

ROSEMARY *gives an embarrassed giggle.*

That's better. Was that a little laugh, Mr Poddle? Was that a little laugh?

LUCY *wiggles Mr Poddle about, bringing him close up to* **ROSEMARY***'s face and taking him away again.*

Was that a little laugh? Was that a little laugh? Was that a little laugh?

ROSEMARY *giggles uncontrollably.*

TERRY *enters from the hall and stands amazed.*

TERRY E...r

LUCY *and* **ROSEMARY** *become aware of him.*

Er...I've locked myself out.

LUCY Have you come back to apologize?

TERRY You got the key, Rosie?

ROSEMARY Yes.

TERRY Let's have it then.

LUCY Not until you apologize.

TERRY Look, I'm not apologizing to anyone. I just want the key. To get back into my own house, if you don't mind. Now, come on.

ROSEMARY *(producing the key from her bag)* Here.

LUCY Rosemary, don't you dare give it to him.

TERRY Eh?

ROSEMARY What?

LUCY Not until he apologizes.

TERRY Rosie, give me the key.

LUCY No, Rosemary. I'll take it. Give it to me.

TERRY Rosie.

LUCY Rosemary.

ROSEMARY *(torn)* Er...

LUCY *(very fiercely)* Rosemary, will you give me that key at once.

ROSEMARY *gives* **LUCY** *the key.* **TERRY** *regards* **LUCY.**

TERRY Would you mind most awfully giving me the key to my own front door?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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