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FLATSPIN

A Comedy

by Alan Ayckbourn

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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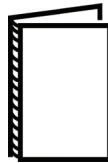


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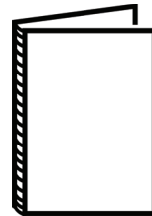
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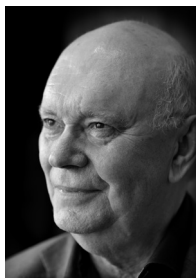
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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

After a lifetime of playwriting (I first started as an unpublished writer at the age of ten!) my career has moved steadily forward from the status of untried tyro through to establishment figure to ageing experimentalist!

The work has reflected this. From the early tried and tested plays, (*Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *The Norman Conquests*, etc.) which thankfully people still seem happy to produce and come to see, through the middle period, larger scale so called “social” pieces (*Man of the Moment*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*) to the more recent smaller scale departures such as *Private Fears in Public Places*, *Snake in the Grass* and *Haunting Julia*, I have continued to experiment with shape and form, whilst I hope continuing to deepen my characters.

Throughout this, though, I have always needed to remind myself of the overriding prime directive drummed into me at an early age by my mentor, Stephen Joseph, that above all else a playwright is a storyteller.

To keep an audience in their seats you need to involve them in a constantly unfolding series of unexpected twists and turns. These can, of course, be the narrative of the story itself as in *Relatively Speaking* or, as with *Woman in Mind* say, through the psychological development of the characters.

One of the nicest things people can ever say to me, coming out of a new play for the first time of seeing it, is “Well, I never saw THAT coming!”

Alan Ayckbourn

FLATSPIN

First performed at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, on 3rd July 2001. The same production was subsequently presented by Michael Codron, Lee Dean, Michael Linnit, David Ian for Clear Channel Entertainment and Andrew Lloyd Webber, at the Duchess Theatre, London, on 7th September 2002. The cast was as follows:

ANNETTE SEFTON-WILCOX

ROSIE SEYMORE

SAM BERRYMAN

EDNA STRICKEN

MAURICE WHICKETT

TRACY TAYLOR

TOMMY ANGEL

Beth Tuckey
Alison Pargeter
Bill Champion
Jacqueline King
Robert Austin
Saskia Butler
Tim Faraday

Directed by Alan Ayckbourn

Designed by Roger Glossop

Lighting by Mick Hughes

Costume Design by Christine Wall

CHARACTERS

ANNETTE SEFTON-WILCOX, 30s

ROSIE SEYMORE, 20s

SAM BERRYMAN, 30s

EDNA STRICKEN, 40s

MAURICE WHICKETT, 50s

TRACY TAYLOR, 20s

TOMMY ANGEL, 30s

The action of the play takes place in a riverside apartment in London's Docklands

ACT I

Scene One August Bank Holiday Monday, noon

Scene Two The same day, 6.30 p.m.

ACT II

Scene One A few minutes later

Scene Two Thirty minutes later

Time - the present

ACT I

Scene One

A riverside apartment on the Thames, somewhere in London's Docklands. August Bank Holiday Monday. Noon.

It's a corporately owned flat, impersonal, with little clue or indeed sign of the inhabitant. A main sitting area and an adjoining walk-through kitchen/dining area. Sliding windows at one end of the sitting area lead on to a small riverside balcony. At the older end of this sitting area, a well-stocked bar. Near the window, a desk and chair. On the desk, a discreetly placed book. A sofa, an armchair and a heavy coffee table. A few quite healthy pot plants dotted around. Leading off this area is a short hallway which leads directly to the front door. Also two archways leading to another area visible to us, the common kitchen/dining space. The kitchen end is well equipped, evidently regularly cleaned, but has clearly not been used for some time. It has an almost spartan tidiness. The other end has a small dining table with four chairs. Leading from this in turn is a further door to the offstage bedroom.

It is around noon in the midst of an August Bank Holiday heatwave. Bright sunshine floods the room.

After a second, ANNETTE, the managing agents' representative, enters. She is in her late thirties, smartly dressed in a business suit. She carries a large set of master keys. With her is ROSIE, mid-twenties, casually

dressed. She carries a notebook and pencil in which she occasionally makes an addition or checks an entry.

ANNETTE (*swiftly, in full flow, as they enter*) ...and this one you'll have very little bother with at all. Number 3C, Mrs Rupelford. R-U-P... Got her on your list, have you?

ROSIE (*consulting her notes*) Yes, yes, Rupelford. Water plants... flush toilets regularly...check round generally...

ANNETTE Spot on. There's a cleaner comes in every month and gives it a good going over, which is all it basically needs, of course, because this woman never sets foot in the place.

ROSIE Never?

ANNETTE Not so far as anyone can gather. Let's say that no one's ever seen her. Still, it doesn't bother us, it's a corporate let, they pay the rent – if they want to waste their money it's up to them, isn't it? No, to be perfectly fair, I think Joanna Rupelford's job does entail an awful lot of overseas travel, so far as I can gather – between the two of us, I think she's oil, actually – all the same, you'd think for the amount of time she was in London it would be cheaper to stick the woman in a hotel, wouldn't it? Still, as I say, who are we...? Now, all perfectly clear so far, is it?

ROSIE Yes, I think so, Mrs Sefton-Wilcox.

ANNETTE Annette, please.

ROSIE Annette, sorry.

She consults her notes.

7B – Mrs Truffick. Water plants weekly, air flat occasionally when away. General check round.

ANNETTE Yes, Ann Truffick's a sheer delight. You'll have absolutely no trouble with her.

ROSIE 5D – Mr and Mrs Warmlow. Check intermittent shower drip...occasional weekend feed fish.

ANNETTE Yes, and whatever else, don't forget to do that. They're the most terrible fusspots, both of them. If their blessed fish starve to death, we'll never hear the end of it. Bane of all our lives, I can tell you, the Warmlows. You won't believe it but they're actually in the midst of litigation with the window cleaner.

ROSIE Really?

ANNETTE They're retired, of course, so they've nothing else to do but write us complaining letters...

ROSIE (*sympathetically*) Yes, well...

ANNETTE Why they can't behave like normal retired people, buy somewhere abroad and die of drink gracefully, I can't imagine. Sorry, do carry on, Rose. Rose, isn't it?

ROSIE Rosie.

ANNETTE Rosie, of course. How pretty.

ROSIE Thank you. Er... 4A – Mr Cheetham. Water plants when advised. Feed budgie on Thursdays.

ANNETTE Yes, now as I say, Mr Cheetham is the weeniest bit odd. The plants are all plastic and the bird cage is empty, but go through the motions. He's perfectly harmless. Secretly, I think he's just desperate for company.

ROSIE Right. 3C – Mrs Rupelford...water plants...flush toilets... general check round.

ANNETTE Oh, spot on, well done. I'll say again, we're all so, so grateful to you for stepping in like this, Rosie. I mean, normally, if one of our janitors is away for more than a day, we arrange proper cover, naturally we do. But of course, with your uncle and aunt due back today, we never—

ROSIE No, it was all very sudden...

ANNETTE Such unfortunate timing. Are they both all right, by the way?

ROSIE Yes, just a little shaken. I spoke to them earlier. They're just keeping them in overnight for observation. Whiplash.

ANNETTE The traffic gets worse and worse, doesn't it? I mean, normally Milton – Mr Granger – would be here to cover for your uncle. But he went off late last night to Benidorm. And on top of everything else it's this wretched Bank Holiday. There's one every other week these days, isn't there? Not that it makes a blind bit of difference to me – I just soldier on regardless... *(She laughs)* Must be in the wrong job, mustn't I? Anyway, as I say, we're all frightfully grateful to you, Rosie. What a stroke of luck you were free!

ROSIE Yes, well, it happens I wasn't working this weekend so...

ANNETTE Yes, now what is it you do again? Your uncle did tell me once, I think – are you still a student?

ROSIE No, I'm an actor.

ANNETTE An actress! Oh, how super. Ought I to know you?

ROSIE No, I shouldn't think so...

ANNETTE I mean, have you been in anything I'd have seen on the box – not that I ever actually have time to watch it, of course. I mean, the number of occasions I actually manage to sit down and see a whole programme...

ROSIE Well, it wouldn't really matter if you had because I haven't really been in anything...

ANNETTE No, no, no, that's not true. Come to think of it, you do seem familiar now I look at you. I have seen you in something, I'm sure...

ROSIE I think it's unlikely. Unless you've been to Crewkerne lately.

ANNETTE Crewkerne? Is that a series?

ROSIE No, it's a place. I was touring with a children's company that's based there.

ANNETTE Where on earth is Crewkerne?

ROSIE Somerset.

ANNETTE Heavens. Yonks away.

ROSIE Certainly is.

ANNETTE What made you choose there? I didn't even know they did television in Somerset.

ROSIE No, this was theatre.

ANNETTE Theatre. Oh. You're a theatre actress, then?

ROSIE No. Any sort. I'm not really fussy.

ANNETTE So, do you come from Somerset?

ROSIE No. Nottingham, actually.

ANNETTE So what made you choose Crewkerne?

ROSIE Well, fancied the challenge. You know.

ANNETTE Wonderful. What fun. It must have been enormous fun, wasn't it?

ROSIE Yes. Eight weeks touring. Ten a.m. shows in a van. Fitting up at nine a.m. in school halls. Changing in the lavatories.

ANNETTE Golly. What were you playing?

ROSIE "The Princess and the Pea".

ANNETTE Oh, I say! Which one were you?

She laughs a lot.

ROSIE (*smiling thinly*) Neither.

ANNETTE Sorry, I was only joking. Which part did you take, then?

ROSIE Actually. I played a rabbit.

ANNETTE A rabbit? Heavens!

ROSIE Yes.

ANNETTE Golly. That's dedication. All the way to Crewkerne to be a rabbit.

ROSIE (*getting sick of this*) Well. There you go.

ANNETTE Still, I suppose that's how Meryl Streep must have started, mustn't she?

ROSIE I doubt it somehow.

ANNETTE Tell me, are you a – what do you call it? – a method actress? Did you prepare by crouching in fields and eating lettuce and things? I was reading somewhere that Robert De Niro always does that sort of thing...

ROSIE Does he? No, I honestly just put on the ears, did the job and took the money, actually. Such as it was...

ANNETTE Ears! Yes, of course. You must have had ears! How sweet! Did you have a little white tail as well?

ROSIE Yes. The works. Listen, Annette, was there anything else or should I—?

ANNETTE Yes, I'd imagine you'd make a lovely rabbit. You're quite petite, aren't you? That would help, being very small.

ROSIE Fairly small, yes.

ANNETTE I say, I do hope this job isn't going to be too much for you...

ROSIE No, well, if necessary I'll have to climb on a box, won't I?

ANNETTE No, seriously, I meant there's some quite hefty bin work, you know. A lot of heavy mopping.

ROSIE Well, I'll probably manage to lift the mop OK. Don't worry.

ANNETTE No, what I meant was—

ROSIE I work out quite regularly.

ANNETTE Yes, I suppose you'd need to. Tell me, when you play rabbits, do you need to do special—?

ROSIE Look, I don't think I'm going to be playing many more rabbits, actually.

ANNETTE No?

ROSIE No. I think I've probably given my rabbit. I'm planning to move on.

ANNETTE What next? A horse?

She laughs. ROSIE stares at her. She's had it up to here with this woman.

Only joking. Sorry.

ROSIE (*rather tense*) Actually, if everything goes according to plan, I think I'm about to play a major lead in a classic television serial on BBC One.

ANNETTE Oh. Spot on! Of course, I don't really watch those classic things because I can never guarantee to see the next episode, the life I lead.

ROSIE Well, never mind. I expect a lot of people will.

ANNETTE No doubt. Most of them seem to have time to waste these days, don't they? So when are you on? I'll try and catch you.

ROSIE Well, it hasn't started yet. I mean, I'm still waiting for final confirmation that I've got it but my agent says it's ninety per cent certain.

ANNETTE Jolly good. No more rabbits then?

ROSIE 'Fraid not.

ANNETTE Unless you're doing "Watership Down", of course.

She laughs merrily. ROSIE stares at her, icily.

Sorry. Only joking. Well, I can't stand around. I must get on.

ROSIE You must.

ANNETTE Now, you're absolutely clear on everything, are you?

ROSIE Yes.

ANNETTE You've got my card anyway, haven't you? In case of a real emergency. Otherwise, Milton – Mr Granger – will be here first thing Wednesday morning to take over. All right?

ROSIE Thank you.

ANNETTE No, thank *you*, Rosie. Really. Sincerely. Well, I suppose I must brave the heat again. It's unbearable today, isn't it? Like an oven out there. Must be in the nineties. There's something terribly wrong with the climate lately, if you ask me. Tell you what, you might as well get started in here whilst you're at it, mightn't you? Water Joanna Rupelford's plants. They look as if they're wilting.

ROSIE I'll do that.

ANNETTE Try not to nibble them, though, won't you?

She peals with laughter.

Sorry. Only joking. Bye!!!

ANNETTE *goes out of the front door, still laughing.*

ROSIE *pulls a face.*

ROSIE (*faintly reminiscent of ANNETTE's voice*) Spot on!

She unlocks and slides open the windows. The sounds of the river fill the room. ROSIE steps out cautiously and grips the balcony rail.

(*leaning out and looking to her right*) Fantastical! Spot on!

She comes in again, leaving the windows open.

Right, little plants. Let me deal with you. (*She feels the base of one of them. Sympathetically*) Oh. Thirsty, little one. Thirsty. One moment. (*She consults her list*)

3C. Watering can under sink. Under sink. Sink. The sink, I sink, is in here!

She goes to the sink and, opening the cupboard beneath it, finds a small domestic watering can

Aha! (*ANNETTE's voice again*) Spot on. Spot on.

She fills the watering can and starts watering the plants. She stops by the desk, is about to water the plant and then, out of curiosity, picks up the solitary book lying there. She reads.

Swinburne, "Collected Poems". Heavens! (*She reads the inside cover*) This book belongs to Joanna Rupelford. (*She tries out the name a little*) Joanna Rupelford! Joanna Rupelford!

She starts to water the plant.

And tonight's very special guest - ladies and gentlemen -
Joanna Rupelford!

She makes applause noises with her mouth.

In her bag, her mobile phone rings.

Oh, God! This is it! This must be it!

She dives for her phone and retrieves it. She studies the screen, disappointed.

Oh.

She answers.

Hi, Cat. No, not yet... I thought you were Jason... No, he hasn't...well, he said some time this morning...but then they said that yesterday... Oh, who cares? If I get it, I get it, love. If I don't, too bad...

She returns to the plant as she speaks and finishes watering it.

Well, it's the only way, isn't it? Yes, I'll talk to you later, sweet. Better leave the line clear. Yep. OK. 'Bye, Cat.

She disconnects and puts the phone on the desk and moves to the next plant. Quietly and with deep conviction.

I would like to thank everyone concerned. An award is never truly won by a single individual. In the end, it's all about teamwork.

She moves to the third plant.

And, ladies and gentlemen, let's face it, the fact that you have voted me best actress of all time in the entire universe ever is neither here nor there. All I would like to say—

On the desk, her mobile rings again. She puts down the watering can hurriedly, rushes back to the desk and, glancing at the screen, prepares to answer it.

Oh, God! Please God! *(She takes a deep breath and answers. Exaggeratedly calm)* Hi, Jason! Good morning. Yes? ...Yes? ...Oh that, yes... Practically forgotten about that, so long ago... Uh-huh... Yep... Well, that's nice of them... Yes, that's really nice they said that...yep... I think I did, yes... Yes, but do they want me, Jason? ... *(She listens)* Yes, but do they? ...Jason, do they want me? ...Do they want me or her? ...Yep. Yep. OK. No, that's fine... No, I'm not. Not at all. No. Yes, well...maybe they will...yep. OK. Yes, no, I'm quite busy just now...thanks all the same.

Another time. Yes, thank you. I will. Don't worry. 'Bye.

She stands very dejected, on the verge of tears.

Oh.

She punches out a number.

Hi, Cat. It's me again. Yes, I just heard. No, in the end they went for her. I thought they would, I really did. No, well, obviously they felt I was... No. I'm fine about it. Really. Just fine. No, I feel absolutely... *(Suddenly the tears are ebbing up)* It's just... God, Cat - I could have at least got a job, couldn't I? I deserve that surely? I've given up smoking, I've got no money and since Davie walked out, I haven't even had decent sex for six months, I mean I deserve something, don't I? It's just not fair, it really isn't—

The doorbell rings.

Oh, God! Someone's at the door, I'll call you back, Cat. Yes.

The doorbell rings again. She disconnects.

It'll be that bloody Annette Sefton-Wilcox again, I know it.

She gets up and goes to the kitchen where she grabs some kitchen roll and attempts to tidy herself up. She goes and opens the front door.

SAM, *in his thirties, stands there.*

SAM (*smiling*) Hi!

ROSIE (*despite her current state, impressed*) Oh.

SAM Sorry. Am I...

ROSIE What?

SAM Am I...interrupting something?

ROSIE No, no.

SAM Sam. Hallo.

ROSIE Oh, yes?

SAM Sam Berryman. Flat 3B. From next door.

ROSIE Oh.

SAM I know we haven't met. I've been your neighbour for six months.

ROSIE Oh, no. I'm not—

SAM I heard your front door close. I knew you must be back.

He moves past her.

What a lovely flat. Do you mind?

ROSIE (*feebly*) Listen...

SAM (*moving towards the open window*) Oh, look at this. You have the view. You definitely have the view, don't you?

ROSIE No, I should explain, I'm not—

SAM I'm at the back there so all I have is the park. I mean, the park's nice enough. But the river is better.

He steps outside on to the balcony.

God! Look at this. Isn't this wonderful!

ROSIE (*following him out there*) Listen, before you go on, I really must...

SAM (*craning out to his right*) Is that Tower Bridge? Yes, Tower Bridge!

ROSIE ...can I just say—?

SAM (*leaning out the other way*) Look, you can even see the Dome, can't you? This is just amazing. You're so lucky!

ROSIE (*forcefully*) Would you please listen to me a minute! Please.

SAM Sorry?

ROSIE I'm afraid you've got it all wrong...

SAM That's not the Dome?

ROSIE No! Of course it's the Dome. Don't be so stupid. All I'm saying is, I'm—

She stops. She's not yet fully recovered.

Sorry.

SAM You all right?

ROSIE Of course I'm all right.

SAM Have you been crying?

ROSIE Of course I haven't. It's nothing at all. It's just I had a...
(*Unable to contain herself any longer*) ...a bit of bad news...

She totters.

SAM (*catching her arm*) Hey! Hey! Hey! Come on! Sit down. Come on, sit down!

He steers ROSIE, now weeping openly, back into the room and sits her down.

You say you've had bad news?

ROSIE Yes.

SAM Do you want to talk about it? What's happened? Have you recently lost someone?

ROSIE Just now... They just told me...

SAM Oh, dear God...

ROSIE ...he just phoned me...

SAM ...that's terrible.

ROSIE I would have been perfect for her. I know I would...

SAM Her? This was someone very close to you, was it?

ROSIE I was as close as that. It was between me and this other girl...

SAM (*understanding at last*) I see, I see. Hell, I'm sorry. Believe me, you're not unique. It happens to all of us, sooner or later.

ROSIE (*recovering slightly*) Does it?

SAM (*smiling*) Believe it or not – even to me.

ROSIE Are you an actor, then?

SAM A what?

ROSIE An actor?

SAM No.

ROSIE (*rather mystified*) Oh.

SAM I'm an investment consultant.

ROSIE Ah.

SAM Can I get you something? A cup of tea? A brandy?

ROSIE (*indicating her running nose*) Do you have a... I just need a—

SAM A tissue? Hang on. Where do you keep them?

ROSIE I've no idea.

SAM I'll have a look.

He goes into the kitchen and, finding no tissues, returns with the roll of paper towel.

(As he does this) If it's any consolation – which of course it never is – I've just broken up a five-year relationship. I'm still getting over it. She went off with someone, too. Just walked out. I'm still getting over it...

ROSIE *(not very interested)* Oh, yes?

SAM *(tearing off a piece)* Here. *(He passes it to ROSIE)*

ROSIE Thanks.

She blows her nose.

SAM I suppose, looking back, it was inevitable. She was sort of a childhood sweetheart, you know. Those things rarely work out long term, do they? I mean, we didn't get together, not then. Not as kids. We met up again much later – well, nearly ten years later – quite by chance – she'd been working abroad – she was a doctor – and, I don't know, it just seemed so right at the time. Us. We had the same sense of humour, the same interests. She was mad about opera, so was I. Well, most music really. And she was a fantastic tennis player. Far better than me. She could have turned professional. Only... medicine got in the way. But there's still this huge hole in my life. Frankly, I don't know if it will ever quite heal over. But you survive somehow, don't you?

ROSIE Excuse me.

SAM Mmm?

ROSIE I hope you don't mind me asking, but why are you telling me all this?

SAM I thought it might help.

ROSIE Help?

SAM Just so you'd know you weren't alone. We all go through it. It's been the same for me, that's all I'm saying.

ROSIE It's not the same at all.

SAM I'm sorry, I—

ROSIE You breaking up with your girlfriend is totally different...

SAM Oh, come on... Don't start that...

ROSIE It's not the same thing at all...

SAM I was only trying to be supportive, don't jump down my throat...

ROSIE Listen...

SAM It's exactly the same. Some man walks off with my girlfriend, some woman walks off with your girlfriend. That's the only difference. The pain's the same. The hurt is just as real. That's all I'm saying. We may be different – differently oriented, if you like – but we still belong to the same species. We're both human beings, for God's sake.

ROSIE I think you're mad.

SAM You want me to leave?

ROSIE Yes, please.

SAM Right. (*He rises*) I tried. That's all, I tried.

He indicates the kitchen roll.

Do you want any more of this?

ROSIE No, thank you.

SAM I'll put it back.

Rather crestfallen, he goes to the kitchen briefly.

ROSIE feels a bit guilty.

ROSIE Listen, I'm sorry, I... I'm sorry.

SAM Look, if this appears rude, I apologize, but have you always had this problem with your sexual identity?

ROSIE (*outraged*) What?

SAM Because, frankly, in this day and age I think you're a little sad.

ROSIE Do you? Do you now? Will you do me a favour? Just piss off.

SAM Right. Don't worry. I'm going. I just want to say this. I don't care if you're straight, I don't care if you're gay. To me, underneath we're all just people, darling. Now, if you want to see yourselves as a race apart, that's your problem and you can deal with it.

ROSIE (*angrily*) What the hell are you talking about? You're completely and utterly howling. Go away!

SAM (*angry, too*) I'm going! Don't worry! I have better things to do with my life than stand here and be shouted at by narrow-minded lesbians.

Silence.

ROSIE I beg your pardon?

SAM Sorry. That was out of line. Sorry.

ROSIE You think I'm gay?

SAM Aren't you?

ROSIE No.

Pause.

SAM Shall I come in again?

ROSIE Why not?

SAM steps back into the front doorway.

SAM Hi! I'm Sam. Sam Berryman. Flat 3B. From next door.

ROSIE How do you do?

SAM I know we haven't met. I've been your neighbour for six months.

He moves into the room.

What a lovely flat.

At the open window.

Oh, look at this view. Do you mind? Thank you.

He steps out, looking to his right.

Oh, look, Tower Bridge! Terrific!

He looks to his left.

Oh, look. The Dome! What's that you said? It isn't the Dome? Oh, I see. My mistake – I sense this is where it began to go wrong... For some reason you started crying. I'm sorry if it was anything I said. Maybe you were a major investor in the Dome. That would have done it.

ROSIE Would you just shut up a minute!

SAM Certainly.

ROSIE I am an actor. My agent has just phoned me to tell me that the role of Jane Eyre in a new BBC One classic serial – eight episodes – a role for which I am simply totally perfect in every respect and which they called me back to read for no less than five times – on every occasion like a dream – (*Increasingly angrily*) and what's more which they practically promised me, on the fifth occasion, was definitely mine – the bastards have now decided to give to a six-foot beanpole with bright red hair and a Northern Irish accent they'd have trouble understanding in Londonderry.

SAM Oh, I see.

ROSIE (*furiously*) As to my sexuality, that has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with you and mind your own bloody business.

Silence.

SAM Well, I'm glad we sorted that out.

ROSIE (*surprised by her own outburst*) I'm sorry about your girlfriend.

SAM Thanks.

ROSIE She just walked out on you?

SAM Yes.

ROSIE For someone else?

SAM Right.

ROSIE I'm sorry. (*Slight pause*) You must have been a bit to blame.

SAM What?

ROSIE It couldn't have been all one-sided.

SAM Well, it was.

ROSIE These things never are.

SAM This was.

ROSIE You may see it that way. But that's because it suits you to. You just haven't asked yourself the right questions.

SAM What right questions?

ROSIE Well...like...what was my part in this? What did *I* do wrong? Those sort of questions.

SAM I don't need to ask myself questions.

ROSIE Yes, you do. Something you did caused her to react. Made her feel unwanted, inadequate. I don't know.

SAM No, you don't know. You don't know anything about it. She couldn't have been more wanted.

ROSIE You drove her a way somehow...

SAM (*irritably*) Why should it have been me, for God's sake?

ROSIE Well, she must have had some reason. I mean, I've only been with you ten minutes and you're already driving me crazy...

SAM Oh, just take a jump in the river.

ROSIE (*triumphantly*) There, you see!

SAM Goodbye.

ROSIE Bye-bye!

SAM marches to the door and stops. A silence. He pulls himself together.

SAM Shall I try coming in again?

ROSIE I wouldn't bother.

SAM One more time.

He composes himself.

Hallo. I'm Sam Berryman. You don't know me. I'm your neighbour from next door. I have only just clapped eyes on you and I appreciate you are probably not feeling at your very best but I just have to tell you that you are probably the most beautiful and attractive woman I have ever seen in my life and more than anything else, whatever your sexual preferences, I would dearly love to have dinner with you tonight. Please.

ROSIE You are seriously deranged. Do you know that?

SAM Possibly.

ROSIE Why on earth should I want to have dinner with you?

SAM (*shrugging*) Hunger...?

ROSIE And everything else that that might entail?

SAM Dinner. That's all it entails. A little talk. Get to know each other better.

ROSIE I know everything I need to know about you. You've already told me in the first five minutes.

SAM Oh, you'd be surprised. I have hidden depths.

ROSIE Really?

SAM I have enormous plans for myself, you'd be amazed.

ROSIE In a restaurant?

SAM If you like. Or we could eat at home.

ROSIE I can't cook.

SAM I can.

ROSIE One of your hidden depths?

SAM One of them.

ROSIE Your place?

SAM Mine's a...bit of a mess. Since she left, I've rather let it...
you know...

ROSIE I can imagine. How long's she been gone?

SAM Six years.

ROSIE My God!

SAM Your place, then?

ROSIE My—?

SAM I mean here?

ROSIE Here?

SAM Yes.

ROSIE *is silent. Weighing it up.*

Say no. By all means. If you don't want to. I won't mind.
I'll just go home, lie in the rubbish and cry myself to sleep.
I'll get over it in a year or two. And I won't hold it against
you, I promise.

ROSIE *(after a pause)* OK.

SAM Here, then?

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