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# LIFE OF RILEY

by Alan Ayckbourn

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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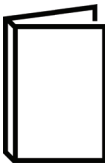
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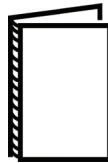


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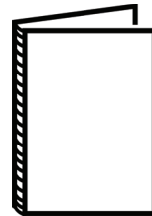
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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After a lifetime of playwriting (I first started as an unpublished writer at the age of ten!)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

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## **LIFE OF RILEY**

First presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, on 16th September 2010. The performance was directed by Alan Ayckbourn and designed by Michael Holt, with lighting by Jason Taylor. The cast was as follows:

**KATHRYN**

Liza Goddard

**COLIN**

Kim Wall

**SIMEON**

Jamie Kenna

**TAMSIN**

Laura Doddington

**JACK**

Ben Porter

**MONICA**

Laura Howard

## **CHARACTERS**

**MONICA** – a teacher, George’s estranged wife, late thirties

**SIMEON** – a farmer, widower and Monica’s new partner, forties

**JACK** – a businessman, George’s oldest & best friend, forties

**TAMSIN** – a former beautician, Jack’s wife, late thirties

**COLIN** – a doctor, forties

**KATHRYN** – a dental receptionist, Colin’s wife, forties

\*\*\*\*\*

Four gardens, one year, between May and November.



## ACT I

### Scene One

*May.*

*The stage is divided into four distinct garden areas, each tending to reflect the personality or personalities of their owners.*

*The first belongs to the Rileys, **MONICA** and George (whom we never see). It is a small suburban garden, once lovingly tended by **MONICA** but now wild and overgrown. Perhaps, in part, the neglect is because **MONICA** no longer lives there and George seldom goes out there. One entrance leads to the living room of the unseen house. This area is currently deserted.*

*The second garden is a patio, part of a far larger unseen garden and belongs to **JACK** and **TAMSIN**. Two entrances to this, one to the kitchen doors of a big modern house, the other to the rest of the garden. This is also deserted.*

*The third is not strictly a garden but a rough part of **SIMEON**'s farmyard, wild grass and weeds covering an area originally paved or concreted. There is a hunk of stone which now serves as an improvised seat. The area is bounded on one side by a fence with a stile leading to a meadow and countryside beyond. The other leads to the farm entrance and the house itself.*

***MONICA**, George's estranged wife, currently occupies this area alone. She is sitting on the makeshift seat, deep in thought. She is casually dressed in jeans, muddy farm*

*boots and a sweater. In her late thirties with her hair tied roughly back, she appears to have taken little trouble with her overall appearance of late. She is currently toying with the idea of having a cigarette. She resists this for some time. It remains unlit in her hand.*

*The fourth area, belonging to KATHRYN and COLIN, is a neat suburban show garden in miniature. This also has a patio but, unlike JACK and TAMSIN's, it is minute, with barely room to accommodate the small garden table and the two chairs which currently occupy it. KATHRYN sits here with COLIN.*

*Both are dressed in coats as if they were shortly going somewhere. They are currently running lines from a script ("Relatively Speaking"). This is not immediately apparent.*

COLIN (*as Philip*) "I can't say I'm very taken with this marmalade."

KATHRYN (*as Sheila*) "No, nor am I."

COLIN (*as Philip*) "Then why did you buy it?"

KATHRYN (*as Sheila*) "I couldn't tell by looking at it, could I?"

COLIN (*as Philip*) "Hmm."

*Slight pause.*

KATHRYN (*as Sheila*) "They didn't—"

COLIN (*as Philip, interrupting her*) "I'd sooner have none than this."

KATHRYN (*coming out of character, impatiently*) Just a minute!  
Just a minute...

COLIN What?

KATHRYN I hadn't finished.

COLIN Hadn't you?

KATHRYN I've got more to say.

COLIN Are you sure?

KATHRYN (*producing her script*) Look. I say, “They didn’t have our sort” and *then* you say, “I’d sooner have none than this.”

COLIN I thought you’d already said that.

KATHRYN Said what?

COLIN “They didn’t have our sort.” I thought you’d already said that.

KATHRYN No, I didn’t. Because I didn’t get a chance to, did I?

COLIN You sure?

KATHRYN No, because you came crashing in with, “I’d sooner have none than this.” Before I could say “They didn’t have our sort.” Which made absolutely no sense at all to the scene, did it? I do wish you’d listen, Colin. Why don’t you listen? You never listen, do you?

COLIN I was listening.

KATHRYN You’re the same in real life. You never listen to a word, do you?

COLIN You’d stopped speaking. I thought you’d finished.

KATHRYN That was a pause. It’s in the script. I was leaving a slight pause...

COLIN Well, how am I supposed to know? I thought you’d stopped altogether.

KATHRYN If you’d only look at your script. Look... Here! (*She stabs a finger at the text*)

COLIN You’re always pausing, how am I supposed to know? If you stop speaking, I assume it must be my go. There’s only two of us in the scene. If you stop, I assume that’s my turn to start.

KATHRYN I don’t know why you agreed to appear in this play in the first place, I really don’t...

COLIN Nor do I.

**KATHRYN** I mean, if you're not going to take it seriously. You don't say half the correct lines. You walk through other people's pauses. I can't think why Peggy Parker picked you, I really can't.

**COLIN** (*muttering*) I wish to God you'd pause a bit in real life.

**KATHRYN** (*icily*) What? What did you say?

**COLIN** Nothing.

*From the house their phone rings.*

**COLIN** Saved by the bell...

**KATHRYN** My God. That phone – it hasn't stopped ringing from the minute I got in.

**COLIN** (*getting up*) I'll answer it.

*From the house, a grandfather clock starts to strike six.*

**COLIN** *goes inside.*

**KATHRYN** We must leave in a minute – Peggy hates it when you're late for rehearsal...

**KATHRYN** *resumes her study of the script. The lights cross-fade to MONICA, sitting deep in thought, about finally to light her cigarette.*

**SIMEON** (*offstage, calling*) Monica! Monica! Where have you got to? Monica?

**MONICA** *hastily jams the unlit cigarette back in the packet and hides the evidence.*

*The lights cross-fade and come up on JACK and TAMSIN's area. TAMSIN enters from the garden, also carrying her script for the play. She glances at her watch. She mutters a few lines under her breath.*

*From the house, the front door slams. In a moment, JACK comes out, still with his coat on, having just arrived home. He carries his overnight bag.*

JACK Oh, you're out here...

TAMSIN (*slightly listlessly*) Hi!

JACK What you doing out here?

TAMSIN Just tidied up the playroom. Switched on the heating.

JACK Oh, yes, of course. Your rehearsals. How's it going?

TAMSIN Haven't started, yet. Just waiting for the others.

JACK (*hugging her, kissing her cheek*) Hi!

TAMSIN (*responding faintly*) Good trip?

JACK The usual. Conference. You know. Bit boring.

TAMSIN Oh.

JACK You know.

TAMSIN Long way to go to get a bit bored.

JACK Yes, well... Tilly around, is she?

TAMSIN At another of her parties.

JACK What? That's the second one this week, isn't it?

TAMSIN The third.

JACK I didn't go to this many parties at her age. Not when I was fifteen.

TAMSIN I did.

JACK Well. It's a girl thing, isn't it? Probably.

*Slight pause.*

(*making to move indoors again*) I'll just unpack, then.

TAMSIN Leave any washing there. I'll put it in with the rest.

JACK Thanks.

*He puts his case down on the table, opens it and dumps a rolled bundle of overnight laundry on the table.*

TAMSIN (*as he does this*) Nice hotel?

JACK What?

TAMSIN Your hotel? Nice, was it?

JACK Oh, one of those – chain places – you know... Cosy broom cupboard with a kettle. Packet of last year's biscuits. Narrow little bed...

TAMSIN Oh, dear, you could have afforded somewhere better, couldn't you?

JACK What was the point? In and out, wasn't I? I'm not fussed.

TAMSIN You could have at least had a room with a double bed.

JACK What would I need a double bed for? (*He laughs*)

*A silence. TAMSIN doesn't smile.*

*JACK laughs again. Another slight pause.*

Oh, yes, hey, I was thinking on the way back – Tilly's big birthday coming up soon, isn't it?

TAMSIN Not till September. Middle of September.

JACK We ought to be planning her party. Special one, this.

TAMSIN I seem to remember you said that when she was thirteen. How many special birthdays are you planning to give her?

JACK No, come on, fair dos, Tam. She'll be sixteen. Age of consent, eh?

TAMSIN I think she's probably jumped the gun a bit there, Jack.

JACK (*frowning*) I don't know anything about that. That's not what she's told me.

TAMSIN No, she wouldn't.

JACK I'll get changed, then.

*JACK goes back into the house.*

**TAMSIN** *stares after him, troubled. She picks up his discarded washing, a bundle wrapped in yesterday's shirt. She unrolls the bundle.*

**TAMSIN** (*sniffing the shirt, reacting*) You bugger...

*She goes back into the house.*

*The lights cross-fade back to COLIN and KATHRYN's.*

*From the house, a different grandfather clock starts to strike five.*

**KATHRYN** *has taken a small hip flask from her bag and is in the process of taking a swig when COLIN returns from the house.*

*He notices KATHRYN as she hastily puts away the flask, but makes no comment.*

**KATHRYN** Was that for me?

**COLIN** What?

**KATHRYN** The phone? Was it for me?

**COLIN** No. For me.

**KATHRYN** Who was it?

**COLIN** Oh, nothing. Work.

**KATHRYN** You were talking for long enough.

*Silence. COLIN is troubled.*

What's the time?

**COLIN** (*abstracted*) Mmmm?

**KATHRYN** Only a few minutes ago, the clock in the hall struck six and now the one in the dining room just struck five.

**COLIN** Oh, lord. They're out of step again.

KATHRYN Well, I wish you'd sort them out, Colin. They're driving me mad.

COLIN I will. As soon as I've...

KATHRYN I mean, which one of them is right?

COLIN Neither of them.

KATHRYN Then what's the time, for heaven's sake?

COLIN Seventeen and a half minutes to seven.

KATHRYN We are, we're going to be very late. Very late. (*Aware of his abstracted mood*) You alright?

COLIN Yes. Yes, yes. (*Pause*) Yes... It was - er - this specialist from Manchester, that's all.

*Pause.* KATHRYN *waits.*

He had some rather bad news... That's all.

KATHRYN Oh, I see. Manchester?

COLIN Chap called Hinchwood. Jeremy Hinchwood.

KATHRYN Hinchwood? Do we know him?

COLIN No. We've never met him. Cancer specialist. Rather good in his field. (*Pause*) Yes, I had to refer a patient of mine a week or so ago. Hinchwood's just come back with a rather negative diagnosis.

KATHRYN Oh, dear.

COLIN Yes. Oh, dear.

KATHRYN That's life.

COLIN Yes. Well. In his particular case, only a month or two more of it.

KATHRYN A month?

COLIN Well, six at the most.

**KATHRYN** Dreadful. Do they know they've only got six months? This person?

**COLIN** Hinchwood said he'd written to him. Followed up with a phone call this morning. Explained the situation and probable ramifications. Then I'm around to pick up the pieces.

**KATHRYN** I'd hate to be told that. Six months? Hardly time to do anything. If someone told me that, I'd probably drop dead with shock.

**COLIN** I don't think this chap will. Not the type. It'll probably all happen pretty quickly when it happens. He can look forward to a few good months, before he goes.

**KATHRYN** Who is it? Do I know him?

**COLIN** (*admonishingly*) Now, Kathryn...

**KATHRYN** What does he do, then? What's his job? You can at least tell me that.

**COLIN** Don't for heaven's sake start all this twenty questions business again. You're always doing this. I can't discuss it, I really can't. After all, I am the chap's GP and there is such a thing as patient confidentiality.

**KATHRYN** You can tell your own wife, surely.

**COLIN** No, I can't tell my own wife. Especially when she happens to be you. Because she'll promptly go and tell everyone else.

**KATHRYN** What's the point of being married to a doctor if you can't hear these things first? If he won't share them? What's the point in being married to you, Colin?

**COLIN** That's a separate issue entirely.

*Pause. The first grandfather clock starts to chime seven.*

**KATHRYN** *close her eyes in exasperation.*

Why on earth does it matter what the blessed man does for a living?

**KATHRYN** Well, if he were a bus driver, say, for instance, it could be very dangerous. If he dropped dead at the wheel with a bus load of passengers on board.

**COLIN** I daresay the bus company would have health and safety regulations in place to cover such an eventuality. (*He laughs at his own rare joke*) I don't know whether that's the same in the case of schoolteachers. (*He laughs again*)

**KATHRYN** Schoolteachers?

**COLIN** *stops laughing.*

He's a schoolteacher, then?

**COLIN** (*vaguely*) Er – possibly. No. Look, we should be going, Kathryn, we really should. It's nearly eight and a half minutes to. We're going to be dreadfully late for rehearsal. Then we'll have Peggy in a stew, won't we? I'll get the car out.

**COLIN** *starts to move off to the house.*

Kathryn, I know you, you'll try and wheedle this thing out of me, but this time my lips are totally sealed. You mustn't mention a word about this, not to anyone—

**KATHRYN** About what?

**COLIN** About George's condition. Don't say a word to anybody. Please. I'll be out in the driveway.

**COLIN** *goes off.*

**KATHRYN** (*thoughtfully*) George? Teacher? George Riley? (*As the penny finally drops, stunned*) Oh, dear God! Not George. Not George Riley, please!

*She dives into her bag and takes out her mobile phone.  
She taps a number and waits.*

(*rising, as someone replies*) Jack? Kathryn... I've got the most terrible news... I thought you should be the first to know, you being so close to him... It's about George. George Riley...yes...

**COLIN** (*off calling*) Darling!

**KATHRYN** (*calling*) Coming! Just a minute!

*She moves towards the house.*

*(talking into the phone as she does so)* ...well, Colin's just let slip – you know how hopelessly indiscreet Colin is...he's just told me...now you're not to mention a word of this to anyone, Jack...promise me...

*As KATHRYN goes indoors still talking, the lights cross-fade back to the farm area. MONICA is again on the point of lighting a cigarette when SIMEON enters from the house. She hastily conceals the cigarette and lighter.*

**SIMEON** (*concerned*) OK?

**MONICA** *nods.*

*(smiling)* Thought you might have been having a crafty smoke there.

**MONICA** *shakes her head.*

We had an agreement about that, hadn't we?

**MONICA** *is silent.*

Come on... Monica...come on, girl...

**MONICA** I don't think I can cope with him. Eight years old, he really frightens me, Simeon, he does. He won't even acknowledge I'm in the room. He's been three months like this.

**SIMEON** *is silent.*

Three months!

**SIMEON** (*awkwardly*) Well... His mum meant the world to him...

**MONICA** (*angrily*) Yes, well, she's gone, hasn't she? She was so fond of him, she walked out and left you both. So he'll

have to get used to me now, won't he? (*Slight pause*) Till I run away as well.

**SIMEON** *touches her arm gently.*

God, I spend my life running away, don't I? We both got on so well, too, when I used to teach him. My star pupil. Ridiculous of us to think he'd adjust to all this. That he'd ever accept me as his... No, we were in too much of a hurry. I was. I moved in here far too early – before he'd had time to – before he was ready. We should have waited.

**SIMEON** (*tenderly*) I couldn't have waited.

**MONICA**, *touched by this, touches his face and smiles at him tenderly.* **SIMEON** *makes to respond but she gets up abruptly, moving back to the house.*

**MONICA** Sorry, Sim. You can do without all this, can't you? I'll go back inside. Check he's OK. Have another go.

**SIMEON** You alright, then?

**MONICA** (*unconvincingly*) Yes...yes...

**MONICA** *goes off to the house.*

**SIMEON** *watches her and then, in frustration, makes as if to kick the seat.*

**SIMEON** Oh, bugger it all to buggery!

*He stamps off towards the house as the lights cross-fade to JACK and TAMSIN's.*

**JACK** *comes out from the house, distressed.* **TAMSIN** *follows him, concerned.*

**TAMSIN** Six months?

**JACK** That's what she just told me. According to Colin.

**TAMSIN** Could they be wrong?

**JACK** (*stunned*) I don't know. I don't know. Maybe. (*He sits*)  
Oh, God. George? Not George.

**TAMSIN** (*concerned*) Oh, I'm sorry. You're both so close, too.

**JACK** My best friend. Always has been. Oh, God, it takes the wind  
out of you, something like this. The breath out of your body.  
I haven't felt like this since I gave up bloody five-a-side...

**TAMSIN** They may have got it wrong. You read about them  
getting it wrong all the time. Besides, you know Colin. I  
wouldn't trust him, not as a doctor. He put Tilly on those  
tablets when she first started her you-know-whats, didn't  
he? Remember? Made her constipated for weeks.

**JACK** (*in a daze, barely hearing her*) Yes...yes...yes...

**TAMSIN** You want a drink? Can I get you a brandy?

**JACK** ...yes...

**TAMSIN** I'll get you a brandy. Wait there.

*The doorbell rings.*

Oh, this'll be them. I'll go. Sit still.

**JACK** (*fumbling for his mobile*) I ought to ring George, you  
know. Kathryn said Colin let it out by mistake. Do you  
think George even knows yet?

**TAMSIN** I don't know. Maybe he doesn't...

*The door bell rings again.*

...better be careful what you say to him. In case he hasn't  
heard. Terrible if you were the first to break the news to  
him, wouldn't it?

**TAMSIN** *goes indoors.*

**JACK** (*listening to his phone*) It's ringing.

*Lights come up on George's house for the first time. From  
inside the house, a phone starts to ring. It continues for*

*a second or so and then loud rock music starts up from within as someone, presumably George, starts up his sound system. The phone continues to ring.*

*In his own garden, JACK waits impatiently.*

TAMSIN returns with COLIN and KATHRYN.

TAMSIN (*as she enters*) He's just out here...he's on the phone...

JACK No reply from his house. (*He cuts off his mobile call*)

*The phone stops ringing in George's house. The lights and the music cut off.*

COLIN (*cheerily*) Hallo, Jack. Good to see you. How are things?

JACK (*moving off to the house*) Excuse me one minute. Sorry, Colin, mate.

KATHRYN Hallo, Jack...

TAMSIN What are you doing?

JACK (*as he goes*) I'm going to try his mobile. In case he's out somewhere.

*JACK goes off down the garden.*

KATHRYN Poor Jack. It must be especially awful for him...

TAMSIN Yes, terrible news, isn't it? Jack's taken it very hard, of course.

COLIN What news is this?

TAMSIN The news about George.

COLIN George?

KATHRYN George Riley, darling.

TAMSIN About his – you know – condition...

COLIN His condition?

TAMSIN Yes. He's dying apparently. Six months to live.

COLIN Good God!

TAMSIN Didn't you know? I thought you knew.

KATHRYN Of course he knew.

COLIN Yes, of course I knew. I just didn't know anyone else knew. How on earth did you know?

TAMSIN Jack told me.

COLIN How did he know?

TAMSIN Well, from Kathryn. Kathryn told him.

COLIN How on earth did you know it was George Riley?

KATHRYN I guessed.

COLIN There we go again. So much for patient confidentiality.

TAMSIN Do you know if George knows yet?

COLIN Oh, yes. The consultant wrote to him a couple of days ago. And then phoned him today.

KATHRYN Why on earth's George not mentioned it to anyone?

TAMSIN Probably doesn't want to upset people. Knowing George. Jack's trying to get hold of him. But there's no answer. It's awful. He's all on his own in that little house, isn't he?

KATHRYN Since that wretched woman walked out.

COLIN What wretched woman?

KATHRYN His wife, darling. George's wife. What was her name?

TAMSIN Monica.

COLIN Oh, yes. Monica. She ought to be told, of course.

KATHRYN Why should she? She walked out on the man, didn't she? She's probably not even remotely interested.

TAMSIN I think that's slightly unfair on her. I think there were probably two sides to it.

**KATHRYN** Anyway, sorry we're late. Rehearsals are in the playroom as usual, I take it?

**TAMSIN** Oh, I'd almost forgotten we're meant to be rehearsing.

**KATHRYN** Our director's no doubt already in there? Impatiently hopping up and down?

**TAMSIN** No, Peggy's not arrived yet.

**KATHRYN** Really? That's unlike Peggy.

**TAMSIN** No, you're the first. I was beginning to think I'd got the wrong day.

**JACK** *returns, slightly tearful.*

Any luck?

**JACK** He's not answering his mobile either. I left a message. Just in case he picks up later. You know, I was thinking one of us ought to go round there, you know...

**TAMSIN** Are you sure, Jack?

**JACK** George will be in a terrible state. He'll need our help. Need us to rally round him. All of us.

**KATHRYN** If it was me, I don't think I'd welcome a coach party.

**TAMSIN** No, he probably wants to be on his own. You've left the message on his mobile, Jack, that's all you can do for now. He'll call if he needs us.

**COLIN** My advice is to leave him be. Let him come to terms in his own way. Perhaps a moment of quiet reflection.

**KATHRYN** I can't imagine George ever quiet. Let alone in reflection.

**TAMSIN** Was the answering machine on when you rang his landline?

**JACK** No, it wasn't switched on. It rang for ages.

**TAMSIN** Well, there you are. He must be home. He's choosing not to answer.

**JACK** Unless he's lying there. Unconscious. Taken an overdose—

**KATHRYN** Oh, Jack, really...

**TAMSIN** He'll be fine, love. George would never do that.

**JACK** (*in sudden despair*) Why George? Why the hell did it have to be George? It's always the people who are full of life that go first, have you noticed? The miserable bastards live for ever, don't they?

*Slight pause.*

**TAMSIN** Oh, I promised you a brandy, love, didn't I? Anyone else fancy a drink? I know we shouldn't before rehearsal but... Tea? Or coffee?

**KATHRYN** Brandy sounds lovely. Good for shock, don't they say?

**COLIN** No, it's not. Complete fallacy.

**TAMSIN** Really? I always thought—

**COLIN** You're far better off with a glass of water.

**KATHRYN** Try telling the St Bernards, dear.

**TAMSIN** I'll get the brandy.

**JACK** (*rising*) I'll get it. You stay put.

**TAMSIN** You sure?

**JACK** (*his tears welling up again*) I'm going to try George again...

*JACK goes off, barely able to hide his grief.*

**TAMSIN** He's really taking this badly. They're such friends, of course.

**JACK** (*offstage, with a cry of grief*) Oh, God!

*The others do their best to ignore this. Not wishing to intrude.*

**TAMSIN** (*rather too brightly*) Where on earth have Peggy and co. got to? This isn't like her at all, is it?

**JACK** (*offstage, wailing*) Why George? Why?

**TAMSIN** I'm – I was in two minds whether to take this part, actually. It's only because Peggy – I think she couldn't find anyone else to play it...

*Another burst of sobbing from JACK.*

**KATHRYN** You're perfect. You'll be a perfect Ginny.

**TAMSIN** She's supposed to be twenty-something, isn't she?

**KATHRYN** Where does it say that?

**TAMSIN** She's supposed to be twenty-seven or something... Late twenties.

**KATHRYN** Where does it say that in the script? Listen, I've done this play three times before and I can tell you, you're a perfect Ginny. Far and away the best. Believe me, Tam, you're ideal casting. You look young – youthful. With just that little hint of knowingness behind the eyes. The tiniest bit worn round the edges...

**TAMSIN** Thanks very much...

**KATHRYN** No, you know what I mean. It's what the character needs. Innocence. With a suggestion that she's seen it all before.

**TAMSIN** Please don't go on...

**COLIN** (*gallantly interceding*) After all she's meant to be having an affair with me, isn't she? In the play, I mean.

**KATHRYN** Well dramatic licence there, I think.

**TAMSIN** Don't be so mean, Kathryn! (*Coming on to COLIN slightly*) We could have a lovely affair, you and me, couldn't we Colin?

**COLIN** *laughs nervously, drawing back.*

**KATHRYN** I rest my case.

TAMSIN I mean, in the first scene I have to walk around with virtually nothing on.

COLIN (*laughing*) Look forward to that...

KATHRYN You're not even onstage. You'll be in the wings, I hope. Learning your lines.

TAMSIN I mean, next to Jeff, I'm going to look like his mother, aren't I? I've got a daughter practically the same age as him.

KATHRYN What nonsense! Jeff's much older than Tilly. He's twenty, isn't he? He must be.

TAMSIN Nineteen. He's nineteen. He told me in the pub the other night.

KATHRYN And how old's Tilly?

TAMSIN Sixteen in September.

COLIN Sixteen. I can't even remember being sixteen, you know.

KATHRYN You may have skipped that age altogether, Colin. You probably slept through it.

*JACK returns with a bottle of brandy and four glasses.*

JACK (*sniffing*) Sorry.

TAMSIN Did you get hold of him, love?

JACK (*setting down the tray*) No, he's still not answering.

TAMSIN (*taking over*) I'll do this. (*She pours brandies during the next*) Kathryn?

KATHRYN Thank you. Just a wee one. Little bit more. Whoaaa! Easy!

COLIN No, thank you. I'm driving. I'll have a sip of Kathryn's.

KATHRYN No, you won't.

TAMSIN (*passing a glass to JACK*) Darling?

*She pours herself a glass and they settle.*

(*raising her glass*) Well, here's to...

**KATHRYN** Yes, to...

**COLIN** Yes...

**JACK** Listen, I've been giving things a bit of thought out there. We're all George's friends, aren't we? I know I'm a particularly special friend...his greatest friend...his oldest... I love the man...

*He stops, in danger of breaking down again.*

...but we all of us share that in our own ways... (*He falters again*) ...love... I've known George since he and I were at school together...just down the road there...the same school, of course, he teaches in now...we were twins, really...that's what it amounted to...different parents, of course, but... living next door to each other...both only kids...sharing the same dreams, ideals to start with...brothers. Till George chose one path...and I – went off down another...did what I wanted to do. He stayed here – married a fellow teacher, married Monica...whilst I...met Tam...made a bit of money... had Tilly...came back here then...get her away from London... But George – all that time stayed here, he kept faith with the original dream. He held on to the ideals. Whereas – I – sold off my bit...like another chunk of real estate...

**TAMSIN** (*quietly*) That's not actually true, you know...

**JACK** Well, that's what it feels like...not that George ever...he's never criticised me for it...never accused me, you know, of selling out...of not keeping... But let me tell you, that is one very special person there. And, at this time, he's going to need every bit of love we can spare... And I think we, all of us, in our various ways, we owe him that, at least.

**KATHRYN** Hear! Hear!

**TAMSIN** Agreed.

**COLIN** Oh, yes.

# WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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