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SF PERUSALS

SAY SOMETHING HAPPENED

A Play

by Alan Bennett

SAMUEL FRENCH

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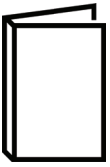
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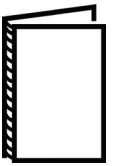
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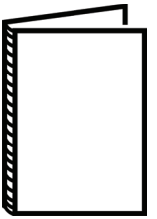
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Bennett was born in Leeds in 1934. After studying at Oxford University he collaborated as a writer and performer with Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Peter Cook in *Beyond the Fringe* in 1960 at the Edinburgh Festival.

He then turned to writing full time and produced his first stage play *Forty Years On* in 1968. His other plays include *Getting On, Habeas Corpus, The Old Country, The Lady in the Van, A Question of Attribution, The Madness of George III* (together with the Oscar-nominated screenplay *The Madness of King George*), an adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and *The History Boys*; as well as many television plays such as *A Day Out, Sunset across the Bay, A Woman of No Importance* and the series of monologues *Talking Heads* and *Talking Heads II*.

SAY SOMETHING HAPPENED

First presented on television by BBC2 on 17th December 1982 with the following cast:

MAM	Thora Hird
DAD	Hugh Lloyd
JUNE POTTER	Julie Walters

Produced by Innes Lloyd
Directed by Giles Foster
Designed by Austin Ruddy
Music by George Fenton

The hall and living room of a semi-detached house. Day.

A couple in their sixties are sitting there, the man in an easy chair, the woman gazing out of the window. Pause.

MAM More leaves coming down. *(Pause)* Straight on to our path. *(Pause)* I could be in and out all day. *(Pause)* It's not right. It's her tree, yet somehow they're our leaves.

DAD I might get down the atlas in a minute. *(Pause)* Try and spot Helsinki.

MAM I'm just wondering if I ought to wash one or two stockings.

DAD *gets up to get the atlas.*

Don't upset. I've just this minute sat down. *(Pause)* I shouldn't know where to look.

DAD Helsinki. Oh yes. It's the capital of Finland. It was a station on the little wireless we had when we were first married. Hilversum. Helsinki. Droitwich. No end of different places.

MAM All radio this that and the other now.

DAD It won't be so warm. Getting on for the Arctic Circle.

MAM It's to be hoped she takes them little bootee things we bought her. They'll be just what the doctor ordered in the Arctic Circle.

DAD *is turning over the pages of the atlas.*

DAD It can't be so far off Russia.

MAM *(alarmed)* Russia?

DAD She's a sensible girl. Russia won't worry our Margaret. *(He reads out the statistics from the atlas)* "Helsinki. Seaport and

capital city of Finland. Population two-point-seven million. Chief industries: carpets, sugar, paper-making—

The door chimes go.

—fisheries."

MAM I hope this isn't next door. *(She stands up and looks out of the window)* It's a young woman.

DAD What sort of a young woman? *(He gets up)*

MAM Educated. Got a briefcase. You go. Only, Dad...

DAD *is going out into the hall. He pauses.*

Put the chain on.

In the hall **DAD** *puts the chain on and opens the door.*

We don't see the young woman on the other side and the following is spoken through the open crack of the door.

DAD Hallo.

JUNE *(offstage)* Mr Rhodes?

DAD Yes.

JUNE *(offstage)* June Potter. I'm from the council. The Social Services Department.

DAD Yes?

JUNE *(offstage)* You had a leaflet.

DAD What leaflet?

JUNE *(offstage)* You should have had a leaflet. Put through.

DAD *(calling)* Mam. Have we had a leaflet?

MAM *comes out into the hall.*

MAM What about?

JUNE *(offstage)* The register. Old people in the council area.

MAM *(mouthing to* **DAD***)* I threw it away. *(Pause)* We're not council tenants. You've got mistaken.

JUNE *(offstage)* Hullo!

DAD Yes?

JUNE *(offstage)* Rhodes, Arthur. Rhodes, Elizabeth Mary.

DAD Well?

JUNE *(offstage)* It's not confined to council tenants. It's all senior citizens in the council area. We have you down as pensioners.

MAM *(mouthing)* Ask her for her card.

DAD She looks right enough.

MAM She should have a card. There was a woman at Bramley gagged with her own tights, and they said they were gasmen.

Suddenly the card is held round the door and moved up and down. **DAD** *takes it and hands it to* **MAM**. *He then unchains the door.*

It is **JUNE POTTER**, *a girl in her early twenties wearing a cape.*

Does this reckon to be you? June Potter?

JUNE Yes.

MAM The hair's different.

JUNE I wasn't in Social Services then. I was Transport. I had it frizzed out. They tend to be more relaxed in Social Services.

MAM It's not the same colour.

JUNE I'd just got back from Torquay.

DAD It is her.

JUNE I might have had it dyed, then. I can't remember.

MAM Dyed?

JUNE A cream rinse.

MAM I thought you said you worked for the council. My uncle worked for the council, and you'd never see him without a collar and tie.

DAD They all dye their hair nowadays. Lads. Everybody.

MAM He wore a suit every day of his life did my uncle.

JUNE Social Services they make us wear what we like.

MAM That's one of them poncho affairs, isn't it?

DAD Well, I've seen Princess Anne in one of them.

MAM Not since she got married.

JUNE It's just a matter of one or two questions.

DAD Fetch her inside. She's only young.

MAM You keep saying that. Youth's no guarantee nowadays. There was a woman attacked in the Grasmeres and it left her a vegetable. Wipe your feet.

JUNE *comes in and they go through into the living room.*

(entering the room) If you want to come waltzing into people's houses you ought to get yourself a little costume. You'd look heaps better in a two-piece, and you'd find people much more forthcoming. She wants to take a leaf out of our Margaret's book.

DAD They can't all be like our Margaret.

MAM That's a change, coming from you. Sit down. Do you want some tea?

JUNE *nods.*

MAM *goes out to the kitchen.*

(offstage) Sending out questionnaires. They want to do something about public toilets. Stuff written up on walls.

Them little rings from beer cans you see lying about everywhere – never mind questionnaires.

DAD *has been embarrassed by all this, and is more anxious to put* **JUNE** *at her ease.*

DAD She's hyper-careful is Mam.

JUNE No, full marks. There are very few people your age know how to answer the door. I wish I could show her to Mr Farquarson. At night I walk down the middle of the road.

Pause.

DAD I like those poncho things, personally.

JUNE Mr Farquarson tells us not to dress up. Otherwise we get into an "us" and "them" situation. *(Pause)* These are in fact old ski pants.

DAD *nods. Pause.*

DAD Not them jogging things?

JUNE No.

Pause.

DAD Not a jogger?

JUNE No fear. *(Pause)* Thin enough!

JUNE *prepares her interviewing kit – clipboard, form, pencil – very methodically.*

DAD What's it to do with, this questionnaire?

JUNE No. *(Reading from her notebook as if talking to a child)* "Where possible, interviewer should endeavour to see all members of the household together." I've never done this before, so I have to stick to the book of words. *(Pause)* You know…structured.

DAD Don't want telling two different tales. *(Pause)* Tip-top job, now, working for the Council.

JUNE They took me on to do discs. Controlled parking.

DAD
JUNE } *(together)* Transport.

JUNE Then the inevitable happened. Computers. I went and saw Mr Stringfellow and he said, "My advice to you, June, is to do a bit of a sideways jump and get yourself into the S.S." Social Services.

DAD We don't have a parking problem. We don't have a car.

JUNE I prefer working with people to cars. They're more unpredictable but they're more rewarding. With me people come first. Old people specifically. Old*er* people.

Pause.

DAD They are a problem.

JUNE Yes.

DAD Where to put them. They have to be put somewhere.

Pause.

JUNE Old people?

DAD Cars. I've often thought, if we had one I could put one of those carport affairs inside the front gate. There's room.

JUNE As I see it, young people have a lot to give old people, and old people have a lot to give young people. You know… *caring.*

DAD I agree. With a car our daughter can run us to Ilkley. Or Knaresborough. Will you be motorized?

JUNE I've got my trusty moped, only the clutch has packed in, so I'm sampling public transport.

DAD Your parents'll have a car?

JUNE Split up.

DAD Oh. *(Pause)* That's on the up and up.

JUNE What?

DAD Divorce.

MAM *returns with the tea things.*

MAM How do you like your tea? We like ours strong.

JUNE Weak, please. No milk.

MAM No milk?

JUNE No milk.

MAM Whatever for?

DAD Because that's how she likes it.

JUNE I generally have lemon. I don't want lemon but that's what I have.

DAD I've seen our Margaret have lemon.

MAM Only in a café. We haven't got any lemon.

DAD We've got one of those plastic squirters. Lemon juice.

JUNE That'll do.

DAD *gets up to go into the kitchen.*

MAM And Dad. Some little plates.

He goes.

All that's come in now. Lemon in your tea. Yogurt. Carrying babies on your back. We weren't brought up to any of that. I was thought a bit revolutionary for having prunes.

DAD *returns with the plastic lemon and plates.*

Not them plates, Dad. The *side*plates.

She goes out.

DAD You're not bothered about sideplates? *(Calling)* She's not bothered about sideplates.

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