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SF PERUSALS

ROLEPLAY

A Comedy

by Alan Ayckbourn

SAMUEL FRENCH

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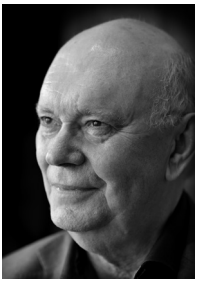

Alan Ayckbourn has worked in theatre as a playwright and director for over fifty years, rarely if ever tempted by television or film, which perhaps explains why he continues to be so prolific. To date he has written more than seventy-nine plays, many one act plays and a large amount of work for the younger 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After a lifetime of playwriting (I first started as an unpublished writer at the age of ten!)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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Damsels in Distress is a trilogy of plays first seen at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough and later at the Duchess Theatre, London. Each of the three comedies is self-contained, the common theme linking them is that the setting for each is the same London Docklands apartment and all three concern young women in various states of distress.

ROLEPLAY

First performed at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, on 4th September 2001. The same production was subsequently presented by Michael Codron, Lee Dean, Michael Linnit, David Ian for ClearChannel Entertainment and Andrew Lloyd Webber, at the Duchess Theatre, London, on 7th September 2002. The cast was as follows:

JULIE-ANN JOBSON	Saskia Butler
JUSTIN LAZENBY	Bill Champion
PAIGE PETITE	Alison Pargeter
MICKY RALE	Tim Faraday
DEREK JOBSON	Robert Austin
DEE JOBSON	Beth Tuckey
ARABELLA LAZENBY	Jacqueline King

Directed by Alan Ayckbourn
Designed by Roger Glossop
Lighting design by Mick Hughes
Costume design by Christine Wall

CHARACTERS

JUSTIN LAZENBY, thirty
JULIE-ANN JOBSON, his fiancée, twenty-three
PAIGE PETITE, an ex-dancer, twenty-nine
MICKY RALE, an ex-boxer, forty
DEREK JOBSON, Julie-Ann's father, fifties
DEE JOBSON, Julie-Ann's mother, forty-five
ARABELLA LAZENBY, Justin's mother, fifties

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

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene One	Justin's riverside apartment. March. 6pm
Scene Two	The same – A few minutes later

ACT II

	The same – Two hours later

Time: one evening in March

ACT I

Scene One

JUSTIN'*s riverside apartment on the Thames, somewhere in London's Docklands.*

A main sitting area and an adjoining walkthrough kitchen/dining area. Sliding windows at one end of the sitting area lead on to a small riverside balcony. At the other end of this sitting area, a well-stocked bar. Near the window, a desk and chair. A sofa, an armchair and a heavy coffee table. A few quite healthy pot plants dotted around. Off this area is a short hallway leading directly to the front door. Also two archways leading to another area visible to us, the common kitchen/dining space. The kitchen end is tidy and well equipped, evidently regularly cleaned. The other end has a small table with two chairs. Leading from this is a further door to the offstage rooms: bedroom, bathroom and a second spare bedroom, usually **JUSTIN**'*s study but tonight converted into a dining room.*

It is six p.m. on a grey, windy March evening. Outside it is raining heavily. We hear the rain occasionally lashing the windows as the wind gusts.

JULIE-ANN, *a woman in her twenties, is in the kitchen area in the process of carefully folding six linen table napkins which she is then placing on to a large tray. She is dressed casually. A particularly loud gust of wind and rain causes her to look anxiously towards the window.*

JULIE-ANN *(calling off)* Hark at it!

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Hot-hoo-hay?

JULIE-ANN *(calling)* Just hark at it!

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Hwaymin!

JULIE-ANN *(calling)* It's getting worse. There's great waves on the river out there.

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Harnteeruyulee.

JULIE-ANN *(calling)* Terrible. It's more like the North Sea than the Thames.

JUSTIN, *a man of about thirty, appears in the doorway. He is slightly hot and breathless from his exertions.*

JUSTIN Sorry, Julie? What did you say?

JULIE-ANN This weather. Hark at it...

JUSTIN Oh. Yes.

JULIE-ANN Hope it doesn't make them late. If it's like this on the motorway...

JUSTIN Well. It may not be.

JULIE-ANN I mean, they're coming from Doncaster. If it's like this on the Ml...

JUSTIN *(looking out of the window)* Yes, it is rough out there, isn't it? Don't often see it as bad as this.

JULIE-ANN I mean, if they break down or have a puncture...

JUSTIN They'll be fine.

JULIE-ANN I mean, they're both getting on, you know. And Daddy's never been a very good driver. He likes to turn round to talk to you when he's driving.

JUSTIN Well, he's only bringing your mother, isn't he?

JULIE-ANN What's that got to do with it?

JUSTIN Well, won't she be in the front?

JULIE-ANN Oh, yes.

JUSTIN Unless they pick up a hitch-hiker.

JULIE-ANN *finishes her napkin folding.*

JULIE-ANN Oh, no, they never do that. Daddy doesn't approve of them. (*She shows the napkins)* There! What do you think, Justy?

JUSTIN (*frowning a little)* Lovely.

JULIE-ANN I'll give you a hand to move that table now, shall I?

JUSTIN No need, I've done it. Wasn't heavy.

JULIE-ANN You haven't moved all your stuff as well?

JUSTIN I put it in the bedroom.

JULIE-ANN The printer?

JUSTIN Yes.

JULIE-ANN And the big computer?

JUSTIN And the scanner. And the speakers, the zip drive. And the mains lead.

JULIE-ANN *(kissing him lightly)* Clever darling. Where'd you put it all?

JUSTIN In the bedroom.

JULIE-ANN Well done. *(She takes the tray)* Does it work all right in there with the table in the middle?

JUSTIN Just about. Have a look. See what you think.

JULIE-ANN *goes off with the tray.*

I think we can just about squeeze six of us round. If we all hold our breath and nobody eats too much.

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Hot?

JUSTIN I said— *(He gives up, calling)* Doesn't matter.

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Harnteeru!

JUSTIN *(calling)* Nothing.

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Oh, steel get ordimadus found, farthing.

JUSTIN *(calling)* What?

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Ormibustle rust slit. Eyes un bosey.

JUSTIN *(only mildly irritated, half to himself)* I can't hear you, Julie!

JUSTIN *goes off after her.*

(calling) What did you say, darling?

The sound of their voices off. We now can't hear either of them.

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Oh queasily, steel cabbage.

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Slee pud rye it motherway.

JULIE-ANN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Ho dough weed. Sleall queez bound.

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Ho hay. Lo hubble.

JULIE-ANN *enters from the dining room with the empty tray.*

JULIE-ANN *(entering)* No, it's fine, darling, it's perfect where it is. Clever you. We'll all fit round. None of us are that big, are we?

JUSTIN *follows her back on.*

During the following, **JULIE-ANN** *starts taking cutlery from a drawer and placing it in neat piles on to the tray. Six of everything plus a number of serving spoons and forks.*

JUSTIN Sorry, what did you say?

JULIE-ANN Your mother's not big, is she?

JUSTIN My mother? No, my mother's... a normal sort of size.

JULIE-ANN Tall?

JUSTIN Yes, she's tall-ish.

JULIE-ANN She always is in the photos. Tall's not a problem. *(She thinks for a second)* My father will be fine up that end by the window. He'll be all right there. Not too squashed.

JUSTIN Is your father—well built, then?

JULIE-ANN Daddy's—he's quite well built, yes. You know.

JUSTIN Right.

JULIE-ANN But then he is very nearly sixty, Justy.

JUSTIN *(a little mystified)* Right.

Slight pause.

JULIE-ANN *(laughing)* Good job my sister's not coming. She's enormous.

JUSTIN Lucy-Jane?

JULIE-ANN No. Not Lucy-Jane. Sally-Jo.

JUSTIN Right. I still get them muddled. Sorry.

JULIE-ANN I told you, Lucy-Jane's the one in Canada. The one we don't talk about.

JUSTIN Right.

JULIE-ANN Don't for heaven's sake mention her in front of my parents, will you?

JUSTIN I won't.

JULIE-ANN You can talk about Sally-Jo all you like.

JUSTIN On the whole, it's probably safer if I don't talk about either of them.

JULIE-ANN Just as you like. *(Rather coyly)* You'll have to, though, sooner or later, won't you, darling?

JUSTIN How do you mean?

JULIE-ANN Well, when they're both, you know—your sisters-in-law.

JUSTIN Oh, sure. Yes, well... Then. Sure. Yes.

JULIE-ANN *(examining the cutlery carefully)* Some of these are filthy, Justy.

JUSTIN Oh, are they?

JULIE-ANN Which of us washed up last, I wonder?

JUSTIN No idea...

JULIE-ANN I bet it was. You're supposed to wash them properly in hot soapy water, rinse them and then dry them. Not just run them under the tap.

JUSTIN Damn! I must have been off school that day.

JULIE-ANN What we really need is a proper dishwasher.

JUSTIN I'll try and find someone. There'll need to be a height restriction, though. They'll have to live under the sink.

JULIE-ANN *(oblivious)* It could fit just there perfectly. I mean, once we're—married—we'll be giving dinner parties all the time, won't we?

JUSTIN Once we've got the ballroom open.

JULIE-ANN Ballroom? How do you—? *(She realizes he's joking, at last)* Oh! You! Honestly, Justy. You're so naughty sometimes, aren't you?

JUSTIN *smiles.*

(blowing a kiss at him) Always teasing me, aren't you? *(She smiles at him. She turns her attention back to washing the forks. As she does so she sings discordantly)*

JUSTIN *winces but tolerates it for a while. Then:*

JUSTIN What else do you want me to do?

JULIE-ANN *(indicating the kitchen chairs)* You can take those chairs through if you like.

JUSTIN Sure.

JULIE-ANN We'll keep those two for us. Put those by our places.

JUSTIN Right. How are we all sitting again?

JULIE-ANN Justy! How many more times! Daddy at the end...

JUSTIN By the window?

JULIE-ANN Correct. Then on his right, me, and then your mother's—man friend—on my right...

JUSTIN Olaf.

JULIE-ANN Olaf on my right... and he definitely speaks English, you're sure of that?

JUSTIN Apparently.

JULIE-ANN Well, I do hope so.

JUSTIN Mind you, it doesn't really matter to my mother. None of the men she lives with ever gets a word in, anyway.

JULIE-ANN So it's this Olaf on my right—I hope your mother doesn't talk too much—

JUSTIN So do I.

JULIE-ANN —you know, monopolise the conversation too much—then Mummy at the other end—with her back to the door, then you on her right and then next to you, your mother who will be on Daddy's left, of course. Have you got that?

JUSTIN Daddy's left. Yes. I think so. *(He picks up the chairs again, but then hesitates)* Er... Julie.

JULIE-ANN *(absorbed with polishing the cutlery with a cloth)* Mmm?

JUSTIN You're not... we're not... we're not in danger of going over the top a bit with all this, are we? You know, of making too big a thing of it?

JULIE-ANN It is a big thing.

JUSTIN Yes, well. Big-ish.

JULIE-ANN The first time I'm going to meet your mother and her—current man. The first time you'll meet my parents. And the first time they'll all be meeting, too. It is important, Justy. It really is. It's very important.

JUSTIN I just don't want it all—you know—to get out of proportion.

JULIE-ANN No...

JUSTIN Well. *(He makes to go again)*

JULIE-ANN It's important for another reason as well, isn't it?

JUSTIN What's that?

JULIE-ANN We're going to—aren't we? We're going to—you know. Announce it. Our—you know— *(softly)* —engagement.

JUSTIN Oh, yes. Right.

JULIE-ANN Have you thought what you're going to say yet?

JUSTIN Say?

JULIE-ANN You said you were going to make a speech.

JUSTIN When?

JULIE-ANN During dinner.

JUSTIN I never said that.

JULIE-ANN Yes, you did.

JUSTIN When?

JULIE-ANN The other night. In bed.

JUSTIN Oh. Then. I thought that was a joke.

JULIE-ANN I didn't take it as a joke. I thought it was a lovely idea.

JUSTIN Ah.

JULIE-ANN So romantic. It made me cry.

JUSTIN Oh.

JULIE-ANN I mean happy-cry. You know.

JUSTIN Good.

JULIE-ANN Not cry-cry. You are going to make a speech, aren't you, Justy?

JUSTIN I'll—yes, I'll—say a few words, yes. Possibly.

JULIE-ANN How we're both so in love—how happy we are together—how we want to share the rest of our lives with each other. For ever and ever...?

JUSTIN Yes. Sure. Something along those lines...

JULIE-ANN *(frowning at a fork)* This is disgusting. I can't believe we've been eating off these all this time, Justy**.** *(She scrubs with renewed vigour)*

JUSTIN *(staring at her, a little worried)* Julie, listen, darling. No one's going to notice. I promise.

JULIE-ANN My mother certainly will.

JUSTIN Ah. Yes.

JUSTIN *goes off with the chairs, briefly.*

JULIE-ANN *(despairingly)* Filthy! They're all filthy! We could both have got typhoid, you know. That's the trouble with eating by candlelight all the time. You never notice the state of the cutlery.

A fresh gust of wind and rain at the window.

(calling) Is the bedroom window shut?

JUSTIN *(offstage, inaudibly)* Hot?

JULIE-ANN *(calling)* Is the bedroom window shut?

JUSTIN *returns empty-handed.*

JUSTIN Sorry, what did you say?

JULIE-ANN Is the window shut? In the bedroom?

JUSTIN Yes, I said I closed it.

JULIE-ANN We don't want another flood, do we?

JUSTIN *returns to the window.*

JUSTIN I think it's getting worse out here.

JULIE-ANN I hope your mother gets here all right.

JUSTIN She'll be all right. Olaf's driving her. They're only coming from Godalming.

JULIE-ANN I hope we haven't forgotten anything, that's all. I just pray I haven't forgotten anything.

JUSTIN Julie, darling, stop worrying. Calm down. It's all going to be a great evening, I promise you. They'll all get on fine. I'll love your parents, you'll adore my mother. They'll all fall in love with each other. It's only a party, Julie. That's all. Now relax, darling. All right?

JULIE-ANN *(unconvincingly)* I just want them to love you, Justy. As much as I do. *(She smiles and kisses him)* Well. Nearly as much, anyway. *(She pauses slightly)* You'll—er... You'll try to remember not to call me Julie while they're here, won't you, Justy?

JUSTIN What?

JULIE-ANN I told you they hate me being called Julie. I did tell you.

JUSTIN I didn't think you were serious. What am I supposed to call you, then?

JULIE-ANN Julie-Ann. That's what they prefer.

JUSTIN Is that what you prefer?

JULIE-ANN I don't mind...

JUSTIN Why should I call you Julie-Ann?

JULIE-ANN Please.

JUSTIN I've never called you Julie-Ann.

JULIE-ANN Just for tonight. For their sake. Please.

JUSTIN Well, I'll try and remember.

JULIE-ANN Don't sulk, Justy. Don't sulk, darling.

JUSTIN Look... We're putting ourselves out quite a bit one way or another, aren't we? For your parents? I mean, first of all we have to move everything of yours out of the flat, I've reorganised my study...

JULIE-ANN We had to move my things out—if my parents knew we'd been living together they'd just die—with shock.

JUSTIN Why? God, you're twenty-whatever-it-is. You're not a kid, Julie. You're a grown woman.

JULIE-ANN That doesn't come into it as far as they're concerned. They don't see it that way, not at all.

JUSTIN Why on earth not?

JULIE-ANN *(awkwardly)* Because I'm still...Being the youngest. They still look on me as—their—as the baby, if you like. You know what I mean.

JUSTIN *(faintly incredulous)* Their baby?

JULIE-ANN In a way.

JUSTIN Then it's time they grew up too, isn't it?

JULIE-ANN Listen, Justy, you have to understand. My eldest sister, Lucy-Jane, she had this terrible row with them and then moved to Canada. She never communicates from one year to the next and they refuse to have her name mentioned in the house. My other sister, Sally-Jo—she married this

man they both—disapprove of—and now she's moved to Truro—so they never see each other either. I'm all they have left, Justy. They need me.

JUSTIN They have each other, don't they?

JULIE-ANN But they need me.

JUSTIN So do I, Julie.

JULIE-ANN *(softly)* I know you do. And I need you, Justy. I really, really do. You know that.

They hold each other, happy for a second.

You'll love them. I know you will. You'll get on so well.

JUSTIN They do sound just the slightest bit heavy-going.

JULIE-ANN No. Never. My father's the funniest person I know. He makes me laugh more than anyone in the world. Apart from you, of course.

JUSTIN What about your mother?

JULIE-ANN Oh, you'll love her, Justy. She's exactly like me. Everyone says so. *(She glances at the clock)* Oh, we must get on. Look at the time. *(She takes up the tray of cutlery and starts to head off to the dining room)* Do you think your mother will mind me calling you Justy?

JUSTIN No idea. I don't give a stuff if she does, quite frankly.

JULIE-ANN I can call you Justin, if you'd rather. Just for tonight.

JUSTIN Don't bother. We can't both be sitting there all evening trying to remember each other's name.

JULIE-ANN *(going)* All right. I just wondered. Don't get sulky, now.

JULIE-ANN *goes off, singing. As before* **JUSTIN** *stands frowning. The phone rings.*

JUSTIN *(answering)* Hallo... Oh hallo, Mother... Are you just setting out? ... What? ... Listen, you can have one when

you get here, Mother, why don't you wait till you get here? ...Well, Olaf can wait, can't he? Especially if he's driving. I don't care if he's a rally driver, he still shouldn't drink, should he? ... Mother, just get in the car, please... Yes, I love you, too. See you soon. 'Bye.

JULIE-ANN *enters during the following. The tray is now empty.*

(ringing off, a small prayer) Please, please, God. Behave yourself tonight.

JULIE-ANN Who was that?

JUSTIN My mother. She's just setting off.

JULIE-ANN Oh. Cutting it fine, isn't she?

Slight pause.

Justy—I'm going to say something. And I don't want you to get cross with me.

JUSTIN Cross?

JULIE-ANN Promise me you won't get grumpy.

JUSTIN Why?

JULIE-ANN It's just that—now that I've moved all my things out of here and back to my own flat—all my belongings... I've been thinking seriously about this. I think things should stay that way, for now.

JUSTIN How do you mean?

JULIE-ANN I don't think we should live together any more. Not until we're married.

JUSTIN What?

JULIE-ANN All I'm saying is—

JUSTIN Julie, we've been living together for six months.

JULIE-ANN I know. That's the point. And I don't think we should any longer, you see. Not now we've decided to get married.

JUSTIN I don't follow this at all.

JULIE-ANN Well, otherwise, I was thinking about this, otherwise there won't be anything special about getting married, will there? It'll just be the same as before. I want being married to be something special, Justy.

JUSTIN It will be special. Of course it will.

JULIE-ANN How will it be?

JUSTIN Well, we'll have made vows to each other. I don't know, we'll have rings—and—go on honeymoon... *(He trails off)* Tax—and so on...

JULIE-ANN How different is that? We can go on holiday now—we can wear rings if we wanted to—we can make promises... I want it to be different...

JUSTIN I don't know what this is about. Are you saying we're not even going to sleep together?

JULIE-ANN That's the point. Not till we're married.

JUSTIN We're not getting married till the twenty-third of June.

JULIE-ANN That's not long.

JUSTIN It's three months away, Julie!

JULIE-ANN That'll fly by.

JUSTIN This is crazy.

JULIE-ANN Darling, think what it'll be like.

JUSTIN I am. It'll be terrible.

JULIE-ANN I mean, on the honeymoon night. When we haven't touched each other—like that—for all that time. It'll be fantastic, won't it?

JUSTIN I'll probably have forgotten how to do it.

JULIE-ANN Justy! You won't. And if you have, my darling, I'll soon remind you. I have this fantasy, you see. Let me tell you. We'll get on the plane together at Heathrow. And we'll fly to Barbados. But when we get to the airport, we'll both take separate taxis to the hotel, you see.

JUSTIN Separate—?

JULIE-ANN Shhh, wait! And I'll arrive first and I'll check in and go straight to the room where I'll have a bath and I'll change into my evening dress and I'll make myself really beautiful for you and then I'll take my book down to the lounge and I'll—

JUSTIN Your book? You're reading a book on our honeymoon night?

JULIE-ANN Wait! I haven't finished! And I'll sit in the lounge and wait. And pretend to read. Only the words will probably be a blur because I'll just be so excited with anticipation. And, in the meantime, you'll go up to the room and have your bath and get changed and make yourself handsome and desirable for me. And when you're ready, you'll come down to the lounge and in a moment you'll notice me all alone in the corner, a solitary beautiful woman absorbed in her book. I'll be unaware of you initially and then—quite suddenly—I'll become conscious of your stare—and for a fleeting second, our eyes will meet and, a few moments later, you'll be there, this tall figure standing over me, looking down. And you'll introduce yourself and offer to buy me a drink. I may be a little hesitant about accepting at first, but eventually, I'll agree—

JUSTIN Glad to hear it.

JULIE-ANN And for the rest of that magical evening we'll be like two strangers, gradually getting acquainted, growing ever closer and closer, increasingly filled with an aching longing for each other. A candle-lit dinner under the stars, caviar, lobster, delicious wine and then finally, when we can scarcely contain ourselves, up to the bedroom. And

we'll both undress and explore each other's body, first with our eyes, then our hands until finally we're making perfect love together as if for the first time in our lives yet having known each other for ever. Can't you imagine it, darling?

Silence.

JUSTIN What book are you currently reading? *(He pauses)* Yes, well, it sounds all right in theory but—

JULIE-ANN It'll be so beautiful.

JUSTIN What are we supposed to do in the meantime? I mean, between now and June.

JULIE-ANN We'll dream of each other, darling. I'll dream of you. You'll dream of me.

JUSTIN I'll probably be doing a bloody sight more than that.

JULIE-ANN Justy!

JUSTIN Julie, we've been doing it—we've been having sex together—well, several times a week, haven't we...? On average.

JULIE-ANN I've no idea. I don't go counting, do I...?

JUSTIN Well, nor do I. But the point is, Julie, you can't suddenly stop just like that and become a monk overnight. It's like smoking—you have to give up gradually. Otherwise you get—you know—withdrawal symptoms.

JULIE-ANN *(sadly)* So you won't agree to it?

JUSTIN I don't—it would—it would be very—difficult. That's all I'm saying.

JULIE-ANN It would be just as difficult for me.

JUSTIN I'm sure.

JULIE-ANN The only difference is, that I'm prepared to do it for you. But you aren't apparently for me. *(She moves away)*

JUSTIN Oh, come on, that's not fair. That's like me saying, OK, Julie, are you prepared to be hung upside down from Tower Bridge for three days just to prove you love me? Because I'm very happy to do it for you, darling!

JULIE-ANN Now you're just being silly.

JUSTIN Not at all.

JULIE-ANN *(rather coolly)* And it's Julie-Ann, please. Not Julie. I'm going to lay the table, excuse me.

JULIE-ANN *goes.*

JUSTIN Oh, come on! *(He stands miserably)* Come on, three months. Men aren't designed for that. No way.

JULIE-ANN *returns clutching five dessert forks. She appears a trifle distraught. The beginnings of a panic attack.*

What's wrong?

JULIE-ANN I thought you said you had six of everything?

JUSTIN I thought I did.

JULIE-ANN There's only five pudding forks. *(She goes to the cutlery drawer and rummages around in it)*

JUSTIN, *alarmed, goes to help her.*

JUSTIN Are you sure? I thought I had six of everything… My mother gave me six of everything originally, I'm sure she did.

Not finding whatever it is she's looking for, **JULIE-ANN** *tries one or two other drawers.*

JULIE-ANN *(a trace hysterical)* Well, you haven't got six pudding forks. There's only five. Look for yourself.

JUSTIN Well, I did have. *(He opens drawers at random)* Now don't—make a crisis of it… We'll find it. We'll find it, don't worry… Probably just slipped down the back of the—somewhere…

JULIE-ANN You won't find it, it's not here.

JUSTIN *begins to search the kitchen for the missing fork, looking in progressively more unlikely places.* **JULIE-ANN** *gives up and stands for a second.*

Now what are we going to do? The whole table's going to look ridiculous, isn't it?

JUSTIN Of course it isn't.

JULIE-ANN What are we going to do? What are we going to do?

JUSTIN Julie! Don't get like this, darling. It doesn't help! We'll find it. Forks don't walk, do they?

JULIE-ANN I'm just going to have to go out and buy one, aren't I?

JUSTIN It's half past six—what are you talking about?

JULIE-ANN I'm not sitting down to dinner with a fork missing…

JUSTIN *(sitting her down)* Julie, sit down and pull yourself together. You know why you're like this. You know. You get these moods, you know you do, darling. You're getting hysterical for no reason.

JULIE-ANN I'm going to have to go out, I'm going to have to go out now, aren't I? Go searching for forks.

JUSTIN Julie, it's pouring with rain, everywhere round here is closed, where the hell are you going to buy a fork at this time of night?

JULIE-ANN *(getting up)* Then I'll have to borrow one. I'll ask round the other flats. Someone's bound to have a spare.

JUSTIN *(angrily)* My God, Julie, every month it's the same! Listen to yourself! No one's even going to notice.

JULIE-ANN Of course they will.

JUSTIN Who the hell is going to notice there's a fork missing?

JULIE-ANN My mother for one!

JUSTIN Well, bugger your mother!

JULIE-ANN *freezes. Silence.*

(shocked at his own outburst) I'm sorry, Julie. I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to say that. I'm deeply, deeply sorry. Really. Please, believe me.

JULIE-ANN, *grim-faced, goes to the front door.*

I really—can't even begin to say how sorry I am for saying that. I mean, your mother, for God's sake. Your *mother*. It's appalling of me. I'm so, so, so sorry, Julie. Ann. Truly.

JULIE-ANN *(coolly)* I hope you will not be using language like that in front of my parents.

JUSTIN I said I—

JULIE-ANN Perhaps you'd care to turn the oven on to low whilst I'm out. I'll leave the door on the latch. Try not to lock me out, please.

JULIE-ANN *sweeps out and closes the door.*

JUSTIN *stands unhappily. He looks out of the windows. The wind and rain continue unabated.*

JUSTIN *(half to himself)* Mr and Mrs Jobson... Derek and Dee—Mother—Julie-Ann and I have some really wonderful news... we are planning to get married in June...and in order to celebrate this happy event—we're giving up sex for twelve bloody weeks. Oh, God...

The phone rings.

(answering) Hallo... oh, hallo, Mother... what? ... Why have you stopped at the pub? ... Look, it's nearly... Well, tell Olaf to get back in the car... You're supposed to be here in... Mother, please. Do not have another drink... No, you don't... You don't need one at all... Just get in the car and please be here. *(He rings off)* God! *(He remembers)* Oven. *(He goes into the kitchen and stands at the stove. Staring at the stove, gloomily)* Twelve weeks? I might as well stick

my head in this oven and have done with it. What's there to live for? What's there to live for...?

Faintly, from outside the doors above the noise of the storm, a woman's long-drawn-out scream as if falling from some height. **JUSTIN** *turns, startled, and goes into the sitting-room, forgetting the oven.*

Outside the windows we see that someone is gripping the balcony rail, hanging on for grim death as they hang above the river.

JUSTIN *stares in amazement.*

Slowly and painfully, with great difficulty, the someone now hauls themself up a little so that their head is visible over the rail. It is **PAIGE***, a woman in her late twenties. She is soaked to the skin from the torrential rain. Her hair is plastered to her head like an otter. She has blood on her face, hands and legs. Her make-up is streaked and her clothes are badly torn.*

JUSTIN *stares at her, horrified.*

Outside the window, **PAIGE***'s mouth opens and closes, but her words are drowned out by the storm which rages outside. She is shouting something silently. Although we can't hear her it looks suspiciously like "Help!"*

(reacting at last, calling) Just a minute. *(He fumbles with the window locks—and eventually opens one window)*

The full force of the storm is heard. **JUSTIN** *is practically blown backwards. He fights his way on to the balcony, forcing himself forward against the wind. He reaches* **PAIGE** *and, with difficulty, hauls her over the rail. She is completely exhausted and he has to catch her before she drops in a heap on the balcony. He half-assists, half-carries her into the flat.*

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