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SF PERUSALS

ENJOY

A Play

by Alan Bennett

SAMUEL FRENCH

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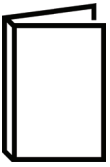
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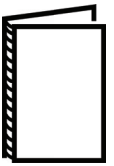
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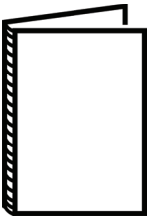
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Playgoers who find this text does not coincide with what they heard in the theatre may assume that the cast just did not know their lines. They will (I hope) be wrong. The text here printed is that of the play prior to rehearsal and production. In the past my plays have always altered (and generally improved) in rehearsal. I imagine this play will do the same. However, I am told that there is some advantage in having a text available to coincide with first production, if only for those members of the first night audience who are unable to believe their ears. So here it is.

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO THE FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

I have made some cuts in the original text, but a little careful pruning might still be done in rehearsal.

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ENJOY

First presented on 15th October 1980, at the Vaudeville Theatre, by Michael Codron with the following cast:

WILFRED CRAVEN	Colin Blakely
CONNIE CRAVEN	Joan Plowright
MS CRAIG	Philip Sayer
LINDA CRAVEN	Susan Littler
HERITAGE	Roger Alborough
ANTHONY	Julian Ronnie
GREGORY	Stephen Flynn
MRS CLEGG	Liz Smith
ADRIAN	Graham Wyles
SID	Michael Hughes
HARMAN	Marc Sinden
CHARLES	Simon Painter
ROWLAND	Gareth Price

Directed by Ronald Eyre

CHARACTERS

WILFRED CRAVEN (DAD)
CONNIE CRAVEN (MAM)
MS CRAIG
LINDA CRAVEN
HERITAGE
ANTHONY
GREGORY
MRS CLEGG
ADRIAN
SID
HARMAN
CHARLES
ROWLAND

The action of the play takes place in the living room of a back-to-back house in the North of England.

Time: the present

ACT I

The chorus ***"FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN"*** *from Handel's Messiah is heard.*

The music is cut off sharply in full flow, there is a brief silence and the curtain rises on the living room of a back-to-back house in the North. The outside door opens directly on to the street and other doors lead to the scullery and the upstairs. It is neat and ordinary and some effort has been made to improve the place. There should be something not quite right about the room... Is it that the furniture is too far apart (as it is, for example, in opera)? Or is it islanded in the centre of the stage with space round it...a stage upon a stage? Perhaps it's just that the room is too real.

MAM *and* **DAD** *are a couple in their sixties. They are discovered in the middle of their marriage.*

DAD *sits in the easy chair by the fire.* **MAM** *stands.*

DAD *(answering a question, with controlled anger)* Sweden.

MAM Sweden?

DAD Sweden.

MAM *goes into the scullery.*

DAD *roots in the depths of the chair for a magazine, which he holds close to his face as his eyes are bad.*

MAM *starts singing* ***"FLY HOME LITTLE HEART"*** *(Novello, King's Rhapsody). She sings well and knows all the words. She stops singing, abruptly, comes back.*

DAD *puts the magazine down.*

MAM This room's upside down. *(Pause)* Where? Dad.

DAD Sweden.

MAM Sweden. It's news to me is that. *(Pause)* What if anybody comes?

DAD Feel my arm.

MAM It's like a tip.

DAD Two minutes.

MAM It's where they commit suicide and the king rides a bicycle, Sweden.

DAD Mam.

MAM I don't want to feel your arm. What do I want to feel your arm for? I'm always feeling your arm. Feel your own arm. *(She feels his arm)* You use this arm, you.

DAD That's the point: I don't use it. I can't use it. I can't feel it.

MAM It's an excuse. You curry sympathy. Do you feel that?

DAD *shakes his head.*

This?

DAD *shakes his head again.*

DAD Don't stop.

MAM I'm bored.

DAD You've nothing better to do.

MAM I have. I've the milk bottles to put out.

MAM *goes back into the scullery.*

DAD It wants a different environment. The new flats have this underfloor central heating.

MAM *(offstage)* You've let it beat you, that arm. You want to make it a challenge, something to be overcome. That's today's philosophy with handicaps. You see it on TV all the time. There's people with far worse than your arm gone on to not bad careers.

DAD I've no feeling in one arm; I've got a steel plate in my head; I can hardly see and you talk about a career. I thought I was retired.

MAM *(offstage)* I wish women could retire. *(Pause)* What have I come in here for?

DAD I haven't lost my gift for responsibility. That's something you never lose, the ability to command respect. Milk bottles. I had six men under me.

MAM *returns with the bottles.*

MAM Well it's not a bad little biscuit barrel. Women don't get biscuit barrels choose how long they work.

DAD Once we get shifted I plan to take an active part in the community association; I was thinking in bed last night I might take up French.

MAM As the victim of a hit-and-run driver I think you're entitled to put your feet up. *(She is at the door putting the milk bottles out)* Smoke rising from the Grasmeres. The toll of destruction goes on. I've no tears left. *(She sits down again)* Where did you say Linda's gone?

DAD *groans.*

I felt your arm.

DAD Sweden. Sweden. Linda has gone to Sweden.

MAM I won't ask again.

DAD You will.

MAM I won't. I'll think about something else. *(Pause)* My mother lost her memory. I think. *(Pause. Looking at a magazine)*

They're bonny curtains. Only they're nylon. I wouldn't have nylon. Smells, nylon. I wouldn't have any man-made fibres. Wool, cotton, you can't go wrong. "Try these easy-to-make, prepared-in-advance menus and be a relaxed and carefree hostess when the doorbell rings." *(Pause)* Have I asked you where Linda has gone?

DAD Yes.

MAM And have you told me?

DAD Yes.

MAM I know then? *(She looks miserable)*

DAD Sweden, Sweden, Sweden, Sweden, Sweden.

Pause.

MAM We're under siege here. Pulling down good property. It's a sin.

DAD I think of the future.

MAM When I was a girl there were droves of houses like these. You'd see them from the railway, streets of them, the stock of every town and city in the country. What's become of the old estates? Streets we played in when we were little, courted in when we were young… Harringtons, Hawkesworths, Gilpins, Grasmeres…groves deserted, drives emptied, terraces reaped of every house. Rubble.

DAD Light! Air!

MAM We're a relic. An ancient monument. We are living in the last back-to-backs in Leeds.

MAM *goes into the scullery singing* ***"BLESS THIS HOUSE"*** *(Brahe).*

DAD I have high hopes of the maisonette, Mam. I mean it to be a new start. A different going on.

MAM *sings on.*

I'm looking forward to the chrome-plated handles on the bath. That'll transform my life. And non-slip vinyl. Vinyl throughout. There's even vinyl in the lifts.

MAM *returns.*

MAM It's best not to expect too much. The worst is the most I intend to expect. Then I shan't be disappointed.

DAD No more trailing to the bin. Just chuck it down the chute. It's the last word in waste disposal.

MAM They pee in those lifts. It takes more than a bit of vinyl to alter human nature.

DAD It's south facing so I was thinking in bed last night I can go in for few tomatoes.

MAM They found a baby down one of those chutes.

DAD We could be self-sufficient where tomatoes are concerned. I shall sit out on that bit of grass.

MAM Another mecca for dogs.

DAD It's a new life beginning! *(He opens his arms wide in an expansive gesture)* Come, bulldozer, come!

MAM What's she doing going to Sweden? I bumped into her in the scullery last night and I don't remember anything about Sweden. She didn't look like someone going to Sweden. I wonder where she does go sometimes.

DAD She's a personal secretary. She goes where she's told. That's the nature of her employment.

MAM She's just this minute come back from some other place abroad. West Germany was it? Now it's Sweden.

DAD That's the contemporary world.

MAM She didn't have any luggage. You have luggage if you're going to Sweden.

DAD Not in this day and age. It's like popping across the road. A new world. And don't go calling our Linda.

MAM I'm not calling her. I'm only saying you don't waltz out of the house empty-handed last thing at night saying, "I'm going to Sweden", even if it is the twentieth century.

DAD What do you know about the twentieth century? I know one thing. She'd feel my arm. She loves me, does Linda.

MAM If we're talking of love I know somebody else who'd have liked Sweden, somebody else with whom it'd 've struck a chord.

DAD Guide-books, street-plans: she'll have Stockholm at her fingertips.

MAM I admit the person in question generally made a bee-line for the Mediterranean, but given the right circumstances he wouldn't have said No to Scandinavia. Talking of love.

DAD If I know her boss it'll be one long round of conferences, our Linda there at his elbow. Still, she'll generally manage to snatch an hour or two from her gruelling schedule to take in the principal sights. She might even get to a sauna. It's where saunas originated, Sweden.

MAM They've spread to Leeds now, talking of love.

DAD Sweden boasts some fine modern architecture plus a free-wheeling attitude towards personal morality. But our Linda's a sensible girl: she won't be bowled over by that.

MAM He always had a level head. Only he was quite happy to stay at home. He was the stay-at-home type. Talking of love.

DAD Then why didn't he?

MAM Why didn't he what?

DAD Stop at home.

Pause.

MAM Dad.

DAD What?

MAM How will anybody find us when we move?

DAD Who?

MAM Anybody anxious to locate us. With the house pulled down where will they start?

DAD Who?

MAM A casual visitor, say. A one-off caller. Anybody.

DAD You send out cards. They give you cards to send out.

MAM That's nice.

Pause.

Dad. What if it's someone you can't send a card to because you've lost touch?

DAD Too bad.

MAM The Corporation's bound to keep a schedule. You'll be able to walk into the Town Hall and find out where we've been put. They'll keep track – we pay rates.

DAD It won't happen. He'll not come.

MAM Who?

DAD I won't say his name.

MAM How do I know to whom you are referring then? Who, Dad?

DAD You won't get his name out of me.

MAM I wonder if he's famous: he went to London.

DAD Yes, we know what for.

MAM Its institutions and libraries. Its public buildings, the concerts, art galleries and places of interest.

DAD Not forgetting its superb toilet facilities. The dimly lit charms of its public conveniences. Purlieus of that nature. Talking of love.

Silence.

MAM Sweden was where Mr and Mrs Broadbent went last year. One of these winter-break things. Very reasonable apparently: they couldn't get over the public transport.

DAD You want to forget about him.

MAM Who?

DAD You're losing your memory, capitalize on it and forget him. Because I do not want his name mentioned. You never will see him again. He is dead. He does not exist.

MAM Why am I sitting on this chair? I never sit on this chair. I don't remember ever sitting on this chair before.

A knock on the door.

That must be Linda. She can't have gone to Sweden. She must have forgotten her key. *(She looks out of the window)* It's not Linda. It's a young woman.

DAD What sort of young woman?

MAM A young woman. She looks like a total stranger.

DAD They tell you not to open the door. They put out leaflets.

MAM Professional type. Little grey costume – blondeish.

DAD There's all sorts now. The women are worse than the men. They're devoid of conscience. She'll go away.

A loud knock.

MAM Very slim. Looks as if she keeps off the carbohydrates.

DAD Be still.

They wait. Another knock. **DAD** *gets up. Looks. Goes to the door. Shouts through the letter box.*

Listen. We're on the telephone and there's an Alsatian within earshot. So get lost.

DAD *is coming away from the door when there is another knock.*

Be told. You have come to the wrong house.

MAM She may be from the Corporation, it's a smart little costume. *(Shouting through the letter box)* If it's about the new fiat we're waiting to be allocated; we're an oldish couple; we don't have that many visitors.

A piece of paper is put through the letter box. They let it lie for a moment, looking at it, then **MAM** *picks it up.*

(reading) "This neighbourhood is shortly to be demolished." Well, we know that. "In the past, redevelopment has often ignored many valuable elements in the social structure of traditional communities such as this. Their sense of identity has been lost and with it the virtues of self-reliance, neighbourliness and self-help." This is going to take some studying out. "Your council is anxious to avoid the mistakes of the past and preserve those qualities." What qualities? Oh, self-reliance, neighbourliness and self-help. "It is therefore undertaking a social study of selected families in this area…" They do this sort of thing now. It's the sort of thing they do. "This card will be shown to you by a qualified sociologist. Kindly admit him/her to your home as an observer. The observer will not speak." (Oh.) "Try not to engage him/her in conversation as this may falsify the true picture of your home life he/she needs if this project is to succeed. The name of your observer is Ms Craig. Your co-operation is appreciated. R. S. Harman. Projects Director." I've seen his picture in the *Evening Post*, cutting a ribbon.

DAD No.

MAM We must have been selected; they've picked us out down at the Town Hall.

DAD It's an intruder.

MAM They couldn't go to twenty-six with him being black: they'll know we're a bit more classy. Fasten your trousers. *(Through the letter box)* We shan't keep you a moment. *(She tidies the already tidy room)*

Another knock.

DAD She's come to kill me.

MAM Kill you? She's got one of those new briefcases – I've seen them in Schofield's.

DAD I'm telling you. Don't open it.

MAM Don't. Don't. It's always don't. The doors I could have opened if it hadn't been for you. My voice would have opened any door. I could have been in the Choral Society, sung on the stage of the Victoria Hall. I could have been rubbing shoulders with doctors' wives, solicitors, people with their own transport. I could have been going out to coffee mornings in select neighbourhoods, mixing with all sorts. I could have blossomed half a dozen times over. But no. Why? You. You, Dad, you.

DAD Connie.

DAD *rises from the chair.* **MAM** *pushes him back.*

MAM Sit down. We'll see if she kills you. Coming. *(She unlocks the door)*

There is a slight pause, long enough for one to begin to wonder if there is anybody there, then the door is pushed smartly back and to the strains of ***"WALTZ OF MY HEART"*** *(Novello, The Dancing Years).* **MS CRAIG** *comes in, walks straight across the room with no hestitation at all, sits on an upright chair downstage, puts down her briefcase at one side of the chair, takes out a pad and waits, pen in hand.*

MS CRAIG *is a man. Not a man in outrageous drag, but a man who is a woman perhaps but nevertheless a man. Silence.* **MAM** *looks at him/her for a long time.* **DAD** *keeps looking and looking away. He can't see* **MS CRAIG** *all that clearly.*

How do you do. Pleased to meet you.

MS CRAIG *looks coolly at them with no response whatsoever.*

This is my husband, Mr Craven. And I'm Mrs Craven. We're The Cravens.

Pause.

DAD I'm frightened, Mam.

MAM Then have one of your tablets. He gets over-anxious. It's not mental. He's been the victim of a hit-and-run driver. Don't start yet, this isn't typical yet. I'm sorry the place is upside down, I haven't had a chance to get round this morning, that's not typical either. Haven't we been having some weather?

DAD Mam!

MAM She's starting.

DAD Connie.

MAM Shut up.

Silence.

Our visitor hasn't picked the most comfortable chair, has she, Dad? *(Pause)* Though I've read that a straight back is better for you. *(Pause)* Bad backs seem to be on the increase. *(Pause)* It must be to do with sitting habits. One way and another. *(Desperately)* My sister-in-law had a terrible back and they put it down to lolling about in easy chairs, only then it turned out that she had a progressive disease of the spine. Which she died of. Unfortunately. *(Pause)*

DAD It was a slipped disc.

MAM It wasn't a slipped disc. It was a long-term illness.

DAD How do you know? You can't remember.

MS CRAIG *makes a note.*

Mam. She's just made a note. What did I say?

MS CRAIG *writes something else down.*

Look, Mam.

MAM I'm taking no notice. *(Whispering)* Dad, what is the survey about again?

DAD *hands her the schedule and* **MAM** *reads it again.*

I have a tendency to forget: one of the penalties of getting older. I take after my mother; she suffered with her memory. Is it to do with us being happy? Is that the gist of it? We are.

DAD And if we're not, we shouldn't let on to you.

MAM We are anyway, by and large. Put down happy. Not discontented.

DAD We will be happy once we're out of this midden.

MAM It used to be one of the better streets, this. You were always thought to be a bit more refined if you lived in this street. It was a bit classier. None of them are very classy now.

DAD Course they're not classy. How can they be classy when they're flattened?

MAM Mr Craven's always been on the side of progress: he had false teeth when he was twenty-seven. Notice too that this is an end house, giving us three downstairs windows as opposed to two in the other houses. I don't know whether that's relevant.

DAD I had six men under me.

MAM We've been very happy all in all. I'd offer you a cup of tea but if we're meant to behave as if you're not here I can't, can I?

MS CRAIG *writes something down.*

Don't put me on record as not having offered though. If you were the ordinary run-of-the-mill visitor I would.

DAD We never have any visitors.

MAM Only because we're not well served by public transport. I'd like to have gone in for these coffee mornings. You read about them in magazines: functions in the home in aid of one thing and another. Like-minded people. Only Mr Craven's not keen on company. One of the big might-have-beens. I'll make some tea. You go on behaving normally, Dad.

MAM *goes into the scullery singing* ***"I CAN GIVE YOU THE STARLIGHT"*** *(Novello, The Dancing Years). She calls from the scullery.*

(offstage) We're waiting for our Linda. *(Pause)* We think she may have gone somewhere. *(Pause)* Where is it we think she's gone, Dad?

DAD *Sweden.*

MAM *(offstage)* Mr Craven worships Linda. *(Pause)* Tell her about Linda, Dad.

DAD Shut up about Linda.

MS CRAIG *writes something down.*

She's a personal secretary.

MAM *(offstage)* She's a personal secretary. She's our only daughter.

DAD Our only child. Goes all over. Last week it was West Germany. You've never been to West Germany, I bet. She spent Christmas in the Lebanon. A grand girl. Everything a father could wish for.

MAM *returns.*

MAM She's quite at home in hotels; can choose from a menu without turning a hair. He's deeply proud of her. Where is it she's gone?

DAD I said to her last time she was home: Did you ever dream you'd be in Beirut? But she's very modest: she just laughed.

MAM Just laughed. Where was it she liked? Antwerp, was it?

DAD Antwerp! *Hamburg.*

MAM I forget, you see. My mother was like that. It's boys that generally travel. Daughters are more the stay-at-home type. Linda's different.

DAD She was a wanderer, right from being a kiddy. It was always: Get out the atlas, Dad. Let me sit on your knee. Show me Las Vegas, Dad. Rio de Janeiro.

MAM Sat on his knee. Las Vegas. Rio de Janeiro.

DAD They advertised for a Girl Friday. Someone with the ability to arrange small private lunches and take creative decisions in a crisis. She's strong on both those points.

MAM She takes air travel in her stride. It's a shame she's not here. You'd have had something in common.

DAD What?

MAM Both career women.

DAD There's no comparison.

MAM He idolizes Linda. Only she's not normal for girls round here.

DAD Normal? She's exceptional. You won't find girls like Linda stood on every street corner. Girls with no advantages who are in a position to fly off to Scandinavia at five minutes' notice.

MAM They've both done well.

At "both" **MS CRAIG** *looks up.*

DAD I can hear a kettle.

MAM Right from the start we were determined neither of them should have to go through what we went through.

DAD I can hear a kettle. Make the bloody tea, go on. *(He makes some threatening move towards* **MAM** *with his stick as she goes)*

MAM *exits.*

Go with her. Go on.

MS CRAIG *doesn't stir.*

So it's me you're watching? Not her? What for? There's only me, sitting. *(Pause)* And that's not real, not accurate. Because you're here too. You spoil it. Go away and I might be natural. Me alone in a room. What's that like? You'll never know. Private, madam. My secret. *(Pause)* And don't think you're going to pick up any information about me and her either. Our so-called sexual relations. If that's the sort of gen you're after you go out of here on your arse. I make no apology for using that word. On your arse. I know you want to know. You're just the sort of casual caller that does. Well, no. No. No. *(He bangs his stick closer to her but she does not flinch)* Write *that* down.

She doesn't. Pause.

Still, I'm not an unreasonable man. You've got your job to do. And I don't want to give you the idea I'm trying to hide something or that anything unorthodox goes on between my wife and me. It doesn't. Nothing goes on. Nothing at all. I don't know whether that's unorthodox. Judging from all these magazines it probably is. No foreplay. No afterplay. And fuck all in between. But don't expect me to expand on that. What made you do this job?

MS CRAIG *makes a note.*

So far as the formal sex act is concerned, in the actual performance of sexual intercourse, or coitus or whatever you were brought up to say, I start off at some disadvantage. I've no feeling in this arm and I can hardly see. Which knocks out at least three erogenous zones for a kick-off. I was run over down at Four Lane Ends.

In the scullery **MAM** *is singing* ***"WE'LL GATHER LILACS"*** *(Novello, Perchance to Dream).*

I was on a crossing. I was within my rights. He came straight at me. It wasn't a genuine accident. I don't think it was an accident at all. It was a deliberate attempt at murder. The police kept the file open for months but they never found him. Do you drive? I expect so. They all have cars on the Council. I don't bear a grudge. I did bear a grudge for a long time, only now they've put me on tablets, since when the grudge has gone.

MAM *(from the scullery)* How do you like your tea, Dad?

DAD We've been married twenty-five years. Strong. I like it strong. "Dad." You never asked me my name. It's Wilfred. Wilf. Only it never gets used. Always Dad. It's practically new, my name; it's hardly been used since we were first married. It's kept for best. She'll use it when I'm dying, you'll see. She'll fetch it out then.

Pause.

Linda touches it. Linda strokes it. Linda wants the feeling back. She's a saint is Linda. Only what good's that when she's in bloody Sweden?

MAM *comes in with a nice tea tray.*

MAM Who are you talking to?

DAD I'm talking to madam.

MAM There's nobody here, Dad. Nobody here at all. *(She winks at* **MS CRAIG***)* We're just having a normal day.

DAD Where's my beaker? Which cups are these? We don't use these cups.

MAM *(sotto voce)* Dad.

DAD *belches.*

Pardon.

DAD What?

MAM Beg pardon. I don't know what sort of impression this young lady's getting. I'm trying to behave normally and you seem bent on showing us up.

DAD *gets up.*

Where are you going?

DAD For a piss.

MAM *is mortified.*

MAM He wouldn't say that normally. He'd say anything but that. Pay a visit. Spend a penny. There's half a dozen ways you can get round it if you make the effort. He's just trying to impress.

DAD Well what about you?

MAM What?

DAD Normally every time I get up to go to the lav, you say "Don't wet on the floor."

MAM I never do.

DAD Without fail. She does. "Don't wet on the floor, Dad."

DAD *exits.*

MAM I don't say that. I promise. Though he is very slapdash. He puts it down to his arm but frankly I think he doesn't concentrate.

Pause.

We were the first couple in the street to install an inside toilet. You could say we were pioneers in that department. Then everybody else followed suit. *(Pause)* When we first came here there was all that having to go down the street. I never liked that. *(Pause)* Mr Craven's not been well. He's on tablets. The aftermath of being run over. One of these hit-and-run drivers. Are you motorized? Practically everybody is nowadays. Without a car you're static. He reckons he'll be

better once we get into these horrible new flats but I have my doubts. They're not the high flats. Not the multis. They've discontinued those. It's a maisonette. They're built more on the human scale. That's the latest now, the human scale. Still I've no need to tell you that, if you're from the Housing.

DAD *returns.*

DAD She's not from the Housing. She's doing a survey. She's seeing how we live. I put her in the picture *vis-à-vis* our sex-lives.

MAM I think I'll just have a run round with the Ewbank.

DAD I was telling her in graphic detail how nothing happens.

MAM I wage a constant battle against dust.

DAD I was hoping she'd be able to furnish me with some comparative statistics.

MAM It's having an audience. Saying stuff. Ordinarily speaking we never have a wrong word.

DAD We do.

MAM We don't.

DAD We fucking well do.

MAM And he doesn't swear.

DAD I do. I fucking do.

MAM He doesn't use that word.

DAD What word?

MAM The word he just used.

DAD Well say it. Say it.

MAM NO. That isn't my husband. I forget your name. What is it you're from?

DAD Read it. Read it. *Read it. (He hands* **MAM** *the paper)* I'm telling her the same thing sixteen times over.

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