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SF PERUSALS

SNAKE IN THE GRASS

A Play

by Alan Ayckbourn

SAMUEL FRENCH

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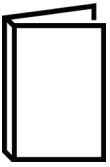
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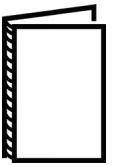
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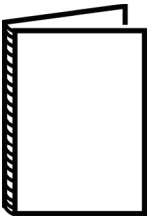
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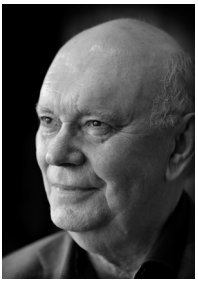
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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 story teller.

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

SNAKE IN THE GRASS

First performed at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, on 5th June 2002, with the following cast:

ANNABEL CHESTER	Fiona Mollison
ALICE MOODY	Rachel Atkins
MIRIAM CHESTER	Susie Blake

Directed by **Alan Ayckbourn**
Designed by **Roger Glossop**
Lighting designed by **Mick Hughes**
Costumes designed by **Christine Wall**
Music by **John Pattison**

CHARACTERS

ANNABEL CHESTER, fifty
MIRIAM CHESTER, Annabel's younger sister, forty-four
ALICE MOODY, a nurse, forties

The action of the play takes place in the garden of the Chesters' house.

ACT I

Scene One A late afternoon in August
Scene Two The following day, a little later

ACT II

Later the same night

SNAKE IN THE GRASS

"...a terrific piece – brilliant, bizarre and yet totally believable."
Yorkshire Post

"...subtle and powerful..." *Guardian*

"I defy anyone to write for women as well as Sir Alan..."
Teletext

"...nobody structures a play with more perfect control of his craft..." *What's On Stage*

ACT I

Scene One

A garden. Late afternoon in August.

We see part of a tennis court which, although in evident disrepair, has solid enough fencing and a door that is in working order. The rest of the court extends off stage. There is a bench alongside the court. At the other side, a small summerhouse/pavilion, very weathered and derelict. This contains a solitary piece of furniture, an old, weather-worn, but solid and still serviceable rocking chair. There is a practical trapdoor concealing a well. From the roof hangs a rusty outdoor wind chime. It is far too calm a day, though, for this to sound.

Elsewhere, rough grass underfoot. Bushes and trees.

ANNABEL, *a rather gaunt, tense, middle-aged woman is standing staring round the garden. Despite the bright afternoon sunshine, the cheerful birdsong and the general air of peace and tranquillity, her memories of this place appear to be disturbing ones. She moves to the summerhouse and can't resist brushing the wind chime with her finger. It chimes sweetly. But does little to reassure her.*

ALICE *enters.*

ANNABEL *doesn't see her at first.* **ALICE** *studies her.*

ALICE *(eventually, with a slight Northern accent)* Mrs Morton?

ANNABEL *(starting slightly)* Oh! *(Seeing* **ALICE** *at last, slightly abruptly)* Yes?

ALICE Alice Moody.

ANNABEL Oh, yes?

ALICE You'll be Mrs Morton?

ANNABEL No. I was.

ALICE Ah.

ANNABEL Not any more.

ALICE Oh.

ANNABEL I'm Annabel Chester.

ALICE How do you do.

ANNABEL Who did you say you were?

ALICE Alice Moody.

ANNABEL Do I know you?

ALICE I'm—

ANNABEL Ought I to know you?

ALICE I'm – I was your father's nurse. At one time. I don't know if your sister mentioned me at all...?

ANNABEL Oh, yes. Alice. Of course. Yes. Miriam did mention you. In her letters. Yes. Alice Moody?

ALICE That's right.

ANNABEL Yes. *(A slight pause)* Alice *Moody*. Just a moment, aren't you the one my sister got rid of?

ALICE Technically speaking, yes.

ANNABEL Hardly technically. She fired you, didn't she?

ALICE She chose to dispense with my nursing services, yes.

ANNABEL Then what are you still doing here?

ALICE I needed to have a—

ANNABEL Not back to nurse my father, I trust?

ALICE No, of course not, I was—

ANNABEL Because I've bad news if you have, he died three weeks ago. *(She laughs.* **ANNABEL***'s humour is an acquired taste)*

ALICE Yes, I'm well aware that your father's deceased, Miss Chester.

ANNABEL Then why are you here? If my sister got rid of you, there was obviously—

ALICE If you'd allow me to explain, Miss Chester, I—

ANNABEL Where is my sister, anyway? I arrive to find the house all locked up. Where's Miriam?

ALICE I believe she's presently at the shops.

ANNABEL The shops?

ALICE Shopping. She doesn't know I'm here, you see.

ANNABEL She doesn't?

ALICE No, I came to see you, Miss Chester.

ANNABEL Me?

ALICE It's a delicate matter. I needed to speak to you privately.

ANNABEL How did you know I'd even be here?

ALICE I was – I was aware you would be…

ANNABEL Did you now? I've only just got off the plane and here you are lying in wait for me.

ALICE I knew you'd be home sooner or later, Miss Chester. I was familiar with the terms of your father's final will, you see. I felt certain you'd be here.

ANNABEL How do you know about my father's will? Who told you about that?

ALICE Your father and I became quite close friends by the end, before I was – forced to leave.

ANNABEL Did you?

ALICE I rather expected to see you here for the funeral, as a matter of fact.

ANNABEL Did you? Well, I wasn't.

ALICE Seeing it was your own father's.

ANNABEL What exactly do you want, Miss Moody?

ALICE I've said. I'd like a word with you, Miss Chester, if I may.

ANNABEL If you're claiming you were wrongfully dismissed or somesuch, I should take it up with the Royal College of Nursing or whatever...

ALICE *(calmly)* No, it's not about that.

ANNABEL ...because there is no point in talking to me about it. If I remember correctly, according to my sister, she dismissed you because you were unpunctual, neglectful, unreliable and unprofessional.

ALICE Is that what she called me?

ANNABEL So far as I remember. I may have them in the wrong order and there may have been a few more reasons, I can't recall. Now I suggest you leave at once, please.

ALICE I don't know why you're being quite so hostile, Miss Chester.

ANNABEL Because I've had an extremely long flight, I'm very jet-lagged and from what I've learnt from my sister you're not someone whom she'd particularly welcome in her garden, Miss Moody.

ALICE Your garden.

ANNABEL What?

ALICE Your garden, surely? I understood this garden belongs to you now. Since your father's departure. Surely?

ANNABEL What business is that of yours?

ALICE I mean, if we're being strictly accurate – technically – I understood that under the terms of the will you own, or will shortly own, the house, this garden and all the contents.

ANNABEL Possibly. What of it?

ALICE Plus the bulk of the estate.

ANNABEL I don't know how you obtained this information...

ALICE I obtained it because your father wrote to me and told me that was what he was doing.

ANNABEL He did?

ALICE Altering his will. In your favour. Just a few days before he died.

ANNABEL I see.

ALICE But that's not all he wrote to tell me. He also wrote to say he was almost certain your sister was trying to kill him.

Pause.

ANNABEL I beg your pardon?

ALICE That's what he believed.

ANNABEL What rubbish!

ALICE I've got the letter.

ANNABEL This is complete nonsense. *Miriam?* My sister *Miriam*?

ALICE Would you care to see it? *(She produces a sheet of paper from her bag)* Here. It's all right, you can keep it. It's a photocopy. *(She hands the paper to* **ANNABEL***)*

After a second, **ANNABEL** *takes it and starts to read it.* **ALICE** *watches her.*

I have shown the original to your sister. It's perfectly genuine, isn't it? Definitely your father's handwriting. A little bit shaky, but then he was very ill. He must have dragged himself all the way to the post box. On his own. While your sister was out. That must have taken a bit of doing. He was very weak, even when I was still here to care for him. After I went, with the dosages your sister was giving him, God knows what sort of state he must have been in. Amazing he could stand up at all, really.

ANNABEL *(finishing the letter)* This is no sort of proof at all.

ALICE No? Don't you think so?

ANNABEL This is clearly written by a man who hardly knew what he was doing. He was probably not even thinking straight. Look at the state of the handwriting. He was obviously delirious. Fantasising.

ALICE Oh, but he wasn't, you see.

ANNABEL How do you know? You weren't even here.

ALICE I know because when I confronted your sister with it a few days ago, she admitted it.

ANNABEL Admitted what?

ALICE That…she'd been doubling his doses. Tripling them some days.

ANNABEL She admitted it?

ALICE Evidently one night he got up to answer a call of nature, hardly knowing where he was at all, blundering about in the dark – he wandered on to the landing looking for the – little boys' room – and she shoved him down the stairs.

ANNABEL She pushed him?

ALICE The poor man never stood a chance. It was pitch dark, you see. She'd taken all the light bulbs out as well, just to make sure.

ANNABEL This is unbelievable. I'm sorry. I simply do not believe you. You're talking about my sister Miriam. She would never do anything like that to a living soul. Let alone her own father. She's – she's the gentlest, most – harmless person in the world...

ALICE You haven't seen her for a bit, though, have you?

ANNABEL No. But we've corresponded regularly. I—

ALICE I think you might be a little bit surprised when you see her. She's probably changed a lot since you last saw her. Someone who spends fifteen years of their life, virtually a prisoner, looking after a sick old man – no social life to speak of – no – sex life – no nothing – well, you might undergo a few changes yourself. But you were all right, weren't you? Safe and sound in Australia.

ANNABEL Tasmania, if you must know.

ALICE Well out of it there, weren't you?

ANNABEL That is absolutely none of your business.

Pause.

If you must know, my father and I – never saw eye to eye.

ALICE I see.

ANNABEL I was forced to stay away. We simply didn't agree on things.

ALICE He liked you enough to leave you everything, anyway.

ANNABEL Well. People do that. When people realise they're dying they often – want to try and put things straight, don't they? That's all that was.

ALICE Just in case, eh?

ANNABEL If you like.

Pause.

Anyway, assuming there's a single grain of truth in all this—

ALICE Oh, there's more than a grain, believe me—

ANNABEL —what do you hope to get out of it?

ALICE Why should I want anything?

ANNABEL Obviously you do. Or you'd have done your proper duty as a nurse and reported all this in the first place.

ALICE Yes, I probably should have done that.

ANNABEL Then don't stand there pretending you don't want anything.

ALICE I'm not pretending.

ANNABEL Well, then.

ALICE I want a considerable amount, as a matter of fact, Miss Chester. I think I'm entitled to that for wrongful dismissal, don't you? Despite what your sister said to you, I was a good nurse to your father. I was very fond of him and all – he was a wicked old boy, he used to make me laugh like a drain – and I took good care of him. Too much care, as it happens. If I'd been working here now, he'd have still been alive, wouldn't he? Only your sister chose to get shot of me in order that she could get rid of him. Calling me incompetent. Tarnishing my professional reputation. I think I'm entitled to something for that, don't you?

Pause.

ANNABEL I see. What is it you want, then?

ALICE I've already told your sister what I want.

ANNABEL Then why are you talking to me?

ALICE Because I thought, as her sister, you ought to be aware of the situation. And I wasn't sure how much she'd tell you.

ANNABEL I see.

ALICE Besides, I thought the least you were entitled to was the truth, seeing as you're the one who now has all the money.

ANNABEL Ah.

ALICE No point in asking her for anything. Poor cow hasn't even got a decent coat to her back.

ANNABEL Would you kindly not refer to my sister like that!

ALICE I have to say he kept her on a short chain, your father. Just enough to get her to the village shop and back. Hardly what you'd call a generous allowance...

ANNABEL Now you listen to me. I want you to leave now, do you hear? I will talk to my sister—

ALICE Yes, you'll need to talk to her—

ANNABEL —I say, I will talk to my sister and get to the bottom of all this. But I must tell you that my instinct at present, Miss Moody, is to call the police and have you charged with extortion and blackmail.

ALICE You could give it a go if you like. It'll all have to come out then, won't it? Depends how much you care for your sister, I suppose. Tell you what, I'll come back tomorrow around about this same time, shall I? Then we can all sit down and discuss it properly. I'll leave you a night to sleep on it. Get over your jet-lag.

ANNABEL You will come back when we call you back.

ALICE You don't know where I live though, these days, do you? But I know where you live. Good afternoon, Miss Chester. Or may I call you Annabel?

ANNABEL You most certainly may not. Good afternoon, Miss Moody.

ALICE *(imperviously)* I'll go out the back way. I'll see you later.

ALICE *goes out past the tennis court.*

ANNABEL *stands for a moment.*

ANNABEL *(shaking her head in disbelief to herself)* Oh, my God. Miriam!

Suddenly, the mesh of the tennis court fencing resonates as if something or someone has knocked against it.

(startled; calling) Who's that?

No reply.

Who's there? Is there someone there?

MIRIAM, *her younger sister, appears at the mesh. In contrast with* **ANNABEL** *she is a rounded, soft, rather vulnerable figure.*

MIRIAM *(rather tearful)* Annabel...?

ANNABEL *(only half recognising her)* Miriam...?

MIRIAM *comes out of the court and embraces* **ANNABEL** *passionately.*

MIRIAM Oh, Annie, it's good to see you! I'm so glad you're here!

ANNABEL *(rather taken aback by this effusiveness)* Miriam, what are you doing? How long have you been there?

MIRIAM I came back from the village – I saw you talking to her – I just had to hide. *(She goes totally to pieces)* Oh, Annie, she's a terrible woman – you've no idea...it's been a nightmare, it's just been a nightmare...

ANNABEL Miriam! Miriam, calm down, now. Just calm down. My God, woman, look at you. Look at the state of you...

MIRIAM I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm such a mess.

ANNABEL Sit down, now. Come along. Sit down. *(She seats* **MIRIAM** *on the bench)*

MIRIAM I'm such a terrible mess. Oh, Annie, I'm so happy to see you, you've no idea...

ANNABEL Miriam, is all this true? All the things that woman's told me? Are they really true?

MIRIAM Oh, God! I'm such a mess...

ANNABEL Miriam...

MIRIAM ...such an awful mess...

ANNABEL Yes, I can see you are.

MIRIAM ...just look at me...

ANNABEL Yes, I've looked, I've said. Now, Miriam, what that woman told me just now – is any of it true? Is there any truth in it?

MIRIAM You don't know what it was like, Annie, those last months, you don't know. He was getting worse and worse.

ANNABEL Father?

MIRIAM He was just terrible to me. So cruel and unkind, I couldn't do anything right for him... *(She weeps afresh)* Everything I did, he...he shouted...and threw things and threw his food... I just couldn't take any more...

ANNABEL Miriam, calmly now. Calm down, dear. Take a few breaths.

MIRIAM *does this.*

That's it. Deep breaths.

MIRIAM *(a little calmer)* Sorry. I'm sorry. God, I'm such a mess.

ANNABEL Yes, yes, we've established that. *(She finds a tissue)* Here... Wipe yourself a bit.

MIRIAM Thank you... I'm sorry... I never even asked. How are you? Did you have a good flight?

ANNABEL Yes, I had a perfectly wonderful flight. Apart from being seated next to a woman with a screaming baby all the way from Singapore, absolutely perfect – now never mind about me. Miriam, tell me something. I need to know. How much of our conversation, me and that woman's, did you hear just now?

MIRIAM *(snuffling)* A little bit, just a little bit...

ANNABEL *(talking to her like a child)* Then tell me, honestly. Now you have to be honest with me, Miriam…do you hear me? Honest?

MIRIAM *(weakly)* Yes.

ANNABEL Promise?

MIRIAM Yes…

ANNABEL Tell me, did you deliberately dismiss that woman?

MIRIAM Yes.

ANNABEL Why?

A little wail from **MIRIAM**.

Don't start again! That isn't helpful.

MIRIAM Sorry.

ANNABEL Did you dismiss her so that you could start – altering Father's medicine?

Another wail.

Miriam, was that the reason? Was it or wasn't it?

MIRIAM *(faintly)* Yes…

ANNABEL Did you deliberately increase his dosage?

MIRIAM *(nodding)* A little bit…

ANNABEL A little bit?

MIRIAM I thought it might make him sleep more. So he wouldn't shout at me.

ANNABEL What do you mean by a little bit?

MIRIAM *shakes her head.*

Did you double the dose?

MIRIAM *shakes her head again.*

Triple the dose?

MIRIAM Maybe a little bit more.

ANNABEL Oh, God in heaven! And did you really push him down the stairs?

MIRIAM Only a little push...

ANNABEL *(agitatedly moving from her)* Oh, dear Lord! Oh, dear heavens! And did you also remove the lightbulbs as well...?

MIRIAM Just one or two...

ANNABEL Miriam! You murdered him. You murdered Father. Do you understand that?

MIRIAM I didn't mean to...

ANNABEL What do you mean, you didn't mean to?

MIRIAM It was an accident...

ANNABEL Miriam, I've never heard anything less like an accident... You deliberately give him quadruple doses of medicine, you take out all the lightbulbs and push him down the stairs... No one in the world's going to believe that was an accident, Miriam, are they?

MIRIAM *starts crying afresh.*

And you've confessed all that to this woman?

MIRIAM She had the letter. She showed me the letter from Father.

ANNABEL I see. And it seemed perfectly genuine to you?

MIRIAM Oh, yes... It was on his writing paper...

ANNABEL Yes, well, that's not necessarily... And what did she say to you?

MIRIAM She said unless we – you gave her an awful lot of money she'd show the letter to the authorities – and then they – they'd dig up Daddy and have a post...

ANNABEL A post? You mean an autopsy?

MIRIAM Yes.

ANNABEL Would they be able to tell, after all this time?

MIRIAM Oh, yes. She's a nurse, she said they'd be able to tell, once they started looking for it... Then I'd have to go to prison. I don't want to go to prison, Annie...

ANNABEL Don't be silly. You wouldn't go to prison...

MIRIAM She said I would.

ANNABEL She's just trying to frighten you, that's all... You're not going to go to prison...

MIRIAM You just said I deliberately murdered Father. Don't they send you to prison for that? For deliberately murdering your father.

ANNABEL Yes, well – sometimes maybe they probably do, yes. Sometimes. It depends if there are any extenuating... *(She gives this up)* Listen, Miriam, what does she want from us, that woman? Did she tell you what she wanted in order to keep quiet?

MIRIAM Yes.

ANNABEL Money, she wanted money, you say?

MIRIAM Yes.

ANNABEL How much money, Miriam?

MIRIAM *hesitates.*

Miriam, how much does she want?

MIRIAM A hundred thousand pounds.

Silence. Even the birds have stopped singing.

ANNABEL *(at last)* I don't have a hundred thousand pounds. I don't have that much money in the world.

MIRIAM You don't?

ANNABEL Of course I don't. Not at all. I have practically nothing left of my own. A tiny little bit set aside to live on. Invested. A few stocks and shares, that's it. I don't have that sort of money.

MIRIAM What are we going to do then? What am I going to do? What do we say to her?

ANNABEL We'll tell her she's – she's going to have to whistle for it. We simply don't have it.

MIRIAM What about from your business?

ANNABEL Miriam, I wrote and told you my business folded. You know it did.

MIRIAM Oh, yes.

ANNABEL I no longer have a business, any more than I still have a husband, thank God. Practically all I have in the world is in those three suitcases outside the back door there.

MIRIAM Then what am I going to do?

ANNABEL I don't know. I really don't.

MIRIAM If we don't pay her what she wants, she'll go to the police.

ANNABEL Then she'll have to. She needs to understand we simply cannot pay her that sort of money.

MIRIAM What about what Father left you?

ANNABEL According to the lawyer's letter, that amounts to considerably less than a hundred thousand pounds, I can promise you that. And after death duties...

MIRIAM What about the house?

ANNABEL Yes, I planned to sell this, anyway. But we'll need that money in order to buy somewhere else for ourselves, won't we? Somewhere smaller. For us both. In, say, Fulham perhaps. I rather fancied Fulham.

MIRIAM Fulham?

ANNABEL Well, somewhere – like Fulham. I don't know. Something with two bedrooms, you know. Nothing too grand but… With both of us working – we should just about manage. I had it all planned out. I can go back to secretarial work – temporarily. Until I find something more challenging.

MIRIAM You're all right to work again, now?

ANNABEL Oh yes, of course I am. Providing I'm sensible. I'm perfectly fit.

MIRIAM What about me, then? What shall I do? If I'm not in prison?

ANNABEL You? Well, you can – you can – we'll find you something, don't worry… You can go back to teaching, surely?

MIRIAM I haven't been in a classroom for ten years—

ANNABEL That doesn't matter – the children aren't going to know the difference. Most of them are so stupid these days, anyway. And besides, you were a drama teacher, weren't you? That's not going to have changed. It'll be the same old waving and shouting, surely? *(She laughs. It's another of her jokes)*

MIRIAM *(gloomily)* What am I going to do, Annie? Seriously…

ANNABEL Oh, come on, Miriam. We'll sort it out, don't worry. At least if you go to prison that'll save us some money, anyway. *(She laughs again)* No, the point is we're not giving that woman a hundred thousand pounds, I can tell you that. Even if I had it, that would go completely against the grain.

MIRIAM Then I will go to prison.

ANNABEL Listen, we'll meet her here tomorrow afternoon as she suggests and I'll offer her – a – a compromise sum. I'll have to do some calculations this evening to see how much I can afford to give her. And she'll have to be content with that, won't she?

MIRIAM What if she isn't?

ANNABEL She'll have to be. She won't get any more. There'll certainly be no negotiation.

MIRIAM But what if she – says no?

ANNABEL That won't happen.

MIRIAM You don't know her. You don't know Alice.

ANNABEL Then we'll – we'll face that if it comes, won't we? Come on, I'm desperate for a cup of tea. Then I need to go to bed and sleep. I'll unpack in the morning. I hope you've given me my old room?

MIRIAM Yes. I'm afraid it's all a bit – run down, though…

ANNABEL It certainly looks it from the outside. When on earth was it last painted?

MIRIAM Oh, God knows… Not in my lifetime…

ANNABEL *(moving off)* Come along, Miriam, brighten up now. We'll think of something, don't worry. We're bound to think of something, aren't we?

ANNABEL *strides off towards the house.*

MIRIAM *(following her)* Yes, we're sure to think of something.

As **MIRIAM** *goes the lights fade to blackout.*

Scene Two

The same. The following afternoon.

Again, it is very warm and sunny.

ANNABEL *is waiting. She again seems to be drawn towards the tennis court. She stares through the fence.*

In a moment, **MIRIAM** *enters with a small folding table and an upright garden chair.*

She goes to the summerhouse and during the following sets up the table in front of the rocking chair and then positions the garden chair. The atmosphere seems a little cooler between the two women.

ANNABEL *(watching* **MIRIAM***)* I don't know why we're bothering with this, I really don't.

MIRIAM *does not reply.*

We're treating the woman like some honoured guest.

MIRIAM *(coolly)* No, we're not.

ANNABEL It's all cut and dried. I've been over all my accounts this morning. I'm offering her five thousand and that's it. She can take it or leave it. No negotiation. Nothing. That is final.

MIRIAM Yes, you said.

ANNABEL That's all I can afford. And I have to say yet again, I begrudge every penny.

MIRIAM And if she refuses to accept that?

ANNABEL Too bad. That's all. Too bad.

MIRIAM *is silent.*

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