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FUNNY ABOUT LOVE

A Comedy

by Terence Frisby

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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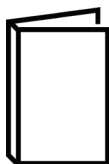
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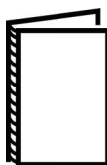


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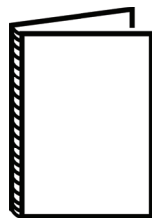
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Playwright, author, actor, director, producer.

Terence Frisby's most famous play, *There's a Girl in My Soup*, was London's longest-running comedy (six and a half years) 1966–1972 and a worldwide smash hit, with long runs on Broadway, and in Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Sydney, Rome, Vienna, Prague and many other places. It is still constantly played wherever there is theatre.

His script of the equally successful film, which starred Peter Sellers and Goldie Hawn, won the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award in 1970 for the Best British Comedy Screenplay.

His other stage plays include *The Subtopians* (Arts Theatre, 1964), *The Bandwagon* (Mermaid, 1969), *It's All Right If I Do It* (Mermaid, 1977), *Seaside Postcard* (Young Vic, 1978), *Rough Justice* (Apollo, 1994) and *Funny About Love* (two UK national tours, 1999–2000). All his plays are published by Samuel French.

He has also written many plays for television, two of which were nominated for awards. His comedy series include *Lucky Feller* with David Jason (1976) and *That's Love* with Jimmy Mulville, Diana Hardcastle and Tony Slattery, (1988–92), which won the Gold Award for Comedy at the 1991 Houston International Film Festival.

His radio play *Just Remember Two Things: It's Not Fair And Don't Be Late* for BBC Radio 4 won The Giles Cooper Play of the Year Award and achieved some sort of record by being broadcast ten times in a few months on Radio 4 and BBC World Service.

A stage play with music of this was produced at the Queen's Theatre, Barnstaple, in 2004. It was again tried out in 2011 as a full musical, with the new title of *Kisses on a Postcard*. A West End production is now being sought.

The book of *Kisses on a Postcard* was published by Bloomsbury Press in 2009. It has sold and is selling many thousands.

His first book was *Outrageous Fortune*, an autobiographical story about his fifteen years as a litigant-in-person in the High Court following his spectacularly awful divorce. *Outrageous Fortune*, both hilarious and nightmarish, created shock waves throughout the legal world and helped reform divorce law.

Besides his work as a writer, Terence has worked extensively for over fifty years as an actor, director and producer. He has played leads and directed in the West End, Young Vic and all over the country. As a producer, his favourite presentation was the South African, multi-award-winning *Woza Albert* at the Criterion Theatre in 1983, subsequently off-Broadway and worldwide.

Terence is currently writing a novel and *Diary of a Grandfather*.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have given an alternative ending on page 94 and a few alternative lines (in square brackets) in this published version of the play.

The alternative ending was not tried in the original production, but it has the merit that it ties up the final thread of the story, which is otherwise left floating, so could well be the more satisfying. I look forward to seeing it performed one day.

Nicky Henson, who directed the play at the Chichester Festival Theatre for the second tour, and all the original cast made valuable contributions to the final text and I thank them, particularly Robert East, an author himself, who was most inventive.

Terence Frisby

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FUNNY ABOUT LOVE

First presented at Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, by Paul Farrah Productions in association with the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, and the Theatre Royal, Windsor, on 18th May 1999, with the following cast of characters:

ROSIE BOSTON

Stephanie Beacham

DARREN TUCKER

Sean Maguire

PIERS BOSTON

Robert East

LARISSA TUCKER

Sarah Wittuck

Designed by Julie Godfrey

Lighting by Douglas Kuhrt

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene One An early evening in October, just before sunset

Scene Two The following evening

ACT II

Scene One An early evening the following May

Scene Two Later the same evening

Scene Three Dawn the following morning

CHARACTERS

ROSIE BOSTON

DARREN TUCKER

PIERS BOSTON

LARISSA TUCKER

The action takes place in the Bostons' London flat

Time – the present

ACT I

Scene One

The Bostons' London flat. October, early evening.

It is a spacious, stylish flat on the river, either in Docklands, Chelsea or Fulham. In addition to the front door, there are doors to the kitchen and two bedrooms. There is a four-legged dining-table reasonably prominent on the set and two framed paintings by Turner, his late period, very impressionistic. Other furniture includes a sofa and coffee table. N.B. it is suggested that, for lighting and dramatic reasons, the main window of the room (through which the sunrise shines in Act II, Scene Three) is set in a side wall of the set rather than upstage. It is daylight outside, fading to evening later in the scene.

ROSIE *is sitting, shoes off, centre with a half-finished TV dinner at her feet. She is listening to classical music on her CD player.*

The door entryphone rings. ROSIE gets up and puts her shoes on as the entryphone rings again. She picks up her TV dinner, switches off the CD, crosses to the entryphone and answers it.

ROSIE Hallo? ...Speaking... Delivery? A bit late, isn't it? ...Oh, all right. First floor.

She presses the door-release button and hangs up. She goes and unbolts the top and bottom bolts on her front

door and opens the door, which is still on the security chain.

She takes her TV dinner off to the kitchen.

DARREN's face appears in the gap of the front door.

DARREN (*calling through the gap*) Hallo? Mrs Boston?

ROSIE (*offstage*) Yes, here. Can you put it through?

DARREN Er – no, it's too big.

ROSIE enters.

ROSIE What is it?

DARREN A package.

ROSIE Well, do I have to sign for it or something?

DARREN Yes.

ROSIE Can't you shove that through?

DARREN Oh. Yeah. Here. (*His hand pushes through a clipboard with a pen attached. His second hand comes through and points at it.*) Just there, please.

ROSIE (*curious*) Photographic and reproduction studios?

The official look of the board reassures her as she signs it, then releases the chain and opens the front door.

(*relaxed*) What's all this? I haven't ordered anything photographic?

She hands DARREN the clipboard and receives from him a nice, plastic, one-bottle carrier bag with a ribbon on top and a card attached.

DARREN There you are, Mrs Boston. It says it all on the card.

She turns away from the door to switch on the lights to read it. As she does so, DARREN slips into the room.

DARREN TUCKER *is young and downmarket; normally*

cocky, he is now unsure of himself, quite nervous in fact. He is dressed in cheap, well-worn, probably grubby cycling gear, with helmet, mask or handkerchief to breathe through and rucksack; perhaps old or torn jeans.

ROSIE "For us to drink together." Who's us?

DARREN *(closing the door)* You and me.

ROSIE *(startled)* What? I didn't say you could come in.

DARREN It's all right. Don't worry. I'm quite safe. No bother.
I just want to have a talk.

ROSIE What about?

DARREN I'm your husband's secretary's husband.

ROSIE What?

DARREN *(slower)* Your husband's secretary's husband.

ROSIE My husband's secretary's...? Ooh.

DARREN That's right.

ROSIE Good heavens. *(pause)* Well, what do you want?

DARREN Just to meet you.

ROSIE Whatever for?

DARREN Dunno, really... Well... I suppose I wanted to know...
(He is struggling with his feelings.) How do *you* feel about
your old man bugging off with my missus?

And having got that out he relaxes a little and feels a little more in charge. Pause. ROSIE looks at him, still unsure.

ROSIE *(cautiously)* Whose missus she is doesn't affect how I
feel about it.

DARREN *is disappointed that his firework is merely a damp squib.*

DARREN Oh. No. S'pose not really.

ROSIE Actually, it never occurred to me that she was *anyone's* missus. I just thought of her as some little bit of... I don't see why marriage should raise her status in my mind but... What prejudices one has. So. Here you are, the other part of the equation, the other dumpee.

DARREN Come again?

ROSIE Dumpee. Haven't you been discarded as well?

DARREN Oh. Yeah. Funny, innit?

ROSIE Funny?

DARREN I meant this – us. Standing here.

ROSIE Rollicking. Perhaps you'd better sit down.

DARREN Cheers. (*He doesn't move.*)

ROSIE As you wish. (*pause*) I always think that's a ghastly expression, don't you?

DARREN What?

ROSIE Cheers.

DARREN What?

ROSIE Cheers is such a frightful expression, unless you're drinking, of course. But as a substitute for thank you...

She sees that this is all beyond DARREN.

Oh, well, it seems it's here to stay.

DARREN takes the bottle of champagne from the bag and holds it out.

DARREN 'S cold. 'S all ready to drink. I got it from the cold cabinet in the supermarket.

ROSIE (*with eyebrows raised*) Crémant de Bourgogne?

DARREN 'S like champagne, only cheaper.

ROSIE Trying to impress me, were you?

DARREN (*concerned*) No, no. 'S only cheaper in price, not in quality. Rissa always gets it.

ROSIE Rissa?

DARREN Yeah. My – my...*her*.

ROSIE Is that her name? Rissa?

DARREN Short for Larissa.

ROSIE Ah. Well, well. I named her Open-Legs-Annie. I suppose you'd better uncork that, I'll get some glasses.

During the following, he removes the foil and half undoes the wire and takes a paper napkin from his rucksack which he lays over his forearm so that he ends up waiting for her, looking like a waiter.

DARREN You know what I call *him*? Ferret Face.

ROSIE Yes, very good.

She holds the glasses before him but he motions her to set them down. He removes the wire, holds the cork and twists the bottle, precisely according to the book. As the cork comes out he quickly pours, holding each glass tilted so that it will not foam over. All is deftly done, a little ceremony. He offers her a glass and keeps one.

I see you've been trained to do all that very neatly.

DARREN Yeah.

ROSIE } (*together*) { Rissa? Yes.
DARREN } { Rissa. Yeah.

ROSIE (*raising her glass*) Well. To...

DARREN What, then?

ROSIE Rissa and Piers.

DARREN Eh?

ROSIE Ferret Face and Open-Legs-Annie. Sod 'em both.

DARREN (*overlapping*) Up theirs.

They drink.

What d'you think of it?

ROSIE Very nice. Thank you. But I have had it before. Your dear, evangelical Rissa obviously converted Piers to it.

DARREN *doesn't understand evangelical nor punctilious.*

DARREN Yeah. Well.

ROSIE And Piers, punctilious as always that I should miss none of the new-found pleasures of life that he was experiencing, brought home a *crate* of it.

DARREN She said he always bought them champagne. She'd kissed the old Crémant goodbye.

ROSIE How one warms to her. The girlfriend gets the champagne, the wife gets the Crémant. God, he's antediluvian, isn't he?

DARREN Anti what?

ROSIE Sorry. It's from the Latin: ante, before; diluvian, the flood.

DARREN What flood's that?

ROSIE The biggie. Noah's Ark and all that.

DARREN Nohzark?

ROSIE Not nohzark. Noah's Ark.

DARREN (*blankly*) Oh, yeah, yeah. Course. Cheers.

ROSIE *winces.*

ROSIE Didn't you do all that at school, in religious instruction?

DARREN Religious instruction? At my school? Listen, the Muslims wouldn't come to our religious classes, we wouldn't go the Muslims, the Jews held their own and the Catholics brought notes from their mum.

ROSIE *stares at him for a while.*

ROSIE What gulfs there are between us.

DARREN You don't have to take the piss.

ROSIE I was thinking of Rissa and... (*She smiles.*) Poor Piers.
What has he done this time?

DARREN (*suddenly singing*)

"THE ANIMALS WENT IN TWO BY TWO, PARLEZVOUS."

Is that it?

ROSIE (*laughing*) Thank God we've found a cultural point of reference.

DARREN I never learned no Latin.

ROSIE Or English, it seems.

DARREN Or religion, or history, or any of that old stuff and you just go on taking the piss. But I'm learning now.

ROSIE Splendid. So the area of your ignorance will shrink and fewer people will be able to take the piss from you in future.

There is a simmering, resentful pause.

DARREN Anyway, why is Ferret Face anti – whatever-it-was?

ROSIE Er, excuse me, but let's get this completely straight – for the sake of clarity, not to take the... I didn't say anti, I said ante. Anti with an 'i' means against – that's Latin, too, by the way; ante, with an 'e' means before. They are easily confused. There. A further shrinkage – not a major one, but nevertheless.

DARREN *manages to accept this.*

DARREN Right. Cheers.

ROSIE Let's have another drink.

DARREN Right. My name's Darren, by the way. Everyone calls me Daz... Some call me Dazza.

ROSIE Darren will do fine.

DARREN Darren Tucker.

ROSIE Ah, that's her surname, is it? Rissa Tucker. I'm Rosie.

DARREN Rosie Boston.

ROSIE Precisely.

DARREN You're not what I expected.

ROSIE Ah, well, that's life.

DARREN I mean, well, your old man, he's such a boring-looking, old fart – if you don't mind me saying.

ROSIE No.

DARREN And you, well, you're – quite – nice.

ROSIE Easy on.

DARREN's *resentment pours out.*

DARREN You know when you get married – I mean – you know it might not all go smoothly, you can expect *anything*. But *him*. *That*. *Ferret Face*. I mean – the humiliation, I come home from work dead tired, and he's in there with her. No supper, Ferret Face's eating it. I wasn't even allowed through the front door. He's in, you're out. I've packed your stuff. Here it is. Goodbye.

ROSIE Didn't you put up a fight?

DARREN She kept him out the way. I didn't even see him.

ROSIE No, I didn't mean punch him – though you're welcome – I meant why didn't you fight for your wife, your marriage?

DARREN Oh. She'd made up her mind. I know her.

ROSIE Such determination. You know, that shit of a husband of mine phoned me after I – after I found out about them. He asked me to move out of here so that they could move in. I told him where to go.

DARREN (*resentfully*) Yeah. My place.

ROSIE But you didn't even try to save your place.

DARREN Anyway, it was her place, not mine. She owned it.

ROSIE Ah. Where?

DARREN Maisonette in Potters Bar. I mean, what's your old man got that I haven't?

ROSIE Yes, from your point of view he's not exactly – but women have always liked him.

DARREN I made a bad mistake, you know. I told me mates. One of 'em said he'd have helped me out with Rissa if I couldn't, you know. So I hit him. Whack. Right in the eye.

ROSIE You hit the wrong person.

DARREN I'll say. He laid me out.

ROSIE (*laughing*) I caught them at it, you know.

DARREN What?

ROSIE Yes.

DARREN (*shocked*) At it?

ROSIE In his office. I walked in, unannounced, one lunchtime and there they were. Across his desk.

DARREN You mean actually shagging?

ROSIE It's wonderful how these words go full circle, isn't it? I remember saying "shagging" to my mother when I was about fourteen. She had fifty fits. Then shagging disappeared for a whole generation. We always screwed. Then bonking came in. Horrid. Now shagging is everywhere again, etymologically speaking.

DARREN (*can't handle it*) They were shagging? On his desk?

ROSIE That's why I called her Open-Legs-Annie.

DARREN And you walked in just expecting to have lunch with your old man?

ROSIE (*laughing involuntarily*) An open sandwich, actually.

DARREN Coh, you must have been surprised.

ROSIE No. They were surprised; I was astonished.

DARREN What?

ROSIE Sorry, sorry. An old joke, very old indeed.

DARREN (*outraged*) How can you joke about your husband shagging someone else? Don't you care?

ROSIE I'm not sure. (*And she really isn't.*) The sight of those two little faces, one upside down, gawping at me across the office, made me – well – perhaps the laugh was only nervousness. He said – (*She laughs again.*) see? I'm still at it – he said, "I wasn't expecting you". (*She shrugs.*) Well. I said, "Your last words will be, I'm dying". He said, "Caustic as ever." I left. I mean, trust Piers... *His secretary.*

DARREN (*a cry of pain*) She's *my wife*.

ROSIE Yes, sorry.

DARREN It's like me doing it with – with my mother or someone.

ROSIE You bring unexpected perspectives, don't you?

DARREN Are you taking the piss again?

ROSIE (*sharply*) Out of *myself*, you egocentric – (*She pulls herself together but her anger bubbles on.*) out of *me*. I'm trying to absorb the cliché that my cultured, erudite, loving husband of twenty-two years has dumped me for a semi-savage, ignorant, allegedly attractive – but especially young – bit of arse. Then you come in here and tell me in your fluent little way that the reverse procedure would be unthinkable, almost incestuous.

DARREN I think what *they've* done is disgusting, too.

ROSIE Ah, well, that makes everything all right, of course. No double standards for Daz-The-New-Man.

Pause.

DARREN I think you've got a bit of a problem, you know.

ROSIE I beg your pardon?

DARREN An attitude problem. I don't just mean about Rissa 'n' your old man. I'm having trouble coming to terms with that myself, so I understand. No, I mean you seem to have a problem about everybody. Even me. I think you should have a bit of self-assessment, a bit of a re-think. It might help.

ROSIE *is surprised at this.*

You think everyone's thicker than you, including your old man. You think I am, Rissa is.

ROSIE I've never met Rissa.

DARREN See?

ROSIE *(laughing, caught)* So, is delivering packages really what you do for a living?

DARREN It's only temporary. I'm a student really.

ROSIE Ah.

DARREN I bike stuff for a photographic and reproduction studio to pay for my classes: Business Management and Law. I'm going to get a management and law diploma. Evening school and Open University. I'm trying to improve myself. *(He stares, perhaps even glares, at her for a moment.)* Aren't you gonna say, "There's room for it"?

ROSIE *(smiling)* No. I think that's admirable. Good luck to you.

DARREN At least I'm making the journey.

ROSIE Ah, yes, that journey that everyone's making.

DARREN See? Piss-taking again.

ROSIE Look, Darren, I don't really see any point in our swapping insults ten minutes after we've met just because your Rissa has bedazzled my Piers. So why don't you get on your bike and deliver some stuff?

DARREN *(sitting back into his seat; he has no intention of going)* I'm done for the day.

ROSIE And you've pedalled all the way from Potters Bar just to say hallo to me?

DARREN No, no, I been dossing on a mate's floor in Muswell Hill.

ROSIE Why have you come here?

DARREN I just wanted to... Anyway, *you're* all right, aren't you.
(*He looks round.*) You got this place.

ROSIE *picks up and waves a letter.*

ROSIE I've just received this from his solicitor. Today. Piers wants this place back. He's drawn the balance from our joint bank account and refused responsibility for any future overdraft. If I write out a cheque now it'll bounce and he's cancelled all the joint credit cards.

DARREN Use cash.

ROSIE I've got seventeen pounds fifty in my bag. How do I eat?

DARREN What? Seventeen quid'll feed you for days.

ROSIE Such foresight.

DARREN Where are your kids?

ROSIE We don't have any.

DARREN Why's that, then?

ROSIE We couldn't, if you must know.

DARREN Who was that, then? Him or you?

ROSIE Mind your own bloody business.

DARREN Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean... Sorry, really.

ROSIE Never mind. Just go.

DARREN Well, ain't you got a job? Oh, no, I suppose...

ROSIE (*offended*) What?

DARREN We-ell, you wouldn't ever've needed one, would you?

ROSIE Soft, little, pampered cow that I am.

DARREN No, I didn't – sorry.

ROSIE My rage at all this is *because* of my jobs. I don't want to lose them.

DARREN Then you've got some money.

ROSIE No, I haven't.

DARREN What do you mean?

ROSIE They're not the sort of jobs you get paid for.

DARREN What d'you do 'em for, then?

ROSIE They're not just jobs, they're my life. I work two days a week on environmental research – in other words I try to slow down the rate at which we're screwing up the world.

DARREN (*not impressed*) For nothing.

ROSIE (*fiercely*) It's wonderful. And I work two days a week for Amnesty International.

DARREN (*uncertain*) Oh, yeah, yeah.

ROSIE You don't know who they are, do you?

DARREN (*assertively*) Yeah, course I do. (*losing confidence*) They're them travel agents, ain't they?

ROSIE I help get people out of prison.

DARREN (*surprised*) Oh.

ROSIE Innocent people.

DARREN (*with a little laugh*) Well, they're all that in there, ain't they?

ROSIE People with principles, in hell-holes all over the world.

DARREN You like suffering, doncha?

ROSIE (*giving up*) I'll give you some of our literature.

DARREN And you *love* fighting. That's 'cos you've never had to do neither.

ROSIE If I get wiped off the world this minute, at least I will have done something worthwhile. I used to get paid. Quite well, actually.

DARREN Doing what?

ROSIE I was an investment adviser. Huh. Earning money for people who already had plenty. Now I have found two jobs that consume me, I'm not losing them just because he wants to shag Open-Legs-Ann – oh, sorry.

DARREN No, no. 'S all right. Go on. 'S interesting.

ROSIE And I'm not losing my home either.

DARREN Then sell something.

ROSIE I've got nothing to sell.

DARREN *gestures and looks round him expressively.*

DARREN Look at this stuff. One bit of furniture'll feed you for months. (*He indicates the Turners.*) Even these old things must be worth something.

ROSIE My God, the Turners. They're worth a fortune.

DARREN What, them?

ROSIE They've been in Piers's family for generations.

DARREN Keep 'em.

ROSIE But they're his.

DARREN They're yours as well. You're his wife.

ROSIE He'll be back for them.

DARREN Don't let him in.

ROSIE What?

DARREN You heard.

ROSIE But he – it's his flat too.

DARREN They slung *me* out. They want to chuck you out. Change the locks.

ROSIE I can't do that.

DARREN I bloody would.

ROSIE I don't know a locksmith.

DARREN *Yellow Pages*. Now.

ROSIE Of course. How stupid of me.

She looks for the Yellow Pages, finds them, then searches in them.

DARREN (*indicating a painting*) Can I take this down? (*He does so.*)

ROSIE Be careful. Piers'll have a fit.

DARREN Bit wishy-washy, aren't they?

He examines the front and back of the painting.

ROSIE Wishy-washy? Turner? He was wonderful, unearthly. He beat the Impressionists to it by years. He loved the Thames. Just look at the light out of the window. There he is. (*referring to the locksmiths section of Yellow Pages*) There are hundreds of them.

DARREN *peers out but is lost.*

DARREN (*looking at the second painting*) So what are these worth?

ROSIE God knows.

DARREN Roughly, then.

ROSIE They're insured for one-point-three each. Here we are, locksmith. Just round the corner.

DARREN One-point-three? What's that mean?

ROSIE Million. But that may be above their real value at auction; say one each to be sure.

DARREN (*awestruck*) One-point-three million pounds?

ROSIE Yes.

He lets out an involuntary exclamation.

(*irritated*) Don't do that. I'll lose the number.

The door entryphone rings, an idiosyncratic ring which

ROSIE recognises.

DARREN Each? Bloody hell... I'll drop it... I'll put it back.

DARREN *re-hangs the painting as ROSIE looks out of the window.*

Bloody hell.

ROSIE (*to DARREN*) It's Piers.

DARREN Who?

ROSIE Piers.

DARREN Ferret Face?

ROSIE He's coming up. (*She puts the chain on the door.*) Quick. Hide.

DARREN What for?

ROSIE I don't know. Instinct.

DARREN OK.

ROSIE (*pushing him off*) Go on. In there.

ROSIE *ushers DARREN into the bedroom, with his rucksack and helmet, as PIERS opens the door with a key.*

PIERS (*through the door gap*) Rosie?

ROSIE (*offstage*) Yes. Just coming.

PIERS You all right?

ROSIE (*offstage*) Yes, yes. Hang on.

She enters and releases the chain and opens the door.

PIERS *comes into the room.*

PIERS Putting the chain on now, are we?

ROSIE You notice everything, as always.

PIERS You had a break-in or something?

ROSIE That's what living on your own does for you.

PIERS *(determined not to rise; agreeably)* Ah. That'll teach me.

ROSIE To what do I owe the pleasure? Got an eviction order in your back pocket, have you?

PIERS *(ploughing pleasantly on)* No, no, no, Rosie. Really. I just wanted to—

ROSIE You've never "just wanted to" anything in your whole life.

PIERS *laughs gently, buying the rebuke. He doesn't rise to ROSIE at all.*

PIERS You don't realise how much you miss someone until you hear them in action again.

ROSIE Oh, dear. Compliments. Watch out.

PIERS That's what I mean.

ROSIE That's a really shitty letter from Shyster 'n' Screw You or whoever they are.

PIERS No, it's not, Rosie, and you know it. It's perfectly reasonable and it's why I'm here.

ROSIE Unannounced.

PIERS Do I have to announce myself to come home?

ROSIE Home? Ha. It's *home* again, is it?

PIERS I knew you'd be all up, in this mood. That's why I came. So come down, we have to talk; we can't go on pussyfooting about like we have been.

ROSIE I need some money. Cash. Now.

PIERS How much?

ROSIE What?

PIERS Will two hundred tide you over?

ROSIE Well...

PIERS Here's three. There.

ROSIE Oh.

PIERS has noticed the bottle and glasses as he puts £300 down.

PIERS Is somebody here?

ROSIE (*jumping*) What?

PIERS points at the glasses.

Oh. Oh, Jane was. Jane Crabtree.

PIERS Oh.

ROSIE Jane's alone, too. Ivor's left her. Not for his secretary.
For God.

PIERS (*half-laughing*) Jesus.

ROSIE No, a more oriental version, I think. Gongs and robes
and things.

PIERS Do I get a glass?

ROSIE You know where they are. This is your home.

He gets himself a glass.

PIERS I thought you said Crémant was slop.

ROSIE Of course, you love it, don't you? The discerning Rissa
has led you to it, like a horse to water. Or was it a lamb to
the slaughter?

PIERS Where did you get Rissa from?

ROSIE What?

PIERS Rissa! Where d'you get that from?

ROSIE I thought you said Larissa was her name.

PIERS But you said Rissa.

ROSIE La-rissa. The hearing going too, is it? I hope everything else is standing the strain.

PIERS Look, Rosie, I just want to get things settled.

ROSIE Pressing you a bit, is she, your tungsten-tipped fluffy bunny?

PIERS The thing is, I'm not really making any money; the company is not declaring a dividend this year; and you've only got those tin pot jobs with Amnesty and Greenpeace.

ROSIE (*dangerously*) Leave my jobs out of this.

PIERS Yes, yes, I know, I'm privileged to subsidise such exemplary causes, but at the moment there are two homes, two lots of bills, and I've no real income. I'm living in a – a – well, a modest place – it's fine but it won't do for—

ROSIE And where is this modest place of yours?

PIERS (*an embarrassed smile*) Potters Bar.

ROSIE (*smiling*) Not quite your stamping ground.

PIERS A tiny maisonette. Sweet. It's quite handy in some ways, just off the M25; exit 24.

ROSIE So, what do we call you now? The Potters Bar Turn-Off?

PIERS (*laughing emptily*) Oh, Rosie. You're taking all this very well. But I'm afraid that you might be thinking, if you just let all this drag on, I'll get tired of her and come home, don't you? That's the short of it.

ROSIE *lets out an involuntary gasp of indignation.*

No, no, I don't go as far as to say you *hope* I will. Perhaps you don't even care much by now, and I wouldn't blame you but, well, let's face it, it would suit you, wouldn't it?

Well, look at the facts: we've got along fine for years but it's been sort of – well moribund, really, hasn't it? Oh, friendly, even affectionate, but not exactly vibrant since we gave up trying to have children. And it's always been me who's been the restless one, who's sought something – well, I mean, I know I've gone out and had the odd – well, affair and so on along the...and it's you that's been contented to just let things...and I don't blame you, very cosy. So naturally you'd prefer the status...and I respect that, but this time it's different, I'm afraid. Sorry darling, but we have to... and that's about it.

Pause.

ROSIE That is the most moving and original account of the break-up of a marriage that it has ever been my privilege to listen to.

PIERS Rosie.

ROSIE I just wish I'd taped it to fire into space for alien species to marvel at the beauty and profundity of the human spirit.

PIERS Oh, Rosie, I wish you could feel as fulfilled as I do. Let's face it, Rosie, we've been dead for years, you and me. Now I've found – well – joy; true, full, rounded happiness. It's worth the upset. It is, really, I assure you.

ROSIE (*nodding sympathetically*) Bit of a goer, is she?

PIERS That side of life is...well, wonderful.

ROSIE That side of life. What a poet you are, Piers. Still at it across the office desk, are you?

PIERS God, that was embarrassing, wasn't it? Mind you, we did laugh after you'd flounced out. I expect you did too.

He laughs. ROSIE laughs, too, in spite of herself.

ROSIE As your income's now dropped so much, perhaps you'd better shove her off your desk, sit down at it, and earn some money.

PIERS I'd like you both to meet. Shall I bring her up sometime?

ROSIE You mean all over the carpet like yesterday's tandoori?

PIERS Really, Rosie. To be friends.

ROSIE Ah, of course, friends. Why didn't I think of that? We can do lunch and discuss the menopause. She'll have to face it within the next thirty years.

PIERS, while laughing at ROSIE, quite enjoying her, is still, most determinedly, ploughing his own furrow.

ROSIE, meanwhile, has warmed considerably, genuinely amused by PIERS.

PIERS Oh, I do love you, Rosie. See? There is life after death for us. What fun you are.

ROSIE Was she all on her own, this girl? Didn't she have a family or feller or husband or anything?

PIERS Oh, there was a husband, yes.

ROSIE Wow.

PIERS An immature error on her part. She booted him out.

ROSIE Did she really, the sweet old-fashioned thing?

PIERS He's a sort of criminal, really.

ROSIE Criminal?

PIERS Ye-es. He's been to Borstal, or whatever they call it now, then done some real time.

ROSIE In jail? What did he do?

PIERS Oh, I don't know. Does it matter?

ROSIE No, no.

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