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SF PERUSALS

Close to the Wind

A play

Richard Everett

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CLOSE TO THE WIND

First produced at The Theatre Royal, Windsor, with the following cast:

Gerry	Keith Barron
Kate	Angela Thorne
Louise	Francine Morgan
Julian	Christopher Villiers
Mary	Faith Brook
Roy	Raymond Francis

Directed by Mark Piper
Designed by John Page
Lighting by Stuart Schofield

The play was subsequently revised and produced at The Mill at Sonning in 1993 with the following cast:

Gerry	Mark Kingston
Kate	Carole Nimmons
Louise	Rebecca Egan
Julian	Christopher James
Mary	Heather Chasen
Roy	Eric Dodson

Directed by Myra Frances
Designed by Michael Pavelka
Lighting by Roslyn Nash

CHARACTERS

Gerry, a middle-aged man
Kate, Gerry's wife
Louise, their daughter
Julian, Louise's boyfriend
Mary, Gerry's mother
Roy, a friend of Mary's

The action of the play takes place in the home of Gerry and Kate, a period house in the Home Counties

Time: a night in winter

ACT I

The living room of an oak-beamed seventeenth century house. It is a winter night

We are seeing the room through the fireplace wall. It is tastefully furnished in a homely cottage style and elegantly finished off, with antique ornaments etc. The room is quite spacious with an alcove housing a small dining table. Upstage c are windows looking onto the garden. To one side is a doorway leading to an unseen kitchen. On the other side is another doorway leading to the hall and stairs, of which we see only a part. There are two sizeable cupboard doors: one by the kitchen door, leading to a cleaning cupboard; the other near the hall doorway, leading to an all-purpose junk cupboard. There are several table lamps which can be switched off individually or collectively from a master dimmer-switch by the hall door. There are also wall lights controllable by a wall-switch. There is a large sofa—perhaps winged, and at least one armchair

The curtains are drawn and the room is dimly lit by one small table lamp

In the half-light, a young girl, Louise, stands and looks adoringly into the eyes of a young man, Julian

Louise I love you.
Julian I love you too... I'm also rather knackered.
Louise Then I'll revive you... (*She runs her hands under his clothing and explores his skin*) Arms up.
Julian What?
Louise Quickly.

She lifts his arms for him and pulls his sweater over his head

Julian Look Lou, would you mind terribly if——
Louise Buttons.
Julian What?

Louise I hate all these buttons.
Julian Exeter is nearly two hundred miles from here, you know.
Louise *(unbuttoning his shirt)* Why do they put them so close together?
Julian I really have travelled quite a long way to see you today.

She slides off his shirt

Louise And now I want you to go even further.

She caresses his torso and at the same time steers him upstage of the sofa

Julian Louise... Just a minute... Look, I'm somewhat done in by the journey and——

She stops and stares at him

What is it? What's the matter?
Louise Julian. I don't know how many times in your life a woman has taken advantage of you but it's not something I do very often.
Julian No, I know that.
Louise Then, would you mind just shutting up and letting me get on with it?
Julian Right. Sorry.
Louise I can't undo this buckle.
Julian There's a knack. You have to tug it and pull.
Louise You bloody tug it and pull.

He does so. The belt loosens

Thank you.

She kisses him swiftly and hard on the mouth and then pushes him backwards. He disappears behind the sofa. She follows him. A few seconds pass, then their voices are heard from behind the sofa

Julian Louise... Ow! Sorry, but can I just ask something?
Louise What?

During the following, items of clothing are thrown over the back of the sofa

Julian Why don't we move somewhere more comfortable?
Louise What do you mean?
Julian The sofa. Why don't we move on to the sofa?
Louise I prefer the floor.
Julian You get splinters on the floor.
Louise Let me worry about the splinters.
Julian What about your parents?
Louise I shouldn't think they've ever done it on the floor.
Julian No—where are they? Supposing they come back.
Louise They've gone to the theatre. We've got the place to ourselves. For God's sake stop asking questions and——

The shadowy half-light is pierced for a moment as car headlights sweep across the closed curtains. Louise's and Julian's heads pop up from behind the sofa

Julian What is it?
Louise I'm not sure.

They watch and listen. Two car doors slam

Quick! It's them!
Julian Who?
Louise My parents! Who do you think!?
Julian Oh my God. (*He runs around the room in his boxer shorts*) What shall I do? Where shall I go?

Louise emerges in her bra and pants, clutching odd bits of clothing

Louise In the kitchen! Quickly!
Julian Where is it?
Louise Through that door.

Julian goes through a door and slams it shut

Louise gathers up more clothing

Julian enters

Julian It's a cupboard, Louise! It's a bloody cupboard!

The sound of the front door slamming

Louise Never mind.

Louise pushes Julian back into the cupboard. With her arms now full of clothes, she scans the room. She hurries across to the light switch by the door and awkwardly flicks on the lights. She notices Julian's shirt protruding from under the sofa. Unable to pick it up, she opts for pushing it out of sight with her foot. Muffled voices are heard in the hall. Still clutching the clothes, she disappears into the other cupboard

Gerry, aged about fifty, and Kate, in her mid to late forties, enter from the hall. They wander slowly into the room, stop some distance apart and stare vacantly at the room

Kate Well, there we are. These things happen.
Gerry Not to anyone else, they don't.
Kate Stop being such a martyr. Brrr! It's cold. That wind goes right through you.
Gerry I really wanted to see that play, Kate.
Kate We'll go another time.
Gerry Three months in advance I had to book those tickets.
Kate We'll go another time, Gerry.
Gerry I wanted to go tonight. I've been looking forward to it for weeks.
Kate Then re-book and you can have all those weeks of looking forward to it again.
Gerry It'll be off by then.
Kate When?
Gerry Whenever I book.
Kate I thought it was selling out.
Gerry It is.
Kate Then it won't come off, will it?
Gerry They'll change the cast.
Kate Oh, for goodness sake.
Gerry (*calling*) Louise!
Kate She's not here.
Gerry Why are all the lights on?
Kate That was me. It keeps the burglars away.
Gerry What burglars?
Kate They've done two other houses up the road.

Gerry So, what are you trying to do—encourage them? It's like a Harrods window. May as well price everything and be done with it.
Kate The curtains are drawn. They can't see in.
Gerry Then what's the point in leaving the lights on?
Kate Gerry, will you please stop now? You haven't drawn breath since we left the theatre. D'you want a drink?
Gerry No. What a waste of a bloody evening.
Kate Why don't we ring Janine's and have a nice quiet meal?
Gerry I don't want to ring Janine's and have a nice quiet meal.
Kate They do that lovely steak *au poivre*—you enjoyed that last time.
Gerry It'll take more than a steak *au poivre* to redeem this evening.
Kate Come on. It's not too late.
Gerry It is too late.
Kate It's quarter to nine.
Gerry I'm beyond hunger.
Kate Well, I'm going to ring them.
Gerry Jolly good. You do that.
Kate What's their number?
Gerry No idea.
Kate Then I'll look it up, shall I?
Gerry You could try.
Kate (*thumbing through the directory*) Honestly. The slightest disappointment and you stamp your foot and sulk.
Gerry (*sulking*) I'm not sulking.
Kate I don't know what gets into you sometimes.
Gerry My mother, Kate—that's what gets into me. Whenever we include her, she hijacks the outing.
Kate Stop it.
Gerry Who needs terrorists with her on the loose?
Kate It was a misunderstanding—just leave it at that.
Gerry Ridiculous. I'm managing director of a company that'll insure anything down to the Pope's knees—and I can't get protection against my own mother.
Kate Try drafting a new policy. You'd make a fortune.
Gerry No-one would touch it—she's an *act of God*. I book the tickets, arrange the transport; all she has to do is stick her bum in the seat and watch the bloody play.
Kate I'm sure that's what she's doing at this very moment.
Gerry Lucky her.
Kate Does Janine have one "n" or two?

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