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SF PERUSALS

SUGAR DADDIES

by Alan Ayckbourn

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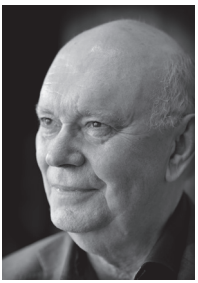
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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 eighty 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*; and at Chichester Festival Theatre, major revivals of *Way Upstream* in 2015, and *The Norman Conquests* in 2017.

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. He has been inducted into American Theater'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

The climax to *Sugar Daddies* was altered in 2013, prior to the US premiere at ACT (A Contemporary Theatre), Seattle. Therefore the script presented here is different from any previously published versions. Speaking at the time about the reason for the changes, Alan Ayckbourn said the following:

"Rereading the play, I thought Sasha goes through this experience pretty well unscathed. She escapes with just a singe. I wanted those last few moments to show that there's part of Uncle Val that's been left with her. If you've supped with the devil, you've probably burnt your tongue. There is a sense that Sasha is refreshingly clear-eyed at the beginning, the 'country mouse' who has come into the city, but she has a sort of mistrust of human nature by the end - something you see in children growing up…. Sasha's not quite the girl she was at the beginning; she has developed a ruthlessness."

(*from an interview with Thomas May for Crosscut.com, 3 October 2013)*

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FIRST PERFORMANCE INFO

World Premiere at Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough: Round auditorium on 22 July, 2003.

With the following cast:

Sasha	**ALISON PARGETER**
Val	**REX GARNER**
Chloe	**ANNA BRECON**
Ashley	**TERENCE BOOTH**
Charmaine	**ELIZA HUNT**

Director: **ALAN AYCKBOURN**
Design: **ROGER GLOSSOP**
Lighting: **MICK HUGHES**
Costumes: **CHRISTINE WALL**
Music: **DAVID NEWTON**

The North American Premiere took place at ACT, Seattle (Allen Theatre) on 10 October 2013.

With the following cast:

Sasha	**EMILY CHISHOLM**
Val	**SEÁN G. GRIFFIN**
Chloe	**ELINOR GUNN**
Ashley	**JOHN PATRICK LOWRIE**
Charmaine	**ANNE ALLGOOD**

Director: **ALAN AYCKBOURN**
Design: **MATTHEW SMUCKER**
Sound: **BRENDAN PATRICK HOGAN**
Costumes: **DEB TROUT**
Lighting: **RICK PAULSEN**

CHARACTERS

SASHA – early 20s
CHLOË – her half sister, early 30s
VAL – late 70s
ASHLEY – late 70s
CHARMAINE – mid 60s

SETTING

The living room of Chloë and Sasha's London flat.

TIME

ACT I
Scene One: 6pm. A few days before Christmas.
Scene Two: 6pm. Two weeks later.
Scene Three: 2am. That same night.
Scene Four: 6pm. Two days later.

ACT II
Scene One: Mid-day. Several weeks later.
Scene Two: 7pm. A few days later.
Scene Three: A few hours later. The same night.
Scene Four: The next morning.

ACT I

Scene One

The living/dining, all-purpose room in **CHLOË***'s and* **SASHA***'s first floor London flat. Although the flat is a large, pleasant, airy Victorian conversion, the furnishings and décor are rather run down, due to lack of care rather than money. At the start, it is an untidy shambles, with abundant evidence of the two women who live there. Clothes and belongings, especially* **CHLOË***'s, are strewn everywhere. Amidst the debris, there are some signs that it is just before Christmas, with one or two cards and a tiny, rather battered artificial tree.*

*Furnishings include a sofa, an armchair with accompanying coffee table, a rarely used extendible dining table with three chairs and a desk (***CHLOË***'s) strewn with papers. These virtually bury the phone and her laptop. Also a sideboard with drawers and cupboards. There are three doors leading from the room. The flat's front door which opens directly onto the first floor landing. Besides this is an entry phone linked to the downstairs street door. A second door leads to the kitchen; a third to the flat's two bedrooms, etc.*

It is late December, just before six pm and outside it is dark. At the start, the room is lit only from the street lights outside. We can hear the continuous rumble of city traffic.

In a moment, there is the sound of voices outside the flat's front door. They are those of **SASHA** *and* **VAL**. *His*

is pure cockney whilst hers has the slight trace of a Norfolk burr.

SASHA *(offstage)* ...just these last few stairs. Are you sure you can manage alright?

VAL *(offstage)* ...I can do it, my dear, you mustn't worry about me...

The sound of a key in the lock.

SASHA *(offstage)* Here we are. Here at last.

VAL *(offstage)* ...so kind of you, my dear. As I say, you're a good Samaritan...

The front door opens and light from the landing illuminates the room. At first silhouetted, we catch our first glimpse of **SASHA** *and* **VAL.**

SASHA *is in her early 20s. Her casual clothing and rather well scrubbed face, with no trace of make up, tend to make her appear younger. Her manner is direct and open. All in all she appears friendly, straightforward and unsophisticated. She is assisting* **VAL** *who is in his late seventies or even early eighties. He is limping slightly having recently injured his leg. We can see little of the rest of him initially as he is dressed in a Father Christmas outfit complete with beard.* **SASHA** *switches on the lights. The full horror of the room is revealed.*

SASHA There!

VAL *(a little startled by his surroundings)* My word!

SASHA Sorry, it's a bit... We've been meaning to...but neither of us seems to get round to it. *(Clearing the armchair of clothing)* Here. Why don't you sit here, while I get you the water?

VAL Thank you, my dear. *(Indicating the dining chairs)* Would it be alright if I sat in one of those...?

SASHA *(hastily making a dining chair accessible)* Oh, yes of course.

VAL Only if I sat down in that one, I doubt I'd be able to get up again.

SASHA Right.

VAL I tend to lock up. I could be here for the duration. *(He sits)*

SASHA That OK?

VAL Ideal. This is ideal. Couldn't be bettered.

SASHA *(moving to the kitchen)* I'll fetch the water.

SASHA *goes off briefly to the kitchen.*

VAL *(calling after her)* You're a good Samaritan, my dear. I say, a veritable good Samaritan.

VAL *surveys the room briefly.*

(to himself) Dear, oh dear, oh dear!

VAL *fumbles under his robe and retrieves a sachet of tablets from his pocket.* **SASHA** *returns with a glass of water.*

SASHA Here you are.

She hands it to **VAL** *who hesitates.*

It is clean, I promise. I rinsed it. In running water.

VAL I'm sure you did. *(Extracting the pills from the foil)* You're very kind.

SASHA *(solicitously)* Can you manage those?

VAL I can manage. Take a couple of these, I'll be right as rain. Just for the old ticker, you know...

SASHA Yes.

VAL For the shock. *(Taking the glass from her)* Ta.

SASHA *(indicating his beard)* Do you need to take off your – beard, first? I mean, does it come off?

VAL Oh, yes, it comes off. *(He has his hands full)* I don't wear this all year.

SASHA Here. Let me. *(She helps to remove his beard)*

VAL Ta. You're a good, kind girl. *(Indicating pills)* These'll put me right. I just take two of these. Just for the shock. I'm not supposed to give it too many shocks. If I do that I get told off by my doctor…

SASHA Well, it wasn't your fault just now, was it? It was their fault entirely. I was a witness. The only witness. You weren't even on the road. You were walking on the pavement, weren't you – are you alright?

VAL *(who seems to have a little trouble swallowing)* Fine. Right as rain, now.

SASHA I could crumble them up for you, if that would make them easier to swallow.

VAL No, you've done enough, you've done quite enough, dear.

SASHA I'm used to doing that. I used to do it for my Auntie Fay. Before she died.

VAL Well, I'm not dead yet. Not long to go, probably, but not dead yet.

SASHA No thanks to that driver. Didn't even stop, did they? Just to drive off and leave you lying there like that.

VAL Sign of the times, my dear…

SASHA I mean, you could have been dead. You could have been dead for all they knew…

VAL …times we live in. It's called urban disregard…

SASHA …or at least, badly hurt. How's your leg now?

VAL I think it's just a bruise, dear. Nothing more.

SASHA Are you sure?

VAL Just my hip. I've been very lucky.

SASHA I still think you should get it looked at.

VAL No, no. No need for that.

SASHA You can never be sure. Especially when you get to – to certain stages in life, you know...

VAL Don't you worry. I'm a tough old git. Always have been. Car didn't touch me, you see. I jumped out of the way and banged into the wall, that's all. Saw him just in time.

SASHA What was it doing driving on the pavement?

VAL It's that time of year, darling. Every other driver's over the limit, isn't he? Full of Christmas spirit, no doubt. Take your life in your hands, going out walking this time of the year.

SASHA Where were you going, anyway?

VAL I just come out the hospital, didn't I?

SASHA *(alarmed)* You'd been in hospital, as well?

VAL No, no. Not that way. I was visiting. Children's hospital. On the corner of Melbourne Street. Just along there. Doing my good deed for the year.

SASHA Oh, I see. Father Christmas.

VAL Been doing it sixteen years.

SASHA Lovely.

VAL Bring the presents. Little walk round the beds. Have a word with the kiddies. Cheer 'em up. Have a little joke. I always keep the kit on when I leave though. 'Cause some of them, the ones that can walk like, they look out the windows. Otherwise it would spoil it. Park the car round the corner.

SASHA I bet they must love it.

VAL I don't know about them. I certainly do. Wouldn't miss it. See the little faces. Innocence, you know. At that age, they

really believe in you. Father Christmas. Still young enough to believe, you see.

SASHA Yes. I can remember that.

VAL You used to believe, did you?

SASHA *(a trifle embarrassed)* Yes, I believed. I believed right till I was eleven.

VAL Goodness! That'd be your mum and dad did that then?

SASHA Right. They used to go to all sorts of lengths. We got this big log fireplace at home, and they used to fetch soot down the chimney. On Christmas Eve. As if he'd actually climbed down, you know. And they'd leave sooty footprints right across the living room floor to the kitchen.

VAL What, all over your carpet?

SASHA No, it's stone. We have a stone floor.

VAL Oh, I see.

SASHA Right through to the kitchen. And then on the table, on the kitchen table, they'd have left him a glass of milk and some mince pies.

VAL Right.

SASHA Covered up, you know. Last thing at night. And in the morning, they'd be all gone. Just crumbs and the empty glass. Like he'd been there.

VAL Gracious.

SASHA And there'd be like handprints everywhere. Sooty ones, you know. Where he'd touched things.

VAL Quite a mess.

SASHA It was. They had to have the place re-painted every other year.

VAL They sound like loving sort of people.

SASHA *(smiling)* They are.

VAL I take it you're an only?

SASHA Yes.

VAL Ah. That'd do it.

SASHA They both run this tea room. My dad cooks and my mum runs it.

VAL Where's this then?

SASHA In Swaithe.

VAL Swaithe? Where's that?

SASHA Not far from King's Lynn.

VAL *looks blank.*

In Norfolk.

VAL Norfolk. That's where you're from?

SASHA Right.

VAL Yes. I thought I – you know, spotted a – an accent.

SASHA Did you? Have I still got one? I thought I must have lost it by now.

VAL How long you been in London?

SASHA Oh, coming up two months.

VAL Well, you still got one. Norfolk. Just north of me, then.

SASHA You live up that way?

VAL Essex.

SASHA *(doubtfully)* Ah.

Slight pause.

VAL Listen my dear, I won't take up any more of your time. I'd best be moving along. You've been a real good Samaritan…

SASHA But how are you going to get home? To Essex?

VAL Look, what I'll do is, you don't have to worry, I'll make a quick call, if I may, to my nephew Frankie. And ask him to come and pick me up.

SASHA You sure?

VAL He won't be a minute. He'll be somewhere in the neighbourhood, he's bound to be. He was supposed to pick me up in the first place only he must have missed me.

SASHA *(moving to the desk)* There's a phone over here somewhere – if I can find it...

VAL Don't bother, no bother. I got my own one here. *(He fishes for his mobile)* Present from my grandchildren. They give it me for just such an emergency.

SASHA You have a lot of grandchildren?

VAL *(as he dials)* Fifteen. At the last count. Ranging from thirty-two, Adam, right down to six, little Melanie-Ann. Adam's from my eldest son Bernie's second marriage to Lainey, and Melanie's from my youngest daughter June and her first husband Wayne. Only they just split up. Excuse me, one minute, dear.

SASHA Of course.

During **VAL***'s phone call,* **SASHA** *goes back to the kitchen briefly with the water.* **VAL** *walks about during the next.*

VAL *(into his mobile)* Frankie? Where'd you get to, you pillock? ...I was waiting on the corner of Melbourne, wasn't I? ...Frankie, I said half five...half five... Well, you're no bloody use to me in a betting shop, are you, son?

SASHA *returns and hovers in the doorway.*

(aware of her, moderating his tone slightly) Yes, you come and pick me up now, there's a good lad, Frankie... Yes, I'm at – *(To* **SASHA***)* Where am I exactly, darling, can you tell me?

SASHA 56 Widcombe Street.

VAL 56 Widcombe Street... You got that? Well, it's just round the corner from Melbourne Street, isn't it? ...No, that's Birdsmoore Street. Widcombe Street... Yes, well you just get your – yourself round here Frankie... I'm with a very nice, kind young lady whose name I don't even know, who has kindly come to my rescue.

SASHA Sasha.

VAL Sasha. That's nice... *(Into phone)* No, I'll tell you later. Blow by blow. Just get here pronto, son.

SASHA First floor. Tell him to ring the bell marked Vines. Flat two.

VAL Oy, Frankie. Ring the bell marked Vines... Vines. First floor... No, first. See you in a minute, son. *(He rings off)* Nice boy with all the intellect of a fridge magnet. That's a pretty name that – Sasha.

SASHA Thank you. Do you want to sit down again, till your nephew arrives?

VAL No, sweet of you, but I can't sit down for too long, see, else they'll lock up completely. The knees.

SASHA Your knees?

VAL Like that. *(Demonstrating with his hands)* They stiffen. Solid.

SASHA Do you know what's wrong with them?

VAL Over-age and over-usage. That's the medical term. Past their stroll-by date. My work, that was. Lot of kneeling involved.

SASHA *(mystified)* Kneeling? In your work?

VAL That or crouching.

SASHA What were you then? A vicar?

VAL Vicar? No, policeman.

SASHA Oh.

VAL Thirty four years.

SASHA Here in London?

VAL Serious crime squad, mostly. Chief Super.

SASHA Right.

VAL Retired. Wasn't much I didn't see, I can tell you.

SASHA I bet.

VAL All changed now.

SASHA Yes?

VAL For the worst. No honour, you see. Used to be honour. No honour these days.

SASHA No?

VAL Everyone for himself.

SASHA You think so?

VAL End of civilisation, my dear. Just around the corner.

SASHA I hope not. I'm just starting out.

VAL *(smiling)* Don't you worry. You'll be fine. Sasha. Sasha. Your parents choose that for you, did they?

SASHA Yes.

VAL I'm Val, by the way.

SASHA How do you do?

VAL Everyone calls me Uncle Val. Always has done.

SASHA Right.

VAL You can call me Uncle Val if you like.

SASHA *(smiling)* OK.

He smiles at her.

VAL Nice big flat. You live here on your own do you, Sasha?

SASHA Oh, no. I share it with my sister. Chloë.

VAL I thought you said you was an only?

SASHA Oh, yes. Sorry. My half sister. Chloë's my half sister. Only her mother died. Quite young. And her father then married my mother. Only Chloë doesn't speak to our father any more. So we never met. Not till recently.

VAL I see.

SASHA Chloë's older than me.

VAL She owns the flat, does she?

SASHA No, we both do. Well, neither of us does. We rent it. Together. She had someone else sharing with her. Only they left – they didn't get on – and I was just about to come here to college and – so it worked out quite conveniently, in the end. I don't know how much longer we'll be able to afford to live here, though.

VAL Why's that?

SASHA Well, they're apparently putting the rents up by a fantastic amount – like double – they've just written to tell us. It is pretty cheap at the moment, I suppose. For London, anyway. They're probably justified. So I think we may have to move. I mean, Chloë's earning pretty well – she works in television, she's a researcher – but I'm just a student, of course. And I don't think she can afford the place on her own. And there's very few people she'd choose to share with. 'Cos she doesn't get on, not with everyone, you see.

VAL Who's your landlord, then?

SASHA No idea. Some company or other. Perry – Perry something. I did know. Periphon. Periphon Properties.

VAL Periphon?

SASHA Have you heard of them?

VAL No.

SASHA The people downstairs. The Pearsons. I think they've already decided to move out. *(Realising she's been rabbiting*

on rather) Anyway. *(Slight pause)* She should be home soon. Then I have to go out again.

VAL On the town, eh?

SASHA What? Oh, no. To work.

VAL I thought you were a student?

SASHA I am. This is just a night job.

VAL Doing what?

SASHA Washing up, mostly. Working in a hotel kitchen. The Dorchester.

VAL Nothing but the best, then.

SASHA I wouldn't know. Dirty plates are dirty plates, aren't they? I haven't a clue what was on them originally.

VAL And what's it you're studying, Sasha?

SASHA I'm at catering college. North London.

VAL Ah, I see. You want to run a tea room like your mum and dad, do you?

SASHA Not really, no. I want to run my own restaurant. Eventually.

VAL What, in Norfolk?

SASHA London. Essex. Not fussed.

VAL I'll tell you what, you come to Essex. We could do with a few more good eating places out our way.

SASHA *(smiling)* I'll bear that in mind. Or I might be a singer. I can sing quite well. Only I don't like singing in public. Not at present.

VAL That's a drawback, then.

SASHA Not till I've practised a bit more. But then I might end up singing in my own restaurant. When I'm not cooking. I'll have to see. Who knows?

VAL Leave it open for now, eh?

SASHA Yes.

VAL Plenty of time, isn't there? Tell me, did you by any chance get a sight of the driver? In that car?

SASHA What, the one that nearly...? No. It was all so quick. I couldn't even swear it was a him. Drove away so fast.

VAL Right. So you didn't happen to notice if they had one eye?

SASHA One eye? What makes you think they had one eye?

VAL Well, it would explain the driving. I mean, I understand that with only one eye, it's more difficult to judge distances. So that could explain it.

SASHA *(puzzled)* No, I didn't notice.

VAL Just a long shot.

Pause.

SASHA He shouldn't even have been driving with one eye, anyway, should he?

VAL *(darkly)* That never stops most of them.

The sound of a key in the front door lock.

SASHA Oh. This'll be her. My sister.

CHLOË *enters. In her early thirties, she is somewhat fraught. This is more or less the norm for her. She is trying to keep up with the pace of modern living and under all manner of pressure both at work and in her personal life. Almost the complete reverse of her younger half sister.*

CHLOË *(as she enters)*...that is the last bloody time I am travelling on that Northern Line, I can tell you that. Why the hell can't people find another way to kill themselves? Why must they always choose my train to plunge themselves in front of –? *(Seeing* **VAL**, *stifling a scream)* Oh my God, who are you?

SASHA It's OK, Chloë, it's OK.

CHLOË Who is he? What's he doing here?

VAL How do you do? I'm –

CHLOË Sasha, who is he?

SASHA He's –

CHLOË How did he get in here?

SASHA I let him in.

CHLOË You let him in? Why d'you let him in?

SASHA Val was – he was nearly run down in the road. I brought him back here so he could recover.

CHLOË *(incredulous)* You brought a stranger back to this flat?

SASHA Yes, as I say –

CHLOË A man you've never even met before? A complete stranger off the street and you bring him back here –? My God, Sasha, what's the matter with you, girl? Are you completely and utterly half-witted? He could be anyone, couldn't he? Anyone? Look at him! What do you know about him, do you even know the first thing about him?

SASHA Chloë, he was hurt in an –

VAL How do you do, I'm –

CHLOË Who is he? Tell me, who the hell is he?

SASHA *(loudly)* Chloë, he's perfectly alright, he's Father Christmas!

Silence.

CHLOË *(softly)* He's what?

SASHA And before that he used to be a policeman.

CHLOË A policeman?

SASHA He's called Uncle Val.

CHLOË You mean he's a relative?

SASHA No –

CHLOË He's certainly no relative of mine, I can tell you that.

VAL Listen, I do beg your pardon. I didn't mean to startle you. I'm just on the point of leaving. Your sister's been very kind and helpful...

CHLOË*'s mobile rings.*

CHLOË God! I've only just come in the door! *(She answers it)*

VAL ...and I won't impose on you any further.

CHLOË *(into phone)* Hallo...

VAL I'll wait out in the street, Sasha. Frankie'll be along in a minute.

CHLOË *(into phone)* Hallo... I can't hear you, you're breaking up!

SASHA No, you can wait here. You don't have to –

VAL Be best, I think. *(To* **CHLOË***)* I'll be off then. Good-bye.

CHLOË *(ignoring* **VAL***, into phone)* Hallo! Oh, Mr Bagwick, it's so – Ragwick, sorry – It's good of you to call back so late... No. Let me tell you what this is. My name's Chloë Vines, I'm a researcher with – no, Vines – V – I – N – E – S ...Yes...

As she speaks, **CHLOË** *struggles out of her coat which she tosses casually onto a chair. She seats herself at the desk, still talking.*

SASHA *(during this, sotto to* **VAL***)* I'm sorry. I think my sister's had a rough day.

VAL That's quite alright. I've outstayed my welcome.

SASHA Not at all!

CHLOË *(under this, into phone)* ...no, I do see... It would be literally five minutes...no, absolutely...we would respect your privacy utterly... I don't know if you know the programme

at all, but we never...no, we never...we wouldn't... No, we absolutely wouldn't, not under any circumstances...listen, maybe you'd care to sleep on it? May I call you in the morning? Mmm... Mmmm... Mmmm... Mmm...

SASHA *lets* **VAL** *out of the front door.*

VAL Good-bye then, Sasha.

SASHA Good-bye then – Uncle Val. *(Just before closing the door)* Go carefully now, won't you? Look both ways...

CHLOË *(into the phone)* ...right, just as you like, Mr Wagwick. Either way you have our complete assurances that we'll absolutely respect your decision...of course...of course...

VAL *leaves.* **SASHA** *finally shuts the door.*

...yes, lovely to talk to you, too... Bye. *(She rings off)* God, that man's a pain in the arse...all we want is a five second sound bite... *(Looking round, to* **SASHA***)* Have you got rid of him?

SASHA Yes, he's gone now.

CHLOË God, Sasha! What did you think you were doing? How many more times? You are not in Great Yarmouth now, girl.

SASHA King's Lynn.

CHLOË We are in the middle of London where nowhere, repeat nowhere, these days is safe and I've told you, you let no one into your home unless it's burning to the ground and you're absolutely convinced it's the fire brigade. As for bringing strange men in without a by your leave –

SASHA He was very nice.

CHLOË Oh, yes? How could you possibly know that? How could you possibly?

SASHA I could tell. He used to be a policeman.

CHLOË A policeman! Anyone can say that. Don't do it again. Don't ever let strangers in here again. Ever.

SASHA Sorry.

CHLOË Not that we're going to be here much longer. The Pearsons downstairs, they're definitely going. She told me this morning. They're going to stay with her brother-in-law temporarily. End of next week they're off. *(In pain)* Aaaah! God, I need a bath. *(Hunching her shoulders)* Aaaah!

SASHA Bad day, again?

CHLOË It's my shoulders. Aaah! Aaah! Aaah! Tension! I've had the most ghastly day. Just awful. Would you believe, I spent hours working on this item and then at the very last minute, Marjorie decides to cut it. I mean, why let me spend hours on something if she meant to cut it?

SASHA Perhaps she didn't know she wanted to cut it.

CHLOË How do you mean?

SASHA Until the last minute.

CHLOË Oh, she knew, she knew alright. Don't tell me she didn't know.

SASHA *(giving up)* Well.

CHLOË *(rolling her head)* Aaaah! I'd been working on it for three solid days. And nights. I wouldn't mind but it isn't the first time she's done it. You didn't let that man in the bedrooms, did you?

SASHA No. He just sat on the chair there.

CHLOË Only sometimes they – you know – they do things in the drawers.

SASHA Really? I don't think he's like that.

CHLOË You don't know. You've no idea. You're just a child, Sasha. Welcome to inner city hell, darling. The sooner you get back to – Leighton Buzzard – the better for you.

SASHA *(softly)* King's Lynn. Everyone here seems very friendly to me.

CHLOË Ha! Ha! Ha!

SASHA I'd better get changed for work, I suppose. You're out tonight, aren't you?

CHLOË *(grimly)* No.

SASHA Oh. I thought you were.

CHLOË I thought I was, too. Until I get this text message at 4 o'clock this afternoon.

SASHA Oh. From Zack, was it?

CHLOË Who do you think? Hasn't even got the guts to speak to me to my face. Just a bloody text message. I mean – a text message. Want to see?

SASHA Not really.

CHLOË No, go on. See for yourself. You won't believe this. *(She punches her phone buttons)* Look. How would you feel if someone did this to you?

SASHA I don't have a phone.

CHLOË Look at this. What sort of person would write this to someone?

SASHA *(reading with difficulty)* "Thnk we shd cl it…" What's cl?

CHLOË Cool. I think.

SASHA …cl it. Nd to fnd my spce…

CHLOË Need to find my space, that is. What space? I couldn't give him more space if I tried.

SASHA Tk sn. Z. X.

CHLOË Bloody men. Well, that's it. This time. No more. He has had it. Goodbye, Zack.

SASHA You have said that before, you know.

CHLOË This time I really mean it. No, I really, really mean it, Sasha. I do. Really.

SASHA Yes.

CHLOË You don't believe me but I do.

SASHA I just think he's – playing you around a bit, that's all. It's all about when it suits him, isn't it? You don't come into it.

CHLOË *(defensively)* Well, I do. It's – it's an open relationship. Two way. I mean, it's when it suits me too. As well. You know.

SASHA It never seems to be.

CHLOË How do you mean?

SASHA When it suits you. It always seems to be when it suits him, doesn't it? That's how it seems to me.

CHLOË *(considering this)* You're too young to understand. When you get to my age... Anyway, let's not talk about it, it's over. Over! The next time Zack tries to get in touch, I'm not available, do you hear?

SASHA *(unconvinced)* Good.

CHLOË I mean it, Sasha.

SASHA I must get going.

CHLOË Sod him! I'll have a wonderful evening on my own. Wash my hair. Wallow in a hot bath. Watch garbage TV. Have an early night. Hot water bottle. Pamper myself.

SASHA Why not?

CHLOË Have we got any of that gin left?

SASHA I think you drunk it all.

CHLOË Did I? I don't remember that. When did I drink it?

SASHA Last week. When Zack phoned to say he wasn't –

CHLOË Oh, yes. You need the bathroom first?

SASHA No, you go ahead.

CHLOË I mean, how can anyone just text you? It's unimaginable. I can't believe someone could do that to another human being, can you?

CHLOË*'s mobile rings again. She grabs at it, glances briefly at the display and answers it.*

(as she goes) Roger, darling, how can I help? Yep…yep…yep…

CHLOË *goes off to the bedrooms.*

SASHA *(to herself, surveying the room)* I really must have a good tidy up sometime. You can't see to think in here.

She turns to follow **CHLOË** *when the front door buzzer rings.* **CHLOË** *returns with her blouse half unbuttoned, still talking.*

CHLOË No…no…no… *(To* **SASHA***)* Who's that?

SASHA *(going to the entry phone)* No idea.

CHLOË Not that old man back again, I hope? *(Into her phone)* Yep…yep…

SASHA *(picking up the entry phone)* Hallo? …Who? …Oh. Right. Hang on. I'll be down. *(She hangs up)* It's some flowers, apparently.

CHLOË *(touched)* Ah! *(Into phone)* Roger, could you hang on just one second, darling? *(To* **SASHA***)* Could you get them, I'm…?

SASHA Sure. *(As she goes)* I suppose this means it's all on again now, does it?

SASHA *goes out.*

CHLOË *(after her)* No it does not, not at all. *(Into phone)* Roger, may I call you back, darling? …Yep, OK… Sure will. Bye.

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