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SF PERUSALS

EVER SINCE PARADISE

An Entertainment chiefly referring to Love and Marriage

In Three Acts

by

J. B. PRIESTLEY

With Music

by

DENNIS ARUNDELL

SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED
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EVER SINCE PARADISE

Produced at the New Theatre, London, W.C.2, on June 4th, 1947, with the following cast of characters—

(in the order of their appearance)

PHILIP	*Dennis Arundell.*
JOYCE	*Jane Carr.*
WILLIAM	*Roger Livesey.*
HELEN .	*Ursula Jeans.*
ROSEMARY	*Joy Shelton.*
PAUL	*Hugh Kelly.*

The Play produced by the Author.

The action is in many different places, and the time is the present.

EVER SINCE PARADISE

ACT I

The main curtain may or may not be used, according to the size of the stage. On each side of the stage, as far apart as possible, is a grand piano, each exactly alike. A little on stage from each piano are two stools, one each for use of the commentators. This setting is backed by a further curtained proscenium front, concealing an inner stage, which extends in the form of an apron or rostrum a few feet below the second curtain line. R. *and* L. *of the second proscenium are curtained arches.*

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the play.*)

When the CURTAIN *rises, the inner Curtains and Arch-curtains are closed. Lights Cue 1.* PHILIP *in dinner jacket is seated playing the piano* R. *and* JOYCE, *also in evening dress, is seated playing the piano* L. *They are two youngish people, and commence playing the overture—Music Cue 1, shortly before the* CURTAIN *rises. The overture continues for about two or three minutes after the rise of the* CURTAIN, *both keeping perfect time. Then they begin to sound ragged and to look worried.* PHILIP *wants to increase the tempo and* JOYCE *is lagging behind. Finally, with a discordant crash, they stop playing, and glare across at each other.*

PHILIP (*rising angrily*). There you are, you see!

JOYCE (*rising angrily and moving* L.C.). It's not my fault.

PHILIP (*moving* R.C.). Of course it is.

JOYCE. No, it isn't, it's your fault.

PHILIP. No, it isn't, you were dragging it again.

JOYCE. I wasn't. You were racing away at a ridiculous pace.

PHILIP. I wasn't.

JOYCE. You were. Always the same! Want to rush everything.

PHILIP. I don't want to rush everything.

JOYCE. Yes, you do. Going and taking that cottage!

PHILIP (*very angrily*). What's my taking that cottage got to do with your dragging the time again——?

(WILLIAM, *in dinner jacket, enters* L. *and moves down* C.)

WILLIAM (*reproachfully*). I say, I say, this won't do, you know. You two ought to be playing, not shouting at each other. (*To the audience.*) I'm so sorry about this. Do excuse us,

please! (*To* Philip *and* Joyce.) You were playing so well, too. I was just remarking to Helen how well you were playing —and then—no more music but another quarrel.

Joyce. It's his fault. He began to rush it again.

William. Now, Philip, you mustn't rush it—

Philip. I wasn't. She *will* drag it. (*He breaks to the piano* R. *and sits at it.*)

William (*turning to* Joyce). Now, Joyce, you really mustn't drag it——

Joyce. I never do. That's just his stupidity.

Philip (*rising angrily*). It isn't. It's your——

William (*very forcefully*). Stop it, stop it, stop it!

(Joyce *breaks to the piano* L.)

Now if one of you would condescend to rush a little less——

(Philip *and* Joyce *sit at their pianos.*)

—then no doubt you'd keep together, be in time—— (*He breaks to* L.C.)

(Helen, *in a simple but striking evening dress, enters* R., *moves to the piano* R. *and leans on the upstage end of it.*)

—in exquisite unison, in beautiful harmony, and you'd both be happy and we'd be happy. Whereas . . .

Helen. William, you always go on too long.

William (*rather annoyed*). How do you mean—I always go on too long?

Helen. You shouldn't go on with that "whereas". Nobody wants your *whereas*. And it's pompous. You're rather inclined to be pompous, you know.

William (*horrified*). Pompous! My dear Helen, I'm the least pompous man who ever lived.

Joyce. You're *all* pompous.

Helen. Perfectly true (*she moves* C.), Joyce, dear. They *are* all pompous. But when William has a grievance, I think he's really above the average in pompousness.

(Philip *guffaws audibly.*)

William (*glaring across at* Philip). If you're going to snigger and provide her with an appreciative audience, she'll go on for hours.

Helen. Audience! (*She breaks to down* R.C.) That reminds me. (*To the audience, with tremendous charm.*) I'm so sorry about all this. Do excuse us, please.

William (*moving to* Helen *and patting her on the shoulder*). I've said that already.

Helen (*sweetly*). Possibly, but perhaps when a little charm is added to the apology——

WILLIAM (*interrupting her*). Charm! If there's one quality more contemptible than another in our contemptible bag of tricks, it's this famous feminine charm. As soon as I see that rotten little piece of scented silk run up as a flag, I know that honesty and decency are about to be scuttled. (*He breaks* L.)

PHILIP. And I agree.

HELEN (*turning to* PHILIP). Only because you haven't any, Philip dear.

PHILIP. Oh—I don't know about that.

HELEN (*smiling sweetly at* PHILIP). No, Philip, you don't know about it. (*She moves to* R.C.)

WILLIAM (*breaking to* HELEN *and turning her round to face him*). Now what's the matter with you?

HELEN (*with wide-eyed innocence*). Nothing that I know of, William. Why?

WILLIAM. Because you're behaving very badly, that's why. You come on here, looking—I must admit—very delightful, shining and smiling upon us like a May moon——

HELEN. Thank you, my pet.

WILLIAM. I'm not your pet. (*He breaks a little to* C.) And keep away, keep away.

HELEN. Oh—why?

WILLIAM. Because—well it's less confusing and easier for me to say what I have to say——

HELEN (*moving to the stool* R.). Then don't say it. (*She sits.*) Nobody cares.

WILLIAM (*breaking to* L. *of* HELEN). And what I say is that you come on here and instead of trying to help us out of our little difficulty, you at once make everything worse. Now why—why—do you go and make everything worse?

HELEN. Shall I tell you?

WILLIAM (*exasperated*). I'm asking you to tell me. (*He leans over* HELEN.) Though I doubt if you know.

HELEN. Oh, yes, I do. It's perfectly simple. You see, being a woman I must be noticed and appreciated. We take a great deal of trouble over our appearance—(*she adjusts* WILLIAM'S *bow*) about twenty times as much trouble as you do, for instance.

(WILLIAM *breaks to* C.)

And we insist upon first being noticed and appreciated. Now if you'd said, at once, that I was looking very nice, or if you'd only smiled at me, that would have been quite enough. Immediately I'd have felt full of goodwill and kindness and helpfulness, and I'd have tried to do my best for everybody. But first of all I must be noticed and appreciated.

WILLIAM. That seems to me all wrong.

HELEN. Yes, but then you happen to be a man and I happen to be a woman.

WILLIAM. It shouldn't make so much difference.

HELEN. But it does.

WILLIAM. Well, does it? I know women who aren't like that.

HELEN. Yes, and how much time do you spend with them?

(JOYCE *bursts out laughing.*)

WILLIAM (*breaking to the piano* L. *and speaking to* JOYCE). I think you'd better start playing again.

(JOYCE *commences playing—Music Cue 2.*)

HELEN (*rising*). No, not yet. (*She breaks to* R. *of* WILLIAM *at* L.C.)

WILLIAM. Why not?

(JOYCE *ceases playing.*)

HELEN. I think—we ought to look into this a little more. This man-and-woman business.

WILLIAM (*with gloomy approval*). Yes, it needs looking into.

HELEN. Of course it does. (*She moves to* C.) Now it's no use taking ourselves, is it?

WILLIAM (*brightening at this*) Not a bit. (*He turns and moves to the stool* L.) Lot of talk about ourselves—only leads to trouble —scenes, temper and tears—terrible! (*He sits.*) No use, you see, unless you can be detached.

HELEN. You love being detached, don't you?

WILLIAM. Can't observe properly unless you're detached. That's obvious. (*He makes a double take to* JOYCE.)

HELEN. All right, then, we'll take some other pair.

PHILIP. What about Henry and Muriel?

JOYCE. Dull.

WILLIAM (*to* JOYCE). Very dull.

HELEN. I'm afraid you're right. Well, you suggest somebody.

WILLIAM. Boris and Nina.

HELEN. Oh—no, just a long cat-and-dog fight broken by an occasional orgy.

WILLIAM (*thoughtfully*). True. (*He rises and breaks down* C.) Though I've always wanted to be in at an orgy. All this writing and talk about orgies, and yet you never seem to catch up with one. Every place I've ever been to, they've always just stopped having them. "You ought to have been here last year," they say. "It was terrible."

PHILIP. I know.

JOYCE. How do you mean, you know?

WILLIAM (*breaking to the piano* L.). Now, Joyce, don't you two start all over again. Look at your music or something.

HELEN (*triumphantly*). I know the very pair. Not too dull, not too wild. Very nice and rather typical. Paul and Rosemary.

WILLIAM (*breaking to* HELEN). Rosemary and Paul. Yes, they might do. Pleasant pair. As you say, nice people. Not very intelligent perhaps, but I can supply the intelligence.

HELEN (*closing to* R. *of* WILLIAM). And you've heard what's happening to them?

WILLIAM. No. Not busting up, are they?

HELEN (*leading* WILLIAM *to the stool* L.). Sit down and pay attention.

(WILLIAM *sits and turns towards the inner stage.*)

You'll see. Joyce, Philip! (*She crosses to the stool* R. *and sits.*)

(JOYCE *and* PHILIP *commence playing some broken, discordant music—Music Cue 3. Lights Cue 2.*)

EPISODE I

The Curtains open to reveal a room whose few props suggest a waiting-room in a solicitor's office.

There is a window R., *a bookcase back* C., *with some deed-boxes* R. *of it. The door is* L. *A chair stands* L.C.

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the play.*)

PAUL, *in the middle thirties, with horn-rimmed spectacles and wearing a check overcoat and muffler* (*to facilitate quick change*), *is moving about, crossing to* L. *and* R., *like a man kept waiting for an unpleasant appointment. After a moment,* ROSEMARY *is heard speaking off* L.

ROSEMARY (*off*). Oh, in here. Thank you!

(ROSEMARY, *also wearing a heavy coat, and looking pale and miserable, enters* L. *She stops and stares at* PAUL *who looks very embarrassed.*)

PAUL (*with an effort, now standing* R.C.). I'm afraid this is—er rather embarrassing—Rosemary.

ROSEMARY (*with a similar effort*). Yes—Paul—I'm afraid it is. (*She moves to the chair, sits and looks away from* PAUL.)

PAUL. Well, it's not my fault . . . I had a note from Coulson asking me to be here at half-past three—to answer some questions about the—the divorce.

ROSEMARY (*with a tiny voice*). Yes, so had I.

PAUL (*restlessly, moving to up* C.). Oh, I say—monstrous thing for Coulson to do—(*he turns*) asking us both here at the same time. Shows you how blankly insensitive these lawyers are. (*He crosses* R. *and turns.*) Typical lawyer's trick, this. Damn Coulson!

ROSEMARY (*faintly*). Oh—I don't think—it's—perhaps . . . (*Her voice dies away.*)

PAUL. What?

Rosemary. No—nothing.

Paul (*closing to* R. *of the chair*). Look here, I'll go and wait out there. (*He indicates the door* L.)

Rosemary. No—it . . . (*She makes a movement as if to halt him.*)

Paul (*moving to the door* L.). Don't mind a bit.

(Paul *exits* L. Rosemary *stares after him a moment, then sinks back in the chair. Her face begins working, and she starts sobbing.*)

William (*rising and mounting the rostrum at* L.C.). I say, this is too bad.

(*The Curtains close.* Joyce *and* Philip *play some broken discordant music—Music Cue 3a. Lights Cue 3.* Helen *rises and mounts the rostrum* R.C.)

Now, Helen.

(William *and* Helen *meet* C. *on the rostrum. She takes his* R. *arm. They break together off the rostrum to down* C. *The Pianists cease playing.*)

Helen (*sympathetically not satirically*). What made it all the worse, of course, is that obviously it was she who had asked their solicitor to send for them both at the same time.

William. Yes, but I—can't see why she should do that if they were arranging a divorce.

Helen. Because she was hoping that a miracle might have happened, that, seeing her again, he might have discovered he was still in love with her. (*She looks away to* R.) We're always hoping for miracles like that. And then—well, you saw.

William. Yes, but, mind you, if he'd been completely indifferent he'd have stayed in there. He went out chiefly for her sake.

Helen. She thought he went out because he couldn't even stand the sight of her.

William (*moving a little down* L.). Quite wrong. (*He turns.*) What a lot of muddlers we are, aren't we? She ought to be crying over the human race. There *is* something to cry about. (*He eases* L.C.)

Helen (*very gravely*). She was crying because once there was love and now there is no love. (*She turns while speaking, moves to the stool* R. *and sits.*) If we can't cry over the grave of love, what are our tears for? I could cry a little myself.

William (*crossing to* Helen; *anxiously*). Now, now! Now, now? Don't you start, my dear. Besides, we must keep our detachment, or we'll never learn anything. (*He addresses the Pianists.*) Play something quiet, but cheerful.

(JOYCE *and* PHILIP *commence to play—Music Cue 4.* HELEN *turns her face to* WILLIAM *and smiles.*)

(*He takes* HELEN'S *hand.*) That's better. (*He pats her hand, releases it, crosses to* R. *of the piano* L. *and turns.*) Let me see now, how did this begin? Where, when and how did Paul and Rosemary first meet?

HELEN (*slowly and reflectively*). She told me once. Her father gave Paul some architectural job and asked him to come and dine.

(*The Pianists cease playing for a few moments.*)

(*She rises and moves* C.) You'll have to be Rosemary's father. Go on!

WILLIAM. I thought for a moment you said I'd have to be Rosemary's father?

HELEN. That's what I did say. Go on.

WILLIAM. Certainly. Great pleasure. (*He moves to the arch* L.) Only not for long, y'know.

(*The Pianists resume playing softly.* WILLIAM *exits* L.)

HELEN (*moving to above the piano* R.). It takes some girls months, some years, before they know, but she seemed to know at once. (*She leans on the piano* R.)

(*The music swells up. Lights Cue 4.*)

EPISODE 2

The Curtains open to reveal a corner of the drawing-room in ROSEMARY'S *home.*

There is a small table C. *On it are a tray with a decanter of sherry and three glasses, an ashtray and a box of cigarettes. There is no other furniture.*

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the play.*)

ROSEMARY, *looking younger and prettier, is* R. *of the table. She pours out three glasses of sherry.* PAUL, *who looks younger without the spectacles, enters* L., *and moves to* L. *of the table. The Pianists cease playing.* WILLIAM, *wearing a grey wig and moustache as* ROSEMARY'S *father, enters* L. *immediately following* PAUL. WILLIAM *moves to above the table.*

WILLIAM (*speaking in an older man's voice*). Ah—you haven't met my daughter Rosemary, I think. My dear—Mr Paul Weybridge.

(ROSEMARY *and* PAUL *smile and shake hands.*)

Glass of sherry, eh?

(ROSEMARY *hands* PAUL *and* WILLIAM *a glass of sherry each.*)

Thank you, my dear. (*He drinks.*)

ROSEMARY (*smiling at* PAUL). And how's the bungalow?

PAUL (*smiling back at* ROSEMARY). I think it's going to be grand.

ROSEMARY. I thought your idea for it awfully clever.

PAUL. Thank you.

(PAUL *and* ROSEMARY *raise their glasses and drink, at the same time smiling at each other significantly over the top of them.*)

WILLIAM (*rambling on without noticing them*). Yes, yes—I think Weybridge realizes now exactly what I've always had in mind. Convenient and cosy are my two watchwords. Easy and cheap to run, but snug. Plenty of weather outside, on the top of that cliff (*he pours another glass of sherry for himself*), but none inside, eh, Weybridge. (*He drinks.*)

PAUL (*who is lost*). What? Oh—yes, rather—that's the idea.

WILLIAM. Made a little sketch or two I wanted to show you. Have 'em in my den. (*He moves* L., *taking his glass with him.*) This way, my boy.

(WILLIAM *exits* L. JOYCE *and* PHILIP *commence to play softly for a moment or two—Music Cue 4a.* PAUL *hands his glass to* ROSEMARY, *there is a pause between them, then he, obviously reluctant, turns and exits* L. ROSEMARY *stands in a daydream. The Pianists cease playing.* ROSEMARY *places the glasses on the table, then moves forward a pace or two and speaks to* HELEN.)

ROSEMARY. Really I knew then. Or one part of me did.

HELEN (*with sympathy*). I know.

ROSEMARY. That part of me which seems to stand back always and isn't caught up with every moment.

HELEN. Yes, the part that can see far ahead, in a dim sort of way, and seems to know what's coming.

ROSEMARY. That's exactly it, Helen. But how does it work? I mean, it's just as if behind the little *now* there's this big *Now*, in which all at once you've met a man and loved him for years and lost him. And how can that be? (*She turns and moves up stage.*)

HELEN. I don't know, darling. I don't believe anybody knows.

(*The Curtains close. Lights Cue 5.* WILLIAM, *without the wig and moustache, enters briskly through the centre of the curtains on to the rostrum.*)

WILLIAM. I know. It's a question of movement along the fourth dimension—— (*He moves to* R.C. *on the rostrum.*)

HELEN (*breaking to* R. *of* WILLIAM). What is?

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