

National Theatre
Theatre Clwyd

methuen | drama

How happily married are the happily married?

Every couple needs a little fantasy to keep their marriage sparkling. But behind the gingham curtains, being a domestic goddess is not as easy as it looks.

Laura Wade's plays include *Posh* (Royal Court Theatre and West End); *Tipping the Velvet* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Alice* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield); *Kreutzer vs. Kreutzer* (Globe Theatre, Sydney Opera House and Australian tour); *Other Hands* (Soho Theatre); *Colder Than Here* (Soho Theatre and MCC Theatre New York); *Breathing Corpses* (Royal Court Theatre); *Catch* (Royal Court Theatre, written with four other playwrights); *Young Emma* (Finborough Theatre); *In Winters* (Bristol Old Vic Basement) and *Limbo* (Crucible Studio Theatre, Sheffield). Films include *The Riot Club*. Awards include the Critics' Circle Award for Most Promising Playwright, the Pearson Best Play Award and the George Devine Award. Laura Wade's plays have been performed in the UK, USA, Australia, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Mexico.

★★★★★ 'Laura Wade's superb new play.' *The Stage*

★★★★★ 'An amusing, affecting, inspiring evening of soft gingham and hard truths.' *The Times*

★★★★★ 'A joy. Brilliantly staged and hugely original.' *What's on Stage*

★★★★★ 'Laura Wade's sharp satire is a fizzing drama of gender, power and housework.' *Time Out*

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LAURA WADE HOME, I'M DARLING

methuen | drama



now play by Laura Wade

Characters

JUDY, 38

JOHNNY, 37

FRAN, 35

MARCUS, 43

SYLVIA, 67

ALEX, 30

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

A 1950s suburban semi: an Ideal Home, immaculately clean. Kitchen, hallway and living room downstairs, bedroom upstairs. The kitchen has classic English Rose units, formica-topped table, lino floor and a large fridge which hums continually.

Early morning on a beautiful spring day. JUDY bustles in the kitchen, putting final touches to the breakfast table (toast in a rack, teapot, butter dish, a boiled egg in an egg cup).

Upstairs, JOHNNY knots his tie in the bedroom mirror.

JUDY goes to the bottom of the stairs.

JUDY: Johnny!

JUDY goes back into the kitchen, then to the bottom of the stairs again.

I'm taking the top off your egg!

JUDY goes back into the kitchen, slices the top off the boiled egg and looks inside.

JOHNNY comes into the kitchen. JUDY kisses him and adjusts his tie.

Have you seen this beautiful day?

JOHNNY: Heavenly.

JUDY: 'Morning, darling.

JOHNNY: 'Morning.

JOHNNY sits down at the table, looking at his egg.

Look at that - perfect.

JUDY butters toast for both of them. JOHNNY settles to eating his breakfast.

JUDY: You'll enjoy your drive to the office, this lovely sunshine.

JOHNNY: Delicious.

JUDY: You are funny, it's only toast.

JOHNNY: You make the best toast, it's perfect. You could get a job at the Ritz just doing the toast in the morning.

JUDY: Then I couldn't cook your breakfast.

JOHNNY: No, you're right. Don't do it, I need you here.

JUDY looks around the room, takes a breath, satisfied.

JUDY: What about a chicken?

JOHNNY: What about a chicken?

JUDY: I grow most of our vegetables, what about a chicken too, for your morning egg? Pottering about, scratching.

JOHNNY: A sheep grazing the lawn, save me getting the mower out.

JUDY: I don't see why not. A goat, maybe.

JOHNNY: And a cow living in the pantry.

JUDY: Milk on tap.

JOHNNY: The smallest farm in the world, in Welwyn Garden City.

JUDY: One chicken.

JOHNNY: Your Sweet Peas. Pecked to bits.

JUDY: Hmm. Yes. Also the pantry's quite small.

JOHNNY: It's the perfect size for the two of us.

JUDY: Not so good for livestock. No, silly idea, forget it.

JOHNNY: You're always thinking of improvements. I'm a lucky man.

JUDY: Yes you are.

JOHNNY: Particularly when you wake me up the way you did this morning.

JUDY giggles.

JUDY: I don't know what you're talking about. Tea?

JUDY pours the tea.

JOHNNY: Are you happy, darling?

JUDY: Terribly. Aren't you?

JOHNNY: Oh yes, appallingly.

JUDY: Appallingly? I like appallingly.

JOHNNY: It's disgraceful. Shouldn't be allowed.

I keep thinking we'll get a letter. 'Happiness hasn't come off the ration, you know.'

JUDY: A letter from

JOHNNY: The police? Something about public decency.

JUDY: Like a stiff letter from the bank.

JOHNNY: 'It has come to our attention, Mr Martin, that you and Mrs Martin are Offensively Happy. We ask that you desist at once. This uxoriousness is quite unacceptable.'

JUDY: Ux

JOHNNY: Uxoriousness. It means a surfeit of spousal affection. It isn't at all the done thing for a man to be so keen on his own wife.

JUDY: Then you're an uxor.

JOHNNY: No, I think uxor is wife.

JUDY: Is it?

JOHNNY: I think so. Latin.

JUDY: I'm sure you're right.

JOHNNY: So you're the uxor that I'm all uxorious about.

JUDY laughs.

JUDY: You're cheerful.

JOHNNY: It popped into my head, as I was lying in the bath you ran for me, that I will have nothing to do at the weekend.

JUDY: Nothing to do?

JOHNNY: To the house. No tiling or plastering, no dust sheets. Nothing left.

JUDY: You've done a wonderful job.

JOHNNY: You as well. In your dungarees, scarf round your head like Rosie the Riveter.

JUDY: Will you know what to do with yourself?

JOHNNY: I expect we'll find something.

JUDY: We could go dancing?

JOHNNY: Yes, perhaps.

JUDY: Whatever you want to do, darling.

JOHNNY: Sickeningly happy.

Do you know, I'm so contented I'm not sure I even care if the promotion doesn't come off.

JUDY: Oh?

JOHNNY: I look around and think well, what more do I need? My wife, my beautiful finished house. The money would come in handy, but we don't *need* it, do we? We've got everything.

JUDY: No of course.

JOHNNY: Asking for more might be greedy. Knowing I'm utterly content with what I've got.

JUDY: Yes no that's wonderful, darling.

Is it today?

JOHNNY: Is what?

JUDY: Will you find out today?

JOHNNY: I don't know. Soon, I think. Now, marmalade or lemon curd?

JUDY: It's wonderful you're feeling so philosophical about it.

Have some marmalade, it's a new batch.

Only don't let it hold you back from making every effort. You've been there the longest, by rights they should have made you Assistant Manager some time ago, it's only fair.

JOHNNY: You always defend me.

JUDY: Of course I do I'm your wife.

You deserve that job. Don't miss out by being diffident.

Or late.

JOHNNY: No, alright.

JOHNNY stands up, draining his tea cup.

Delicious breakfast, thank you.

He goes to the hallway and puts on his hat and coat. JUDY picks up his lunch box and follows him.

JUDY: I'm so proud of you.

She hands him his lunch box and his briefcase. He kisses her.

Have a good day, darling.

JOHNNY: Same to you. Don't buy any chickens.

JUDY: I promise. Goodbye.

JOHNNY goes out of the front door with his briefcase and lunch box.

JUDY waves and smiles from the door as he goes down the path.

JUDY comes back to the kitchen, goes to a drawer and takes out a laptop computer.

She brings it back to the kitchen table, opens it and sits down.

SCENE 2

Afternoon, the same day. JUDY and FRAN are in the kitchen.

JUDY is decanting some modern groceries into 1950s tins and boxes and putting them away.

FRAN sits with a cup of tea. There are a number of vintage dresses slung over the back of one of the dining chairs.

JUDY: Johnny?

FRAN: Yes.

JUDY: My Johnny?

FRAN: I was surprised because you don't go in the shopping centre.

JUDY: We didn't agree with them building it.

FRAN: That's what I thought.

JUDY: And we loved the old cereal factory, we were heartbroken they knocked it down.

FRAN: It was derelict by then, wasn't it? Probably a hazard.

JUDY: They could have propped it up, the what d'you call it, the front of it

FRAN: The façade.

JUDY: Façade, exactly. That was everyone's horizon, that was the face of our town since the twenties.

I don't expect it registers as a protest, just the two of us boycotting, but still.

Grab the Self-Raising, will you?

FRAN does.

He takes his lunch with him, he doesn't go out for pizza.

FRAN: It looked exactly like him.

JUDY: You were in there?

FRAN: Going past the window. I was going to wave, but it was too far.

JUDY: Did you see who

FRAN: No, I didn't recognise

JUDY: It probably wasn't him.

FRAN: I recognised his suit.

I don't know who she was.

JUDY: Probably someone from the office.

FRAN: Dark hair.

JUDY: Right.

FRAN: You know them all from the office, do you?

JUDY: Yes, I've met them.

FRAN: They all get on, do they?

JUDY: Yes he gets on with all of them apart from one of them.

FRAN: Quite young. Well, younger than

JUDY: Younger than me?

FRAN: I um. I was at a distance so I don't know, really.

I'm sure there's a perfectly

JUDY: Yes, I'm sure there is.

FRAN: Sure there's nothing to worry about.

JUDY: I'm not worried – you seem more worried than I am.

FRAN: Just you never really know what someone gets up to when you're not there, do you, or how they are with other people

JUDY: Johnny doesn't get up to anything, god he wouldn't know where to start.

FRAN: Marcus wants me to quit work, do this.

JUDY: This is work.

FRAN: Quit my job, I mean.

JUDY: He doesn't want you to stop and have babies, does he?

FRAN: Oh god no.

JUDY: OK, good.

FRAN: Yuck.

JUDY: No, I know.

FRAN: He just means running our home, like you do.

JUDY: It is nice. It makes sense for us.

FRAN: You still like it?

JUDY: I do. I like the calm. Looking around and knowing everything's in order. Having time to clean behind things, it's a deep, quiet kind of happy. Our home. All ready for him. I pop upstairs just before Johnny gets back, pin my hair, little bit of perfume. Take my pinny off. Daisy-fresh.

Then he walks in the door and

JUDY smiles to herself.

Yeah.

What are you thinking? Is it something you'd

FRAN: Oh, Marcus is making so much noise about it I can't hear what I think.

When he gets an idea in his head I mean I love how tenacious he is about things but when he goes on and on.

Does Johnny drive you mad sometimes? Properly mad. No?

JUDY: He doesn't really.

FRAN: No.

I just don't think I've got a domestic goddess in me. I leave things on the stairs intending to take them up and then I find I've been quite happily walking past them for weeks. I come home after a twelve hour day and I'm frazzled. Longest recipe I used this week was 'Pierce Film Lid'.

JUDY: But if you were at home, you'd have time to

FRAN: This is what I'm saying – even if I had the time, I'm just not sure I would. We both like things tidy, it's just his tidy is a lot tidier than mine.

JUDY: You do need a consensus.

FRAN: I always think that when they cite 'unreasonable behaviour' in divorce cases. For some people that's leaving a towel on the floor, unreasonable behaviour. Others wouldn't mind if you shagged a different lover every lunchtime as long as the washing's hung up.

JUDY: Sorry, I've just got to pop upstairs – one moment.

FRAN: Sure.

JUDY goes upstairs. She loudly closes the bathroom door then tiptoes into the bedroom and closes the door softly.

FRAN looks through the pile of dresses.

JUDY picks up the phone beside the bed and dials.

She sits down while it rings, stands as it's answered, then realises it's gone to voicemail.

JUDY: Hi Johnny, it's me.

Hope you're having a good day, I um

You're probably at a valuation.

Sorry, it's nothing really

Don't worry about phoning back, I'll see you when you get home

Just wanted to say hello, really, so

Hello.

OK, I'll see you later, bye-bye

Um, it's nothing to worry about, everything's fine.

JUDY replaces the phone. She quietly comes out of the bedroom, goes into the bathroom and flushes the loo, then comes downstairs to the kitchen. FRAN is holding one of the dresses.

FRAN: What are you doing with these?

JUDY: Having a clearout. eBay.

FRAN: This one? Not this one.

JUDY: I never wear it.

FRAN: But it's beautiful, look at it.

JUDY: I've got so many, I can't close the wardrobe. Pops open all the time, all these big skirts trying to escape.

FRAN: Ooh, this one's handmade. Look at the love that's gone into that, nobody sews like that now. The detail round the

JUDY: I know, it's gorgeous.

FRAN: It's gorgeous, how can you bear it?

Can I buy this from you?

JUDY: You?

FRAN: Yeah. No?

JUDY: Thing is, if you had it and Johnny saw you in it

FRAN: Was it a present from Johnny?

JUDY: I can't remember.

FRAN: OK.

Sorry, I shouldn't have asked.

JUDY: No it's fine.

FRAN: Put a pile of dresses in front of a stylist, I can't help having a rummage. Magpie behaviour, it's awful.

JUDY: I don't want him to know I'm selling them. That's all it is.

FRAN: Because?

JUDY: Just the housing market's not so good. And that's our favourite bit of the day, when he comes home from work. Mix him a drink, take his shoes off, give him his slippers, help him relax. I'm not going to stand there and say 'by the way darling we're running out of money'.

We're not running out of money. We just need to be a bit careful.

FRAN: Well and going two salaries down to one

JUDY: I used to earn more than him.

FRAN: Did you? Sorry, I shouldn't be surprised. Only you hear the stuff about men being paid more just for having a penis.

JUDY: I've got a degree, so

FRAN: Johnny didn't go to university?

JUDY: Don't tell him I told you, he's a bit funny about it.

FRAN: Oh, men.

JUDY: And nobody needs as many vintage dresses as I've got.

FRAN: Well good luck with the eBay.

FRAN sits down.

Sorry I said penis.

JUDY: Fran, look – the Johnny thing,

FRAN: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to suggest

JUDY: I don't want to hear anything like that, I don't want it in the house.

FRAN: OK, sorry.

Sorry.

JUDY: No, it's OK.

FRAN drinks her tea, looks around.

How'd you get your taps so shiny?

JUDY: Um, half a lemon. Rubbed round.

FRAN: Huh.

JUDY: Old ways are the best.

FRAN: Marcus says that.

JUDY: It's all there on the internet, all the hints and tips. You can do most things with lemon juice, vinegar, soda crystals. Better than all the chemicals people use now.

FRAN: I don't know anything about

JUDY: There's a book if you're interested.

FRAN: Yeah?

JUDY goes to a drawer, pulls out a book and hands it to FRAN.

JUDY: It's my bible, this.

FRAN: "How To Ruin Your Home Without Help"

JUDY: *Run.* How to run your home.

FRAN: Sorry, it's very small writing.

JUDY: 1949, so it's a bit early. Middle-class women doing without servants for the first time, after the war.

FRAN: Wow, this is

Terrifying.

JUDY: No, she splits it all down into daily tasks, weekly things,

Every room gets a light going-over every morning, air the bedrooms, make the bed, then each afternoon you do one or two rooms properly – behind things and under things, vacuum, dust, wipe, polish. Then dinner cooking. Plus Monday is your washing day and Friday is baking.

FRAN: So much to do.

JUDY: It's manageable when you break it down. Plus we're not dealing with all that coal dust anymore.

FRAN: You've been talking to me for an hour, you should have been ironing the door handles. You really do all this?

JUDY: Have a borrow if you like.

FRAN: Can I? Thank you.

FRAN gets up to leave.

Best get started.

JUDY picks up the dress they were looking at and holds it up.

JUDY: Maybe not this one, it's a good dancing dress I'll need it next month, won't I? Kicks out really nicely when you spin.

FRAN: Need it for?

JUDY: Jivestock?

FRAN: Yes.

JUDY: You haven't forgotten?

FRAN: No no.

JUDY: 28th to the 30th.

FRAN: Yes no absolutely. No, very excited.

JUDY puts the dress back on the pile. They walk to the front door.

I'm sorry I upset you

JUDY: I'm not upset.

FRAN picks up some letters from the mat.

FRAN: Post for you.

JUDY: Can you believe how late they come now? Four o'clock, look.

FRAN: See you next week?

JUDY: Yes, and you're coming for tea on Sunday, yes?

FRAN: Yes of course. 'Bye.

JUDY: Bye bye.

JUDY closes the door and comes back down the hallway looking through the pile of letters. She sees one that looks serious and opens it, standing by the kitchen table. She reads it, putting a hand to her mouth.

The doorbell rings, making JUDY jump. She stuffs the letter back in its envelope then opens the cupboard under the sink and puts the letter right at the back.

JUDY goes down the hallway and opens the front door. There's nobody there, but she calls to a figure retreating down the path.

JUDY: Hello?

SYLVIA: Oh hi.

Didn't think you were in.

JUDY: No, I had to wash my hands I was just

SYLVIA: Hello darling.

SYLVIA has reached the front door and she and JUDY hug hello.

How are you?

JUDY: Yeah I'm fine

Come in.

JUDY leads SYLVIA through to the kitchen.

SYLVIA: I didn't think you were in I thought you were out.

JUDY: No, well I'm in.

SYLVIA: I thought maybe you'd started a new job.

JUDY: No.

SYLVIA: I was just going to get a pen and paper from the car.
Can't text you, can I?

JUDY: Is that why you didn't tell me you were coming?
Because I haven't got a mobile phone?

SYLVIA: I didn't know I was coming today but yes, I do think it's bloody-minded of you when the entire rest of the world has accepted a basic level of

JUDY: Tea?

SYLVIA: Yes please.

Anyway I was just in the area, thought I'd pop in.

JUDY goes to put the kettle on. SYLVIA takes off her coat to reveal a colourful dress underneath.

JUDY: We do have a landline. Why were you in the area?

SYLVIA: I've been to a funeral, actually.

JUDY looks at SYLVIA's clothing.

It said 'no black'.

JUDY: Who, um

Is it sugar at the moment or not sugar?

SYLVIA: Have you got any herbal?

JUDY: No.

SYLVIA: It was Erica.

JUDY: Erica from Willowfield?

SYLVIA: Yes.

JUDY: But she wasn't

SYLVIA: No, my age. Cancer.

JUDY: God.

SYLVIA: Coming for all of us, isn't it?

JUDY: Was that a yes to sugar?

SYLVIA: No darling.

JUDY puts the sugar bowl onto the tea tray. SYLVIA sits down.

I know you never cared much for her, for Erica.

JUDY: It was the way she talked to me, like she was my mother.

SYLVIA: We were all the parents, that was the point.

JUDY: I'm sorry she's passed on.

SYLVIA: Lot of love for her at the service. All the people she'd rescued over the years, all standing up to say something.

JUDY: I remember her banana bread.

SYLVIA: Yes. God. They didn't mention that.

JUDY: Everything we ate there was brown.

SYLVIA: We were healthy.

JUDY: I used to dream about oven chips.

SYLVIA: You'll learn when you have kids they're never happy, whatever you do.

JUDY pours water into the teapot.

Look at your fridge.

JUDY: You've seen that before.

SYLVIA: Can't believe it's still going.

JUDY: Off and on. More off than on recently.

SYLVIA: Chuck it, get a new one.

JUDY: I like this one. We went all the way to Sunderland for it.

SYLVIA: But it doesn't work.

JUDY: Yes but you don't just give up on things.

SYLVIA: You do if they don't work.

JUDY: You try and mend it. Or get someone to

SYLVIA: How about get a modern fridge and just hide it inside that one?

JUDY: Yeah that's really not the point.

SYLVIA: You've got a laptop, haven't you?

JUDY: Mum.

SYLVIA: Sorry.

JUDY: We don't want to keep buying new things all the time.

SYLVIA: Alright, sorry.

Maya's pregnant.

JUDY: Maya?

SYLVIA: Anita's daughter? She's in a sustainable community near Worcester now, says she couldn't imagine living with just her own family. And Anita's still working, she's running a women's refuge in Nottingham.

JUDY: Good for her.

SYLVIA: Some of the stories: god, the cuts. Makes Thatcher look bountiful. I'm thinking I might give them some of the money.

JUDY picks up the tea tray.

Proper cups and saucers.

JUDY: Shall we sit in the living room?

SYLVIA: Not that these things should depend on donations.

SYLVIA follows JUDY into the living room, looking around her as she goes.

JUDY: What money?

SYLVIA: What?

JUDY: 'Some of the money'?

SYLVIA: Erica left me some money. Quite a lot, in fact.

JUDY: I thought she didn't have any.

SYLVIA: You remember we rented Willowfield off her grisly old aunt?

JUDY: Yes

SYLVIA: Well the aunt left her the whole estate a few years ago, and property around Brighton's gone through the roof so Erica sold it for an absolute bomb, the barns and orchard and everything.

JUDY: Milk?

SYLVIA: Just a little.

JUDY hands SYLVIA a cup and saucer.

Can't believe she's gone. I can't think of anyone less likely to die.

JUDY: She was a good person.

SYLVIA: Jacqui was there - remember her son David?

JUDY: Grubby little boy. Used to eat woodlice.

SYLVIA: Lawyer now, apparently.

JUDY: Gone to the dark side.

SYLVIA: Human rights lawyer.

JUDY: Right.

SYLVIA: Anyway darling how are you? How are you and Johnny?

JUDY: Yes no we're fine.

SYLVIA: You're still enjoying it, being at home?

JUDY: Yes I like it, it suits me.

SYLVIA: It's all perfectly rosy, you couldn't be happier?

JUDY: Why d'you ask?

SYLVIA: People were asking after you today, I realised I didn't know really. How you are.

JUDY: No, we're well. Johnny's being promoted soon,

SYLVIA: Wonderful.

JUDY: Once that happens we'll have a bit more money.

SYLVIA: So money's tight?

JUDY: No, mum. We've got to be careful with it, but that's OK. That's what we love about the fifties: it's not all about acquiring *stuff*. I like being frugal, it's a project, it's fun.

SYLVIA: So when it stops being fun you'll get a job?

JUDY: I've got a job, this is my job

SYLVIA: But if you can't really afford it, comfortably. You've done your experiment, there'd be no shame in putting yourself back out in the

JUDY: Oh you'd love that, wouldn't you?

SYLVIA: What?

JUDY: For this to fail.

SYLVIA: I've made no secret of the fact I'd like to see you doing something more fulfilling.

JUDY: Maybe a human rights lawyer.

SYLVIA: Darling I'm sorry but what do you think it's like for me, standing there at Erica's funeral, the woman who put the staunch into feminist, people asking me how you are, what you're doing, and having to tell them you're a *housewife*? My daughter.

All those years, all those pamphlets, marches. Ghastly rides to London in a minibus, hoping you'd get it by osmosis at least.

JUDY: I'm a feminist.

SYLVIA: Ha.

JUDY: I am. I get to choose now. This is what I've chosen.

SYLVIA: "This is what a feminist looks like"? Wearing a frilly apron and dancing around with a duster isn't feminism.

I don't know why you ever let Johnny coax you into it.

If you had children I'd understand but

JUDY: There wasn't any coaxing, it was a mutual

SYLVIA: It might feel like that, but if you look back long enough this was a man's idea first.

JUDY: I'm thirty-eight years old, I'm

SYLVIA: Completely dependent. You've given up your car.

JUDY: We don't need two cars if I'm not going to the office, that's just wasteful.

I spent years with that firm. I know what they were charging me out at, and it was a heck of a lot more than I was taking home.

SYLVIA: If you don't like the way something is, you stay in the ring and fight it.

JUDY: Why do I need a job to be fulfilled? Bit capitalist, isn't it? I'm surprised you've swallowed that.

SYLVIA: You've made a luxury choice, don't pretend it's political. You've got no children to support, a husband who's healthy and working.

JUDY: I'm working. My work here is work, why isn't this valued?

SYLVIA: Because men don't do it.

What would you do if something happened between you?

JUDY: Nothing's happened, what d'you mean?

SYLVIA: How would you survive if Johnny came home tonight and said he wanted a divorce?

JUDY: What a horrible thing to say, why would you say that?

SYLVIA: It's all very well for him, out in the world all day long doing whatever he likes and you're stuck here going crackers.

JUDY: I'm not remotely going crackers I'm very happy.

And you going out to work didn't stop you and dad getting divorced, did it?

Mum?

SYLVIA: Alright darling, I'm sorry.

I'm very sorry.

JUDY: Let's leave it, shall we?

They sit for a moment, SYLVIA thinking.

SYLVIA: Can I ask you something darling?

JUDY: What?

SYLVIA: What do you *do*? What do you do all day?

SCENE 3

Evening, the same day. JOHNNY is in the living room reading the newspaper, a drink beside him.

Several pans are bubbling on the stove.

JUDY sits at the kitchen table, still, looking at JOHNNY's lunchbox on the table in front of her. After some time she pulls off the lid. She takes an untouched, greaseproof-paper-wrapped sandwich out of the box.

She lays the table for dinner. She moves the lunchbox onto the counter by the sink. She holds the sandwiches over the bin, then changes her mind and puts them into the fridge.

JUDY: Dinner, Johnny.

JOHNNY puts down his newspaper and comes into the kitchen.

JOHNNY: That. Smells. Amazing.

JOHNNY kisses JUDY on the shoulder as she serves lamb chops onto two plates.

JUDY: You must be hungry.

JOHNNY: Starving.

JOHNNY sits down at the table.

You didn't ask her to stay for dinner, then?

JUDY: I didn't think it'd be relaxing for you, to get back and find my mother on the sofa, saying things.

JOHNNY: No well, thank you.

JUDY sets his plate down in front of him and sits down with her own.

Thank you.

JUDY: There's plenty more mash if you want seconds.
Actually, here, you should have some of this.

JUDY scrapes one of her chops onto JOHNNY's plate.

JOHNNY: What're you

JUDY: Don't want you going without.

JOHNNY: I'd say I'm doing pretty well looking at this. Is everything alright?

JUDY: How was day?

JOHNNY: Alright. Bit more news about the job.

JUDY: Yes?

JOHNNY: Well, bit more and a bit less. Alex says the decision's not going to be made for a few weeks, there's going to be a 'listening exercise'.

JUDY: Goodness.

JOHNNY: Might be some kind of restructure.

JUDY: So there might not be an assistant manager?

JOHNNY: Don't know, I mean I don't think it'll be just one boss and everyone else is a minion. But means it'll be a while before we know. While all this listening and observing goes on.

JUDY: Making a bit of a meal of it if you ask me.

JOHNNY: Well you know, new boss. Have to make your presence felt, don't you? But now Sean's looking like he wants to be considered too.

JUDY: You've been there much longer than him.

JOHNNY: I think it's going to go on who's best at bringing vendors in, my love. Sean's numbers are really good.

How was your day, anyway, apart from Sylvia's visitation?

JUDY: Oh, fine. Normal. Nothing much.

JOHNNY: Toby was hilarious this morning.

JUDY: Yes?

JOHNNY: Monday morning meeting so everyone's you know, *bleurgh*, he's spouting off about his weekend cooking adventures – what he's sourced from the farmers' market,

JUDY: Sourced?

JOHNNY: Yeah *sourced*, he never says bought. Weird stuff the butcher keeps back for him

JUDY: Kangaroo burgers.

JOHNNY: This new Japanese beef – have you heard about this, most expensive beef in the world it's got this marbled texture

JUDY: I bet it has by the time it's come from Japan.

JOHNNY: *Wagyu*, that's it. Apparently Mrs Toby was furious when she found out how much it cost but then when he cooked it for her she pretty much, you know

JUDY: Probably just the surprise at being cooked for.

JOHNNY: He does all the food in their house. Doesn't let her anywhere near the kitchen, he says.

JUDY: I'm sure he lets her clean up.

JOHNNY: Yeah, Janet said that. So then the conversation gets onto baking, and Sean has the idea we should have a bake off at the office,

JUDY: What's that?

JOHNNY: Where everyone brings in a cake they've made, like a competition?

They've all been watching that programme, the people baking?

JUDY: Oh, the baking programme.

JOHNNY: They're all really into it.

JUDY: They don't bake, they watch baking.

JOHNNY: Anyway so that's happening on Friday, we're having a bake off. For *team-building*.

JUDY: I can bake a cake for you to take in, what kind would you like?

JOHNNY: I think I'm supposed to make it myself.

JUDY: You?

JOHNNY: I could probably manage a cake, couldn't I? I mean how difficult

JUDY: Why don't I just do it? Make sure you win.

JOHNNY: They'll know you've made it, won't they? It'll be obvious. Mine'll be all

JUDY: Lopsided

JOHNNY: Probably. I'd still like to try. Do you mind?

JUDY: Tell me what sort you want to do and I'll get the ingredients in. I'll get extra in case you need a couple of goes.

JOHNNY: I was a better cook than you before we started this arrangement.

JUDY: Only 'cause I'd never had a chance to practise.

JOHNNY: And I'd looked after myself for years before that.

JUDY: This *arrangement*?

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: You called it an *arrangement*, makes it sound like a

JOHNNY: I don't know, what do we call it?

JUDY: I think we call it a marriage, Johnny.

JOHNNY: OK, but we were married for quite a long time before you started doing all the cooking.

Don't be upset. I didn't think this would be upsetting, it's just a cake.

JUDY: I'm not, I'm not upset.

JOHNNY: You know I love it, I'm not saying I don't love it, what we do.

They eat in silence for a moment.

This is really delicious.

JUDY: There's more potatoes.

JUDY gets up, serves him some more potatoes.

JOHNNY: Thank you. Whoa whoa that's plenty, thank you.

JUDY: Well you must be hungry. Not having any lunch.

JOHNNY: Not having

JUDY: Your sandwiches.

JOHNNY: Right.

JUDY: D'you not like my piccalilli anymore?

JOHNNY: I love it.

JUDY: I'm very happy to change the sandwich. I make it like that cause it's your favourite, but you've only got to say.

JOHNNY: I'm sorry. If I'm trying to do four valuations in a day and the morning ones take longer it's just not enough time to get back to the office, so if I've left my lunchbox in the fridge

JUDY: You've never brought them home before.

JOHNNY: No well I usually have them later probably, afternoon tea sort of

JUDY: And you get something else at lunchtime.

JOHNNY: Sometimes I have to grab a sandwich from the garage, it's really only happened a couple of

JUDY: As long as it is a sandwich, not something bigger like a pizza at the new shopping centre.

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: Fran says she saw you in Pizza Pronto.

JOHNNY: When?

JUDY: What d'you mean, *when*? I told her it couldn't have been you, what d'you mean 'when'?

JOHNNY: I've been a couple of times. The crowd from the office, someone's birthday or

JUDY: We promised we'd never go in the new centre.

JOHNNY: If everyone else wants to go it's quite hard to – you don't have this, being at home.

The Pizza Pronto has a door from the car park you don't actually have to go *in* or look in any of the shops, you know, I've never *bought* anything. So I sort of convinced myself it didn't count. I didn't inhale.

I mean we could go there if you

I like pizza, we never have pizza.

JUDY: Well it's not very fifties, is it? They didn't have pizza then.

JOHNNY: They did in Italy.

JUDY: Fran saw you today.

JOHNNY: OK.

JUDY: And she didn't seem to think it was any kind of big work group, she said you were there with a woman, just you.

JOHNNY: Right. And do you want to know who that was?

JUDY: Yes.

JOHNNY: That was Alex.

JUDY: Alex.

JOHNNY: My new boss?

JUDY: Alex your boss is a *woman*?

JOHNNY: Yes they do let women be bosses now.

JUDY: I thought it was a man.

JOHNNY: I've never said it was a man.

JUDY: You never said it wasn't a man.

JOHNNY: I didn't think I needed to.

JUDY: And you were having lunch with her.

JOHNNY: She's taken everyone out to lunch this week, one at a time – get to know us individually, she says, part of the listening exercise.

On the company card, so it didn't cost us anything.

Alright?

JUDY: Yes, I

I'm so sorry.

JUDY laughs.

I'm sorry.

JOHNNY: You didn't really think I'd

JUDY: Oh god.

Sorry, I'm. I'm a bit crying because I'm relieved.

JOHNNY: What did you imagine?

JUDY: Oh don't, it's so silly.

JOHNNY: D'you think that's where I take my dates? Pizza Pronto in the mall where everyone could see me?

JUDY: Don't, I'm embarrassed.

JOHNNY: I'd be much more secretive.

JUDY: Well I hope you wouldn't

JOHNNY: Of course I wouldn't.

Alright now?

JUDY: I might have that back, actually.

JUDY takes back the chop she'd scraped onto JOHNNY's plate.

JOHNNY: Is this why I had that rather enigmatic voicemail from you earlier?

JUDY: Fran was here this afternoon. I basically told her to go away and not bring me any more stories.

JOHNNY: Quite right. Does she want you running to her with tales about what Marcus gets up to?

JUDY: So silly, I just *assumed* this Alex was

JOHNNY: Very much not a man.

JUDY: Right.

What's she like?

JOHNNY: Alex?

JUDY: Yes is she nice?

JOHNNY: She's – yeah, she's nice.

JUDY: You haven't said anything about her.

JOHNNY: No, I like her. I mean, you know, she's the *boss* but she's a laugh as well. She makes me laugh, anyway.

JUDY: What sort of

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: What does she do to make you laugh?

JOHNNY: Oh I don't know, just

Things she says. I can't think of

JUDY: D'you want to have her over?

JOHNNY: Here?

JUDY: Yes, that's what people do, isn't it? Have the new boss over? I could make cocktails.

SCENE 4

Evening. ALEX (30) sits on the sofa, sipping a cocktail. JOHNNY stands with his back to the fireplace. JUDY perches on the arm rest at the other end of the sofa. She's wearing a cocktail dress with a full skirt and a small fur around her shoulders. ALEX is wearing a trouser suit - work clothes - and JOHNNY still has his suit trousers on, but has swapped his shirt for a more casual one.

ALEX: It's a what?

JOHNNY: Gimlet.

JUDY: Gin and lime syrup.

ALEX: Wow, it's quite

JOHNNY: D'you want something a bit

ALEX: No no it's delicious, just don't let me have another one or I won't be able to drive back to the

JOHNNY: You've got to go back have you?

ALEX: Well fingers crossed, if Toby gets this

JOHNNY: (*To JUDY*) Toby's got a big valuation going through this evening.

ALEX: Big buy-to-let vendor with four properties she's looking to offload all at once, and probably more business later on. Toby's over there now convincing her to list with us and not the other two agencies she's met with.

JUDY: Right, important.

ALEX: If he gets her signed by midnight, that's made our target for the month, my first month. I'm hoping we can head back to the office, get the paperwork done and then all be in the pub celebrating by last orders.

Obviously you're welcome to come if

JOHNNY: Cool, thanks.

ALEX: Both of you, obviously.

JUDY: Tonight?

ALEX: They've set the bar quite high to see if I'm up to it. So if we smash it, that's awesome. We might get Office of the Month.

JOHNNY: Pizza vouchers!

ALEX: (*re the drink.*) Ooh, that's lovely isn't it? Cheers.

JUDY: Back in a sec.

JUDY goes out to the kitchen. She opens the oven, checks inside it, then closes it again.

ALEX: Your house is incredible.

JOHNNY: I did say it's very fifties.

ALEX: No, it's amazing.

JUDY takes out a couple of serving dishes and puts them on the table. There's a bunch of flowers which she picks up, unsure where to move them to. She puts them in the sink.

JUDY takes a plate of Ritz crackers spread with cream cheese and olives out of the fridge.

ALEX: D'you do this a lot, having people round for cocktails?

JOHNNY: Um, no. I'd go as far as to say you're the first.

ALEX: I'm honoured. I feel quite underdressed.

JOHNNY: No, you look great.

I mean that's just Judy, she likes to, you know

ALEX: Should we give her a hand in there?

JOHNNY: Oh um, no I think she's

I'll go and see.

JOHNNY goes to the kitchen. ALEX takes her phone out of her handbag and checks it.

JUDY: I feel completely overdressed.

JOHNNY: No, you look

JUDY: She's so young.

JOHNNY: I don't think she's quite as young as she looks.

JUDY: Right.

JOHNNY: Have we got any nibbles? Some Kettle Crisps or

JUDY: I'm doing it now, Johnny.

I had to put the cheese straws back in 'cause she was late.

JOHNNY: You could take the fur off.

JUDY: You do think I'm overdressed.

JOHNNY: Just want you to feel comfortable.

JUDY: I did feel comfortable, now I feel silly.

JUDY goes to the fridge, takes out an elaborately-arranged crudites plate with a bowl of dip in the middle, and another plate of devilled eggs with piped centres.

JOHNNY: Don't worry about it, it's just casual drinks.

JUDY sets the two plates down on the table.

It's just casual.

JUDY: Go in there and talk to her.

JOHNNY retreats to the living room.

JUDY looks at her reflection in the window above the sink, tries to loosen the back of her hair a little. She takes off her earrings and necklace, and the fur.

JOHNNY: She's just bringing some, um

ALEX: Sorry I was just

JOHNNY: Some nibbles.

ALEX: Just seeing if there's any word from Toby.

JOHNNY: No no, go ahead.

JUDY takes the cheese straws out of the oven and slides them onto the serving plate.

ALEX: I made him promise to call me as soon as he knows.

JUDY picks up the serving plate, and the crudites dish and carries them into the living room.

JUDY: Here we are.

JOHNNY: Lovely.

JUDY: Help yourself, Alex.

ALEX: Thank you.

JUDY goes back to the kitchen, picks up the other two plates and brings them through.

(To JOHNNY) She's amazing.

Wow, look at this.

JOHNNY: What's this one?

JUDY: Devilled eggs, you've had them before.

ALEX: Oh, you've taken your earrings off, I was just admiring them.

JUDY: Felt a bit overdressed.

ALEX: No, I was just saying to Johnny how scruffy I felt.

JOHNNY: I said it's just casual, so

ALEX: I've been admiring your house, Judy. I feel like I'm in *Mad Men* or something.

JUDY: We did it all ourselves, didn't we?

ALEX: I mean the awful thing is you probably would end up ripping it all out, going back to neutral when you come to selling it.

JOHNNY: The guy with the picture? "It's maybe not everyone's taste....."

ALEX: Oh god, Church Street.

ALEX and JOHNNY laugh.

JUDY: What's this?

JOHNNY: I told you about it. Church Street, the one with the
JOHNNY laughs again.

JUDY: If it's that funny I think I'd remember.

JOHNNY: OK, so this guy wants to sell his house – nice little semi, not a problem – and he's a geologist, lots of photos of rocks all over the house, again no problem except there's this huge print as you walk into the living room of some kind of underground rock formation, like wavy layers of stalactite

ALEX: Massive close up, I mean it's all you can look at, and it looks like – what did he say it's called?

JOHNNY: Cave Bacon.

ALEX: Yes. Only it turns out cave bacon looks a lot less like bacon than it does a

ALEX and JOHNNY collapse laughing.

Than a

JUDY: What?

ALEX: No, you say.

JOHNNY: Basically this picture looks like a massive vulva.

ALEX: Hanging there over the mantelpiece, you can't take your eyes off it.

JOHNNY: And the guy says,

ALEX: Quite innocently.

JOHNNY: "Is there anything I need to do to the place before having buyers round?"

ALEX: I nearly lost it.

JOHNNY: Wasn't it your first

ALEX: First day in the branch, yeah. Poor Johnny trying to make a good impression, taking me out to a valuation.

JOHNNY: I'm in this man's living room, trying to work out a polite way to suggest he takes the enormous vadge off the wall. My new boss standing there.

ALEX: Ahh. I actually thought "this job's going to be alright, you know?" This guy's alright.

JOHNNY: That's nice.

ALEX: So yeah, buyers don't like personality.

JUDY: I don't think we'd want to move, after all the work we've put in.

ALEX: No, sure. It's amazing.

JUDY: There's nothing in this room that's not original. Actually
I made the curtains but it was vintage material.

ALEX: Johnny said you used to work in finance.

JUDY: Yes.

ALEX: I did finance at university.

JUDY: Which one?

ALEX: LSE.

JOHNNY: London.

ALEX: Where were you?

JUDY: Birmingham. Uni, Birmingham uni.

ALEX: Was it fun?

JUDY: Where I met Johnny. Not at the university, we met at a
vintage car thing.

JOHNNY: Johnny No-Degree over here.

ALEX: Yeah, but it's not your fault you had glandular fever
when you did your A Levels, is it?

The phone beeps again. ALEX looks down at her bag.

JUDY: Do check that if you need to.

ALEX: Oh, thanks, d'you mind?

*ALEX takes the phone out and opens a text message. She jumps up,
triumphant.*

Yes! Yes, we got it! She's signed.

She goes to JOHNNY, hugs him.

Hurray hurray

JOHNNY: Yay

*They jump up and down slightly, a little awkward, before ALEX
moves back and sits.*

ALEX: Good work Toby.

JOHNNY: Devilled egg to celebrate?

JOHNNY picks up the plate and holds it towards ALEX.

ALEX: Yeah, thank you.

*ALEX takes one, then places it carefully on the table while she replies
to TOBY's text.*

JUDY: Look at you, helping.

ALEX: Sorry, just letting Toby know I got his text.

There we go. Gosh, phew.

ALEX sits back with her drink, looks around.

So with the fifties thing

JUDY: Yes?

ALEX: Do you go to normal shops and stuff, I mean the
normal supermarket or

JUDY: You can't really not go shopping.

JOHNNY: She puts everything in old packets when she gets
home.

JUDY: We don't have anything that's not fifties or earlier. The
furniture, the fridge,

ALEX: I've heard about the fridge.

JUDY: Sixty years that's been working. Modern appliances
you'd never get

ALEX: Washing machine?

JUDY: They had washing machines thankfully, yeah.

ALEX: And they had a telly.

JUDY: Some people, yeah.

ALEX: (*Pointing at the TV*) But that – that doesn't show fifties programmes.

JUDY: Johnny adapted it inside, it plays DVDs.

ALEX: Brilliant, that's so clever.

JUDY: When I was little we watched old films on a Saturday afternoon – me and my dad. Completely fell in love with the fifties – the houses, the clothes, the hair. James Stewart. Doris Day. James Stewart *and* Doris Day. I just had this very strong affinity. Doris Day and Rock Hudson.

JOHNNY: Gay, of course.

JUDY: Yes but I didn't know that.

ALEX: Cinema?

JUDY: Sometimes, if they're showing something we – don't really get much you'd want to see, do you, at the cinema here?

ALEX: I love it, going to the cinema.

JOHNNY: Oh yeah. I mean I often think it's something we should do more.

JUDY: Everything now, it's all just aimed at teenagers.

JOHNNY: Of course the teenager was a fifties invention.

JUDY: Car crashes and explosions.

JOHNNY: I mean for big films, you've got to watch them on a big screen, really, haven't you?

ALEX: Big action films, yeah.

JOHNNY: No I do think we should go a bit more often.

JUDY: Do you?

JOHNNY: Maybe try and get into a bit more modern films,

JUDY: You're being very talkative, Johnny.

JOHNNY: I'm just saying maybe we could broaden our horizons a bit.

JUDY: Sit down, Johnny, you're *looming*.

JOHNNY: OK, sorry.

JUDY: I'm so sorry, he gets a bit

ALEX: No no I'm used to it.

JOHNNY sits down.

JUDY: Cheese straw?

ALEX: Um, thanks I'm still working on this, um

Egg.

ALEX picks up her devilled egg from the table.

And Johnny was saying the other day it's not just the aesthetic side, it's about the culture, fifties values.

JUDY: Did he? I mean yes, we do I suppose. People were kinder, I think. People took the time. It wasn't just everyone staring at their own smartphone, not seeing anyone else. Too busy taking photos of their dinner to really enjoy it. I don't get it.

ALEX: You didn't photograph Johnny's bake off entry, then?

JOHNNY: Should have done. For comedy.

ALEX: It wasn't that bad, it tasted nice. Just not quite the showstopper.

JOHNNY: Should have got the wife to make it. Trying to play fair.

JUDY: Fifties values.

I mean I do think back then there was more community, people were nicer to each other.

ALEX: Unless you were gay or

JUDY: Sorry?

ALEX: I don't think it was very easy in the fifties if you were black or gay.

JOHNNY: Or disabled or

ALEX: No, exactly.

JUDY: Well obviously it wasn't perfect.

ALEX: If you were ill, if you got ill now, would you use modern medicine or only things they had in the fifties?

JUDY: I think we'd just go to the hospital, it's not like a religious cult.

ALEX: No, sorry, just trying to work out the rules. You don't use the internet or

JOHNNY: We've got a laptop.

ALEX: Have you?

JUDY: We need the internet for buying things, vintage things on Ebay,

And meet ups, car meetings, festivals.

There's a festival we go to called Jivestock. Big country estate in Wiltshire, a whole weekend of music and dancing and classes, workshops. Everyone's dressed like us and you forget about the modern world, you can't even see it.

ALEX: And it's all arranged on the internet.

JOHNNY: Modern communities, isn't it, communities have all moved online now. Everyone sharing information about their weird little hobby

ALEX: Yes, how did people find each other before?

JOHNNY: But no, I guess it might seem a bit inconsistent. All this and then a laptop hidden in the cupboard.

JUDY: But it doesn't matter, does it? It's not a test.

ALEX looks at her phone.

ALEX: OK, Toby needs me, I'd better head, you know?

I'm so sorry.

JOHNNY: No it's fine.

ALEX: Sorry I feel like I just got here. It's so lovely to meet you.

JUDY: Yes you too.

ALEX: I've promised to buy a round so if you guys did feel like coming to join us

JUDY: Probably a bit late for us.

ALEX: OK, no problem. I can see myself

JOHNNY: No no I'll see you out.

ALEX: Gentleman. Very fifties.

JUDY: 'Bye then.

JOHNNY walks ALEX out to the hallway, finds her coat on the hat stand and helps her into it.

JUDY stays still in the living room.

ALEX: We'll be in the Bell if you change your minds about coming out.

JOHNNY: I think Judy wants to stay um

ALEX: See you tomorrow, then.

JOHNNY: Bright and early.

ALEX: Ha, depends if we get a lock-in. Bye.

JOHNNY: Home safe.

JOHNNY closes the front door behind ALEX. He starts back towards the living room.

JUDY picks up her and ALEX's cocktail glasses. She takes them through to the kitchen and puts them in the sink.

JOHNNY picks up a couple of the snack plates and carries them into the kitchen.

JOHNNY: D'you think we maybe slightly over-catered?

JUDY: It'll all go back in the fridge.

JOHNNY: Yes, picnic tomorrow.

JUDY picks up some plates. She goes to the kitchen, puts the plates down on the table.

JUDY: You seem to get on very well with her.

JOHNNY: Got to make an effort, haven't you?

JUDY comes back into the living room, picks up the other plates.

Put those down.

JUDY: What?

JOHNNY: Just put those down a second, come over here.

*JUDY puts the plates down and goes to sit on the sofa with JOHNNY.
JOHNNY touches her hair.*

JOHNNY: Can this come down a bit?

JUDY takes some pins out of the back of her hair.

JOHNNY puts a hand in the back of JUDY's hair and pulls her towards him for a kiss. She responds, leaning into him.

He tries to manoeuvre her into a lying-down position, running a hand up her leg under her skirt. JUDY laughs.

JUDY: Wait, let me just

Let me just clear up then we can go to bed.

JOHNNY: Leave it, come on.

JOHNNY succeeds in lying her down, it becomes clear he intends them to fuck on the sofa.

JUDY: Wait, Johnny, wait

Let's just

Johnny

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: Just

Not here, I

JOHNNY: What's the matter?

JUDY: I don't want to do it on the sofa.

JOHNNY: I thought you liked it when I took charge.

JUDY gets up, smooths down her dress. She picks up the plates and goes into the kitchen.

JUDY: Just don't feel like it right this second.

*JOHNNY puts his head in his hands, then looks around the room.
After a few moments, he gets up and goes to the hallway. He picks up his coat and goes into the kitchen.*

JOHNNY: I'm going to the Bell.

JUDY: Johnny

JOHNNY: All of them down there *bonding* and I'm not there, what's that look like? When she's deciding who to give the job to.

JUDY: But that's why we invited her, get her on her own.

JOHNNY: I'll see you later, OK?

JOHNNY goes down the hall. He puts out a hand to take his hat then decides against it. He goes out of the front door and closes it behind him.

JUDY: Johnny?

JUDY looks around her, putting a hand to her mouth.

SCENE 5

Sunday afternoon.

JUDY, JOHNNY, FRAN and FRAN's husband MARCUS are sitting in the living room with cups of tea and cake plates. On the coffee table, the remains of a plain-looking loaf cake.

FRAN: I never met anyone who grew up in a commune before, how come I didn't know this about you?

JUDY: I don't know, it wasn't really *me*, I guess.

FRAN: What was it like?

JUDY: Big run-down house out in the country near Brighton. Random collection of oddballs trying to be unconventional but constantly drawing up rotas because you have to be really organised if you're living in a group, that's the paradox of it.

They called themselves an 'intentional community'. As if everyone else lives together by accident.

FRAN: How many people?

JUDY: About fifteen adults. Tons of grubby children running around. And me, I was the only teenager.

FRAN: Was it religious?

JUDY: No no. Feminism and CND. We had communal dinner every day which was basically lentil lasagne and a lecture about patriarchy or whatever. Railing against Thatcher even though she'd gone by then.

And they rejected the idea that their self-worth was linked to how much Hoovering they did, so nobody cleaned. I said to Erica once – Erica was the leader although of course no one was the leader, except everyone knew that she was – I said to her why didn't they get a cleaner, but she said it was exploitative of other women.

So yeah, my filthy childhood.

MARCUS: And were they all shagging each other?

FRAN: Marcus.

MARCUS: Didn't you want to ask that?

JUDY: People assume it's some free love thing but they were too busy sitting in a circle analysing their *feelings*. Adults grabbing the wooden spoon off each other.

JOHNNY: Put you off people for life, didn't it?

JUDY: It did a bit, yeah. I really hated Erica. Mum thought she was Boadicea, I thought she was a battleaxe.

I desperately wanted to go and live with my dad, but he wasn't up to it.

MARCUS: Ah, you're a daddy's girl, are you?

JOHNNY: Lovely cake, Fran.

FRAN: Lemon and rosemary. Not a fifties recipe, I'm afraid.

JOHNNY: Get it out of our house!

JUDY: Johnny. It doesn't have to be a fifties recipe.

JOHNNY: No, I'm joking. Don't think I've ever had rosemary in a cake before.

MARCUS: I don't think anyone has.

FRAN: Still it explains a lot about you, doesn't it, Judy?

JUDY: Does it?

FRAN: I mean, why you'd have chosen something much more traditional now.

MARCUS: Oh for god's sake.

FRAN: What?

MARCUS: Sorry, she does this. Fran loves a crashingly obvious diagnosis, she can't help psychologising people.

FRAN: Well it's a window to look through, isn't it? It's interesting.

JUDY: More tea?

MARCUS: Yes please.

JUDY pours MARCUS another cup.

Tea strainer.

JUDY: Yes, proper tea.

FRAN: 1953, tea bags came in.

JOHNNY: Just a preference, I think.

MARCUS: No, absolutely. Fran makes it in the mug at home and I can almost hear my mother turning in her grave.

FRAN: She can't, you cremated her.

JOHNNY puts his plate down.

JOHNNY: Really good cake.

FRAN: Thank you. I have been trying to be a bit more domestic, haven't I?

MARCUS: I haven't had to get into an unmade bed all week.

FRAN: I always make the bed, don't listen.

MARCUS: She keeps opening windows.

FRAN: It's in the book: give the rooms an airing. And I've been cooking. Picking things up off the stairs.

MARCUS: Yes, the house is transformed.

FRAN: Fuck off.

Sorry, Judy.

JUDY: What?

FRAN: You don't like swearing.

JUDY: I don't mind swearing.

FRAN: I wouldn't normally, but Marcus is being a knob this afternoon.

MARCUS: Fran thinks that having a cleaner means you don't have to clean your house the rest of the week.

FRAN: That's exactly what having a cleaner means.

MARCUS: In any case as I keep trying to explain, there's no way, doing a job, that you could ever give the house the amount of love and attention Judy does.

FRAN: I love my job. Judy hated her job.

JUDY: I didn't hate it. No, I hated it. Offices are awful.

FRAN: I don't work in an office.

MARCUS: The carpets, the lighting.

JUDY: Stale air. The kitchen corner with teaspoons everywhere, brown lumps in the sugar. People having birthdays all the time.

MARCUS: I mean look at this room. What is it that makes it so warm, so welcoming? We all know, don't we? I know you do, Johnny.

JOHNNY: The rug?

MARCUS: It's Judy. The Angel in the House.

JUDY: Stop it, I'm blushing.

MARCUS: The open fire we all want to sit round.

FRAN: Yes stop it Marcus.

MARCUS: Don't be cross – you could be just as good as her if you practised. Almost as good, anyway.

FRAN: Stop it.

MARCUS: Oh my love. Am I being a bit rough?

FRAN: Yes.

MARCUS: I'm sorry, I'll play nicely. My beautiful wife.

MARCUS kisses her. She relents. JUDY and JOHNNY watch, uncomfortable.

There. Better?

FRAN: Much.

JUDY: Say about Jivestock, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Yes, Jivestock, so we've been looking at the brochure.

JUDY: Did you know The Lamours are playing on the Saturday?

MARCUS: No.

JOHNNY: There's four stages this year, it's getting bigger every time.

JUDY: Long as it doesn't get big like Glastonbury or something. I like that it's still our crowd. Not those rockabilly girls in polka dot dresses. Tattoos everywhere.

JOHNNY: We thought maybe try to get down there on the Thursday night.

JUDY: If we go early we might be able to get in the campsite right by the lake, be really up close to everything.

MARCUS: Actually, we wanted to talk to you about this today.

Thing is, we're not going to make it to Jivestock this year.

JOHNNY: Oh.

JUDY: Why?

MARCUS: We've got an issue with that weekend, sadly. We need to get away for a proper holiday.

FRAN: We still haven't had a honeymoon.

MARCUS: There's only one window coming up where I'd be safe to leave the office, and the Jivestock weekend directly clashes.

JOHNNY: Where are you going?

MARCUS: Cuba, we think.

FRAN: Marcus wants to go to Havana, see all the old cars.

JOHNNY: No, of course, amazing.

FRAN: We're really sorry.

MARCUS: Obviously we'd love you to borrow the Airstream and

FRAN: Yes, please take the Airstream.

JUDY: I don't know if we'll go if you don't.

FRAN: Oh don't say that.

JUDY: I mean we won't know anybody without you.

JOHNNY: We'll talk about it.

FRAN: You're one of the best dancers there.

JUDY: But if Johnny doesn't dance, I won't have a partner, we normally take turns with

MARCUS: Oh, there's better partners there than me.

FRAN: I thought you were having lessons, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Yeah, there's not been much time recently, work's been really busy and

JUDY: Sorry, I'm just going to go and

Fill up the tea.

JUDY goes out to the kitchen.

FRAN: Is she

JOHNNY: Yeah yeah, she's fine, don't worry.

MARCUS: We never really said we'd go this year.

JOHNNY: No, we probably just assumed, 'cause we'd been two years running.

MARCUS: We thought maybe we could find a weekend later in the summer, all go for a caravan weekend together.

JOHNNY: Whatever, yeah, whatever you want to do.

Back in a sec.

JOHNNY goes out to the kitchen. JUDY looks at him in silent distress.

FRAN: I feel terrible.

MARCUS: They can still go, they don't need us.

FRAN: They do, though, don't they? They're shy. And you've seen Johnny dancing.

JOHNNY goes to hug JUDY, but she steps back, afraid she'll cry.

JUDY: Not now.

MARCUS leans close to FRAN, speaking quietly.

MARCUS: D'you want to change our minds, forget about Cuba?

FRAN: No, of course not.

MARCUS: It was you who said we needed to get away, talk about things. Preferably somewhere incredibly expensive.

FRAN: Cuba's not

MARCUS: To stay in the places we like, yes it is.

JUDY: Go back in, I'll be there in a minute.

JOHNNY goes back into the living room.

FRAN: She OK?

JOHNNY: All fine. She'll be back in a minute.

MARCUS: How's the Austin holding up?

JOHNNY: Broke down again the other day, Wednesday.

MARCUS: Oh no.

JOHNNY: Had to pull over on the side of the A414, smoke puthering out.

MARCUS: I don't know how you manage. I love the Chevy for weekends, but I couldn't do without the Audi for work, just need the reliability, you know?

JOHNNY: Yeah, I don't know. I like having a car I can fix myself – mostly, anyway – open the bonnet and know what everything is, it feels honest. Modern cars it's just a computer on wheels, isn't it?

JUDY comes in, carrying the cake on a plate.

What's that?

JUDY: It's a cake Johnny.

JOHNNY: I know it's a cake, why's it

JUDY: I'd completely forgotten I made a cake too.

MARCUS: Looks tremendous.

JUDY: Johnny's favourite. It's called Chocolate Chiffon Cake.

JOHNNY's phone rings in his pocket. He takes it out to look at it.

I didn't bring it out earlier because Johnny's been on at me about over-catering, but we'll never get through it by ourselves.

JOHNNY: Sorry, I've got to take this, it's work, 'scuse me.

JOHNNY goes out of the room.

(Into phone) Hi, how are you?

JUDY: Will you have a slice, Marcus?

MARCUS: Yes please.

JOHNNY heads up the stairs.

I don't think I've ever seen Johnny with a phone.

JUDY: No he doesn't have it normally, he puts it in the drawer in the hallway.

JOHNNY: Yes yes, yes great. How's yours?

JUDY: We didn't really want him to have one at all, but the way that business works, he can't really do his job without it.

JOHNNY: Right yeah. Oh, OK, that's very

JUDY hands MARCUS his cake.

JUDY: He's got this new boss, I think she might be a workaholic. Fran?

JOHNNY: Yes, we've been wondering when the news might land.

FRAN: Just a little bit, yeah.

JUDY: Had her over for drinks the other night. Never off her phone.

JUDY hands cake to FRAN. MARCUS tucks into his.

JOHNNY: No, obviously you've got to take your time, make sure everyone feels they've had a fair crack.

Right. Yes.

Toby, right. Toby.

MARCUS: Oh my god that is *incredible*.

JOHNNY: Yes no of course. The numbers don't lie, do they?

MARCUS: I mean that is like, *wow*.

JOHNNY: Yes yes, great qualities. Leadership

MARCUS: Don't you think?

JOHNNY: Oh no, I wasn't expecting

FRAN: It's very nice.

JOHNNY: If there are things I can do to, um, improve

No sure yeah, you've got other people to call, we can talk about it on

Yes yes, no I appreciate it.

Alright yeah, thanks bye.

Yes you too, yeah bye.

JOHNNY hangs up.

MARCUS: You know, this might be the best chocolate cake I've ever had. Johnny's a lucky man.

JOHNNY sits on the bed. He looks around the room.

FRAN: Have you guys got a holiday planned?

JUDY: No, um. Jivestock was going to be

FRAN: Oh god I'm so sorry.

JOHNNY comes down the stairs and into the living room.

JUDY: Everything alright?

JOHNNY: Yes, just. Just work stuff.

JUDY: Cake?

JOHNNY: I'm alright, thanks.

MARCUS: You know you have to take a firm line with these people if you don't want them ringing you at the weekend. Set your boundaries. I have to be very clear with everyone at the agency.

JOHNNY: Right.

MARCUS: They respect it, in the main, don't they?

FRAN: Yes.

JUDY: Johnny doesn't normally answer it on a Sunday but he's got a promotion coming up.

MARCUS: Ah, best behaviour.

JOHNNY: So Cuba.

MARCUS: Yes, very exciting. Wonder how much it's changed now Castro's gone.

JOHNNY: Yes, crazy times.

JUDY: Where's Castro gone?

JOHNNY: Castro, Fidel Castro.

JUDY: Yes I know who Castro is.

JOHNNY: He died. Last year.

MARCUS: Longer than that, I think. Year before.

JOHNNY: Was it? I'd have said last year.

MARCUS: Let's look it up...

MARCUS googles it on his phone. JUDY watches.

JUDY: Completely missed that.

FRAN: You're so funny, how did you miss it?

MARCUS: Yes, there we go. Eighteen months ago.

MARCUS shows the phone to JOHNNY.

JOHNNY: Yup, OK.

MARCUS: So you're being promoted?

JOHNNY: Well not actually, no.

JUDY: What?

JOHNNY: There's a reshuffle going on but. I'm going to be pretty much staying where I am.

JUDY: There's not going to be an Assistant Manager?

JOHNNY: No, there's going to be an Assistant Manager, it's just not going to be me.

That's what Alex was ringing to tell me.

Letting me know before going into the office, so that's kind of her.

JUDY: Who's

JOHNNY: Toby.

JUDY: Toby?

JOHNNY: Yup.

JUDY: After all the effort we went to, having her over for cocktails.

JOHNNY: Yeah, I'm not sure it helped.

JUDY: We didn't do anything except be welcoming.

JOHNNY: Yes, when does 'welcoming' tip over into 'scary'?

FRAN: I think maybe we should go, leave you guys to

JUDY: No no no don't go don't go. Let's put a record on, why don't we all have a little drink. It's nearly six o'

Five o'clock that's fine on a Sunday, isn't it?

JUDY goes over to the record player and puts on a jive.

MARCUS: Sorry to hear it, mate.

JOHNNY: S'alright. We'll get through it.

JUDY: Oh, I love this one, don't you?

JUDY goes to JOHNNY, tries to pull him into dancing with her.

Come on, let's have a little dance. Everything feels better after a dance.

JOHNNY: I'm not in the mood.

FRAN: I really think maybe we should go.

JUDY: Marcus, you'll dance, won't you?

FRAN: I was saying we should go.

JUDY: Come on, lend me your husband for a minute. Since we won't be having a dance at Jivestock.

FRAN stands back. MARCUS and JUDY take the floor (what there is of it), and begin to jive together. They're good.

JUDY: Johnny loves watching me dance, don't you, darling?

JOHNNY and FRAN watch JUDY and MARCUS dancing together.

The dance speeds up, with JUDY spinning faster and faster, her skirt flaring wider with each spin, until without noticing it she knocks over a cup of tea next to FRAN.

FRAN: Oh!

JOHNNY: Oh god, are you

FRAN: No it's fine it's fine.

JOHNNY: It's all over your dress – hang on, I'll get a cloth.

JOHNNY goes to the kitchen. JUDY and MARCUS continue to dance, oblivious.

JOHNNY goes into the cupboard under the sink. He rummages, then stops, looks more closely. He reaches into the back of the cupboard and pulls out a small pile of letters. He looks at the letter on the top, turns it over and opens it, then reads it.

JUDY: See, we don't need money to have fun, do we?

JUDY looks around for a response.

Where's Johnny?

FRAN: In there. My tea got knocked, he's gone for a cloth.

JUDY dashes to the kitchen.

MARCUS: What've you done?

FRAN: My drink got knocked, it's not my fault.

JUDY sees JOHNNY reading the letter.

JOHNNY: What's this?

JUDY: I can sort it, it's fine, I can sort it.

JOHNNY: This is a letter from the bank saying our mortgage didn't go out this month.

JUDY: It's fine, let's talk about it after they've

JOHNNY: Insufficient funds?

JUDY: I forgot to move some money across.

JOHNNY: Across from what?

JUDY: My account.

JOHNNY: This is our joint account.

JUDY: My savings account.

I move things around, Johnny, it's about interest rates and

You want me to explain it? You always say you don't really want to know, you just want me to do it.

JOHNNY: This says they're going to repossess our house.

JUDY: It doesn't.

JOHNNY: *(Reading)* 'Please contact us immediately on the above number to arrange payment of the defaulted amount'.

JUDY: Which I

JOHNNY: '...failure to comply with this request, or if you miss further payments on your mortgage, we will have no alternative but to begin proceedings to repossess your home.'

Repossess our home?

JUDY: Don't panic, you're panicking.

JOHNNY: Of course I'm panicking, this is huge and I find it stuffed behind a tin of Brasso at the back of the

JUDY: Because I knew you'd panic, you panic.

JOHNNY: How, the fuck, Judy?

JUDY: Don't get angry at me

JOHNNY: Is this why you were so keen on me getting a promotion?

JUDY: I can get a credit card, put it on that, it'll be fine.

JOHNNY: You can't put a mortgage on a credit card, Jesus.

We've got to stop this.

JUDY: I'll find the money, I'll sort it out.

JOHNNY: I mean this, the fifties. This life.

MARCUS: Everything alright you two?

JUDY: Yes fine, sorry. Didn't mean to leave you on the dancefloor.

JOHNNY: Judy

JUDY: We've got guests.

JUDY goes back into the living room. A new track is playing on the record.

Oh this is a good one, this is a great one.

JUDY pulls MARCUS into the middle of the room and they dance. Johnny stays in the kitchen for a moment, then comes back into the living room. He goes over to the turntable and rips the needle off the record. Silence.

JOHNNY: I mean it, Judy. We've got to stop.

Blackout.

Interval.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Early evening. Three years ago, but we don't know that yet.

The house is messier than we're used to.

JUDY is upstairs, fixing her hair in front of the bedroom mirror. She hears the front door opening and gets up, heads down the stairs.

JOHNNY comes through the front door, in his fifties suit, carrying his work bag. He takes off his hat and hangs it on the hatstand.

JOHNNY: Hello? What are you doing home?

JUDY: I finished early. Hello darling.

JUDY kisses him.

JOHNNY: How are they managing? It's barely six o'clock.

JUDY: Turns out I'm not indispensable.

JOHNNY: I'd have to disagree.

JOHNNY kisses her. JUDY kisses him back for longer than he expects.

Hello.

JUDY: I've made you a cocktail, come through.

JOHNNY: Wow.

They go into the living room. JUDY bustles at the bar, putting ice into a drink she's already mixed.

JUDY: Did you know they're pulling down the old cereal factory?

JOHNNY: What? No.

JUDY: I bumped into Sheila who I used to work with and she said they're pulling it down. I just bumped into her coming out of the Spar

JOHNNY: But it's a landmark.

JUDY: They're going to build a new shopping centre which must be the absolutely last thing we need.

She hands him his drink.

JOHNNY: Lovely. What is it?

JUDY: It's an Old Fashioned.

They sit.

JOHNNY: And how was day?

JUDY: Oh gosh you'll love this

JOHNNY: *(re the drink)* This is delicious.

JUDY: Is it? Good.

JUDY tries hers.

Ooh, yes. So Richard

JOHNNY: Richard?

JUDY: One of the partners? Head of Tax.

JOHNNY: Yes.

JUDY: Basically been there forever, way before the merger, probably the merger before that,

JOHNNY: How old?

JUDY: Old. Nearly retiring. Hasn't given a shit in some time.

JOHNNY: Right.

JUDY: And we've all known that – but I found out today

JOHNNY: From

JUDY: I got talking to Becky, his PA, in the coffee corner – she was having a cappuccino which takes forever with that machine, the nozzle gets clogged.

Anyway it turns out the reason Richard takes so long to reply when anyone sends him an email is he doesn't know how to use a computer.

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: I know, can you imagine? This day and age. I don't care how old you are.

Becky prints out all his emails for him at the end of the day – massive waste of paper – then on the train back to Peterborough he writes his responses freehand on the printouts, and in the morning he hands the stack of paper back to her and she types them up and sends them.

JOHNNY: That's hilarious.

JUDY: Isn't that extraordinary?

JOHNNY: Amazing.

JUDY: I mean god knows what his salary is. Five times mine.

JOHNNY: More than.

JUDY: Anyway.

What a wanker.

They laugh.

Nice, isn't it, me being home when you get back?

JOHNNY: No, lovely.

JUDY: I've got something to talk to you about.

JOHNNY: God, are you pregnant?

JUDY: No?

Pregnant?

JOHNNY: I don't know, women start nesting and stuff, don't they, when they're

JUDY: Because I made you a cocktail I'm pregnant?

JOHNNY: No, sorry, go on.

JUDY: God Johnny, that's really peed on my actual news.

JOHNNY: Sorry. Go on.

JUDY: OK so they made an announcement today. They're scaling back the Welwyn office, and they're looking for some people to take voluntary redundancy. Before they start on the less voluntary kind.

JOHNNY: They wouldn't get rid of you.

JUDY: Chris called me in this afternoon and basically invited me to leave before I'm pushed.

JOHNNY: Ah.

I'm sorry love.

JUDY: Thing is, I suddenly thought yeah, fuck it. Take the redundancy package and leave. It's generous, what they're offering.

JOHNNY: Wait, have you left already? Is that why you're home, you just walked out?

JUDY: No no. I just finished early, I just decided to. I had this feeling that I really wanted to be here to greet you. Instead of leaving the office at seven and racing home to find you eating crisps and frowning into the fridge.

JOHNNY: I like crisps, I don't mind.

JUDY: The thing is I'm thinking it'd be nice to be home to greet you every day.

JOHNNY: No, sounds lovely.

JUDY: Well that's what I'm thinking. Take the redundancy package and not get another job. Make being here my job, looking after us, you, the house.

What d'you think?

JOHNNY: You mean you'd be a what, be a housewife?

JUDY: We'd really be in the fifties.

JOHNNY giggles.

What's funny?

JOHNNY: Well you don't really, um. Cook.

JUDY: I'd learn, wouldn't I?

I can manage a team of six people and a portfolio of corporate clients, I can learn to cook things.

JOHNNY: No, sorry.

JUDY: I could do a class, a course maybe.

I didn't think you'd laugh.

JOHNNY: Are you serious?

JUDY: I thought you might like the idea.

JOHNNY: No it's a lovely idea I just

Well it's a bit radical, isn't it? I don't know anyone who – I mean anyone our age, who

JUDY: We'd be rebels.

They laugh together.

JOHNNY: We couldn't afford it, surely.

JUDY: I've had a look at the numbers, I did some back-of-an-envelope this morning and then checked the real figures when I got home and I think

You've got a really good salary and you've been exceeding your commission target, haven't you? No reason to think you can't stay at the top of the leader board, Mike sending you out as his best valuer.

And me being at home might save us money actually. I'd cook things from scratch, that's supposed to be cheaper. All the petrol money I'd save not driving to that stupid business park.

JOHNNY: All the grief you'd save.

JUDY: Yes.

JOHNNY: And not bringing work home.

JUDY: No, we'd get our weekends back. Especially once the house is finished.

JOHNNY: Which we'll do quicker if you're

JUDY: I'll be all yours. Wouldn't it be wonderful?

Think about it: the house is clean, everything's put away. No more tripping over things on the stairs. A fridge full of food, dinner in the oven already before you get back. Clean sheets on the bed, the pillows fluffed up.

JOHNNY: Could grow some things in the garden.

JUDY: Yes, vegetables, I could learn that.

JOHNNY: Dig for Victory!

JUDY: Except that's forties.

JOHNNY: No, I know.

JUDY: And you go out to work as before, nothing different except you feel like a real provider. My rock. My Rock Hudson. My man, out in the world all day. Knowing I'm here at home waiting for you.

JOHNNY: It isn't a bit sexist, maybe?

JUDY: Only if someone's doing something they don't want to do.

This is us making a choice. Together. Sharing out the work in a different way.

JUDY kneels down in front of JOHNNY, starts to take off his shoes.

Then you'd come through the door in the evening,

JOHNNY: 'Darling I'm home!'

JUDY: And I come out to meet you, I've got a drink ready for you. You get through the door and you put all your cares away in the drawer with your work phone. You sit down and I take your shoes off and give you your slippers and your drink, wouldn't that be nice?

JUDY puts his slippers on his feet.

And the whole evening to ourselves, whatever you want to do. You'd never have to remember just before bed to iron a shirt for the morning.

JOHNNY: Oh god I hate ironing my shirts.

JUDY: The wardrobe's full of shirts, all ironed and ready.

And, you know, at night, I wouldn't be so tired. Neither of us would be so tired.

JOHNNY: Or in the morning.

JUDY: Or in the morning. And everywhere so clean. Surfaces you could eat your breakfast off, every surface clean enough to do whatever we like on.

JOHNNY: You haven't been happy at work in so long. If I could save you that

JUDY: I'd get six months' redundancy, we could call it a trial.

JOHNNY: I guess if it. If it was Cornwall, say, if Cornwall was our favourite place, we'd maybe have had a cottage there for years, for the weekends, but eventually we'd want to go and live there, maybe, wouldn't we?

JUDY: And that's how we feel about the fifties. This would mean we could live there all the time.

I think we might find we love it.

JOHNNY: Yes.

JUDY: Yes?

JOHNNY: Yes. Yes, OK, yes.

JUDY claps with joy. She kisses JOHNNY.

JUDY: I'm so happy.

JOHNNY: Good.

JUDY: How d'you feel?

JOHNNY: I'm just thinking about all those surfaces

JUDY: D'you want to go upstairs?

JOHNNY: Upstairs before dinner? Yes, why not.

JUDY: No reason.

JOHNNY: No reason.

JOHNNY drains his cocktail, stands and kisses her.

JUDY takes his hand and leads him up to the bedroom. Once there, they kiss and sink back onto the bed.

SCENE 2

2 am. JUDY is sitting at the kitchen table, in a dressing gown, staring ahead of her.

JOHNNY comes in the front door quietly.

JUDY stands up, goes to the sink and busies herself drying some dishes.

JOHNNY comes into the kitchen and sees JUDY.

JUDY: Where've you been?

JOHNNY: Went for a drive.

JUDY: It's two o'clock.

JOHNNY: They've gone, have they? Fran and Marcus.

JUDY: Of course they've gone, it's two o'clock.

I don't know when I've been so embarrassed.

JOHNNY: Is that what we're going to focus on?

JUDY stops.

JUDY: D'you want some tea?

JOHNNY: No.

JUDY: Are you hungry?

JOHNNY: I thought you'd be asleep.

JUDY: I didn't know where you were.

JOHNNY: My head was bursting.

JUDY: Johnny, I'm sorry about the bank letter. I didn't show you because you panic about

JOHNNY: We're supposed to share things like that. Squirrelling things under the sink that's not a marriage.

JUDY: I thought I could sort it out.

JOHNNY sits down at the table.

JOHNNY: I had an idea. It's not perfect but it might give us some time, OK? Time to get straight.

JUDY: What is it?

JOHNNY: We use some of the money your dad left you.

I know you're supposed to save it for something special, but if it's just temporary while we get back on our feet, he wouldn't mind that, would he?

I know it's sacred that money and we don't touch it but

JUDY: It's gone, Johnny.

JOHNNY: It's gone?

JUDY: I've been using it to plug the gap.

JOHNNY: Your rainy day money?

JUDY: I guess it's been a pretty wet year. The fridge, the car and

JOHNNY: We haven't had that many repairs, have we?

JUDY: Just a little bit each month, but it adds up.

JOHNNY: You've burned through all of it?

JUDY: Yeah.

JOHNNY: Could we ever afford this?

JUDY: Yes, when there was more money coming in.

JOHNNY: When you had a job.

JUDY: After that.

JOHNNY: When?

JUDY: Don't make me

JOHNNY: When?

JUDY: OK, when your salary was bigger.

When we started this. There was. More commission.

JOHNNY: So it's me.

JUDY: It's not your fault, it's the market, isn't it?

JOHNNY: My failure to provide.

JUDY: I didn't say that. The promotion was going to sort it out.

JOHNNY: Sorry, am I being massively lower middle class about this? You don't start spending the money till you've got it.

JUDY: We were sure you'd get it.

JOHNNY: So if I can't bring enough money in to fund this life, we have to stop, don't we?

JUDY: It's just the finance, just give me a chance to sort out the finance. I'm truly truly sorry, I was trying to protect you

JOHNNY: I'm a big boy I don't need

JUDY: This is what I'm saying, I made a mistake and I'm sorry, but leave it with me and I'll try and think of a way round it because it doesn't need to be a thing that knocks us off course, does it? You wouldn't be saying all this about wanting to stop if you hadn't found that letter, would you?

Would you?

JOHNNY: I think maybe Alex coming here lost me the promotion.

JUDY: No.

JOHNNY: Don't you think it's maybe a bit of a turnoff, knowing someone gets waited on at home, wouldn't you kind of lose respect for them a bit?

JUDY: Let me talk to her, I can talk to her if you

JOHNNY: No, god.

JUDY: Why does it matter what anyone else thinks? If we choose to share out the tasks in our marriage in a different way from

JOHNNY: OK, you're not going to listen let's go to bed.

JUDY: I'm listening.

JOHNNY: Let's go to bed, talk about it in the morning.

JUDY: No, Johnny. I've sat here all evening waiting for you, worried about what you'll be coming back in with.

JOHNNY: I'm tired.

JUDY: So am I.

JOHNNY: How can you be tired? You don't do anything.

Sorry.

JUDY: Where did that come from?

JOHNNY: OK, look. Your life and my life, there's.

You don't vacuum the living room one day, I probably wouldn't even notice. You forget to cook, what's the worst thing that happens? It's not having to deal with people, make decisions all day, knowing the impact on your place on the target board, on the face you get to wear when you walk into the office. You don't have any of that.

JUDY: Doesn't mean I can't understand, can't support you.

JOHNNY: You feel a million miles away.

JUDY: I'm here.

JOHNNY: It's like talking to someone underwater.

JUDY: I'm here, Johnny, I'm here.

JOHNNY: I feel like we're performing it. I have to get home every night at the same time so we can do this little dance of cocktails and dinner,

JUDY: I make you dinner it's a nice thing.

JOHNNY looks at JUDY.

Sorry, I'm listening.

JOHNNY: Whatever we were trying to do, it

What must we look like?

JUDY: It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.

JOHNNY: What about what I think? Do we care what I think?

I think we might have got it all wrong.

I'm supposed to feel like a pig in shit, lucky Johnny.

It actually makes me feel like a child, I feel

I feel like the whole thing is just some kind of delusion we're

JUDY: Johnny this is real. This is us, this is how we're supposed to be.

This is us finally living life like we want to. If other people have a problem with it they're probably just jealous of how happy we are. How everything we do is about making each other happy, making the fantasy happen for each other. Not every couple has that, we're bloody lucky. What we have is so good. It's not about the money, the money's not important. We've made a real home.

"Are you happy, darling?" "Yes, disgracefully". We say it as a joke, but it's true, isn't it? Our mornings together, our evenings, our nights.

JOHNNY: I'm not.

JUDY: Not what?

JOHNNY: Happy.

I

I'm sorry, I'm not.

JUDY: Why?

JOHNNY looks away, looks down. Thinks before he speaks.

JOHNNY: Nothing's happened, I promise nothing's happened

JUDY: What?

What, Johnny?

JOHNNY: I've been having feelings for

JUDY: Feelings

JOHNNY: For a person. About a person.

A woman.

Nothing's happened.

But there's been an

Attraction.

JUDY: Who is it?

JOHNNY: It doesn't matter.

JUDY: Of course it matters of course it

JOHNNY: Because thinking about it tonight I think it's more
that things aren't right here.

JUDY: Who is it?

Is it Alex?

It's Alex

JOHNNY: It's not about her, it's not about who it is

JUDY: Is it Alex?

JOHNNY: Yes, OK, if it makes a difference to

JUDY: Well it's nice to put a face to it, isn't it?

This woman you

JOHNNY: You're not listening, nothing's happened.

JUDY: Stop saying that, it makes me think something has.

JOHNNY: Nothing's going to happen.

JUDY: Then why tell me?

So I can think about it while I clean the house?

While I iron your shirts, starch your collars, wondering
where you are, who you're with?

While I scrub the potatoes? On my hands and knees
polishing the floor?

How dare you bring me this? After everything I've done,
Johnny.

JOHNNY: I never

I'm trying to be honest.

I wanted your help.

JUDY: Selfish.

JOHNNY: I didn't tell you for you to get hurt about it, it was an
example of

Something's not right. The way we're living, it

You don't seem to know what it's done to you.

JUDY: I'm happy with it you're the one

You're the one suddenly saying it's broken.

*JUDY goes to the cutlery drawer, takes it out and brings it back to
the table, then upturns it. The cutlery clatters out onto the table.*

JOHNNY: What are you doing?

JUDY: Cutlery needs polishing.

JOHNNY: It's three o'clock in the morning.

JUDY: I'm not sleepy now.

Sunday night, I should have done it earlier only I was too
upset.

JOHNNY: Judy

JUDY: Don't.

JUDY takes out a cloth and a tin of polish. She sits down.

JOHNNY watches helplessly.

JUDY starts polishing the cutlery.

Don't tell me next time.

Telling me only hurts me, doesn't it? Just selfish, getting it off your

I think in future if there's ever anything

If you ever find yourself having *feelings* again

Be man enough to keep it to yourself. However far it goes.

If that's what it takes to keep this, this *arrangement* as you call it, then fine. Go off and do it.

JOHNNY: I don't want to

JUDY: Listen to me, I've listened to you.

I expect you to make damn sure I never know. Before, during and after. I expect you to do me that honour in return for everything I do for you.

JOHNNY watches JUDY as she lays the pieces of finished cutlery carefully back in their tray.

SCENE 3

JUDY by the sink, assembling cups etc for tea. SYLVIA sits at the table, looking at the fridge.

SYLVIA: When was it, 1955, something like that. I was fascinated by the way it hummed. I'd creep down in the night and listen to it.

But a fridge that doesn't work, that's literally just a cupboard, isn't it? A cupboard with a light in. If the light's even working.

JUDY: It's fine, it's all working fine now.

JUDY opens the fridge, looks inside.

SYLVIA: Is it? OK good.

JUDY shuts the fridge.

JUDY: I haven't got any milk.

SYLVIA: Are you alright?

JUDY: I was going to go out shopping this morning then I didn't.

Shall we have a drink-drink?

SYLVIA looks at her watch.

SYLVIA: Yes, why not?

They go into the living room.

JUDY: I fancy a gin and lemon, what about you?

SYLVIA: Oh, anything. Yes, gin.

JUDY mixes them a drink.

Is everything alright, darling?

JUDY: Yes, why?

SYLVIA: You asked me to come over, and now I'm here you seem a bit

JUDY hands SYLVIA her drink.

Thank you. Strung out.

JUDY: I might have a little cigarette, would you like one?

SYLVIA: A cigarette?

JUDY: I sometimes have a cigarette in the afternoon, just the one

SYLVIA: Go on, then.

JUDY: You need a little vice, don't you?

*JUDY takes two cigarettes out of a case and hands one to SYLVIA.
She lights it for her.*

SYLVIA: Thank you.

JUDY lights her own. She sits back and inhales.

Ooh. D'you know I haven't had a cigarette in ages?

JUDY: Aren't they lovely?

SYLVIA: Very nice.

JUDY: Those new things they have now instead of cigarettes.
People standing in doorways sucking on a biro.

SYLVIA: Oh I know. Supposed to be better for you.

JUDY: I don't think it harms just once in a while, just a little
treat.

Wasn't bad for you in the fifties, of course.

SYLVIA: Well it was.

JUDY: No I know but

SYLVIA: It was just as bad – worse, even, because they didn't
have the filters

JUDY: No, OK.

SYLVIA: And they didn't have as good healthcare if you got
emphysema or whatever.

JUDY: OK, mum.

SYLVIA: Was there something you wanted to talk about?

JUDY: The thing is, it's

I need to ask you something. I've never asked you before,
never.

SYLVIA: Go on.

JUDY: Johnny didn't get that promotion.

SYLVIA: Oh, I'm sorry.

JUDY: It's OK, he's OK, but

Well it's left us with quite a shortfall, we were rather
banking on it. Our mortgage hasn't paid this month.

SYLVIA: Oh, darling.

JUDY: So I wanted to ask if. If maybe you could help me with
some money.

I'm sorry, I've never asked before. Not since university.

SYLVIA: I haven't really got any.

JUDY: I thought Erica left you some.

SYLVIA: Yes but Probate, darling. I haven't got it yet.

Could you use some of your father's money?

JUDY: I have, I've used it up. It wasn't that much really, after
the deposit on the house. I mean it was wonderful of him,
it's kept me going for years.

SYLVIA: And now it's my turn?

JUDY: I just thought you might want to help. Especially now
you've got more than you expected to have.

SYLVIA: I couldn't use the money Erica left me to fund your
lifestyle, what would she say?

JUDY: It's not a *lifestyle*, you make it sound like I'm buying
shoes and handbags all day.

This isn't a lifestyle, it's my life.

Dad would understand.

SYLVIA: Oh, Dad would understand, perfect Dad.

JUDY: I never said he was perfect, he got closer than a lot of
He loved you, and you

The doorbell rings.

SYLVIA: Who's that?

JUDY: I don't know.

JUDY goes down the hallway, opens the door. FRAN is there.

Oh hello.

FRAN: Hi how are you?

JUDY: Sorry, I'd forgotten you were coming.

FRAN: No, I wasn't, I just

Sorry, Marcus is at home and I needed to get out of the house so I said I'd made plans to see you – isn't that awful? Then I thought I might as well come and see if you're in so it's not a complete lie.

I can go if you

JUDY: No no, come in.

FRAN: I told him I wanted to see how you were, after

JUDY: My mum's here.

FRAN: Oh lovely.

JUDY: This is my mum.

FRAN: Hello.

SYLVIA: Sylvia.

FRAN: Hello I'm Fran. I'm so glad you're here.

(To JUDY.) We've been worried about you, I've never seen Johnny so

Saying he wanted to stop!

I always hold you and Johnny up as the perfect marriage so it's like, if they're having problems what hope in hell do me and Marcus have, you know?

SYLVIA: Wanted to stop what?

FRAN: When he said he wanted to stop the fifties thing.

SYLVIA: Johnny wants to stop the fifties thing?

FRAN: Oh. Shit, sorry.

JUDY: He was in a state, that's all, he doesn't really want to.

SYLVIA: But that's what he said.

JUDY: We're having gin, Fran – d'you want one?

FRAN: More than anything, yeah.

JUDY pours FRAN a drink.

Is Johnny here?

JUDY: Work.

FRAN: 'Course.

JUDY: Marcus isn't?

FRAN: He's off work for a bit, actually.

He's been having a bit of trouble. His, um

JUDY hands FRAN her drink.

Thank you.

It's appalling, really, it's

He's had a complaint, an allegation of. His PA has

She's alleging inappropriate physical contact. Sexual harassment. They've sent him home while the other partners review the situation.

JUDY: God.

FRAN: This girl, she's

She's worked with him for years, never said anything was

SYLVIA: What's she alleging? Sorry, it's none of my

FRAN: She says he groped her.

JUDY: No.

FRAN: They've taken away his swipe card.

And you know, there's no evidence for this, it's her word
against his, so

JUDY: It's probably just a misunderstanding, isn't it?

FRAN: I hope so.

I mean you know Marcus, he's

He's huggy, isn't he? He's

JUDY: Tactile.

FRAN: It's part of what people like, he's just a big teddy bear,
isn't he? It's never, you know, it's never creepy.

You'd have to be totally over-sensitive to think he was

God. I don't know what's going to happen.

Anyway, he'll have to stop badgering me about leaving my
job if he's about to lose his.

(To JUDY.) I brought your book back.

FRAN takes the book from her bag.

JUDY: Useful?

FRAN: Yeah, very. I'd never live up to it, but yeah.

SYLVIA: What's this one?

FRAN hands the book to SYLVIA.

JUDY: It's just a

Historical

SYLVIA: You're recruiting now?

JUDY: It's household tips mum, it's not

SYLVIA: It's inflammatory material. I thought it was your
choice, didn't need to drag anyone else along?

JUDY: I don't. Fran was asking.

SYLVIA: What d'you do, Fran?

FRAN: I'm a stylist. Films and commercials. Commercials,
mainly.

SYLVIA: Wonderful.

FRAN: I like it. I'm good at it.

SYLVIA: Good. Don't let my daughter lure you away from it.

FRAN: No, well we can't afford it now, not if there's going to
be legal costs and

JUDY: You think it could

FRAN: He thinks she's out to destroy him, bring the company
down with her.

He's so upset. I've never seen him so

He didn't want to to tell me, only this girl has a lot of
friends on Instagram.

He said he just tries to be friendly with everyone, he puts
his arm around the shoulders of his male colleagues all the
time.

I believe him, but you can't help, you can't help
wondering, can you? Thinking maybe he's different with
other people than he is with me, maybe there's a side to
him I don't know, or

JUDY: What's happened to us if you can't put your arm around
someone's shoulders without them crying assault?

FRAN: And he's hurt that she didn't speak to him about it –
they worked together for years.

SYLVIA: Well it's not that easy, is it? When it's your boss. Who's got the power in that situation? She might have felt that if she said anything he'd have her removed, she might have been in fear for her job. We don't have any idea what she might have gone through.

JUDY: Mum. This is Fran's husband

SYLVIA: Yes I'm sorry, I don't mean to say

But we don't know her, do we?

JUDY: You don't know Marcus either. She might be lying for all we know.

SYLVIA: Why would she? At great personal risk

JUDY: I don't know, because she's a fantasist, maybe?

SYLVIA: You'd know, I suppose.

JUDY: What?

SYLVIA: Fantasist. You'd know.

JUDY: You mean I'm

SYLVIA: This gingham paradise you've made for yourself – you know it's not real, don't you? The fifties didn't even look like this in the fifties. You're living in a cartoon.

You want to know what the fifties were like, from someone who was actually there? The fifties were terrible. The idea that anyone would want to would choose to go back there, it's ridiculous.

The pair of you in your frocks, look at you.

Do you know how cold it was? November right through to March. Everyone huddled round their own fireplace, cause everywhere else was freezing. The whole house except about a yard around the sitting room fire where it was *boiling*, the rest of it bone-cold. It bit your nose off in the morning. I'd offer to help mum with the dinner, not to spend time with her, just so I could stand next to the oven.

Rationing! Still rationing. Bread you could build houses with. And god it was bland: grey meat, grey people, everything grey. My dad came home once with this amazing new food a friend had been talking about – Mum wouldn't let us eat it cause she'd heard it was made out of mould. It was yoghurt.

That's being a woman in the fifties. Fear. Bomb-shaped holes everywhere, men like my dad back from the war with their body intact but their head different. Everyone making do and mending, things that were already wrecked. And the intolerance: try being anything other than a straight white man and see if you still think it's utopia.

And don't expect not to be groped at work, that's the least of your worries. Your husband is legally allowed to fuck you whenever he wants to, it doesn't matter how much your head aches or your back aches or you can't stand the sight of him anymore, the weight of him on you. And no abortion, no birth control. No help anywhere. Divorce him? Good luck, love. Whatever he got up to, you turned a blind eye to it.

My poor mother. Frightened of a yoghurt.

She said to me as she was dying – in the hospice – she said 'what have I done, really?' I said don't say that, you brought up three children, what's more important than that? But she knew. Her life was wasted. All her potential boiled down to such a bitter little existence.

You know what she'd do if she saw you now? She'd laugh.

Because it's ridiculous. Being nostalgic when you weren't even there.

They used to think nostalgia was an affliction, did you know that? A neurological disease. Not a branding strategy for tea towels.

'Nostalgia ain't what it used to be', that's the joke, isn't it?

Except it isn't a joke, because you're wasting yourself when you could choose not to. That's what we did for you on those marches, so you could be brave and strong and *better* and this is not what I fought for this is not what we fought for and it isn't funny anymore.

A long moment while this lands.

JUDY smoothes down her skirt. She stands, walks to the kitchen.

JUDY: God's sake, mum.

She pours and drinks a glass of water. Comes back to the living room with something to say.

I've told you before, I'm not like this as a rebellion against you, this is authentically

SYLVIA: We all rebel against our mothers, don't we? Mine told me not to marry your father, should have listened really but

JUDY: Dad again.

SYLVIA: What's 'Dad again'? As if I bad-mouth him to you all the time.

What Judy doesn't know, Fran, is that her father started sleeping with other women while she was still in nappies.

JUDY: Dad?

SYLVIA: Yes.

JUDY: My Dad?

SYLVIA: Where do you think he was when he wasn't at home? I could name you four or five women.

JUDY: He's not here to defend himself, this isn't

SYLVIA: Why would I make it up? It's a desperate feeling, I wouldn't wish it on anyone. I felt embarrassed to exist.

You're not supposed to complain to the child, it's not good for them but the upshot is thirty years of you thinking I'm the wicked witch and him getting to be bloody Gregory Peck.

I'm sorry darling if that's a shock. But you're thirty eight now and you say you like cleaning behind things so there we are. All clean.

SCENE 4

Late morning. JUDY is in the kitchen.

ALEX is upstairs in the bedroom, looking into the wardrobe at JUDY's dresses. She closes the wardrobe quietly, picks up a notebook and comes downstairs.

JUDY: Got everything you need?

ALEX: Yes, for now. Once we've signed the agreement we'll come back and measure up for a floor plan, get photos etcetera.

JUDY: Right, um

ALEX: Shall we sit down and I'll talk you through

JUDY: I mean I don't know if we're ready to

ALEX: Just want to take you through our pack so you know what you're getting if you list the house with us.

ALEX stands by the table, takes out some papers and brochures from her bag and lays them out.

JUDY: Right.

JUDY comes to sit down opposite.

ALEX: It's a sole agency agreement, minimum of twenty weeks on the market but it won't take that long, things are really getting snapped up right now.

This is one of our standard brochures, you can see it's all nicely presented, but if you like you can pay upfront for Enhanced Marketing, so you get a glossier brochure like this plus your listing comes up first when anyone searches on the website or one of the big meta sites, your Prime Location or Right Move, whatever.

But I wouldn't push that on you because I really think our standard service is what they'd call premium in other agencies. We're all about working closely with clients, making sure you feel valued and listened to, and obviously helping you quickly find a good quality buyer without any of the bullshit you get sometimes, you know?

JUDY: You're good at this.

ALEX: Thanks.

Am I? I don't do many valuations now I'm managing a branch, so

I thought you said you weren't ever moving.

JUDY: I'm just thinking about it at the moment, just considering

ALEX: It's a good time, very much a vendor's market.

JUDY: And how much would we

ALEX: Obviously I need to go back and do a proper evaluation based on all the info I've

JUDY: I was hoping we could just informally, just an idea really.

ALEX: Off the top of my head?

JUDY: Sorry. I didn't realise you'd have to go through the whole

ALEX: It's like Antiques Roadshow, people are just waiting to hear a number.

These are going for four, four-fifty at the moment.

JUDY: OK.

ALEX: But that's very much a ballpark. Where are you going?

JUDY: Going?

ALEX: Moving to.

JUDY: Nowhere just

ALEX: Nowhere

JUDY: Somewhere smaller, maybe. Cheaper.

I'm sure you know, but

Mike had, before he left, he had very much led Johnny to believe he'd be the next Assistant Manager.

ALEX: Yes, Mike shouldn't have done that. Especially when he knew he was going to retire.

JUDY picks up one of the leaflets.

JUDY: You couldn't consider, um, reconsidering, could you?

ALEX: Reconsider the appointment?

JUDY: Toby's wife's a doctor, isn't she? They've got plenty of

Sorry, I shouldn't ask only I know Johnny won't. I know you and Johnny, um. I know you get on very well.

ALEX: It wasn't just my decision. I can put people forward, but the decision's taken at regional board level.

JUDY: Did you put Johnny forward?

ALEX: No, not this

JUDY: You didn't even put him forward?

ALEX: Johnny's target at the moment is to list four houses a week, but all this year it's been more like two and half, the occasional three.

So if I'm putting someone forward to regional management, they're going to be looking at those numbers and asking me why I think this person's ready for a bigger role, and being verbally promised a job by someone who's subsequently left the company isn't going to cut it.

ALEX: Do you see his payslips?

JUDY: Of course.

ALEX: So you'll know he's been getting less commission, considerably less than

JUDY: Yes.

ALEX: For some time.

JUDY: Yes.

ALEX: So what do you think it is?

JUDY: I know the market's been tough.

ALEX: Well we adjust the targets to take that into account.

He asked me, in his one to one the other day. He wondered if it was his clothes. Or turning up in a fifties car.

JUDY: He asked you that?

ALEX: It's obviously on his mind, he knows he's not doing as well.

JUDY: He's always felt dressing a bit differently made him distinctive, made him memorable. It's his thing.

What did you say? In this one to one?

ALEX: I said I'm sure it's not the clothes per se. But if the clothes are making him feel

It's the psychology, it's all about confidence. People can smell it, can't they? You need to project confidence so people want to work with you cause you seem like you're

winning. Maybe Johnny doesn't feel like he's winning for some reason.

JUDY: So how does he turn it around?

ALEX: I said to him you've got to look at everything, everything in your life, work out what it is that's putting you off balance. And then do something about it.

JUDY: Do something about it like what?

ALEX: I don't know. Not for me to say.

Do you want me to value the house? Or is this just

Because it's quite a lot of paperwork and if you're not really intending to

JUDY: No, let's leave it.

ALEX: Right.

ALEX gathers up her things. She stops and looks at JUDY.

I'll bear it in mind, OK? What you've said. I can't see anything coming up, someone would have to leave and I can't see that happening soon, but

JUDY: Please don't take him.

ALEX: What?

JUDY: I know you could, we both know you could but please don't.

ALEX: Sorry I don't know what you're talking about.

JUDY: These feelings he's been having - I don't know what's happened between you, I don't know how far it's gone, I don't really want to know I don't think

But please. He's all I've got. I might be able to bear it just being a sex thing, but if it's more than that

ALEX: A sex thing sorry what?

A sex thing?

JUDY: Oh my god you didn't

ALEX: Johnny?

JUDY: Oh my god.

ALEX: That would be completely

I'm his boss.

JUDY: I thought he'd told you, I thought it was a mutual

ALEX: Johnny?

JUDY: I'm his wife it's obviously not that hard for me to understand someone being attracted to him.

ALEX: No sorry of course he's lovely but

God no.

OK that makes more sense now.

JUDY: What does?

ALEX: The way he's been behaving.

Right, OK.

Huh.

JUDY: Oh god.

ALEX: God, men are so

JUDY: Please don't tell him I told you?

SCENE 5

Afternoon. JUDY and MARCUS in the living room, with drinks.

MARCUS: And that's why it's called a Screwdriver.

JUDY: Because they stirred it

MARCUS: Yes, with a

JUDY: That's brilliant, I never knew that.

MARCUS: No well no one does really.

JUDY: Is it true, do you think?

MARCUS: I don't know. Why let truth get in the way of a good story?

JUDY: This from the man who looks everything up on the internet.

MARCUS: Ha! No, well you've got me there, haven't you?

MARCUS sits back.

This is nice.

JUDY: We get on, don't we?

MARCUS: Yes, we get on very well.

JUDY: We're good friends. Even if it's me and Fran, really, that see each other most often, and you and I don't really see each other without the others but I do always feel

I think there's a lot of things we agree on.

MARCUS: Yes, I do too.

JUDY: Yes?

MARCUS: Yes.

JUDY: I don't see why we shouldn't take that to another level.

MARCUS: Another - sorry?

JUDY: I wondered if I might come and work for you.

MARCUS: Work for me?

JUDY: Fran told me you lost your secretary. PA.

MARCUS: Fran told you the reason, did she? The circumstances behind

JUDY: It's really rough, I'm sorry.

MARCUS: You know they've sent me home, while they

JUDY: But you'll be back, presumably, soon? Won't you?

MARCUS: I'm off indefinitely. While the other partners *review the situation*.

JUDY: I suppose there's a procedure they have to

MARCUS: Oh yes there's a procedure. Procedure that I put in place, when we set up the agency. Collecting statements from the rest of the staff, anyone I'd been in contact with, anyone that had seen us working together.

JUDY: God.

MARCUS: And you know that's my company. Everything I've worked for.

Hashtags flying around, people who've never met me.

JUDY: It'll blow over, won't it? When they work out she was just looking for attention, or money or whatever? It's not like you *really* did something.

MARCUS: Course not.

JUDY: With any luck they'll work out there's nothing in it, welcome you back with open arms. At which point you'll still need help, presumably.

MARCUS: Yes.

JUDY: When Fran told me about it, it was like a lightbulb, I just had this idea of *me* as your secretary.

MARCUS: But why would you want to be

I thought you were very happy here?

JUDY: Well, circumstances. It looks like I'll need to take on some kind of paid something. If we're to stay afloat.

MARCUS: This job that Johnny didn't get.

JUDY: And I don't know, maybe it's time to shake things up a bit, I've had three lovely years of

MARCUS: You used to manage a team, didn't you?

JUDY: I'm not looking for something at that level now.

And, you know, I think working for *you* would be. I'd work hard but it'd be fun, I think, it wouldn't feel like a job.

Typing your letters, pouring your coffee, your four o'clock whisky. Knowing where you've left your pen or your glasses. Fending people off on the phone when you're up against it. First line of defence, a tiger when you need one, pussycat the rest of the time. Shirts from the cleaners, a spare one in the drawer in case you want to freshen up.

Maybe it's a romantic idea, I just quite like the thought of working on one of those old typewriters, cardigan round my shoulders, you know?

MARCUS: Pencil skirt and heels.

JUDY: Of course.

MARCUS: Take a letter Miss Martin! Glasses?

JUDY: Only when I think you're out of the office.

MARCUS laughs.

I mean I know no one really, those old typewriters

MARCUS: Don't send email, sadly.

JUDY: I'm not sure that's better.

MARCUS: Tell me something. If I came into the office in the morning and said 'that's a nice cardigan', would you be alright with that?

JUDY: Why wouldn't I?

MARCUS: I find it quite hard, if I see a nice cardi, say, not to say anything.

JUDY: No well that's normal, I think.

MARCUS: Or if you looked particularly nice that day, if you'd had a good sleep and looked fresh and lovely, would you mind if I said something? Like 'don't you look fresh and lovely today?'

JUDY: Yes that would be fine.

MARCUS: You wouldn't be offended?

JUDY: No, I'd be glad, compliments are nice.

MARCUS: Where do you stand on contact?

JUDY: With?

MARCUS: Physical contact, I mean. Accidental, like if my hand brushed yours when we both reached for the stapler.

JUDY: Oh but that's - honestly, is that what

MARCUS: You'd be surprised.

JUDY: For heaven's sake.

MARCUS: And say you'd done something for me, something really excellent and I wanted to thank you and I put my hand on your shoulder, the back of your shoulder as I said it.

Like this.

JUDY: Yes of course

MARCUS: Or I was leaning over to congratulate you so I put my arm round your shoulders like this

JUDY: Yes that's fine.

MARCUS: Further down your back? Say here?

JUDY: Yes.

MARCUS: Here?

JUDY: Yes.

MARCUS: Here?

JUDY: Borderline.

MARCUS: takes his hand away.

No but this is me, you know I wouldn't misinterpret

MARCUS: Just working out the boundaries.

JUDY: No, sure.

MARCUS moves away.

MARCUS: I mean these women. The power they wield. And they know it, they know they can end you. Watching you all the time, just waiting for you to slip up, say something they can label sexist or racist, something they can enjoy being outraged about. Anything. You can't do anything now. Years where she doesn't object to a compliment, a hand on the arm, nor does she leave me out when she's looking for career advice, looking to *progress*, and doesn't mind doing it over a glass of wine that she's not paying for, the flinty little bitch. Then suddenly boosh it's everything exploded and it's not just now it's historical it's did you *ever*, has it *ever* happened, right back to the first boss who ever patted his PA on the bottom and said 'run along now' as a *joke*.

JUDY: Is that what you did? Patted her on the bottom.

MARCUS: As a joke. I wasn't exactly chasing her round the desk. I don't even find her attractive. She's completely flat-chested, she's no hips to speak of.

JUDY: I'm not sure that's going to help your case, saying that.

MARCUS: No, well. Among friends.

I mean come on, a hand on your arse through several layers of clothing? Grow up. It's not like I fingered her, she'd already made it very clear she wasn't going to let me

JUDY: When did

MARCUS: Oh, years ago.

So anyway. I'm not going back to work anytime soon.

But I'm sure there are things we can do. Now that I've got my afternoons free. If you wanted to put on a pencil skirt and a pair of heels I'd happily provide you with an old typewriter and an enthusiastic audience.

He waits. JUDY doesn't respond.

Or has that idea gone a bit icky?

JUDY: You'd pay me for that, would you?

MARCUS: If that's what it takes.

JUDY thinks about it.

She holds out her hand to him. He puts down his drink and kneels in front of her. He runs his hand slowly up her leg from her ankle.

When he gets above her knee she steps backwards.

JUDY: No, sorry.

She goes towards the kitchen.

Sorry.

MARCUS sits back.

SCENE 6

Evening. JUDY and JOHNNY are at the table, with two takeaway pizza boxes between them, and used plates / cutlery. JOHNNY's finished his pizza, JUDY has eaten half of hers.

JOHNNY is in a work shirt and suit trousers.

JUDY is wearing a pair of modern jeans and a jersey top.

JOHNNY: D'you want any more?

JUDY: No, it's

JOHNNY: Didn't you like it?

JUDY: No, it's very nice, I just

I can't remember what pizza I like.

I might not get chicken on it next time.

JOHNNY: I thought the pineapple was the real bum note.

JUDY: It's *ham* and pineapple you have on pizza, isn't it?

JOHNNY: Hawaiian.

JUDY: There's something chicken and pineapple in one of the recipe books I must have been thinking of that.

Was yours nice?

JOHNNY: Yeah. The spicy sausage was good.

JUDY stands and picks up the plates.

JUDY: Not much washing up, anyway.

JUDY goes to the sink.

JOHNNY: I'll do that. Sit down?

JUDY comes back to the table.

Are those new?

JUDY: What?

JOHNNY: Jeans.

JUDY: Old. Back of the wardrobe.

JOHNNY: Still fit.

JUDY: Housework keeps you trim.

JOHNNY: No, you look good.

JUDY: Good. I feel a bit drab.

JOHNNY: You don't look

JUDY: If it's what you need me to do, I'll work on it.

JUDY sits down.

JOHNNY: I never said I needed you to

JUDY: You said you didn't want us to live in the fifties anymore.

JOHNNY: I wasn't really talking about the clothes we wear.

JUDY: No, of course but it's part, isn't it? I'm doing what I can, Johnny.

JOHNNY clears the pizza boxes.

JOHNNY: I saw um

I saw Alex today, she called me into her office.

She's um. Well it turns out she's been thinking about me.

JUDY: Thinking

JOHNNY: My place in the branch, my role.

JUDY: Right. Right.

JOHNNY: And I think questioning if she did the right thing, promoting Toby

Wanting to put something right, anyway. She's talked to regional management about me and they've offered me a new job, an assistant manager job.

JUDY: Oh.

JOHNNY: But not here. In the St Albans branch.

Which, obviously, isn't that far away, it's just a longer drive.

JUDY: Sure.

JOHNNY: And working with different people, obviously.

JUDY: Are you going to do it?

JOHNNY: Yes of course.

JUDY: What about your, um. Leaving your colleagues.

JOHNNY: I think this is the right thing.

JUDY: What's the um

JOHNNY: Salary? Another six K. Plus commission based on the whole team's performance, because obviously I won't be going out on valuations so much.

JUDY puts a hand to her mouth.

I presume that puts us

JUDY: Out of the woods, yes.

JOHNNY: So there we are.

JUDY: Oh my god.

Oh god.

Oh god Johnny. I can't tell you how

I've been so worried.

JOHNNY: I know.

JUDY: This is good. This'll be good for us.

For you. That they're recognising your potential, I mean.

We'll be fine now. I promise I'll stay on top of it this time, I'll make sure we stay within our means. We can get back to normal, can't we?

JOHNNY: Can we?

JUDY: What d'you mean?

JOHNNY: I don't think it's that simple.

JUDY: How

JOHNNY: The fight we had the other night, I think we uncovered something really big.

I was angry with you for hiding the letter from the bank

JUDY: Which I've apologised for.

JOHNNY: But then you were angry with me for telling you I was having feelings about someone, yes?

JUDY: I think understandably.

JOHNNY: Yes no, listen. I know, just.

I was angry with you for being secretive, you were angry because I'd been open. I want honesty – I need honesty to feel like we're really together. You want to be lied to.

JUDY: I don't for a second want to be lied to.

JOHNNY: You told me I could have an affair but just make sure you never found out.

JUDY: I didn't say I wanted it to happen, I didn't say I'd be glad.

JOHNNY: But don't you see it's a difference? You'll do anything to preserve this fantasy. And I don't want fantasy anymore.

And I think this is a this is kind of a fundamental problem and I don't know how we solve it. It's a whole lot deeper than wearing fifties clothes or not.

JUDY: God, Johnny.

JOHNNY: I mean are we still in tune with each other? Are we looking in the same direction, or do we actually want different things?

JUDY: You're asking if we should or shouldn't even be together, do you realise that?

JOHNNY: Maybe, yeah.

JUDY: This is the second time in a week you've done this to me.

JOHNNY: What?

JUDY: We start a conversation talking about one thing then you suddenly pull out something else that's massive and scary and there's no warning, you just whip it out and I've got to react straight away it's not fair, Johnny. I can't react quickly enough, I feel battered, I feel ambushed.

JOHNNY: You never had a problem keeping up with me in a fight before, you used to wipe the floor with me.

Where's that girl gone?

JUDY: I'm still here.

JOHNNY: Your mind, your wit. The bit of you that could finish a conversation even when there's a dirty plate in the sink. It's like the woman I love has been vacuumed out from inside you.

JUDY: I'm here Johnny

I haven't lost my mind I've been frantically using it.

You've no idea what I've been up to really, trying to shore things up, trying to protect you, treading on eggshells for you.

All so you don't have to hear me say 'look Johnny, you're not earning enough', 'why aren't ybu selling more houses, why aren't you better at selling houses, why've you got worse at your job?'

All this stuff I've been doing, so you could feel like a man.

JOHNNY: What, a proper fifties man who has affairs and doesn't tell you?

JUDY: Throw that back in my face.

JOHNNY: Well OK thank you for everything but I'm sorry to tell you it hasn't worked.

And I don't think you are doing it for me. I think you're doing it for you so you don't have to go to work, so you can stay home

JUDY: I stay home for us.

But yes, staying at home makes me happy. Why isn't that OK?

JOHNNY: Because it's turning us into strangers. Like two people with the same hobby.

JUDY: Don't call it a hobby, it's *us*

JOHNNY: Is it? Is it everything we are? Because I thought there were two things, there was the fifties and then there was us and those were two *separate* things, and us was the thing that came first.

I don't know which you'd choose now if you had to.

JUDY: Johnny I

Obviously I'd

JUDY thinks.

I don't know who I am without the fifties.

I know it's stupid but I wanted this my whole life. I dreamed of a kitchen like this, a husband coming home wearing a hat. Finding you, and finding out you wanted all that too, it was

I was so happy.

JOHNNY: Are you happy now?

JUDY: Not with things being like this, no of course not.

Most of the time I'm happy just *being*. And I tell myself it doesn't matter if I've got no stories to tell you because a good wife listens more than she talks but

I've got that wrong, haven't I? From everything you've been saying, that's not what you want.

But why do I have to change to make this work? What are *you* doing?

And if the fifties is really *me*, and I stop, then what does that mean? Denying myself.

I mean ask my mother the hypothetical version of this and she'd say 'leave him! If he doesn't let you be you then walk out'.

But I can't be a housewife by myself, can I? Woman quits job to become her own wife, that's ridiculous.

And more than that, if I don't know who I am without the fifties, I don't know who I am without *you* even more.

JOHNNY: I miss you.

JUDY puts her hand on the table, reaches towards him.

He puts his hand in hers. They stay like that for a while.

JUDY: So what do we do?

JOHNNY: We still love each other, don't we?

JUDY: I do. Do you?

JOHNNY: Yes. So that's good, that's a big tick.

I used to bring you a cup of tea in bed, do you remember?

JUDY: Yes.

JOHNNY: I used to love that. I loved doing that for you, it felt good. It's a nice feeling, doing things for each other.

JUDY: Have I been hogging it, that feeling? Have I made a world where you can't make me a cup of tea?

JOHNNY: Not just you, we both did. We made all these rules, that

JUDY: Not rules but yes

JOHNNY: Routines. That cut us off from things we might like.

JUDY: So I step away from the kettle

JOHNNY: It's not just the tea, I

JUDY: No, I know. I mean we try and do things differently.

JOHNNY: Maybe that'd be fun. We might fuck it up but who cares?

JUDY: Because we can try things and maybe they don't work but we try something else

JOHNNY: And we keep trying and the question isn't "is this properly fifties?" but "is this properly us?"

We muddle a bit more, we share things a bit more, sometimes one of us does more or less sometimes we both do absolutely nothing and we spend the day in bed together, have someone bring us curry on a bike.

I'm making this up as I go along here, is it

JUDY: You look five years younger.

JOHNNY: I feel. I feel like this might be it. The answer.

Maybe not the answer. The right question.

We don't have to bin the fifties altogether but let's look at what works for us and what doesn't and mix it up a bit. We said we'd try it for six months originally, we only said six months. We've done it for three years without questioning, I just think it's time for a review.

Have we got that in us?

JUDY: Of course. Of course.

JUDY goes towards the fridge.

Do you want some pudding? I think there's crumble left.

JUDY stops at the fridge.

Why do I do that? Turn back to the kitchen instead of

JOHNNY: Why do you?

JUDY: I think I'm scared, Johnny.

JOHNNY: That's OK.

JUDY: That feeling when you've been off school for a week with laryngitis and when you go back you try to catch up but you know you've missed a crucial lesson

JOHNNY: Trigonometry or

JUDY: The Subjunctive. And you never ever feel like you fully understand it, you never really catch up and you know there's going to be a question on it in the exam so you're just dreading

I feel like that about the world. Like I'll never catch up.

JOHNNY: You're not doing it by yourself is the important thing.

JUDY: We're not going to solve this now, are we?

JOHNNY: Making a start.

JUDY: We work it out together, no assumptions

JOHNNY: No eggshells. We review everything.

JUDY: You and me but different.

JUDY takes a deep breath.

JOHNNY: Yes?

JUDY: Yes.

JOHNNY stands up.

JOHNNY: Dance with me?

JUDY: You hate dancing.

JOHNNY: I'm reviewing that. Come on, dance with me.

JUDY comes over to him, and they start to jive together. Really quite badly.

JUDY: Weird, not wearing a dress for this.

After a few moves:

JOHNNY: You're leading again.

JUDY: I'm trying not to. Go on, you lead.

JOHNNY: No, you

JUDY: No, you

JOHNNY: You

JUDY: You

JOHNNY: You.

They laugh. They keep dancing. Music takes over and continues into a....

CODA

Morning. JOHNNY is in the kitchen, in his work suit. He puts the teapot on the table, which is set for breakfast.

As much of this as possible is a dance.

He takes a loaf of sliced bread and methodically puts some in the toaster, and lays some out for making a sandwich.

He makes a sandwich, wraps it and puts it in a lunch box.

JUDY comes out of the bathroom in 1950s-style office wear.

She comes downstairs. JOHNNY comes over. They kiss each other, long and slow.

The toast pops up.

They sit down and JOHNNY pours the tea. JUDY surveys the table.

She gets up, goes to the cupboard and gets out the marmalade.

They eat the toast and drink their tea.

They take the plates to the sink. JUDY starts to run the tap, but JOHNNY points at his watch.

She hesitates, then walks away from the dishes in the sink.

They go into the hallway and each put on a hat.

JUDY hands JOHNNY his briefcase.

JOHNNY hands JUDY her briefcase.

They leave via the front door.

The house is empty.

THE END

