

(GARETH goes out obediently, FLEUR begins readjusting things once more as the phone rings. She sighs as she goes over to pick it up.)

FLEUR: Hello? *(Pause.)* Fleur Honeybourne, hello? ... Yes, this is she. David? Ah, no, no he's rather busy at the moment. ... Sorry, no I don't think I do. Have we? When did we meet exactly? ... Oh, I see. Oh, Gillian! Yes, yes we have met. How are you? ... Oh, I see. No, you're not...? Really? ... She's done what? Oh god, that sounds awful! How serious was it? ... Right... Oh right... Yes, yes, I'll tell him. Thanks for letting us know.

(Fleur replaces the phone and looks at it for a second as DAVID reappears with a tray of various chutneys and sauces.)

DAVID: It wasn't on the island unit, Fleur. It was in the fridge. What was it doing in the fridge? They don't need to be kept chilled do they? *(He recognises something in her face.)* What's up?

FLEUR: There's been an accident.

DAVID: What? What have you broken?

FLEUR: Nothing. It's your mother.

DAVID: What's she broken?

FLEUR: They don't know. I mean – what I mean is there's been a car accident. Gillian's just rung to say.

DAVID: Well is she alright?

FLEUR: Gillian didn't say. I expect so.

DAVID: What do you mean, you expect so? What exactly did Gillian say?

FLEUR: Your mother apparently took the car out for a spin, literally so it would seem, just down the shops and she was cut up at a roundabout, some young bloke clipped her car and flipped it...

DAVID: Flipped it! God she could be dead!

FLEUR: Oh I shouldn't think so. Gillian didn't think so.

DAVID: What does she know about it? Where is she – in hospital?

FLEUR: So she says.

DAVID: Which one? *(He grabs the phone.)* I haven't got any numbers. Gillian... what's her number?

FLEUR: I don't know. Why should I know?

DAVID: You took the bloody call! *(Beat.)* 1471! *(He dials rapidly.)* 'The caller withheld their number!' What the bloody hell is Gillian doing withholding her number?

FLEUR: She doesn't want unsolicited calls I suppose.

DAVID: Who in their right mind would want to call Gillian?

FLEUR: She shouldn't be driving at her age anyway.

DAVID: Who shouldn't?

FLEUR: Your mother. She should have given up that car of hers years ago. Absolutely ridiculous. When will she learn?

DAVID: She needs a car to get around, living where she does.

FLEUR: Yes and all it seems to have done is take her to hospital.

DAVID: But which sodding hospital?

FLEUR: All right, there's no need to swear.

DAVID: There's every need to swear! Where's that address book?

FLEUR: Which address book?

DAVID: That leather one. The one I gave you a couple of Christmases ago.

FLEUR: Oh, I never use that.

DAVID: Well I do.

FLEUR: You've been using my address book?

DAVID: *Our* address book. I wrote down useful numbers.

FLEUR: Like Gillian's?

DAVID: I'm not sure, but some of Mum's friends certainly.

FLEUR: I see.

DAVID: So where is it?

FLEUR: I threw it out.

DAVID: What do you mean you threw it out? Why did you throw it out?

FLEUR: Because we never use it.

DAVID: I use it.

FLEUR: Don't see why. It's not even yours. *(Pause.)* Anyway, it's too late now.

DAVID: My sister!

FLEUR: Sorry?

DAVID: I'll ring my sister.

FLEUR: She's on holiday – you know she is. We had a postcard from Florida just before we left.

DAVID: But she'll want to know what's happened to Mum too.

(An awkward silence.)

FLEUR: Look... Darling, there's really nothing we can do is there?

DAVID: I have to do something.

FLEUR: But they'll be here any minute.

DAVID: Who?

FLEUR: Our guests.

DAVID: And what about Mum?

FLEUR: If there's any news I'm sure they'll let you know.

DAVID: Who will let me know?

FLEUR: I don't know, the police or somebody.

DAVID: Oh great! So the police'll turn up half way through dinner to say they're very sorry to say...

FLEUR: Oh, I'm sure she's fine.

DAVID: How can you be sure? She's involved in a car accident. She's taken to hospital. And you're sure she's fine?

FLEUR: Look, Gillian would have said if it was serious wouldn't she? And she said she'd ring again when there was any news. So that's all we can do isn't it?

DAVID: I suppose so.

(The door bell goes.)

Oh no, it can't be. Not now surely. They weren't due till eight.

FLEUR: It's only quarter to. I'm not quite ready yet.

DAVID: Of course you are.

FLEUR: No, *Darling*, I'm not! You'll have to keep them talking in the hall until I am, that's all.

DAVID: I can't keep them talking in the hall for a quarter of an hour!

FLEUR: Of course you can *Darling*. Just do it. A few minutes that's all.

DAVID: So what am I going to talk about? All I can think about is that my mother is in hospital, in a critical situation for all I know.

FLEUR: Well, talk about that then.

DAVID: Oh that's a good conversation opener isn't it? Hello Daisy, hello whats-your-name, did you know my mother is dying?

FLEUR: Don't be so melodramatic. She's had a bit of a prang that's all.

DAVID: Bit of a –

(The door bell rings again.)

FLEUR: Just do it.

(She hurries him out of the room. We hear the following conversation offstage, while FLEUR fusses around. She arranges something and then rearranges it, moves things unnecessarily. She then finds her handbag which has been tucked away under the side table. She opens it, takes out a mirror, adjusts her hair, perhaps touches up her lipstick.)

DAVID: Daisy! And... ah...

GARETH: Gareth.

DAVID: Gareth, yes! How nice to meet you. And you... Daisy!

DAISY: We have met before... remember?

DAVID: Yes, yes. Well, welcome to our humble abode.

DAISY: Not so humble, David, judging by the outside.

DAVID: No indeed not. Ah... rather nice stonework on the window mullions don't you agree?

DAISY: Well, yes.

DAVID: Would you like to have a closer look?

DAISY: Well, no thanks, if it's all the same to you.

GARETH: Must be difficult double glazing windows like these?

DAVID: Yep, yes, it is. Interesting that you should mention that.

GARETH: You have secondary double glazing do you?

DAVID: Ah... Probably. Tertiary I shouldn't wonder. I mean if you're going to have double glazing why stop at... ah double.

DAISY: They look very nice windows, David. From the outside. But, I was wondering, could we come in now, do you think, David...?

DAVID: Come in? Yes, yes of course. No point in standing around outside is there? We're not ones to stand on ceremony here you know. No, come on in.

DAISY: Thanks.

DAVID: Shall I take your coat?

DAISY: I'm not wearing one.

DAVID: No, so you're not. Right, well here you are. In our... hall. Those are the stairs there.

GARETH: Very nice.

DAISY: They go upstairs do they David?

DAVID: Eh? Oh yes, yes, the stairs go all the way... upstairs.

GARETH: Very nice.

DAISY: Sorry, we're early, David, if we are that is. We couldn't remember whether you said half seven or eight. So we thought we'd split the difference.

DAVID: A wise decision. Very wise. Well, here we are... together. How nice.

GARETH: Yes.

DAVID: So how long's it been, Daisy?

DAISY: How long's what been?

DAVID: You know, since we... last met?

DAISY: Last October.

DAVID: Was it? That recent? Seems like longer.

DAISY: No it was only seven or eight months ago. You were at your mother's and I popped by to return that bread maker of hers I borrowed.

DAVID: Oh, yes... did it work?

DAISY: Don't know. Never got round to using it. I never meant to keep it so long. And, as I was happening to be in Bexhill, it seemed a good idea. How is she by the way?

DAVID: Who?

DAISY: Mabel. Your mother.

(FLEUR has finished at last and makes her way quickly to the door.)

DAVID: Oh... Ah, well she's –

FLEUR: I thought I heard voices! Daisy, how lovely to see you! And....

GARETH: Gareth.

FLEUR: Yes, indeed, well come in, come in...

(She leads them into the Dining Room. And they all stand there briefly.)

DAISY: We brought you these.

(She hands over a bunch of flowers.)

FLEUR: Oh, how lovely, Darling! *(She sniffs them and her nose twitches almost imperceptibly.)* Mm, lovely, I'll pop them in water. David, get our guests a drink.

(She exits with the flowers.)

DAVID: Drink. Yes, drink, what'll you have?

(GARETH holds out the bottle he has brought.)

GARETH: Have some of this if you like.

(DAVID takes it, trying to conceal a wince, as he clocks it.)

DAVID: Oh right, thanks. *(He puts the bottle on the sideboard and picks up a gin bottle.)* Sure you wouldn't rather have something a little stiffer?

GARETH: Well I –

DAVID: Course you would. And you Daisy, what can get you? Still like a drop of gin I expect?

DAISY: Well, actually –

DAVID: Good, good. *(He reaches for the ice bucket.)* Ice? *(Without waiting for an answer, he reaches for the ice bucket and then realises there are no glasses.)* Don't mind it in a wine glass do you?

GARETH: Well, no -

(DAVID scoops ice into three of the wine glasses on the table, glugs out some gin, then tops the glasses up with tonic water. He looks around again.)

DAVID: No lemon I'm afraid. Ha, can't get the staff. Never mind. Cheers!
(He hands the glasses to GARETH and DAISY.)

DAISY/GARETH: Cheers!

(FLEUR reappears with the flowers in a vase as they take their first sip.)

FLEUR *(Coldly)*: Those are wine glasses, Darling.

DAVID: I couldn't see the tumblers...

FLEUR: I'll get them.

(She puts the flowers on the table and exits.)

DAVID: Oh dear, in the dog's house again.

(DAISY and GARETH laugh nervously in response, then DAISY tries to change the subject.)

DAISY: How's business, David?

DAVID: Oh you know...

DAISY: No.

DAVID: Well it has its ups and downs.

DAISY: 'Remember, the value of shares may go down as well as up.' It's imprinted on my brain you see!

DAVID: Exactly. Though more down than up rather at present.

DAISY: I'm sorry.

DAVID: Oh it'll bounce back soon enough, I shouldn't wonder. But you don't want to hear about that.

(FLEUR reappears clasping three tumblers, which she puts on the table.)

FLEUR: Here we are.

(She takes the wine glass from DAISY and pours the contents into the tumbler before handing it back and then reaching out to GARETH.)

FLEUR: Greg...?

GARETH: Gareth.

FLEUR: Sorry, Gareth... Would you like a tumbler?

GARETH: Oh, right, thanks. *(He hands her the wine glass which she proceeds to pour into another tumbler and is about to hand it back to him, when she stops.)*

FLEUR: Looks like you're ready for a top up!

(Without waiting for a response, she goes over to the table and glugs some more gin in, not bothering to add tonic, and hands the glass back to him.)

GARETH: Oh... thanks.

DAVID: It's OK, I'll do it. *(He pours the contents of his wine glass into a*

tumbler and hands the wine glass to FLEUR, who without saying anything, collects up the other two wine glasses and exits.)

DAVID: Well, cheers!

DAISY/GARETH: Cheers again!

DAVID: Good to see you both. You're looking well, Daisy.

DAISY: Thanks. Oh, should I give Fleur a hand?

DAVID: What with?

DAISY: The meal.

DAVID: Oh, no it'll be fine.

DAISY: I don't mind.

(FLEUR reappears with a tumbler full of drink in hand.)

I was just saying Fleur, do you want a hand preparing things?

FLEUR: What? Oh no, no need. David's doing the cooking.

DAISY: *David's* doing the cooking?

DAVID: Don't sound so incredulous – it's a barbecue!

DAISY: Oh right. *(Pause.)* Are we eating outside then?

FLEUR: No, it's a bit chilly for that I thought. We'll eat in here.

DAVID: But I apparently still have to cook it outside!

FLEUR: How's it doing, Darling? Hot enough to cook yet?

DAVID: I don't know, Petal.

FLEUR: Well, would you like to check?

DAVID: What? Oh, yes. Yes, if you'll excuse me...

(DAVID exits.)

FLEUR: Oh, nearly forgot, I've got some appetizers...

(FLEUR disappears and DAISY and GARETH exchange uncomfortable looks.)

GARETH *(Whispering)*: It won't be for that long...

DAISY: No... I might suddenly develop one of my headaches if it goes on...

(They shuffle uncomfortably until FLEUR reappears with two plates of appetizers.)

FLEUR: Here we are!

DAISY: Lovely.

GARETH: Oh they look good.

(They each take one and nibble.)

DAISY: Mm, scrummy.

FLEUR: Thank you. And how's the cottage?

DAISY: Oh very comfortable, thanks.

FLEUR: It was just an old barn when we came here, you know. It was David's idea to convert it. Well, *have* it converted actually.

DAISY: I was going to say I couldn't imagine David getting into DIY!

FLEUR: No, good heavens no. No we had a frightfully good little chap from the village in. Took care of everything. and made a really nice job of it.

DAISY: Certainly did. It's got bags of character. *(Looking around)* And this is gorgeous too. Is it very old?

FLEUR: 18th Century I think. A few hundred years anyway.

GARETH: We were admiring the stone mullion windows. David seemed very keen to show them to us.

FLEUR: Did he? How peculiar. Yes, well I expect he thought you might be interested.

DAISY: Well it's a lovely house, Fleur.

FLEUR: Mm, we were very pleased to find it.

(DAVID returns.)

DAVID: Barbecue's doing fine, Flower. Soon be able to start I think.

FLEUR: Oh well done, Darling. I expect we're all starting to get hungry, aren't we?

DAVID: I am, I know that.

DAISY: I was just saying to Fleur, David, what a lovely house this is.

DAVID: Yes, rather special. Well we like it.

DAISY: Our house is really rather modern. Nice, you know, but not like this.

GARETH: Well, it is what it is...

DAISY: (*Seeing phone.*) And I love that old phone – very retro.

FLEUR: Oh that's not 18th century! It's real though. Came with the house, couldn't bear to throw it out. Very collectible.

DAVID: Good investment I thought.

FLEUR: David's brilliant at spotting really good investments, aren't you, Darling?

DAVID: It's what I do, Petal.

GARETH: Renewables are an up and coming investment aren't they?

DAVID: So they say... Got shares have you?

DAISY: Gareth's got his own company.

FLEUR: Really? Is that what you do, Gareth? Renewables? I never really know what that means... Renewable what exactly?

GARETH: Oh, you know, solar panels, turbines that sort of thing.

FLEUR: I see... how... fascinating.

GARETH: And you?

FLEUR: Me what?

GARETH: What do you do?

FLEUR: Oh lots of things.

GARETH: No, I mean what kind of work do you do?

FLEUR: Work? Oh, I don't work. I'm far too busy for that. No, I have more than enough things to keep me occupied. Difficult to know where the time goes to tell the truth.

DAISY: I'm sure.

GARETH: When you're having fun.

FLEUR: Having fun?

GARETH: Time goes much faster when you're having fun.

FLEUR: Yes!

GARETH: I find when I'm totally absorbed, it simply whips by.

FLEUR: You're so right!

DAVID: Let me freshen your glasses while I get the steaks going. How do you like it?

GARETH: I don't actually.

FLEUR: You don't like steak! Oh, but you'll love this! It comes from a delightful little man in the village. A butcher's you'd die for! So tender it melts in your mouth, believe me.

GARETH: I do, but I'd rather not thanks.

DAISY: Gareth's a vegetarian.

DAVID: A what? Oh, I see. Right, well I'm sure we've got some chicken or something. Oh, no that's meat too isn't it? Might be some fish in the freezer I could defrost.

GARETH: No, no, it's fine. I'll just eat the vegetables.

FLEUR: Oh, you can't just eat vegetables! That won't make your muscles grow will it?

GARETH: No, honestly, it'll be fine.

FLEUR: I'm so sorry we didn't ask you before, Darling. So sorry. You should have said Daisy, that the poor boy couldn't eat meat.

GARETH: Well, it is my choice, actually.

FLEUR: Of course. *(Pause.)* Never mind.

DAVID: So how long have you been a vegetarian?

GARETH: Oh years. It's more practical. Makes sense.

FLEUR: Sense, how?

GARETH: From an ecological point of view. I don't have any moral grounds for not eating meat. But from a global point of view, it makes sense not to eat it.

DAVID: I don't follow you. I like my steak and that's all there is to it.

GARETH: That's fine. But the thing is, it's very wasteful of resources. The amount of land you need to raise cattle is vastly more than you'd need for, say soya.

DAVID: Oh, I can't be doing with all that soya nonsense.

DAISY: It's not really nonsense, David.

DAVID: You know what I mean.

FLEUR: I'll do you a lovely salad, Gareth, would you like that?

GARETH: No, honestly, the vegetables will be fine.

FLEUR: They're not very exciting I'm afraid.

GARETH: I'm sure they'll be great.

FLEUR: We don't go in for fancy vegetables at home you see.

GARETH: Honestly, I'm easy.

FLEUR: OK, if you're sure... You get on with the cooking, David. I'll fix the drinks.

(FLEUR begins to hurry him out of the room.)

DAVID: You'll let me know if the phone goes won't you?

FLEUR: Of course. *(Beat.)* And I should put a coat on if I were you. It might be a bit chilly out there.