

## Act 1

*JOSEPHINE and DANIEL are sat down. FRANCIS is leaning out the doorway*

**FRANCIS** *(Francis is quite a snob and has an anal personality, he's dressed in a smart suit, he shouts out the doorway)* Yes Mother, they will only be here for a couple of hours, quiet as church mice, I promise. *(pauses and shouts)* I said they will be quiet as church mice. *(comes in)* Sorry about that.

**JOSEPHINE** *(Josephine comes over as a dragon, abrupt and self-assured, she is wearing a skirt and jacket suit)* I am curious as to why Iris asked you to invite only the theatre members back here after the wake.

**FRANCIS** Perhaps she didn't want all those hangers on coming back who only go to funerals for the free food and drinks afterwards and let's face it, some of them were so common. They wouldn't know what a canapé is, let alone caviar.

**JOSEPHINE** I refuse to converse with people who are uneducated and have no finesse.

**DANIEL** *(Daniel is intelligent and mild-mannered, he's wearing trousers, shirt and a tie)* Well I thought the service was a lovely, dignified send-off. I can't believe that the play finished two weeks ago.

**FRANCIS** I know, I know, poor Iris went straight to the hospice after the production and an hour later her Frank passed away. It's like he was waiting for her. *(startled)* Good Lord, both of you take your shoes off immediately before any infection sets in, you're bringing all types of smut in here.

*they take their shoes off and give them to FRANCIS, who goes out*

**DANIEL** *(to Josephine)* How long are you thinking of staying?

**JOSEPHINE** As director of the last show, it is my duty to be here especially as during the wake Cynthia promptly left in tears; then Daisy and Monty decided to stay in the pub. Although it's probably best that Cynthia and Daisy don't come.

**DANIEL** What do you mean by that?

**JOSEPHINE** *(raises her voice)* You know full well what I'm referring to. I'm not stupid Daniel, I've seen the way they stare at you with their come to bed eyes, they're just waiting for a moment to steal you away from me and...

**FRANCIS** *(comes in)* Josephine, could you possibly help me bring the nibbles in?

**JOSEPHINE** *(calm)* Yes of course Francis, I'm sure you'll need a woman's touch.

*FRANCIS and JOSEPHINE go out*

**DANIEL** At least Daisy is staying in the pub, I couldn't cope with my ex-girlfriend appearing and... *(his phone goes)* Hello. *(pause)* Oh hi Poppy, when are you and Iris getting here? *(pause)* Yes it must be hard for her saying goodbye to everyone. *(pause)* Sorry, you keep breaking up, it sounded like you said that

Daisy is coming later tonight? *(startled)* You did say that? *(pause)* I know I was blind drunk when I kissed her a couple of weeks ago but... *(pause)* Well I thought we'd cleared the air but she told me today that she wants us to become reacquainted and something about a photo of us kissing. *(pause)* My marriage is over if Josephine finds out that I became intimate with my ex... in a graveyard. *(pause)* Thanks for the warning. *(puts phone away)* Right I need to go home, I've got to get away from here before Daisy turns up.

*FRANCIS and JOSEPHINE come in with nibbles, DANIEL starts groaning*

**DANIEL** I feel like I'm going to faint and be sick, I must have caught a bug. Josephine I must go home immediately, you stay here don't worry about me. *(groans)*

**JOSEPHINE** *(irritable)* Stop being ridiculous you're just attention seeking, Iris could appear any minute so pull yourself together.

**FRANCIS** You shouldn't have come then, passing your filthy germs around.

**DANIEL** Please, I feel dreadful and...

**JOSEPHINE** *(barks at him)* Stop thinking about yourself for once, we must all be here for when Iris arrives she needs us to be strong for her. You're pathetic at times.

**FRANCIS** What aperitif can I offer you? I've got everything you can imagine and more.

**JOSEPHINE** Could I have a dry white wine? But none of your supermarket rubbish.

**DANIEL** *(sulking but reluctantly gives in)* Can I have a beer please?

**FRANCIS** I do not possess any... beer I find it so vulgar, football hooligans chanting in a public house drink beer. How about a charming red wine? Shiraz? Merlot? Pinot?

**DANIEL** I'm not fussed to be honest, I'll be going home very shortly anyway. So Francis, your mother lives in the other half of the bungalow does she?

*FRANCIS pours the drinks*

**FRANCIS** Yes, I've promised her that it won't get rowdy this evening as she goes to bed rather early. Mother has lived with me for about a year now, she moved in after Father died from his heart attack. *(gives them the drinks)*

**JOSEPHINE** *(sips it)* Ah, a beautiful bouquet of fruity flavours with a pleasant aftertaste; just exquisite! Don't tell me, it's a Californian Chardonnay around 2005?

**DANIEL** Only because we sell it in our cheese and wine shop. Thanks for the drink. *(puts his drink down on the table)*

**FRANCIS** Coaster! Coaster! Good Lord, were you dropped on the head as a baby?

**JOSEPHINE** Pick your glass up you ignoramus and put it on a coaster.

*doorbell goes, FRANCIS puts down some coasters and then goes out*

**JOSEPHINE** What's wrong with you? Why are you in such a petulant mood?

**DANIEL** Oh let me think about that; maybe it's because during the week of the play I found some contraceptive pills in the back of our bathroom cupboard.

**JOSEPHINE** I beg your pardon? What were you doing, snooping around my personal belongings? How dare you!

**DANIEL** We both agreed to try for a family over eighteen months ago, you know how desperately I want children and I thought that you did too. How could you?

**JOSEPHINE** There is absolutely no room for discussion as I've changed my mind and...

**ARTHUR** *(comes in with a broken leg and walking stick, Arthur is quite childlike and not overly bright but he means well, he is wearing a brown suit that is too big for him)* Sorry about the gnome Francis, I didn't see it when I was walking down the path.

**FRANCIS** *(comes in)* Is no one house-trained? Shoes Arthur, remove your footwear.

**ARTHUR** Can you take them off please? I can't reach.

*FRANCIS takes Arthur's shoes off, ARTHUR waves his walking stick and hits a plate off the table*

**FRANCIS** You really are a bumbling fool at times. *(he takes Arthur's shoes out)*

**ARTHUR** Yeah, you're right there. Umm, Monty and Daisy are on their way in a minute.

**DANIEL** *(worried)* What? I thought, I thought they were staying at the pub for a while?

**ARTHUR** They were finishing their drinks and then getting a taxi.

*FRANCIS comes in*

**DANIEL** *(finishes his wine quickly)* Can I have a top up please Francis?

**JOSEPHINE** You just said you were feeling sick and wanted to go home. How pathetic!

**DANIEL** I've decided I feel better now and it would be good to catch-up with Monty and Daisy. So what's happened to your leg Arthur?

**ARTHUR** Well, I saw someone illegally parked so I put a ticket on his window but he got really angry and ran me over. I'm beginning to think that people don't like traffic wardens.

**JOSEPHINE** *(to Arthur)* I do hope you'll be well enough for my next play. However, nothing will compare to when I directed 'Guys and Dolls'; that really was an overwhelming feeling. A true release of my creative passion.

**FRANCIS** *(gives Daniel his drink)* So Arthur, which liquid refreshment can I tempt you with from my magnificent collection?

**ARTHUR** I'm not sure really, umm, can I have umm, can I have a cider?

**FRANCIS** I don't keep... cider it's for the uneducated lower classes. One imagines a country bumpkin type guzzling it. How about an exquisite sherry or port?

**ARTHUR** Nah, I think I'll have what Daniel's got.

**DANIEL** I still can't believe that Frank has gone, he was such a kind genuine man.

**FRANCIS** He was advised that he had a month to live and died four days later. Poor, poor Iris; her world has been torn apart. *(gives Arthur his wine)*

*the handbell is rung*

**FRANCIS** I'll be back in a jiffy. *(shouts offstage)* Coming Mother. *(goes out)*

**ARTHUR** Don't you think it's odd that Francis lives with his mum? *(starts fiddling with a cushion; pulls a thread and the stuffing comes out, he puts it down)*

**JOSEPHINE** No, not at all! He's being utterly selfless by caring for her.

**DANIEL** *(to Arthur)* Didn't Julie want to come to the party then?

**ARTHUR** She wanted to but had to get home to the little one. *(he nibbles a nut)*

**DANIEL** You're so lucky to have a daughter. *(takes a big mouthful of his drink)*

*ARTHUR starts choking on the nut*

**DANIEL** Hang on Arthur. *(he grabs him from behind and performs the Heimlich manoeuvre)*

*ARTHUR spits out the nut, drinks red wine and splutters it back out over a rug*

**FRANCIS** *(comes in)* Sorry about that, Mother has requested that we keep the noise down and... *(sees his rug)* Good Lord! My beautiful rug. What have you done you simpleton? *(goes back out)*

**DANIEL** Francis wasn't remotely concerned about him choking.

**JOSEPHINE** Well he has just ruined his rug; you are so inconsiderate Arthur and you're no better Daniel making him splutter out his wine like an untamed animal.

**ARTHUR** I know I'm not the sharpest tool in the box.

**DANIEL** It's not like he meant to do it, accidents do happen you know. *(helps himself to more wine and sits down)*

**FRANCIS** *(comes in wearing marigolds holding cloths and salt)* Move, move, before it settles; I knew it would be a disaster welcoming you into my home.

*ARTHUR throws some more red wine over the stain*

**FRANCIS** What on earth are you doing? How dare you disrespect my belongings.  
*(sprinkles the salt over the stain and starts rubbing with a cloth)*  
*doorbell goes*

**JOSEPHINE** I'll get the door and for goodness sake calm down Francis. *(goes out)*

**ARTHUR** Throwing wine onto a wine stain helps soaks it up.

**FRANCIS** That only works with white wine on red, you've just thrown more red wine.  
It's too late now, it's ruined, ruined I can feel one of my heads coming on.  
*JOSEPHINE comes in with POPPY and IRIS*

**JOSEPHINE** It's Poppy and Iris, and don't worry about the shoes I've already told them.

**POPPY** *(Poppy is always happy, excitable and a dependable friend, she is wearing a colourful skirt and top)* It was a lovely send-off for Frank, there were so many people from different parts of his life, it was fascinating talking to his friends who were in the Royal Marines with him.

**FRANCIS** Just to make it crystal clear Poppy, this is a civilised congregation of thespians celebrating Frank's life and conversing about treading the boards. I don't want people getting carried away and enjoying themselves.

**IRIS** *(Iris is very quiet, reserved and kind, she's wearing trousers, blouse and a cardigan)* I do appreciate this Francis, I wasn't really prepared for everyone to come back to ours and... *(goes quiet)* Sorry... Back to *mine*.

**POPPY** Did you like the fish and chips being delivered to the Dolphin? Frank was so proud of his fish and chip shop it was absolutely brilliant.

**JOSEPHINE** We were discussing earlier that Frank was in our society for twenty two years putting his heart and soul into constructing the magnificent sets.

**IRIS** Yes he was, Frank loved building the scenery he took so much pride in it.

**FRANCIS** What can I offer you both to drink? I've got everything, so don't hold back.

**POPPY** Can I have a lemonade please?

**FRANCIS** I'm afraid I haven't got any lemonade, I find it far too gassy.

**POPPY** Oh okay no worries, water will be fine then thank you.

**IRIS** Water for me as well please Francis.

**FRANCIS** Yes of course, two fresh waters coming up. *(goes out)*

**ARTHUR** *(to Iris)* I'm really sorry about your Frank, I can't believe he was only 52. If there's anything that me and Julie can do to help... *(fades off)*

**IRIS** I do appreciate that and I will call you if I need anything. In his last few days we reminisced a lot about the wonderful times we've shared.

**POPPY** You know that me and my Eddie will always be here for you. *(hugs Iris)* You are so brave Sis, I think you're amazing.

**IRIS** It's not brave Poppy, I'm far from brave. Frank is... was the brave one.

**FRANCIS** *(comes in)* Here are your beverages, pure and fresh. *(passes them the water)*

**POPPY** I see Monty still had his arm in a sling, I heard it was fractured in two places from falling down the steps after the play.

**FRANCIS** I sincerely hope that he'll be ejected from our society for his loutish behaviour, it's an absolute disgrace how inebriated he was and... *(notices the cushion)* What's happened to that cushion? *(picks the cushion up to look)*

**ARTHUR** Oh umm, there was a thread hanging so I pulled it to make it look tidy but the insides started to come outside.

**POPPY** Oh here I've got the Bathminster Post, there's a review of our play in it and...

**JOSEPHINE** As director I should read it. *(snatches the newspaper)* I've had some wonderful reviews over the years in particular for directing 'An Inspector Calls' which was my personal...

**DANIEL** Please get on with it. *(drinks wine)*

**JOSEPHINE** "Daniel Chambers played the part of Adrian, he showed how his character matured as time passed in this drama".

**FRANCIS** Complete and utter tripe, tripe! It's the first time he's acted!

**JOSEPHINE** Shush! "Iris Withers played her part very true, she is a wonderful character actress. Arthur Blight was quirky and rubbery legged".

**ARTHUR** *(deflated)* Oh okay! I'm going to get some more nibbles. *(goes out)*

**JOSEPHINE** "Josephine Drake-Chambers was simply terrifying as the stalker. Monty Soaks was a breath of fresh air but his enthusiasm was a little too extreme at times. Francis Snippet played for strength and determination but I couldn't take my eyes off his wig. The play was at times like watching a pantomime."

**FRANCIS** How dare they say that I'll sue them for slander, this is my real hair!

**JOSEPHINE** "The flirty neighbour Audrey was given her sauciness by Cynthia Berry. The concept of this play was strong but my concern was whether I was watching a comedy or drama, the balance wasn't quite right".

**IRIS** Oh well, it's only the local rag we put on a play and the audience enjoyed it so that's the main thing, it's just one person's opinion.

**JOSEPHINE** You don't understand, that's my career in tatters I'll be a laughing stock. I blame all of you for your mediocre acting skills. *(drops the paper)*

**DANIEL** *(picks up the paper)* Hang on, there's one more sentence. "I wonder what the society will put on next. Maybe Francis Snippet was trying to tell us something when he kept morphing into Blakey from 'On the Buses'".

**FRANCIS** The spiteful ignoramus; he obviously doesn't appreciate a true character actor like myself. Do excuse me, I just need some fresh air. *(runs out)*

**JOSEPHINE** I cannot tolerate these narrow-minded uncultured small town newspaper reporters who can't get a real job. I also need some fresh air. *(goes out)*

**POPPY** *(goes over to Daniel)* Hello Poppet, I didn't expect you to be here. I thought you were going home in case you bumped into Daisy?

**DANIEL** I tried to but Josephine insisted that I stay, so I may as well enjoy myself. *(drinks wine)* At the end of the play, I told you that I was going to ask her for a divorce but when it came to it, I just couldn't go through with it.

**POPPY** You shouldn't have kissed Daisy after discovering Josephine's contraceptive pills, but we all do daft things when we're upset.

**DANIEL** I know but I really don't want to hurt Josephine. I feel utterly trapped and lost. It didn't help that Cynthia formed a crush on me during the play.

*ARTHUR comes in with a ketchup sandwich on a plate and knife covered in ketchup, he leans in to listen to Poppy and Daniel*

**POPPY** Look Daniel, we all make mistakes at times.

**DANIEL** *(slightly drunk)* Emily my ex, was the only woman I've ever truly loved and by stupidly listening to my insufferable domineering father, I pursued my medical career instead of marrying Emily.

**ARTHUR** Who's Emily?

**DANIEL** Didn't anyone tell you it's rude to listen to people's conversations? *(drinks)*

**ARTHUR** I'll go and see if Francis wants a ketchup sandwich. *(goes out with the knife)*

**POPPY** *(to Daniel)* You can't keep living in the past thinking about your ex-girlfriend.

**DANIEL** But when I bumped into her three years ago at our friend's wedding there was still a spark; actually fireworks as we found a spare room in the hotel. Then she cut off all contact with me and... *(fades off)*

**POPPY** You've told me before that Emily's now married and has got a young son, so of course she's stopped contact with you. That night was your final goodbye.

**DANIEL** I know, I know, I'm so sorry Poppy for acting like a whining child.

**POPPY** Don't worry lovely, we all need a good moan at times. I've brought some music as I thought Francis would be a 'classical' type of guy. *(puts some music on the stereo, an '80s compilation')*

*JOSEPHINE screams offstage*

**IRIS** What was that?

**DANIEL** Don't worry about it, I'm sure Francis will look after her. *(drinks wine)*

*JOSEPHINE comes in with FRANCIS behind her, followed by ARTHUR*

**FRANCIS** Turn that awful racket off. If you want some background music then I shall put something on for the more cultured listener. *(puts on a classical CD)*

**JOSEPHINE** Arthur just appeared with a bloody knife, I thought he'd killed someone.

**ARTHUR** *(to Francis)* Have you got any ABBA? *(fiddling with the CDs and pulls one out)*

**FRANCIS** If you are referring to the Swedish pop group, then no I certainly have not. Put that back at once, they are in alphabetical order.

*a handbell rings offstage*

**FRANCIS** Yes alright, I'm coming Mother. *(goes out)*

*doorbell goes*

**JOSEPHINE** I'll go and answer the door as visitors should be greeted in a certain way. Not everyone can act with the utmost decorum. *(goes out)*

**ARTHUR** Josephine and Francis are just like each other. Oh umm, sorry Daniel.

**DANIEL** Don't apologize, I totally agree with you and...

**JOSEPHINE** *(offstage)* Oh how lovely Monty and Daisy are here, please come through.

**DANIEL** Oh no, please no I don't think I can deal with this. *(runs out)*

**ARTHUR** I think he had a curry from Balti Towers; a friend of mine went there and afterwards he couldn't leave his bathroom for two days.

*MONTY and JOSEPHINE come in*

**MONTY** *(his left arm is in plaster, also has a carrier bag, Monty is an old rocker, quite blunt with people and drinks more than he should, he's wearing black trousers, black shirt, a bandana and a leather jacket)* Alright party people, let's get plastered shall we? *(chuckles)* Blimey you'd think there'd been a funeral today. I guarantee you that Frankie wouldn't want you moping around, he'd want us celebrating his life. *(looks up)* Isn't that right Frankie mate?

**POPPY** Hey Monty, it's so good to see you. Where's Daisy?

**MONTY** *(swaying)* Hello Poppy love, she's just putting our coats in the bedroom.

**POPPY** Let me help you take your shoes off before Francis comes in, I don't want you getting in trouble. *(removes his shoes and takes them out)*

**FRANCIS** *(comes in)* Hello, we didn't expect you. Oh well, I suppose you're here now.

**MONTY** Ah just the man, I think I broke one of your gnomes when I collided with it. I wanna be honest with you because honesty as we know is the best policy. I brought some cider; and music as well, some good old Sabbath to rock to.

**FRANCIS** You most certainly will not be playing that; if at any point I hear that you've polluted my stereo with that utter trash I will ask you to leave immediately.

**MONTY** Alright mate take a chill pill, what a party this is going to be. There was this time when I was a roadie for Silver Ginger 5 and the singer really knew how to party, he wanted 1000 brown smarties at three in the morning. *(opens the cider and it overflows on the table)*

**FRANCIS** You complete and utter clot, you've ruined my coffee table. Ruined it!

*POPPY comes back in*

**JOSEPHINE** I'll get a cloth. Francis, you must understand that some of these people have no elegance and grace whatsoever! *(goes out)*

*MONTY drinks the cider and goes to put it on the table*

**FRANCIS** Coaster! Coaster! Don't any of you listen to me?

*MONTY puts his drink on a coaster*

*doorbell goes*

**FRANCIS** Who can that be? I'm not just letting in any old riff-raff. *(goes out)*

**ARTHUR** Monty, are you and Daisy going out again?

**MONTY** Not yet mate but I'm keeping my fingers crossed, I think the world of her.

*JOSEPHINE comes in and wipes the table*

**POPPY** Daisy needs someone to look after her. She's had a pretty rough life, what with losing her parents in the house fire when she was young and then her two daughters Becky and Katie in that car crash and...

**JOSEPHINE** *(irritable)* Don't you worry about me, I'll clear up this mess whilst you enjoy yourselves, you just carry on. *(goes out again with the cloth)*

**FRANCIS** *(offstage)* Come in, come in, Cynthia is here with her friend.

*FRANCIS comes in with CYNTHIA and EMILY*

**CYNTHIA** *(quietly sobbing, Cynthia is a clairvoyant, she is miserable a lot of the time but has excitable moments, she is wearing trousers and a roll neck jumper)* I wasn't

going to come as I found the funeral so distressing, but I thought that I wouldn't see you all for a while and I wanted to be here for Frank.

**IRIS** I'm glad that you did Cynthia, it means a lot to me.

**CYNTHIA** *(loudly blows her nose)* I hope you don't mind but I've brought my dear friend Emily, I used to work with her. She knows your faces as Emily watched the play a couple weeks ago.

**EMILY** *(Emily is intelligent, confident, mild-mannered and prim and proper, she is wearing a pencil skirt and blouse)* Hello, it's lovely to meet you all.

**FRANCIS** You watched the production? Please tell me, what did you think of my performance? I feel it wasn't my best, my heart wasn't in it to be truthful as I'm much more at home when I'm involved in proper drama like Shakespeare.

**EMILY** *(apprehensive)* Well I thought that...

**MONTY** Give her a break, she's come to let her hair down. *(to Emily)* Hang on a mo, didn't I do some work for you when I was still married to Cynthia?

**CYNTHIA** Emily is a doctor in Farewell where I was the receptionist. I stupidly recommended Monty, saying that he unblocked drains. But then, Aunt Connie contacted me and warned me of an accident.

**MONTY** Woah there, don't start with that rubbish.

**CYNTHIA** It's not rubbish, you just don't understand. I'm blessed with special powers.

**MONTY** Cynthia thinks she's a medium and has got it into her head that her Aunt Connie who died years ago, talks to her and gives advice.

**ARTHUR** So what happened at the surgery?

**EMILY** Well we had an ongoing issue with the drains, Monty arrived with...

**MONTY** My high pressure jetting equipment, I took the covers off all the manholes around the surgery and... *(remembers something)* Anyway, umm, yeah... nice to see you again love, it's been good to catch-up.

**POPPY** Hang on Monty, you haven't finished your story. What happened Emily?

**EMILY** As he commenced with tackling the problem there was a loud whooshing noise, which resulted in two of my patients being covered from head to toe.