

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

It's early evening. We're in an elegant hotel, around four-star standard. The room contains a double bed, a single bed, a table with four chairs, a TV, a sofa, a mirror, a mini-bar. The usual stuff. A muted city view shows through a window. It's dusk.

There is a door leading off, upstage, to the bathroom and another door, stage right, which leads to the connecting bedroom. Another door, stage left, leads out into the hotel corridor. Overnight bags lie around the room, open and partly unpacked.

A covered wedding dress and a covered bridesmaids dress are hanging in the wardrobe. We can see the flowing folds of a veil hanging beside them.

A dozen yellow roses in a vase and a large roll of silver ribbon sit on the table.

A woman in her mid to late fifties, COLLEEN, is talking on the phone. She's clearly enjoying her state of flustered agitation.

COLLEEN: *[into the phone]* Seventeen vegetarians?! But we've only got sixteen pumpkin and fetta flans! Why didn't you-? What? An *hour* ago?! Well, what are we going to-? Oh, alright, that sounds like a good solution-but you're sure you've got spare asparagus spears? Good. Now, you will let me know if there are any more problems? Alright. 'Bye-
[Calling towards the bathroom without pausing for breath] Meg! Why didn't you tell me that Naomi Bartlett's boyfriend's a vegetarian?!

MEG: *[off]* What?

COLLEEN: I said why didn't you tell me that Naomi Bartlett's boyfriend is a vegetarian?!

The bathroom door opens and MEG enters. She's attractive, thirty-three. She has a line of white bleach above her upper lip. As this conversation takes place she walks to the table and picks up the roll of

silver ribbon.

MEG: Naomi hasn't got a boyfriend.

COLLEEN: Well, who's this man she's bringing to the wedding, then?

MEG: I don't know. I think it's some guy she met at Pilates.

COLLEEN: *Some guy she met at-?! So you're telling me that a total stranger is taking up a place that could've gone to your Great Uncle Reg?*

MEG: Mum, we've been through this a million times. I haven't seen Uncle Reg since 1997.

COLLEEN: But you've never even met this vegetarian man.

MEG: M-u-u-u-u-m ...

COLLEEN: It's all very well for you to take that tone. You're not the one who had to ring Uncle Reg.

MEG: And did Uncle Reg give a rat's arse?

COLLEEN: *[language]* Meg!

MEG: *[overlapping]* Is this the ribbon for the pews?

COLLEEN: Yes, I had to get that one because they'd run out of the-...

MEG: *[overlapping]* But it's too thick.

COLLEEN: Too what? Too *thick*?

MEG: Too *wide*. I told you I wanted it fine, remember? This one looks like... gaffer tape.

COLLEEN: *[hiding worry]* It does not look like gaffer tape! They only had twenty-one metres in the width you wanted and I wasn't going to have half the pews with one width and half the pews with another.

MEG: But we could've put the elegant ribbons up the front and the others on the back pews. No-one would've noticed-

The door opens and another woman MEG's age enters. She's

ANGELA. *She carries a cardboard box that contains place cards for the reception.*

COLLEEN: I'm not having the church look untidy, Meg. There's nothing wrong with this ribbon!

MEG: *[mildly]* Alright, okay... *[The place cards:]* That them, Ange?

ANGELA: *[nodding]* Yeah. The receptionist put them away and then went off duty. But they found them eventually.

She hands the box to COLLEEN, who opens it. Meanwhile MEG takes out her mobile phone.

COLLEEN: Thank you, Angela. What do *you* think of that ribbon? It's

LUCY: *[interrupting, patronising]* Don't you think Meg's got the right; to make an informed decision?

ANGELA: Maybe she already has.

LUCY: Or-maybe she's under the mistaken impression that she can trust the guy she's marrying?!

ANGELA *takes a beat or two to muster her argument.*

ANGELA: Look, Lucy, I know you've been Meg's best friend since uni, but I've known her since we were *seven* and-

LUCY: *[overlapping]* Oh, we're not playing 'Who knows Meg the best', are we?

ANGELA: No, I'm just saying that she's been planning this ever since we were kids-she used to get in trouble for doodling designs of her wedding dress instead of doing her long division-!

LUCY: So-?!

ANGELA: And she's had red picked out as her bridesmaids' colour since we saw *Pretty Woman* in 1990!

LUCY: *So?!*

ANGELA: And when Paul left and she hit thirty she thought it'd never happen, but now it finally has-

LUCY: Jesus. This has got nothing to do with anything-

ANGELA: Lucy, she's got a ten-thousand-dollar engagement ring, a two-thousand-dollar wedding dress, one hundred people coming at one hundred dollars a head, cousins here from the UK, flowers and outfits and hire cars-not to mention a honeymoon in Paris and Venice-

LUCY: Can you hear what you're saying? It's just a party! And because of one stupid party being ruined, you're prepared to let her have a lifetime of misery.

ANGELA: Who are *you* to say she'll have a 'lifetime of misery'?

LUCY: I'm just trying to make you see-

ANGELA: And *you* might think this is a 'stupid party', but it's the most important day of Meg's life. So far-

LUCY: But that's all it *is-one bloody day!* What is it about this *one day* that turns sane people into raving lunatics?

ANGELA: So she's a raving lunatic now?

LUCY: No, she's the smartest person I've ever met. Who else could start their own PR firm and have clients like hers within, what, four years? She's so sharp she could do anything she wants—so *why* is she obsessing about satin shoes?

ANGELA: Because she loves her job, but it's not enough. She wants James, too.

LUCY *snorts, disdainful of James.*

And she wants a *family*.

LUCY *is momentarily silenced.*

You know how much she wants *lots of kids*. This could be her last chance.

LUCY: So, you want her to have kids with the wrong guy?

ANGELA: I don't think it's our place to say he *is* the wrong guy.

LUCY *snorts in disbelief again, then she takes a few deep breaths and tries another tack.*

LUCY: [*patronising*] Look, Angela, you're lucky. You met John when you were young, and you've always been happy. But things aren't that simple for everyone—

ANGELA: [*overlapping*] Oh, please-

LUCY: [*overlapping*] I'm just saying, if a person's life has always gone smoothly, sometimes they don't understand how complicated things can get for—

ANGELA: [*overlapping angrily*] Yes, that's me, Lucy. I'm an old married woman, and my life is totally boring.

LUCY: I didn't say that.

ANGELA: But that's what you think.

LUCY: No it's not-

ANGELA: [*overlapping*] Don't insult me, Lucy. I know you think that.

LUCY: [*only half telling the truth*] No I don't.

ANGELA: [*only saying this because she's been pushed*] And why are you so keen to ruin Meg's wedding anyway? I reckon you're just *jealous*.

LUCY: Jealous?!

ANGELA: Well, *you* met James first-

LUCY: So? What's that got to do with anything-?

ANGELA: [*overlapping*] And you liked him-LUCY: Oh, for *two* weeks, *two years ago*!

ANGELA: [*not really believing this*] Maybe you still do.

LUCY: So, *I* want Meg to break up with James so *I* can have him?

ANGELA: [*sighing*] No, of course not, that's not what I'm saying.

Look, I just meant—I don't know what I meant—I—

SCENE SEVEN

It's about 10.15 now. More alcohol has been consumed. LUCY, ANGEL and MEG are lazing around in their PJs, indulging in some fun 'girl talk': As LUCY tells an anecdote, ANGELA and MEG listen intently. ANGELA is a little tipsier than the other two.

LUCY: Anyway, he was texting her almost every day and asking her out to the movies and stuff, so finally Suse had to say to him, 'Look—I like you, but I don't think I like you, you know...

MEG/ANGELA: *[overlapping, in unison]* Like *that*.

LUCY: Yeah. 'Cause she was trying to be fair-

MEG: *[nodding]* Like you do-

LUCY: Yeah. And *he* said, 'Well, I *was* hoping for more, but I really appreciate your honesty. And if friendship's all you can offer, I'd love to be your friend.'

ANGELA: Well, that's really nice, isn't it-?

LUCY: *[overlapping]* Yeah it was, but then two days later—are you listening—*forty-eight hours later*—Suse thought, 'Well, friendship's a two-way street, I guess *I* should call *him*'—*so* she rings him—and he tells her that he's really sorry to hurt her, but he just can't give her what she wants.

ANGELA and MEG *laugh, gasp and shake their heads in a Typical Man gesture*.

ANGELA: Why did he do that?

LUCY: Who the hell knows?

ANGELA: And what did he think she wanted anyway?

LUCY: *[grinning]* To marry him of course.

ANGELA: But she was the one who said she didn't- *[feel that way.]*

LUCY: *[overlapping]* I know! But he's a man so that's not what he heard.

ANGELA: They're amazing, aren't they?

LUCY: *[nodding]* Awe-inspiring.

Silence for a moment, then...

MEG: Imagine if you could harness the energy of the male ego and use it for good instead of evil? Pass me the champers, Luce...

ANGELA: More for me too.

MEG: Are you sure, Ange?

ANGELA: [*overlapping, slightly sozzled*] You know what *I* don't get about men? Why so many of them want to be with women who, well... you know... aren't quite as intelligent as-

LUCY: [*overlapping*] Women who are *dumb*, Angela. Tell it like it is. A lot of guys want to be with dumb chicks.

MEG: Can you imagine anything more boring than having some dumb but good-looking guy at home, who cooked your meals and kept the house tidy and agreed with everything you said?

They stop and think about this for a moment.

Actually, that sounds quite appealing...

LUCY: I could handle it for a while.

ANGELA: I don't know. I don't think I could have sex with a dumb guy...

LUCY: I could. I can. I have.

ANGELA: Really? How many?

LUCY: Times, or dumb guys?

ANGELA: Dumb guys.

LUCY: Just the one. A guy called Nick.

MEG: [*clearing her throat*] Hhhhm... Craig.

LUCY: Just the two.

ANGELA: And was it good?

LUCY: It was great until he opened his mouth. To *talk*.

LUCY and MEG laugh together.

ANGELA: See? You *couldn't* be with a dumb guy. And we should be fair to men I suppose-.

MEG: [*overlapping, jokingly*] Oh, why should we? That's no fun.

ANGELA: I mean, there are lots of men out there who don't want to be with dumb women either. Every brainy married woman has to be married to someone.

LUCY: Yeah, but hear that pivotal word 'married'? All the good men are taken.

MEG: Not necessarily. What about David?

LUCY: Yeah. Well. We'll see.

ANGELA: Who's David?

MEG: Lucy had a hot date last night.

ANGELA: Really?! Was it good? Is he nice?

LUCY: He's gorgeous, but he's *just* broken up with his girlfriend.

ANGELA: Well, Meg always says that's the best time to get them.

a bit more important.

As COLLEEN and MEG fuss over at the wardrobe, ANGELA gestures frantically for NAOMI to leave while they're not looking. NAOMI runs to the door, then remembers her handbag, running back to pick it up just as MEG looks over.

Okay, Naomi, get your gear off.

Thwarted, NAOMI starts taking off her skirt and top. Meanwhile MEG and COLLEEN are fussing with the bridesmaid's dress.

COLLEEN: Slip it off the hanger carefully, Meg. We don't want to crumple it- *[Looking at the dress, then over at NAOMI]* Oh, I'm sure it'll fit...

NAOMI slips off her skirt and top to reveal beautiful French lingerie (the kind a woman buys when she's met a new man).

MEG: Wooh... gorgeous undies. Who's the lucky guy?

NAOMI: *[smiling awkwardly]* What?! Oh, no-one.

She tries to grab the bridesmaid's dress, but MEG playfully holds it out of reach as she teases her for more information.

MEG: *[playfully]* Come off it. You don't buy this kind of stuff for yourself. You would have had to mortgage your flat for this. Who is he, and how come I haven't heard about him?

NAOMI: *[grabbing the dress]* Oh, it was just a guy. And it's over, anyway.

ANGELA: *[dripping with sarcasm]* Oh, what a shame.

NAOMI slips the dress over her head, managing to disappear for a precious second. Meanwhile MEG and COLLEEN look a little surprised by ANGELA's tone, but there are too many other things to worry about.

COLLEEN: Well, quickly, help her. Come on, Meg-

MEG and COLLEEN help NAOMI slip the dress down over her.

NAOMI: It feels like it should fit...

ANGELA: *[pointedly]* Does it really?

NAOMI: *[oops]* Well, no, ah, no, maybe not.

COLLEEN: Don't be silly. It's going to be fine!

MEG: Let's do up the zip before we say that, Mum... Ange... ?

ANGELA: What? Oh, sure... I'll just...

ANGELA starts doing up the zip, 'accidentally' pinching NAOMI's skin in the process.

NAOMI: Ouch!

ANGELA: [*totally insincere*] Sorry.

ANGELA *fastens the zip right up to the top. The dress looks to be quite a good fit.*

MEG: Oh, it's pretty good, thank God!

COLLEEN: What did I tell you? It looks fine.

ANGELA: I still think it's way too short.

NAOMI: Yeah, I think it might be too short too.

COLLEEN *and* MEG *stand back and look at the dress length appraisingly.*

MEG: No. It's lovely, isn't it, Mum?

COLLEEN: It's fine. Turn around for us, Naomi—

NAOMI *does a quick turn around in a circle. MEG and COLLEEN like what they see.*

No, that length is fine...

MEG: It's lovely.

COLLEEN: And thank goodness for that! Now let's see if the shoes fit. Angela, can you get Lucy's shoes please?

ANGELA: [*sullenly*] Yes.

As ANGELA stomps over to the wardrobe and grabs Lucy's shoes ...

MEG: [*to NAOMI*] Show us your feet- Oh, they look about right..

COLLEEN: Yes, the shoes should be fine...

ANGELA *makes a point of staring at NAOMI's feet.*

ANGELA: You reckon? Her feet are much fatter than Lucy's.

She thrusts the shoes at NAOMI with such force that she almost falls over backwards.

[*As she thrusts the shoes*] Here.

NAOMI: [*almost falling over*] Oh-!

COLLEEN: Careful, Angela.

ANGELA: Sorry, Naomi.

MEG *and* COLLEEN *look at ANGELA in bemusement, but don't comment. Meanwhile COLLEEN is taking Lucy's shoes out of the box.*

COLLEEN: Well, quickly, let's try them on-

She hands the shoes to NAOMI. In spite of the awfulness of the situation, in true female fashion NAOMI finds herself captivated by the shoes.

NAOMI: Oh, wow... they're beautiful. ...

MEG: You like them?

NAOMI: Yeah, they're gorgeous... And I love the shine...

COLLEEN *slips instantly purse and MEG rolls her eyes in amusement.*

[Puzzled] What...?

MEG: Don't get Mum started on the shiny part. It's a tad controversial.

NAOMI: Oh... Well, here goes...

MEG: Good luck, Cinderella...

COLLEEN: Quickly. Do they fit-?

They all watch anxiously as NAOMI slips her foot into the shoe. She wiggles it around.

NAOMI: Yeah, they fit-.

MEG: Phew.

COLLEEN: Thank Goodness for that-!

ANGELA: [*through gritted teeth*] They don't look like they fit.

NAOMI: [*oops again*] Well, actually, maybe, yeah now that I yeah, I think they're a fraction too big.

COLLEEN: Where are they too big? In the toes?

NAOMI: [*walking a few steps*] Yeah, mainly in the toes.

COLLEEN *starts briskly heading/or the bathroom. ANGELA follows, calling after her.*

ANGELA: Well, we can't have a bridesmaid with shoes that don't fit.

COLLEEN: [*overlapping*] Rubbish. We'll just use a bit of tissue-
She emerges from the bathroom with a roll of toilet paper.

MEG: [*joking*] Mum's the improviser from hell.

COLLEEN *plonks herself on the end of the bed and starts ripping up the toilet paper. MEG sits down beside her.*

COLLEEN: Here, give me the shoes, Naomi-.

NAOMI *gives her the shoes. COLLEEN passes one to MEG, then demonstrates. MEG follows her lead.*

Now, if we just... pull off the paper, then fold it like this... and put a little in the toe of the shoes... like so...

During this, NAOMI and ANGELA are exchanging silent looks.

NAOMI's, look says: 'I hate this as much as you do, but I can't get out of it now'.

And that should fill up the gap-- [*Handing the shoes back*] Here, Naomi, try that.

thinking 'Thank God I didn't wear that old blue bra and the baggy Cottontails'. Does that make me a bad person? Oh, I don't know. Maybe I already was... When I was younger I never thought I'd have an affair with *anyone's* boyfriend... let alone a friend's boyfriend... let alone a friend's fiancé... But things seem really simple when you're young—everything's so black and white. But as soon as life get interesting it starts to turn to grey. I didn't know he was Meg's fiancé when I met him... I was drunk and he was cute and what happened happened... and then I found out he was engaged, but I really liked him by then. I tried to end it but... well, I didn't... and I kind of convinced myself—and him—that it was cool, that I could handle it. I just wanted some fun with no strings attached... And then, well, then I got Meg's wedding invitation—and that's how I found out it was him! *[Pause as she remembers the awful moment.]* Can you *believe* it? I couldn't. I just, I didn't know what to do, and... *[Looking at the audience guiltily]* Oh look, I know what you're thinking. I shouldn't have accepted the invitation. And maybe I shouldn't have. But couldn't help it. I wanted James to look around the church and see my face and feel like the bastard he was—at least, that's what I told myself. But when he ended things two weeks ago I realised I'd been secretly hoping that when it came to the crunch he'd say to the priest, 'I can't go through with this. The woman I *really* love is sitting over there!' Dumb fantasy, huh? And awful to Meg. Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and think, 'With friends like me, who needs enemies?' But you know how sometimes when you need it most you can't get your head and your heart to co-operate? Well, I hated what me and James were doing—in my head—but still, I couldn't seem to kick him out of my bed.

Lights fade.

SCENE ELEVEN

Lights up. JAMES and MEG are alone now. He looks down at her on the bed, head covered by a pillow, and moves towards her helplessly. How to explain the unjustifiable? He doesn't know how he'll do it, all he knows is he has to do it, or he'll lose her.

JAMES: I'm so sorry I lied... I panicked, Meg I love you so much and I was scared I'd lose you...

MEG: *[from under the pillow]* That's not good enough.

JAMES: *[ashamed]* I know...

He waits for another reaction, but nothing comes. He moves closer to the bed.

I just... I can't tell you how sorry I am. I never meant for this to happen.

MEG: *[emerging from behind the pillow]* Oh, so it was an accident?

JAMES: *[grabbing at this]* Well, yeah. In a way it was.

MEG: What? Your zip fell open and gravity got the better of Naomi's undies and you tripped and fell inside her?

There's no answer to that. JAMES ploughs on.

JAMES: It was that weekend you went to the Jazz Festival. I was out with-

MEG: *[interrupting]* In Wangaratta? But that was five months ago...

An intensely awkward silence as JAMES's squirming nod confirms this.

JAMES: Yeah... I went for a drink with Tom, and we got talking to Naomi; and a friend of hers. I didn't even know she knew you-

The second this is out, JAMES realises what a misjudged excuse it is.

MEG's icy stare confirms it. He quickly tries to dig himself out of the hole that keeps deepening.

[Hastily] Anyway-I was having a shit of a time at work—that was when the merger thing was going on, remember? And you'd been so busy at the office with Rachel, and planning the wedding with your mum-

MEG: *[interrupting, defensive]* I was training Rache up. I couldn't leave the poor girl in the lurch-.

JAMES: I know that-.

MEG: *[right over him]* And a wedding's a huge thing to organise—do you think it just magically happens?

JAMES: Of course not—But... you were so caught up in all of that stuff, and then you told me you were going away-

MEG: But I had to go. That Festival's one of my biggest clients!

JAMES: I know. I know all of that, Meg, but... I was kind of feeling invisible.

MEG: *[with a flash of fury]* So it's my fault you fucked someone else?

JAMES: No, no, of course not. That's not what I'm saying,

MEG: Just as well. Keep going.

JAMES: Well, like I said, I was missing you and-

But in spite of herself, MEG's feeling guilty.

MEG: *[interjecting, guiltily]* It was one weekend-

JAMES: *[overlapping]* -and I got a bit pissed, and then we went to another bar with Naomi and her girlfriend and we had a few more-

MEG: *[interrupting coldly]* Which bar?

JAMES: *[thrown]* What?

MEG: Which bar did you go to?

JAMES: Does it matter? The Toff in Town.

MEG: You never take *me* to The Toff in Town.

JAMES: *[embarrassed]* I didn't *take* her, we just ended up there.

Anyway...*[Struggling to continue]* We had some more drinks, and it got late, and then me and Naomi shared a taxi... and somehow we ended up at her place-

MEG: Somehow? JAMES: Yeah. I wasn't thinking straight, Meg. I know that's not much of an excuse but... anyway, we went upstairs and... next thing I knew... well, we started-

MEG *interrupts, hands over her ears.*

MEG: Stop! Don't tell me anymore.

JAMES: Okay, fine.

MEG: No, tell me.

JAMES: Are you sure?

MEG: *[nodding, wincing]* Yes. I want to know.

JAMES: You don't look like you want to know.

MEG: No, I do want to know. Tell me.

Another beat of silence. JAMES looks uncertain about whether to continue.

Go on. Go.

JAMES: *[deeply uncomfortable]* Well, I was drunk, I was missing you, it was out of my control, Meg—and before I knew it we were-

MEG: *[interrupting]* Stop!

JAMES *stops, relieved, then almost straight away ...*

No, go on. No, go.

JAMES: *[he hates saying this]* Well, we ended up in bed.

MEG *visibly winces. JAMES tries to touch her hand. She pulls away sharply.*

But it didn't mean anything. I woke up the next morning and I hated myself. I loved you-