

Just Another Friday!

A Farce in Two Acts

By

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Dramatis Personae

Claire	A bored housewife in her forties
Mike	Her husband
Sandra	A girl from the tennis club
Geoff	A man from the judo club
Cindy	Claire and Mike's student daughter
Steve	Cindy's boyfriend
Constable	Sandra's father
Granny	Claire's mother
Medic 1	Answers the first emergency call
Medic 2	The ambulance driver

Act One

14A Devonshire Street, Early One Evening, April 1985

The action is set entirely in the living room of the first floor flat at the above address. There are five exits from this room; a door UR leads into the bedroom a door UL leads into the kitchen, a door UCL leads to the hall. A second bedroom and the bathroom are off this hall, which leads to the front door. A window CR overlooks the garden and an entrance DL opens onto a small balcony containing a garden chair and small table. There are two cupboards US just to R of C. There are five pieces of furniture in this room; two armchairs CL and CR, a sofa just L of C, a coffee table in front of the sofa (with magazines on it and two bottles of sherry underneath) and a small table against the US wall with a table-cloth vase of flowers' an answer-machine and a telephone. There is a doorbell on the US wall with cables leading into the wall towards the front door. The coffee table is strewn with gardening and ladies' magazines as well as two sets of car-keys. Mike and Claire are in their forties and are finding life rather humdrum now that the children have all left home. They have both joined different evening classes in an endeavour to spice up their lives. Mike has joined a tennis group and Claire has started Judo, both on the same night - tonight. The spice takes the form of Sandra, a fit and attractive blonde, whom Mike has met at tennis and Geoff, a rather ordinary guy who, like Claire, has taken up judo. Claire sits reading a magazine. Enter Mike, in his tennis gear.

- CLAIRE Are you still here, darling? I thought you'd already gone to tennis.
- MIKE As you can see, I haven't. I'm not even sure I've got the energy tonight.
- CLAIRE Oh, come on honey, isn't it mixed doubles today?
- MIKE Yes, but what difference does that make?
- CLAIRE Well, doesn't the thought of those fit young girls in short white skirts make you raring to go?
- MIKE I beg your pardon?
- CLAIRE Well, you know.....
- MIKE *(Acting decorously)* No, I do not know! I can't say I've noticed any fit girls at tennis.
- CLAIRE *(Sniggering violently)* My goodness, then you must be getting short-sighted in middle age.
- MIKE I certainly am not! I can read newspaper print at a hundred yards.
- CLAIRE Can you indeed! Then read this paragraph to me. *(Holding up the magazine and indicating the paragraph.)*
- MIKE *(Seriously flustered)* I...I...well.... um....ah.....
- CLAIRE There you are, you see; you can't read it, can you?

MIKE It's the italic font and and the green background. You know I'm colour blind to red and green.

CLAIRE Oh, the crosses men have to bear!

MIKE Now that's unfair; you know that I'm suffering from arthritis and lumbago and a trapped.....

CLAIRE I know I have to listen to the same excuses every Friday night. That doesn't mean it's true.

MIKE Now just look here..... (*ponders*) Anyway, what about the men at your Judo club? They can't be wimps can they? I mean it's not a tiddlywinks club.

CLAIRE My mind is totally focused on the judo moves, as it happens. I have no time to notice the men.

MIKE What, even when they grab you around the waist, throw you to the floor and pin you down? (*He gestures and she notices his hand.*)

CLAIRE Mike, you're not wearing your wedding ring. Why have you taken it off?

MIKE I... I... well, you know, it rubs against the racquet when I play.

CLAIRE But you're right handed and you wear your wedding ring on the left.

MIKE What is this, the Spanish Inquisition?

CLAIRE (*Looks at her watch*) Goodness, is that the time? I must get changed - and you must go, or you'll be late.

MIKE Goodbye dear; back about eleven. (*blows her a kiss and exits.*)

CLAIRE (*Giving a hefty sigh as the front door slams*) Goodbye, darling. Don't have a fatal accident on the way. Now, where was I? Oh, yes, about to get changed. (*She hums to herself as she exits R to the bedroom.*)
(*The telephone rings but we hear Claire singing. Clearly she has not heard the phone. The answer-machine cuts in.*)

MACHINE We are sorry we are unable to take your call at the moment. Please leave a message after the tone and we will call you as soon as possible. (*tone*)

SANDRA (*On the phone, in a sexy voice*) Hello, Mike, Sandra here. I hope you haven't left yet. I've just arrived at the club and it's flooded - so tennis is off. Please come down to the club and pick me up anyway. I would like to suggest some alternative **extra-curricular** activity, as we have a free evening. Perhaps we could go to your place? Bye for now. (*There is a kissing sound then a click as she rings off. Noises off - Mike driving away.*)
(*Enter Claire, still singing, and now dressed in judo gear.*)

CLAIRE *(Goes to exit then stops.)* Silly me, I won't get far without the car keys, will I!
(Crosses to the coffee table and picks up her keys.)
(As she nears the door she looks at the answer-machine and goes as if to press the button.)

Oh, I'd better leave it switched on - Cindy might phone from college.
(She exits, jingling her keys and still singing. The front door slams and the phone rings immediately. The answer-machine cuts in.)

MACHINE We are sorry we are unable to take your call at the moment. Please leave a message after the tone and we will call you as soon as possible. *(tone)*

GEOFF *(On the phone, sounding rather nervous.)* Hello, darling! It's.... it's....it's me, Geoff. If you haven't left yet, please p...p...pick up the phone. *(silence)* Oh hell, I suppose you've already left. Well, In case you're in the bathroom or something, I was just phoning to say that J....J....Judo has been cancelled - damned power cut. There goes our evening together. Unless - I say, I could come round to your place for a... a.... coffee. That is..... if you would like me to. Anyhow, I'll see you outside the judo hall. Bye for now.
(Click as he hangs up.)

(Noises off - Claire's car driving off. Phone rings and answer-machine cuts in.)

MACHINE We are sorry we are unable to take your call at the moment. Please leave a message after the tone and we will call you as soon as possible. *(tone)*

CINDY *(On the phone)* Mum, Dad are you there? Just to let you know I'm coming home from college a week early - tonight, in fact. Please will you come and give me a lift from the station? Dad? I know you're in 'cos you never go out any more! I'll be on the 7.30 from Waterloo. Please pick me up. Thanks, Dad. I love you. *(Hangs up).*

(The front door slams and we hear a girl giggle. Enter Mike pulling Sandra in by the hand.)

SANDRA Oh, Mike, nice pad you have here. *(They embrace and kiss.)* Just right for a love-nest. What a shame you live alone.

MIKE Well this is our living room and over here is the kitchen.

SANDRA You said 'our'!

MIKE Slip of the tongue; I meant 'my'. The spare bedroom and the bathroom are back along the hall.

SANDRA And where's **your** bedroom, Mike? (*cuddling up to him.*)

MIKE Oh, that's just over here, but would you not like a coffee or something.

SANDRA Just the 'or something' will do. I'll have a coffee later. Come on Romeo - show me the way. (*She pushes him towards the bedroom.*)
(They exit into the bedroom, the door slams and we immediately hear giggling sounds from within. Noises off of front door closing quietly. Enter Claire, followed by a nervous Geoff.)

GEOFF This is very cosy - I like it very much. (*Looks out of window.*) And what a lovely garden you have. I do like gardening.

CLAIRE Oh, so do I. Hence, the gardening magazines. I'll just make some coffee. (*She exits to kitchen.*)

GEOFF (*Picking up a magazine and reading silently for a few moments as he settles into a chair.*) Are you any good with plant diseases? I have a real problem with my Nelly Moser wilting.

CLAIRE (*Appearing at the door.*) No, but I do suffer from fungus on my hypericum.

GEOFF I suppose we should go to see a plant doctor together, eh? (*He chuckles*)

CLAIRE Black or white?

GEOFF I don't care where he's from as long as he can speak English.

CLAIRE Would you like milk and sugar - in your coffee?

GEOFF Oh yes, very pale and sweet, if I may. Just like me. (*Sniggers*)
(Geoff quotes from the magazine.)

GEOFF Hey listen to this: there's an African plant that can cure cramps; it's called cryptocarya latifolia, commonly known as umkhondweni. I would have thought that just saying the name could cause you cramps in your mouth.
(Chuckles)

CLAIRE (*Enter Claire*) Your coffee, sir. Just as you like it. (*Puts the two coffees on the coffee table.*)

GEOFF Oh that's handy. But what about the wine I brought?

CLAIRE Well, perhaps we could have that later. We have the whole evening to kill.

GEOFF I expect we'll find something to do, dear. (*Sniggers again.*) Well, why don't you dig out some wine glasses while I go out to my car and fetch the wine?

CLAIRE O.k., but I must go to the loo first. Don't be long.

GEOFF (*In an intrepid tone*) I am just going outside and may be some time.....

(He chortles as he exits. The front door closes quietly. Claire exits to the bathroom.)

(Enter Mike and exit to the kitchen to make coffee. He sings 'tea for two' and does a little dance as he exits. Just afterwards, enter Sandra. She sits at the sofa and picks up a copy of Woman's Own magazine.)

SANDRA *(Frowning, she picks up one of the coffees and takes a few sips.)*

(Aside) My, that was quick. Must have had coffee in the percolator.

I thought you lived alone, Mike.

MIKE So I do.

SANDRA And do you read Woman's Own?

MIKE *(Entering)* Woman's Own?

SANDRA Yes, look *(pointing to the front page)* Woman's Own.

MIKE Oh, that Woman's Own.

SANDRA I've never met a man who reads that before.

MIKE Ah, and... well.... this one doesn't either.

SANDRA Then.... this isn't your magazine?

MIKE *(Snatching the magazine)* Quite right. It's not.

SANDRA Then whose is it?

MIKE That's my... my.... sister's.

SANDRA You live with your sister?

MIKE Not exactly; she often stays over.

SANDRA Well, you should tidy up more often after her. Here, let's put these underneath.

(She takes it from him and tidies it away with the others.)

(Picking up the remote control) Just in time for Taggart. My favourite programme.

MIKE *(Snatching the remote. In a French accent.)* Not tonight, Josephine. We have other matters to attend to - in the bedroom.

SANDRA *(Copying accent)* But Napoleon, surely it can wait?

MIKE Non, ma Cherie. Allez! I will join you shortly in my chambre.

SANDRA As you wish, monsieur. *(She takes the two coffee cups from the table and exits to bedroom. Exit Mike to kitchen. We hear him briefly, clinking cups and spoons.)*