

All of these things.

A play for radio.

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<i>Dorothy</i>	<i>60's</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>60's</i>
<i>Paula</i>	<i>40's</i>
<i>Jill</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Essie</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Adam</i>	<i>16</i>

1. David and Dorothy at their kitchen table.

SFX *Bird song.*

Dorothy Open the window, David. Let the day in.

SFX *The window scrapes open. We hear the sound of a blackbird and other garden birds.
The blackbird sings.*

Dorothy That blackbird is calling all the girls.

David Paula is out on her patio.

Dorothy She's barely been outside her door since Alex died.
Well- it's the first good day in weeks.

David They said it would be a scorcher.

Dorothy We should get out. We should just get in the car and head for the sea.

David *(Sings)* *Take me riding in the car, car
Take you riding in the car, car
Take you riding in the car, car
I'll take you riding in my car.

David We could ask Paula if she'd like to come?

Dorothy Why would we do that?

David Might be something different for her.

Dorothy We don't know her that well.

David She needs someone to keep an eye on her.

Dorothy You go over and offer your eye.

A cat screeches murderously.

Dorothy What the hell is that cat up to?

The sound of the back door opening.

David Oh. BOSWELL! STOP.

Dorothy What is it, David?

David Boswell has slaughtered the blackbird.
It's like a Tarantino movie in the garden.

Dorothy No, David, don't let him bring the blasted thing into the house. Wrap it in some kitchen roll
and put it in the recycling.

David 'The recycling'?

Dorothy *(Irritated)* A bin. Any bin. A receptacle of waste . What a mess.
That'll teach Mr Blackbird to be so vain.

SFX- *The clatter of a foot pedal bin.*

Dorothy What a planet. One minute you're singing your heart out-
the next minute you're kitty cat food.

David, while you're at the sink stick on the kettle?
I'm parched.

SFX Water in the kettle. A switch snaps on. Music drifts by. David hums.

Dorothy What's that noise?

David Desert Island discs.

Dorothy And I purposely didn't put it on. It's some architect I've never heard of.

David It's coming from next door.

Dorothy Get away from the window, David. Why do you stand and stare like that?

David I'm not staring. I'm seeing. She looks so sad.

Dorothy It looks a lot like staring to me.

David Good God!

Dorothy David, don't shout like that- you put the heart across me.

David It's our wedding anniversary.

Dorothy Is it?

David It's the 12th of September. Happy anniversary, my Dorothy.

Dorothy Darling- I haven't got you anything. I'm saving myself for our 45th.
What are you doing? Get up off your knees.

David **(Sings) There's a new world somewhere/ (He sings over the following interruption)*

Dorothy Ah for Gods-

David *(Sings) They call the promised land
And I'll be there someday
If you could hold my hand
I still need you there beside me
No matter what I do.*

David & Dorothy *(sings)* For I know I'll never find another you.

Dorothy *(Laughs)* Get off the floor.

David I can get down on one knee but I cannot get up.
Your arm, dear?

They laugh together.

SFX: Doorbell.

David groans as she helps him to his feet.

Dorothy Big eejit.

David That's me.

SFX: Doorbell.

Dorothy Ha!
I'm coming. I'm coming.

SFX : Dorothy's footsteps along the hallway.

SFX Front door opens.

Dorothy Hello?

Jill I'm so sorry. I'm looking for Number 27 ?

Dorothy You want next door. Yes, the numbering is confusing on this avenue.
Are you a friend of.../?

Jill (*Hurriedly*) Thank you.

The clatter of heels on the path.

Dorothy Oh. Well - goodbye then.

SFX door closes. Steps to the kitchen.

David Was there any post?

Dorothy No. A visitor for Paula! I redirected her-
There now and after all your neighbourly concern..

David Oh.

Dorothy Looks like we'll be spending our anniversary alone.
Are you disappointed?

David Not at all.

Dorothy Yes. Bring that tea here to me and behave yourself.

David You wouldn't like it if I behaved myself.

Dorothy I bet I would.

David Now, that's odd. Paula hasn't moved from her garden.
She's talking to herself.

Dorothy For the Lord's sake will you step away from the window.

David She's smoothing her hair.
She's gone.

Dorothy You really don't get out enough.
Why don't you make yourself useful and get the beach towels?

SFX music : I'll Never Find Another You.

** Woody Guthrie. Riding In My Car.*

2

Next door.

Constant door bell ringing. The door opens.

Paula Sorry to keep you waiting.

Jill I think I've made a mistake.

Paula You were expecting to see Alex?

Jill Yes.

Paula Would you like to come in? This way.

SFX steps and the front door closes. Music drifts in underneath the dialogue.

Jill Okay. Follow you? Okay.

Paula My name is Paula. You are Jill David?

Jill Yes.

Paula My husband was Alex Fordham. Would you like a cup of tea?

Jill Was? I don't want tea.

Paula Yes- this way. The kitchen is lovely and light this time of year.

You usually meet in hotels?

Jill What?

Paula Let me turn this thing off.

(Turns off the radio. Music stops)

Have you ever been here before?

Jill Clearly not. I couldn't find the place.

Alex was insistent we meet here.

Paula I was insistent.

Jill I'm sorry?

Paula I sent the texts- inviting you to come here.

Jill So he doesn't know?

Paula He couldn't possibly. He died nine months ago.

Are you going to faint?

Jill Yes.

Paula Please. Sit down.

This is not a floor for fainting on.

A chair scrapes across the kitchen tiles. Jill sits.

Paula I'll get you that cup of tea.

Jill Just water please.

Paula runs the tap and fills a glass with water.

Paula Here.

Jill I can't hold the glass. My hands are shaking.

Paula (*Kindly*) I don't mind if you spill it.
It's only water.

Jill Thank you.

Paula There was a little something about Alex in the Telegraph.

Jill God...

Paula but living in the Southern Hemisphere I suppose you missed it.

Jill Could you please stop talking?

Paula Sorry.

Jill I sent some texts. Alex didn't text back and then he started communicating again.

Paula I texted you.

Jill No, no - this is a very bad joke.

Paula No joke. Alex got a chest infection in September that just wouldn't clear.
The consultant said lung cancer and within weeks it had spread.
He died on Wednesday the 10th of December.

Jill Alex, oh, Alex.

Paula He didn't get a chance to put his affairs in order.

Jill I'm sorry for your loss.

Paula He left his phone on. I got your texts.

Jill We didn't see each other often. Once a year,
Sometimes it's eighteen months before I make a trip to London.
It doesn't add up to many days but the feeling was there.

Paula I gathered.

Jill I'm not up for a confrontation.

Paula After the funeral I found out he'd been seeing a number of women.
Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

Jill Around your age I guess.

Paula You're quite a bit older than me.

Jill If you say so.

Paula He didn't have a type.
Nice women. Thin women. Crazy bitches.
Are you a lawyer too?

Jill No.
I met Alex ten years ago. I was lunching at The Wolseley and my friend stood me up.
Alex had the table next to mine. We got talking.

Boswell mews and mewls.

Jill OH GOD! What's that?

Paula How did you get in, naughty cat? Shoo! Shoo! It's next door neighbours.

Jill It's got its claws in my lap. Uhh. I hate cats.

Paula I'll just put him out.
The sliding of patio doors.
Go! Shoo!

Jill The little bastard has drawn blood

Paula *(Calling from a short distance)* I'll get you a plaster.
*SFX: Paula opens cupboards- the sound of a tin being opened. Music : Music comes from David and Dorothy's house next door. *The Seekers.*

Paula There you are. *(handing her a plaster)*

Jill Thank you.

Paula I can see my neighbours dancing in their kitchen. Come and have a look.
Oh, come on.

Jill's chair on the tiles.

Jill Okay.

Paula Look at that.
Beautiful.
Are you married?

Jill For God's sake what is it you want?

Paula Tell me something about Alex? Something that you used to do.

Jill That's what you want?

Paula I don't want sex details.

Jill I am quite shocked.

Paula Of course you are.

Jill Well...I come to London to buy and sell antiques. Once I took him to an auction...

Paula Alex? Went to an antique auction?

Jill He was bored out of his mind. He said, 'That's an hour-

Paula & Jill- 'I'll never get back.' *(They laugh)*

Jill I'm sorry but I can't do this.

The chair scrapes and we hear Jills footsteps. Paula follows her.

Paula Wait. Please.
Did he talk about our beautiful daughter, Essie?

Jill Well...

Paula Was it .. not flattering?

Jill He didn't talk about his family.
Sorry. I'm making things worse.

Paula I was told that I couldn't have children and then she happened. Little miracle.

Jill You must be bitter.

Paula I wish Alex were alive so I could kill him.

Jill Why put yourself through this?
Just remember what he meant to you and Essie. The rest is meaningless.

Paula opens the front door.

Paula Thank you for the insight and get out of my house.

Jill What?

Paula Out. Now.

Jill I loved him. There. I've said it.

Paula Out.

Jill Don't push. Ow. What is wrong with you?

Paula slams the door.

Paula Alex, oh Alex.

3.

A packed and noisy corner of a theatre lobby.

Adam and Essie are two students. Essie is Paula's daughter.

SFX: The rumble of a crowded lobby.

Announcement : This afternoon's performance of Julius Caesar will commence in five minutes. Please take your seats.

Essie This show is supposed to be amazing.

Adam Essie, you said that about Warhorse.

Essie You're the only person in our entire group who didn't like Warhorse.

Adam Alice didn't.

Essie Yeah, but she's a freak.
You'll love this.

Adam Huh.

Essie Adam! Here we are in a fancy theatre with free tickets to see famous actors.
What's your problem?

Adam Nothing. It's nice to see you happy.

Essie Maybe I need more reasons to be cheerful.

Adam Well then come with me and Alice to The British Museum tomorrow.

Essie You're taking Alice to The British Museum?

Adam Yes.

Essie Why?

Adam Because she'll like it.

Essie How'd you know?

Adam We have similar tastes.

Essie You want to date her?

Adam No.

Essie She likes you.

Adam I thought she'd like the Rosetta Stone.

Essie What are you going to do- buy it for her?

Adam Come on.

Essie Do you want to shag her?

Adam She's from Streatham, Essie.

Essie Huh.

Announcement: This afternoon's performance of Julius Caesar will commence in two minutes. Please take your seats.

Gypsy music.

Essie The musicians are starting out here. This is so cool.

Sfx. Music

Hey, I've just seen Jack, Laura and Miss King go into the auditorium.
We better go.

Adam Wait a sec.

You know the way Jack and Laura always have to sit together? You could be in the middle of a conversation with Jack but when Laura arrives- coffees are spilled, toes trodden on- all so she can sit beside him and be blonde.

Essie If you were going out with Laura you'd want to sit beside her.

Adam I would never go out with someone who giggles like a moron and crawls over seats to 'hold hands'.

Essie That's harsh. So who do you want to go out with?

Adam No one.

Essie You're just blocked to intimacy.

Adam Jack is gay anyway.

He was seen leaving Camden Odeon kissing a guy.

Essie Get out.

Adam So Laura doesn't need us to bunch up or swap seats.

Essie How do you know?

Adam The guy was me.

Essie You're joking- right?

Adam You didn't know I liked Jack?

Essie Of course I didn't know. I've just been interrogating you about Alice.
You and Jack are together?

Adam Clearly we're not together. He's with Laura.

Essie You're gay?

Adam Why are you surprised? I can quote the entire movie of *The Sound Of Music*.
What straight guy does that?

Essie I feel really stupid.

Adam What difference does it make to us?

Essie It makes a difference.

Adam Did you think I was hitting on you?

Essie Why wouldn't I think that? You hug me all the time. You call me all the time. You use my lip balm.

Adam Essie. Essie. But you're my best friend. Hey! Where are you going? The play is gonna start .

Essie Are you so blind, Adam? Have I not made it abundantly and stupidly clear that I am head over heels in love with you?

Adam (*Kindly*) No way. Essie?

Essie Dude...I'm going to take my seat.

SFX. Gypsy music.

4. The beach.

SFX. Seagulls and the sound of the sea.

SFX The splish splash of water.

David Dorothy. This was a great idea.

Dorothy Thank you. Now get your feet wet.

David It's all or nothing for me. I'll swim in a bit.

*The shingle crunches as they walk along the shore. Sounds of children playing.
The lapping of water.*

Dorothy It's good to be out. Should we have asked Paula ?

David Well - she had a visitor.

Dorothy I do feel for her.
My first love died tragically young too.

David For a moment I thought you said your first love died too?

Dorothy That is what I said.

David I'm your first love.

Dorothy You are my living love.

David Who was your first love ?

Dorothy His name was John Jordan. He was so beautiful.
I was 16. He was 19.

David You've never mentioned a John Jordan before.

Dorothy I don't like to talk about him.

David You know everything about me.

SFX: Music

Dorothy There's a wedding at the bandstand. Isn't that just perfect?

David Don't change the subject.

SFX: Quartet wedding music as they walk .

Dorothy You have secrets. I know you do.

David Tell me something about him.

David Oh, my mother wouldn't let me go out with John. Too old, she said.
So we exchanged passionate love notes instead.

David And where is this Adonis now?

Dorothy John died in 1980. Chicago. A car accident.
Some people just don't make it through.

David We made it through.

Dorothy We did and we endure. We go on and on and on and on.

David Alright, alright.

SFX Waves.

Dorothy But to be loved like that.

David Like what?

Dorothy I'd kill for that feeling again. Wouldn't you love to love and be loved back
fiercely? Like colliding trains. Admit it.

David I'm going for a swim.

The crunch of shingle.

Dorothy Hey - wait up. I'm coming.

The splash of water.

They screech as they reach the cold water and they get in.

A splash. They are swimming.

Dorothy Wheeeeeeeee.

SFX swimming splashing sounds.

Dorothy How's that?

David Cold.

Dorothy It's - fresh.

David I love you like that.

Dorothy WHAT?

David I SAID I LOVE YOU LIKE THAT.

Dorothy Like what

David Like a colliding train you mad bat.

SFX: More splashing.

David I'm getting out.

Dorothy Why?

David It's freezing. I can't feel my feet.

Splashing and crunching on shingle. A dog barks and a bunch of boisterous children run by.

Dorothy Wait up. Hey, wait. Don't tell me you're sulking?

They shiver.

David It's our anniversary today and you tell me that I wasn't your first love?

Dorothy *(Laughs)* What does it matter? I've loved you for forty-four years. I love you as I loved you when you were twenty-two and had hair.

David I want to be the first.

Dorothy That's a very male trait. Yes- stick a flag in me why don't you.

Might you pass me a towel too?

They dry themselves vigorously.

David I do have a secret.

Dorothy I knew it. You're in love with Paula.

David Don't be daft.

Dorothy She's a very attractive woman. I could understand if you had a crush on her. I'd just rather you didn't make it so obvious.

David I feel sorry for the woman. I do not have a crush on her. Can I tell you my secret or not?

Dorothy Huh- well, whatever your secret is- spill.

David It was the day before the last general election.

Dorothy You were stuffing envelopes or canvassing. I remember.

David That's right and when I got off at Marylebone I spotted Alex at the ticket office. I was about to call out when a woman came up to him and they kissed. I pretended to look at my phone but Alex spotted me. He came over- cool as you like and asked if I'd keep it to myself. I said I would and that was that.

SFX. Seagulls

Dorothy Why didn't you tell me?

David Because every time you'd see Paula it's all you'd think about. It's all I think about.

Dorothy At least now she'll never know.

David Maybe she knows already.

Dorothy You're not thinking of telling her?

David How much of an ass do you think I am?

Dorothy Okay. Okay.

Sound of a fun fair in the distance.

Maybe we could get some candy floss?

David I haven't had candy floss for years.

Dorothy You could win me a teddy at the Coconut Shy?

David I don't know if I can throw straight any more.

Dorothy Ah, go on. You can.
Sfx :The sea and seagulls.

Dorothy All this arguing and making up- seems like old times. Except I'm waiting for the making up.
David?

David (Sings) *Seems like old times, having you to walk with
 Seems like old times, having you to talk with
 And it's still a thrill just to have my arms around you
 Still the thrill that was the day I found you

(Fade out) Seems like old times, dinner dates and flowers
 Just like old times, staying up for hours
 Making dreams come true, doing things we used to do
 Seems like old times being here with you.

**Song Seems like old Times. Guy Lombardo.*

5.

A bonfire. Paula is burning papers in her garden.

Essie (*From off*) Mum? Mum?

Paula I'm in the garden.

Essie enters.

Essie What's going on?

Paula I had a sudden yearning for an autumn bonfire.

Essie I can see that.

Paula Pass me that bunch of papers.

Essie Dude, that's a whole heap of rubbish ya got there.

She chucks on a load.

Paula Whooh!
I thought you were going to hang out with Adam after the play.

Essie I wanted to come home.

Paula You mustn't feel you have to look after me.
I want you to go out more- with Adam and your gang.

Essie Adam is gay

Paula Does it matter?

Essie No biggie.

Paula No biggie? Essie are you upset?

Essie (*Irritated*) Mum! No biggie.

Paula I can see you're upset.

Essie Do I have to tell you everything about me?

Paula No. No, you don't.

Essie I'm just so sick of talking about feelings and feeling feelings.
It's just so - boring.

Paula I couldn't agree more.

Essie These are dad's papers.

Paula I have to get rid of them sooner or later.

Essie Do you have to burn everything? Isn't there anything for me to look at?

Paula Tax receipts from 2003?

Essie Eh- no. You can burn those.

SFX fire crackling.

Essie Are these dad's diaries?

Paula Pass them to me. No, don't read them.

Essie Why not?

Paula It's just his work stuff and I want to get rid of it.

SFX: A small gust of wind. Paula throws the diaries on the bonfire.

Essie What's the rush?

Paula They've been sitting around in boxes for months.
I just want to get organised.

Essie Okay.

Paula I've been thinking that I should I go back to work.

Essie Have Deloitte been in touch again? I'm sure they'll be delighted to have you back.

Paula I don't want to manage a team anymore. I don't want 7 am starts and difficult clients and global strategies.

Essie Please do not say you wanna become a pilates teacher.

Paula Why not?

Essie Because it's a mid life cliché.

Paula Maybe I am mid life cliché.

Essie *(Sympathetically)* Mum !

Paula Come here little miracle.
Give your mama a hug.

Essie I really miss daddy.

Paula I miss him too. He loved a good bonfire.

Essie I miss his smile.
I don't miss his driving.

Paula *(laughs)*
Whoo-
Just stamp on that.

Essie Oh mum look! It's a menu.
The Red Flame diner on 44th street.
When did you guys go to New York?

Paula I was never in New York with your dad.

Essie But why would he keep it?
Who drew the love hearts?

Paula Who knows. Throw it on the bonfire.
 All of these things are just rubbish.
SFX (Paula throws another item on the fire)
 And that's the last of it.

Essie Did you ask David if they mind us having a bonfire?

Paula It didn't occur to me.

Essie It's a bit windy. The smoke is going next door.

Paula I sometimes catch David looking at me from his window.

Essie Mum- you are still hot. Even for an old person.

Paula I am NOT OLD.

Essie Euww though. Is that not a bit creepy?

Paula No. Not creepy. He waves sometimes.

Crackling sounds.

Essie Mum- that's their Willow tree.

Paula Yes?

Essie It's catching fire.

Paula What? What?

Essie It's on fire.

6.

Paula at David and Dorothy's door.

David Paula!

Paula David, all I can offer is an apology and a bottle of gin.

David Forget it. It's a few scorched leaves.
I've been meaning to do something about that willow. It's been hanging over your garden for quite a while.
Please come in.

SFX. *The front door closes. Footsteps.*

David Willow is one of the sacred woods used in Wiccan bonfires.
associated with mystery and healing- at least that's what Dorothy tells me.
Can I get you a drink?

Paula I shouldn't.

David Dorothy has gone to get some shopping but she won't be long.
She'd be sorry to miss you.

Paula Well, alright then. Arm twisted.

The day we moved in next door you and Dorothy came over. Do you remember?
She said- 'You're in the suburbs now' and she handed me a bottle of gin.

David I remember that day very well. Alex pulled up in his red sports car and you stepped out with baby Essie.
You were such a glamorous couple.

Paula Happy days.

(The fridge door opens. Rattling of glasses.)

David *(Singing under his breath)* 'Well, the river is deep and the water is cold as ice-
The river is deep and the water is-'

Ice and lemon?

Paula Whatever you're having yourself.
Are you enjoying retired life?

David I'm not retired. Do I look that old?

Paula You don't look old at all.

David I work from home now.

Paula It's just that I've seen you around.

David We've been meaning to call over but didn't like to intrude.

Paula I've been meaning to call you myself.

David You have?

Paula I burned Alex's diaries on the bonfire this evening.
I didn't want Essie finding them.
In fact- I didn't want me to find them.

David I- well... diaries are best kept - private.
(*Handing Paula a gin and tonic*) I was a bit heavy handed with the gin.

Paula I thought I knew Alex.
Isn't it strange how you can live with someone for such a long time and not know them at all?
SFX: rattling of ice in the glass.

David Yes it is.
It must be a difficult time for you.

Paula It's getting better.
SFX: rattling of ice in the glass.

Ohh, that hit the spot. (*She puts down the glass*)

David Let me give you another.

Paula Oh no, really. I drank that far too quickly.

David Go on.

Paula Just a small one then.
Boswell mews.

David Do you have any musical preference?

Paula No.
Music: Adeus Batucada , Carmen Miranda.

Paula David. I've seen you looking at me from the window.

David Me?

Paula Yes. Do you feel sorry for me? Is that it?

David No. I mean, yes, of course - I'm sorry about Alex.

Paula There's no need to feel sorry for me. My husband was, was
(*Paula takes a breath*)

David Please don't cry.

Paula I'm not crying. (*She laughs*)
Alex was a complete arse. (*She laughs again*) That's what I wanted to say.
Sorry.

David Don't be.

Paula Oh dear. The alcohol has gone straight to my head.
You must think I'm terrible.

David No I don't. You look beautiful when you laugh.
(Boswell mews)

Paula I love your cat. What's he called again?

David Boswell and he's a thug.

Paula laughs.

Paula Yes, you are, Boswell. Psshhh, psshhh, psshhh.

David Dorothy and I think of you often.
I think of you.

Paula Do you?

Dorothy enters.

Dorothy (*from off*) Hellooo.

David In here.

Dorothy (*Entering*) Paula! You've started the celebrations without me?

Paula Hello Dorothy. I just popped in for a minute. What are you celebrating?

Dorothy Forty four years of marriage to this man.

Paula Congratulations.

Dorothy Did David tell you that we've been meaning to call.

Paula He did. I'm very touched that you think of us.

Dorothy It's so good to see you again. Well... You're on the gin, I see.
I picked up some champagne. You'll join us in a glass?

Paula No, no. I'll leave you to celebrate in peace.

Dorothy Oh, please.
David, get the glasses.

David Of course.

Boswell mews and purrs.

Dorothy Look at that. He's has got right up on your lap.
and he can be quite standoffish with strangers.

She opens the champagne. There is a pop.

Dorothy David, the glasses quick, quick quick.

David Here we are.

Dorothy The wind is really getting up out there.
The farmers in my homeplace called a day like today a 'pet day' -
- one good day in between rain and wind.
The rain will come tonight. You'll see.

David Here, Paula.
Dorothy, you have this one.

Dorothy Oh, Paula. I hope it's not insensitive asking you to celebrate/

Paula It's fine. Really. Life goes on. I wish it would.
 And on that note- a toast.
 To David and Dorothy...

 May you have years and years and years together.

Glasses clink.

David Hear, hear.
 Well- happy anniversary, Dorothy.

Dorothy I hope we'll see more of you, Paula. And Essie of course.

David Yes.

Paula Yes. Happy anniversary.

Dorothy This is nice. This is very nice. I love unexpected days.
 Happy, happy all.

They clink glasses. Music swells.

End