

A café somewhere in London. EYDIE sits at a table nursing a cup of tea, her shopping bag at her side. After a while she sighs and looks at her wristwatch, before returning her gaze to her teacup. Presently DORA appears, carrying a large shopping bag.

EYDIE

(Sympathetically.)

‘Ello, darlin’, ‘ow are ya? Come an’ park ya bones, luv, come on.

(Gesturing.)

Come an’ sit ya’self down.

DORA

(Placing her shopping bag at the side of the table, upstage.)

‘Ello, Eydie, sorry I’m late.

EYDIE

Ya not late, luv, I just got ‘ere.

DORA

(As she sits.)

Oh, Eydie, ya got no idea ‘ow glad I am to see ya. What with all them undertakers, an’ insurance people, an’ family I ain’t seen in Gawd knows ‘ow long...well, it’s a relief to see a familiar face, that’s all I can say.

EYDIE

(Breathing a heavy sigh.)

Ya don’t look well, luv. I ‘ate to say it, but you do not look well.

(Beat.)

‘Ow ya ‘oldin’ up? Alright?

DORA

(Tearfully.)

Yeah, I s’pose...All in all.

EYDIE

It’s gonna take time, luv. A lot o’ time. I mean, ‘ow long were ya married? Forty years?

DORA

Forty-two.

EYDIE

(With gravity.)

Forty-two years. That's a long time, darlin'. That's a lot o' water under the bridge.

DORA

(Wiping her eyes with a tissue.)

I know it is, Eydie.

EYDIE

Still, 'e 'ad a lovely funeral. Your Albert would'a been proud.

DORA

Oh, Eydie, please don't mention 'is name just now. I can't bear to 'ear the sound of it...I can't...I just can't bear to 'ear it.

EYDIE

No, no, 'course not, luv...Silly me, I should'a thought.

(Beat.)

Still, it *was* a nice goin' away. Lovely service. An' *what* a lot o' people! Who'd o' thought it? All there for your – your late 'usband. An' the food! Ooh, Dora, the food. All them puff pastry bits n' pieces, n' finger foods, n' bits o' cheese an' melon on sticks, n' little sausages, n' grapes, n'...Ooh! I don't think I ate so much in all me life. I was queasy when I left – quite queasy. Didn't eat for days after! Not days!

DORA

Yeah, she put on a lovely spread, our Jackie.

EYDIE

Everyone enjoyed it. All of 'em. I could tell by their faces. Well, all except your Dennis, that is. 'E did not look well, Dora. I 'ave to say it, 'e did *not* look well. If I 'ad to choose a word, I'd say...distraught. That's what 'e looked like – distraught. Still, what d'ya expect, I s'pose – it was 'is dad, after all. I think it must've 'it 'im the 'ardest, poor bugger.

DORA

(A little agitated.)

Oh, I'm sure it 'it 'im 'ard, Eydie. I don't doubt that for a minute. But it weren't 'is grief that 'ad 'im sat there in the corner, all 'unched over an' moody, snappin' 'is cocktail sticks an' flickin' 'em across the room every which way.

EYDIE

I saw that!

DORA

Forty years old, goin' on fourteen.

Well, I mean...like ya would.

EYDIE

Didn't know where to put me face.

DORA

Don't s'pose no one else noticed.

EYDIE

I saw one of 'em land in your sister's wig.

DORA

That's not a wig, luv.

EYDIE

Innit?

DORA

No – all natural...all sprouts out of 'er scalp somewhere. I've begged 'er to go modern for years, but I might as well save me breath.

EYDIE

What a way to be'ave!

DORA

'Course, I wouldn't o' said nothin' cause...well, I just took it as 'im grapplin' with 'is emotions.

(Beat.)

We all got our different ways, ain't we?

DORA

Well it weren't that, Eydie, it was the funeral – the whole funeral – that's what got 'is back up. Said it was disrespectful.

EYDIE

Disrespectful? It was lovely, Dora...lovely. Ever so movin'. Everyone said so.

DORA

Not our Dennis. 'E was livid.

EYDIE

Whatever for?

DORA
Well, ‘e wanted ‘im to ‘ave a traditional ‘indu burial, didn’t ‘e?

EYDIE
A what?

DORA
An ‘indu burial.

EYDIE
‘Indu? Your – your late ‘usband? ‘E weren’t ‘indu, was ‘e?

DORA
No, ‘course not. C of E, like me. But our Dennis is, as ya know.

EYDIE
(With surprise.)
No. No, I didn’t know that.

DORA
Oh, yeah. ‘Ad one o’ them conversions, see?

EYDIE
Oooh!

DORA
Oh, yeah. ‘Bout six months before ‘e married that, um...Jitjit.

EYDIE
Jitjit?

DORA
I think it’s Jitjit...Or Jatjit...Or is it Jotjat? No, ‘course, you never met ‘er, did ya? Lovely girl, mind...ever such a lovely girl. Indian, see. Well, not ‘er, she was born ‘ere, but ‘er mum n’ dad n’ that, you know.

EYDIE
An’ they’re all ‘indu?

DORA
All of ‘em...includin’ out Dennis.

EYDIE
Well, I say.

DORA

That's 'ow come 'e wanted to fly us all out to India, see?

EYDIE

(Disbelieving.)

No!

DORA

Mmm. Wanted to build a big bonfire on the banks o' the Ganges, fling Albert on top, n' set fire to the lot of it.

EYDIE

(Even more disbelieving.)

No!

(Beat.)

What, with a reception after, like?

DORA

Oh, no – no reception. No, then ya s'posed to scoop up the ashes, toss 'em in the water, disrobe an' wade in after 'em, apparently.

EYDIE

What, naked?

DORA

I think so.

EYDIE

No!

DORA

S'posed to symbolise "a cleansin' bath," accordin' to our Dennis.

EYDIE

Don't sound too clean to me, Dora. Not with all them ashes floatin' about.

DORA

Full o' number twos, n' all, from what I've 'eard.

(Leaning in to the table, confidingly.)

Don't 'ave proper toilets there, see?

EYDIE

What d'ya mean...they don't flush?