

ELAINE is sitting in a chair at the kitchen table, book in hand, snacking from a bowl of something on the table. Momentarily the sound of a doorbell is heard. ELAINE, in a state of agitation, rushes to answer the door.

ELAINE

(Off.)

Oh, Joy! Thank God! I've been waiting an eternity. I was starting to think you'd gone all peculiar on me, too. It's been an eon at least since I called.

(JOY enters, speaking in rapid-fire sentences, followed by ELAINE.)

JOY

Darling, my apologies, you must forgive me, but it's Wednesday, as you know – the day I have to take Stephen's brats to the park – hideous, I know, but what can you do? And so there I am, sitting on this hideously uncomfortable wooden bench that's covered in lichen and bird shit, being subjected to the most appalling high-pitched squeals and laughter emanating from those pre-pubescent monsters from Stephen's squalid little pre-me marriage, wondering what the hell I'd done to deserve it all, when I attempt – in desperation – to make contact with the outside world and check my messages, and wouldn't you know it...the damned phone's out of juice. So, then I have to drag these two creatures, kicking and screaming needless to say, to the nearest wine bar where I can plug in and recharge – me and the bloody phone – them crying and sobbing the whole three hours, of course – even though I'd bought them more magazines and fizzy drinks than you could possibly imagine – until I finally get a signal, got your hideous message, unloaded the brats back onto Stephen and charged over here as if my life depended on it. So how are you, darling? Well, obviously you're feeling completely hideous – but, I mean, other than that? Is everything all right?

ELAINE

Yes, everything's fine, really...other than that.

JOY

Well, that's a relief at least. Thank God for small mercies, I say.

(Beat.)

So...what's the problem?

ELAINE

It's Graham.

JOY

Oh God, not again. What is it now? Don't tell me...you found another brown stain in his underwear.

ELAINE

No, Joy, it's...it's far more disturbing, I'm afraid.

JOY

Then what color is it?

ELAINE

It isn't a color. It has nothing to do with his underwear. Well...not really...I mean, it might do...in some ways...but not really...as far as I can tell.

JOY

Darling, I do apologize, but I've had a very long and very arduous day, so I'm afraid you're going to have to be substantially more specific if this conversation is to hold my attention. Now, does Graham's underwear factor in to your predicament or doesn't it?

(Beat.)

ELAINE

No.

JOY

Good, now that's clear, at least. So what does?

(Beat.)

ELAINE

His...his lover.

JOY

Oh, God – I knew it!

ELAINE

How did you know?

JOY

I don't know...just one of those things one says, I suppose.

(Beat.)

Are you positive?

ELAINE

Yes, he's told me everything.

JOY

That was very forthright of him. Quite out of character, if you'll forgive my saying so, but there it is.

ELAINE

No, no, completely. Under duress, of course.

JOY

Of course. And what's her name?

ELAINE

It's not a "her."

JOY

What do you mean, "It's not a her."

ELAINE

I mean, it's a "him."

JOY

Well, of course it's a "him." If it's not a "her," then there's not much else it could be, is there?

ELAINE

Then why ask?

JOY

I don't know – just one of those things one says, I suppose.

ELAINE

And?

JOY

And what?

ELAINE

Aren't you appalled?

JOY

No.

Why ever not? ELAINE

Should I be? JOY

He's having an affair. ELAINE

With a man. JOY

Precisely. ELAINE

Precisely. JOY

ELAINE  
Joy, I'm your sister – I'm reaching out to you – at least *try* to grab my bloody hand!

JOY  
But I am, darling. You just told me he's having an affair with a man.

ELAINE  
Exactly.

JOY  
So, why worry?

ELAINE  
Why worry!

JOY  
Yes. In fact, you should be pleased.

ELAINE  
Pleased!

JOY  
Yes – that it's a man.

(Beat.)

ELAINE

(Bemused.)

I'm...I'm sorry, I don't follow.

JOY

Well, darling, if he's having an affair with another man then there's really nothing to worry about, is there? I mean, I'm assuming, of course, the marriage is sexless?

ELAINE

(Defensively.)

No more than the norm.

JOY

Well, there you are.

ELAINE

Where?

JOY

Where you should be.

ELAINE

I still don't understand.

JOY

Look, darling, he's only human, after all – hard to imagine sometimes, but there you are. And more to the point, he has needs along with the rest of us – though frankly, that's even harder to imagine.

ELAINE

Joy, how can you be so blasé about it? This is my life...in crisis!

JOY

Oh, for God's sake stop going on like some button-downed hausfrau. Just stop for a second, take a deep breath, and have a good hard look at yourself: You're of a certain age; you and Graham have been married for...God knows how long...

ELAINE

Seemingly forever.

JOY

Seemingly forever; you no longer find each other sexually appealing – and on the odd occasion you feel obliged to do so, it's more than likely forced and horrid;