

FIT FOR A KING
A ONE ACT PLAY

Written by

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Characters:

Margo: Female, 50's. Actress.

John: Male, 50's. Margo's husband.

Daniel: Male, mid 30's. An old friend. He runs a cabaret venue in the heart of London.

Notes

- A slash (/) indicates where the next line begins.

- All of the characters are written with upper class English accents in mind which has a heightened quality that can manifest in a number of ways.

- I encourage the director to explore the quiet moments in the play (...) thinking about the things that are not said as well as the things that are.

SCENE 1

Early evening. London.

A bright and elegant living/dining room with separate kitchen.

Margo enters the room, and circles, looking for someone. She finds a note in the kitchen. She calls/screams.

John!
MARGO

John enters.

Oh God!
MARGO (CONT'D)

What is it?
JOHN

Isabella...
MARGO

Is she alright?
JOHN
(suddenly concerned)

She's not here!
MARGO

What do/ you mean?
JOHN

MARGO
Dear Ms. Margaret ... The lamb is on the oven. Oh / God John...

JOHN
You screamed.

MARGO
The lamb is on the oven...

JOHN
And -

MARGO

She's taken the night off!

JOHN

The neighbors will think / I'm killing you.

MARGO

She can't just take the night off willy-nilly. What are we going to do? *The lamb is on the oven!* What the hell is it doing on the oven?!

(beat)

Daniel's going to be here...

John pours himself a gin.

MARGO (CONT'D)

(gently re the drink)

Darling. Please.

JOHN

It's after five.

MARGO

Doesn't mean you have to get stinking.

JOHN

One gin is not stinking.

MARGO

One...

JOHN

What do you plan on doing with the lamb dear?

MARGO

I don't have a clue how to cook lamb.

JOHN

(enjoying)

You don't say?

MARGO

Oh shut up.

John strolls away casually with his drink.

Where are you going?
MARGO (CONT'D)

To my room.
JOHN

We have a situation on our hands here.
MARGO

John continues to walk away.

John!
MARGO (CONT'D)

Yes?
JOHN

You're a far better cook than I -
MARGO
(with charm)

This is very true dear -
JOHN
(playing along)

Here. The instructions are all written down very clearly.
MARGO
(hands him the recipe)

Then you can do it yourself.
JOHN
(gently)

You know I can't. I'll burn the whole damn lot.
MARGO

But darling, the instructions are very clear.
JOHN

You're enjoying this aren't you.
MARGO

You invited guests. You cook.
JOHN

Daniel is hardly a guest.
MARGO

JOHN
Then why are you making such a fuss?

MARGO
I wouldn't want his frrr-

JOHN
What?

MARGO
No one.

JOHN
Margo...

MARGO
You always do this!

JOHN
Tell me...

MARGO
You never let me have guests over.

JOHN
Daniel is not a guest, you just said so yourself.
(beat)
Spill the beans.

MARGO
He's bringing someone, just for cocktails.

JOHN
Who?

MARGO
Just for cocktails. That's all.

JOHN
Who is he bringing?!

MARGO
A friend. I don't know who, just a friend.

JOHN
I wish you would have told me.

MARGO

What difference does it make?

JOHN

I would have had my jacket pressed.

John moves towards the sofa and puffs out some pillows.

MARGO

This is exactly why I didn't - stop that!

JOHN

Why do we have so many pillows? You sit on this thing and you run the risk of drowning in polyester -

MARGO

This is exactly why I didn't tell you -

JOHN

You are never that thoughtful -

MARGO

And those are 100% Egyptian cotton.

He fusses.

MARGO (CONT'D)

You're getting into a state.

JOHN

Is it someone we know?

MARGO

Are you going to cook this lamb or not?

JOHN

No!

She growls at him. He strides to the bedroom.

MARGO

(calling to him)

I didn't tell you because you would have said no, and tonight is the only night Daniel could come over.

(beat)

You are such a bore.

(she growls again, softer)

(MORE)

MARGO (CONT'D)
(reading instructions)

Three hundred and fifty degrees.

She uncovers a piece of meat with a flourish
There you are ...*Pre-Stuffed...* *Drizzle with olive oil.* ...

She drizzles
Drizzled.

Admires her drizzling
Hello Lamby. What did they do to you poor thing? ... I'm terribly sorry for this. ... Into the oven you go.

(calls to John off stage)
Does Daniel eat lamb?

JOHN
(from the bedroom)
How would I know?

MARGO
Ratatouille. In. The. Pot. Turn on when guests arrive, stir after five min - set timer.
(calling to him)
Daniel said he'd be here by six.

John comes out with a new jacket on, he looks a little less casual. Margo sets the egg timer.

MARGO (CONT'D)
I preferred the other one -

JOHN
I spat toothpaste on it.

MARGO
Why would you do that?

JOHN
For a laugh.

MARGO
I swear that bathroom is like a Jackson Pollack painting after you've brushed your teeth.

JOHN
You can always use your own bathroom.

It's just not the same. MARGO
(beat)
I like your smell. JOHN
What are you a Labrador? MARGO
Awww... I miss poor Geraldine. JOHN
Her name was Goldie. MARGO
I never liked that name - JOHN
You never liked that dog. MARGO
I did. JOHN
No you didn't- MARGO
I did too. JOHN
Then pray tell my dear why I came home one day to find Goldie - MARGO
Geraldine - JOHN
The dog, not in her basket? MARGO
Oh she's much better off with that family, we were never home. JOHN
You were never home. MARGO
You were away for the weekend.

JOHN

I was away overnight!

MARGO

It was on a weekend. You are so pedantic when you're nervous.

(beat)

Darling, it's Daniel - and any friend of his...

JOHN

It's not like him to have friends.

MARGO

He runs a bar. He has lots of friends. Come on, we haven't seen him for over a year. We can accommodate.

JOHN

I hate it when you don't tell / me things.

MARGO

Just take a couple of those pills the Dr gave you, you'll feel better then.

He goes to the bedroom to fetch them.

MARGO (CONT'D)

(calling after him)

And get me a couple while your at it.

JOHN

(from the bedroom)

They are not tic-tacs.

MARGO

(calling to him)

Boring fart.

(back to the list)

Blah blah blah. ... *Fry the shrimp...*

(calling to him)

How long do you think I should fry the shrimp?

(calling to him, louder)

She doesn't say how long to fry the shrimp!

John comes back in and puts more gin in his glass to take his pill.

JOHN

Shrimp and lamb...

I do wish you wouldn't.

MARGO

Sounds like a dubious combination.

JOHN

It does rather doesn't it.

MARGO

I say cut the shrimp from the menu.

JOHN

Cut the shrimp?

MARGO

Cut the shrimp.

JOHN

Cut the shrimp!

MARGO
(in a show)

MARGO (CONT'D)	JOHN
"Off with their heads!"	"Off with their heads!"

Lewis Carol.

MARGO

That ones easy.

JOHN

She takes the pan and tosses the shrimp in the
garbage.

Goodbye shrimpy.

MARGO

Did you throw them away?

JOHN

Well yes.

MARGO

You didn't have to throw / them away.

JOHN

Oh don't start with your lefty lectures.

MARGO

JOHN

Just because **you** were born with a silver spoon in your mouth -

MARGO

Lay the cutlery will you. The nice ones.

JOHN

You my dear are simply astonishing.

MARGO

That might be the nicest thing you've said to me all year.

JOHN

And it's only March.

MARGO

Then things can only get better.

Margo loves John from afar as he lays the table.

JOHN

What is it?

MARGO

Nothing.

(beat)

This.

(beat)

Daniel coming over.

(beat)

It's like the old days isn't it?

(beat)

It's fun that's all.

JOHN

(gently)

You're a sadist Margo.

The egg timer rings.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(startled)

Oh God.

MARGO

It's alright. It's just the timer!

JOHN

Memories of the “Rise and Shine” croak at school.

Margo goes to the kitchen.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Margo who is in the kitchen)

“O! father and mother, if buds are nip'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay.”

(beat)

Well?

MARGO

(from kitchen)

I give up.

JOHN

You didn't even try.

MARGO

Auden, Yates, Thomas -

JOHN

Useless.

Margo sets the timer again and puts the lamb in
the oven.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You really don't know?

The door bell rings. She runs to the door.

MARGO

I just don't care.

She opens the door with a flourish.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Daniel! You're early.

DANIEL

Margo, you look... well simply ravishing.

He embraces her warmly and pecks at her neck, shoulders, whatever with his kisses, playfully.

MARGO

Aww Daniel's here! John look! Daniel's here!

DANIEL

I was hoping that the husband would be away so that I could finally have my wicked way with you, you gorgeous woman. What say you and I run away right now? Off into the sunset. I have my horse outside -

MARGO

Oh Daniel, stop it. Where's your friend?

DANIEL

Ah that.

MARGO

You said you were bringing a friend.

DANIEL

Yes, well - she is now otherwise engaged.

MARGO

Shame -

DANIEL

To a Russian Baron -

MARGO

Well why not -

DANIEL

Exactly.

MARGO

Here, let me...

She takes his coat.

DANIEL

Champagne.

MARGO

Lovely.

Margo takes the bottle towards the kitchen and dumps it into an ice bucket on the counter.

JOHN

Daniel.

DANIEL

You look nice. Are we going out?

JOHN

No, Margo's cooking.

DANIEL

Is that a joke?

MARGO

I'll have you know that I was once an award winning chef -

JOHN

It doesn't count if it's a radio play dear.

DANIEL

Going for Gold.

MARGO

You remember!

DANIEL

Of course I do.

MARGO

(to John)

You never remember anything anymore!

DANIEL

One of my favorite roles.

JOHN

Be careful this apartment can't fit a whole lot more of Margo's ego in it -

DANIEL

And what a wonderful apartment!

MARGO

Do you like it?

He just said so.

JOHN

I think it's awful.

MARGO
(to Daniel)

It's beautiful -

DANIEL

It's all on one floor -

MARGO
(to Daniel)

It's an apartment.

JOHN
(to Margo)

It's beige -

MARGO
(to Daniel)

It's magnolia.

JOHN
(to Margo)

Gin?

JOHN
(to Daniel)

Lovely.

DANIEL

Where's your friend?

JOHN
(to Daniel)

She ran off with a baron, and left him all alone - now lets talk about other things. Daniel.
Tell me... How is the club-life going?

MARGO

I've had a hellish week.

DANIEL

Oh no, poor baby. Come sit.

MARGO

Margo and Daniel take to the couch.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Fix me a martini will you darling?

John does.

MARGO (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Is that awful landlord of yours again asking for more money?

DANIEL

/ No.

MARGO

Because you know if you need...

DANIEL

Too kind Margo, too kind. Actually business is booming. It's just been a long week that's all. We have an act coming in from America this weekend and, well they are a handful to say the least.

MARGO

Americans -

DANIEL

Americans -

MARGO

You work too hard.

John hands Margo her Martini, up, in a rocks glass and Daniel a Gin.

JOHN

He's not blasting for coal. He just runs a cabaret / bar-

MARGO

It's dinner theater John. How many times?! Don't listen to him he's a grump.

JOHN

Charming.

DANIEL

Let's not talk shop. Let us talk about... bum bum bum...
(to Margo)

You!

MARGO

What is there to say? Look at us - we are just distraught at our new situation.

JOHN

I rather like it.

MARGO

Even the help has gone down hill.

DANIEL

How is Isabella?

JOHN

Don't mention the war -

MARGO

She comes and goes as she pleases. It's a disgrace. I don't know why we keep her.

JOHN

Because she stays.

MARGO

I pay her to be here. Anyway. Dear Daniel. Has it really been a year?

DANIEL

I suppose it has.

MARGO

How dare you stay away so long. I simply can't stand it. You didn't come to our apartment warming party.

DANIEL

Ah -

MARGO

I was most upset. This shoebox was filled to the rafters with faux-friends. Where were you in my hour of need?

DANIEL

Yes I -

MARGO

And of course John invited people from the *building*...

JOHN

You can't throw a party in an apartment and not invite your neighbors.

MARGO

(whispers)

Plebs.

JOHN

Now that's not nice Margo.

MARGO

I hope you have a good reason why you didn't come to my rescue.

Beat

MARGO (CONT'D)

Well?

DANIEL

I wasn't invited. In fact this is the first I've heard about it.

MARGO

That's impossible. Yours was the first invitation I wrote. I remember because I used the pen you bought us for our ten year wedding anniversary last December. Isn't that right?

DANIEL

I can assure you Margo. If I had received an invitation, I would have been here.

MARGO

I remember licking the stamp. John took them.

JOHN

Probably got lost in the post.

DANIEL

Yes, that's probably it.

MARGO

I thought you'd fallen out of love with me.

DANIEL

Never! I'm still your biggest fan.

MARGO

I get frightened here... It's hard not being... you know, on the outside, not being a part of things anymore.

JOHN

We've moved forty minutes down the road.

MARGO

Then why hasn't he come to see us?

JOHN

He has a life other than you darling.

MARGO

(with sympathy)

Awww... How is your mother?

DANIEL

The same.

MARGO

I'm so sorry.

The timer rings.

MARGO (CONT'D)

I must check on Linda.

She goes into the kitchen.

DANIEL

Who's Linda?

JOHN

I have no idea.

DANIEL

(to the kitchen)

Who's Linda?

MARGO

(from the kitchen)

The lamb! We bonded over some olive oil earlier on. Poor thing has been stuffed to an inch of her life.

DANIEL

(to John)

Lamb?

JOHN

I hope you ate before coming.

DANIEL

I thought Isabella would be at the helm so I didn't bother.

(beat - quietly)

You look well.

JOHN

What did you expect?

(re a drink)

Another?

DANIEL

I'm not done with this one yet.

(beat)

How / are you?

JOHN

Wonderful.

John pours a little more gin into his glass.

DANIEL

Maybe you should -

JOHN

Pour myself a drink? Don't mind if I do.

DANIEL

(beat)

/ John I wasn't going to come -

MARGO

(from kitchen)

Won't be a minute. I've just put the Ratatouille on. You must be starving after traveling all this way.

JOHN

(calling to Margo)

You seem to think Hampstead is on another planet. It's not!

DANIEL

I don't live in Hampstead anymore. I have a live-in nurse with Mother now.

JOHN

That didn't take you long.

DANIEL

It wasn't an easy decision to make.

JOHN

No, I'm sure it wasn't.

(sarcastically)

How long since your father died?

DANIEL

Don't start.

JOHN

Sorry. None of my business.

DANIEL

No.

JOHN

(beat)

Where are you living?

DANIEL

Clapham -

JOHN

Oh you're joking.

DANIEL

What's so funny?

JOHN

(laughing)

Nothing. It's perfect.

DANIEL

Yes.

(beat)

Happy days.

Margo re-enters

MARGO

What are you two talking about?

DANIEL

My new bachelor pad.

MARGO

You moved?

DANIEL

Yes, I'm in Clapham now.

MARGO

Oh god, be careful of those buggers on the common!

JOHN

Margo!

MARGO

I wasn't saying anything about being queer. I have plenty of queer friends. I just don't understand why they have to *do it* in the park like that.

JOHN

Margo!

MARGO

Honestly. He joins the Labor Youth movement and suddenly it's like living with Trotsky.

DANIEL

A little long in the tooth aren't you for rallying?

JOHN

I like to make friends.

MARGO

So we're skipping the starter, and getting straight to the intercourse.

JOHN

What?

DANIEL

What?

MARGO

You know, the course before the course - the main course - the intercourse.

JOHN

And what kind of intercourse will we be having Margo dear?

MARGO

Oh stop being silly. Come, come. Let's all sit at the table.

She pops the bottle of champagne.

DANIEL

The table looks lovely.

MARGO

We had to get rid of the other one - do you remember it?

DANIEL

Of course.

MARGO

Aww we had so many lovely evenings around that table. Do you remember that night with that ghastly date of yours. What was her name?

DANIEL

Natasha.

MARGO

Yes! Oh dear, she was up and down like a yo-yo. That cocaine is a terrible thing, I don't know how anyone has the energy to do it. She didn't even use a plate, just laid it out there on the table for the world to see.

DANIEL

She was quite a character.

MARGO

That table came from Europe... My mother took it with her when fleeing the / Nazi's in Vienna.

JOHN

Nazi's in Vienna, yes we've heard it before.

DANIEL

It's quite the story.

MARGO

Yes it is.

JOHN

I'm still not sure how you sneak a six foot table past a bunch of Nazi's in Vienna and bring it to London -

MARGO

(pouting to Daniel)

It wouldn't fit in this little corner -

JOHN

Unless she stuck in up her arse -

DANIEL

(distracting Margo)

Margo, your apartment is quite remarkable. My little studio flat would fit nicely in this dining portion of the room.

MARGO

Why move from that fabulous house Daniel?

DANIEL

I just couldn't take it after my father died.

MARGO

No...

DANIEL

Mother has gotten to be quite a handful. She doesn't have the foggiest who I am anymore... It's quite the thing really. She came charging at me with a knife you know.

Margo gasps.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I was coming home from the club, late, and she thought I was a burglar I suppose. It would have been forgivable if it was dark but *all* the lights were on and I was trying to speak to her, explain... She just stood there, stony eyed, wielding the carving knife I bought my father for his retirement.

MARGO

Couldn't she go into a home?

DANIEL

She won't sign the house over to me. Thing is Margo, she's senile but, she has no cancer or anything that will kill her anytime soon.

MARGO

Oh dear.

DANIEL

This could go on and on... I'd have to **sell** the house to pay for the **home** and then there would be nothing left.

The egg timer rings.

JOHN

That blasted timer!

MARGO

It can only do eight minutes at a time apparently. Excuse me a moment.

Margo goes back into the kitchen.

JOHN

You're not getting anymore money.

DANIEL

I didn't come here to ask / for money -

JOHN

Why else would you come?

DANIEL

Margo invited me. Let's try to be civil. For Margo's sake.

JOHN

She doesn't have any money.

DANIEL

I don't think it's appropriate for us to be discussing your wife's finances -

JOHN

She hasn't had any money since she put it all in "The Carrier" -

DANIEL

That was a fine film.

JOHN

Daniel, it was about a bike messenger! Everyone thought they were going to see a film about a viral epidemic.

He finishes his gin, it shows.

The sound of scraping from the kitchen.

DANIEL

(re the sound)

What's that?

JOHN

(calls to the kitchen)

Are you alright in there?

MARGO

(from the kitchen)

Yes... It seems I might have put the gas on too high...

They stay...

DANIEL

I don't think I've ever eaten Margo's cooking -

JOHN

Lucky you.

DANIEL

No I'm wrong, there was that trip we all took to the Lake District. What did she call it? Cooking...?

JOHN

Gaicho style. That lasted all of five minutes.

DANIEL

(fondly)

Yes. She had brought that little gas burner do you remember?

JOHN

I remember -

DANIEL

Almost set the whole tent on fire.

MARGO

What are you two talking about?

DANIEL

(to Margo in the kitchen)

We're reminiscing about our first -

JOHN

(to the kitchen)

And only -

DANIEL

(to the kitchen)

Camping trip.

MARGO

(from the kitchen)

Oh God. I don't know what possessed the two of you to stay.

DANIEL

It rained all bloody night.

(beat)

God it was so cold.

JOHN

Stop it!

Margo re-enters with a saucepan and ladle.

MARGO

Let me guess. You're both complaining about the fact that you were freezing your little nipples off while I was nice warm and snug in front of a fireplace, looking at fine Laura Ashley wallpaper.

DANIEL

Exactly.

JOHN

Yes.

MARGO

Everyone help themselves.

JOHN

And how should we eat this?

MARGO

With a spoon.

JOHN

Is it soup?

MARGO

It's food. So eat. Just pick out any black bits. It could be pan.

There are many black bits.

MARGO (CONT'D)

So what are you working on at the moment?

DANIEL

There's a lot of work to do for the party -

MARGO

What party?

DANIEL

The Parisian Lounge will be celebrating it's second anniversary next month.

MARGO

Oh goody. I love parties. Who's coming?

DANIEL

Just friends and family.

MARGO

I don't think you should bring your mother under the circumstances.

JOHN

He means people like us. Family means investors Margo.

DANIEL

I suppose I'll ask some of the resident acts to do a turn, maybe some burlesque -

MARGO

Tits. And. Teeth! Yes! You know I love a good party. Photos to document the evening are essential of course.

DANIEL

It needs to be on a small budget. Things have picked up, but we're not exactly flush.

MARGO

We can take care of the photographs can't we John.

JOHN

Do we own a camera?

MARGO

Hush. We'll need to dress the club a little for the occasion. Flowers for the tables -

DANIEL

Fish -

MARGO

What?

DANIEL

It's all the rage. Fish bowls as centre pieces.

MARGO

Instead of flowers?

DANIEL

It's all the rage...

MARGO

Alright then. How many fish bowls?

DANIEL

There are forty tables, so forty fishbowls.

MARGO

And forty fish -

DANIEL
Eighty.

MARGO
Eighty?

DANIEL
Yes, we can't just have one fish in each bowl.

MARGO DANIEL (CONTD)
They'd get lonely. They'd get lonely.

MARGO
Awww... Daniel, when are you going to find love?

DANIEL
Margo. You know my heart is all yours but you had to go and marry this one didn't you.

MARGO
If only I'd met you first.

(beat)
We'll take care of the fish and the photographer.

DANIEL
What would I do without you?

John goes to the drinks cart again.

MARGO
(whispers to Daniel)
He's on these new relaxation pills. Shouldn't be drinking.

JOHN
I'm still in the room.

MARGO
(still whispering)
I thought this might cheer him up.

DANIEL
I was just telling John how much I missed this.

MARGO
Exactly.

The timer rings again.

JOHN
That damn timer!

MARGO
The feeling is mutual darling.

Margo exits to the kitchen.

DANIEL
You haven't told her have you.

JOHN
That's none of your business.

DANIEL
Relaxation pills?

JOHN
Winter blues. I'm S.A.D.

DANIEL
John. You have to tell her.

JOHN
This has nothing to do with you.

DANIEL
You are my friends.

JOHN
Don't give me that, you haven't seen her in a year.
(beat)

Why now?

DANIEL
She invited me.

JOHN
Oh yes, she did didn't she...

...

JOHN (CONT'D)
So what happened to that little dancer friend of yours? Blonde thing -

Keeping tabs? DANIEL

He's a child. JOHN

He's nineteen. DANIEL

And your thirty five. Act your age. JOHN

Like you always did? DANIEL

Jesus. JOHN

...

Does he live with you in Clapham? JOHN (CONT'D)

What if he does? DANIEL

You're right - what if he does? JOHN

Screw you John! DANIEL

John, smirks.

I'm glad I amuse you. DANIEL (CONT'D)

Margo re-enters.

Sooo.... MARGO

Where's the lamb? JOHN

Not ready. MARGO

JOHN
How long will it be?

MARGO
Another hour... or two.

JOHN
For God sake Margo.

MARGO
We have bread...

Margo sits.

MARGO (CONT'D)
Go get it will you John?

JOHN
“He who is not a good servant will not be a good master”

MARGO
Nope. Don't know who said that. The bread lives in that box thingy.

JOHN
I know where the bread lives.

MARGO
You need to cut it.

JOHN
Oh? I was thinking of bringing the whole bloody loaf out to the table so that we can nibble at it like ferrets.

John goes to get the bread.

MARGO
(secrets)
I am secretly glad your friend couldn't come.

DANIEL
It sounded very serious on the phone so I thought it best to come alone.

MARGO
We need to talk about John.

DANIEL
Now?

MARGO

He's been seeing a doctor.

DANIEL

An affair?

MARGO

Don't be silly. It seems that he is (*mouths*) depressed.

DANIEL

He's seeing a psychiatrist?

MARGO

I-atrist, Olo-gist, I can't remember which.

DANIEL

I see. What does this have to do with me.

MARGO

He won't tell me what's going on, why he's... you know... (*mouths*) depressed. You need to talk to him. Find out, then tell me.

DANIEL

Tonight?

MARGO

Yes.

DANIEL

I really don't think I can help -

MARGO

Listen to me. I'm going to feign a headache, something terrible so that I simply have to go to bed. The lamb is going to take at least another hour anyway, that should be enough time. Then you can tell me all about it over coffee in the morning.

DANIEL

I really don't feel comfortable talking to him about this.

MARGO

We need your help. And after everything we've done for you...

DANIEL

Margo, this won't help -

MARGO

Daniel darling. Y

John enters with the bread

JOHN

What are you two whispering about?

MARGO

Nothing -

DANIEL

Margo is worried about you.

JOHN

I can't imagine why.

MARGO

Because your stinking all the time.

JOHN

Not all the time.

DANIEL

She thinks your unhappy.

JOHN

Me?

DANIEL

Are you?

JOHN

Impossibly so.

(beat)

I've been looking forward to a nice shank of lamb all night, and all I get is some metal burned ratatouille and, bread I have to cut myself.

MARGO

Trying to have a serious conversation with him is impossible.

JOHN

How can I have a serious conversation when all I can hear is my stomach?

Margo fanes a slight faint and Daniel rushes to catcher her.

DANIEL

(whispers)

Now?

MARGO

(acting)

The room - it just... started spinning.

DANIEL

Do you want some water?

MARGO

No... no... no thank you Daniel dearest. I suppose it is the worry that goes to my head.

She stumbles again.

DANIEL

I think you should sit / down.

MARGO

Lie down. Yes. I think I should lie down. Just for a short while maybe. A little rest from all the cooking in the kitchen. Would you help me Daniel? Would you help me to my room?

DANIEL

Anything for you Margo you know that.

John turns and finishes his drink.

MARGO

(acting confused)

John? Darling? Don't worry about Linda, I have it all under control. You know I've become quite fond of her...

DANIEL

Come along Margo. I'll tuck you in.

Daniel escorts Margo to the bedroom. John is left alone. After some time, Daniel re-enters.

JOHN

She's become quite a ham in her old age don't you think?

DANIEL

She's worried sick about you. She thinks your having a nervous breakdown -

JOHN

Technically I am.

That's not funny. DANIEL

But it is. It's all very funny. JOHN

John drinks.

You've had enough. DANIEL

Don't touch me. JOHN

John - DANIEL

JOHN

Go home. Make up a story to tell her tomorrow over tea or coffee or herbal infusions or whatever the hell you two used to drink. Make something up. It'll be just like the old days.

DANIEL

This is not the old days. You can't shut her out like this. It's not fair.

JOHN

Fair? Ha!

DANIEL

She's very upset.

JOHN

"We should never be ashamed of our tears."

DANIEL

You're impossible.

JOHN

Yes I am.

...

DANIEL

Dickens.

JOHN

Yes! Well done. That was a hard one.

DANIEL
Not really.

JOHN
Dear Birdie... You were always so good at this game.

DANIEL
I had a good teacher.

...

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Look at me.

(beat)
You look old.

JOHN
I am old.

DANIEL
No you're not.
(with kindness)
It's the gin. It's weathering you.

JOHN
As long as it's the gin.

...

DANIEL
I miss you.

JOHN
/ Not now -

DANIEL
You've always run away / from me-

JOHN
I can't do it to Margo.

DANIEL
But you can do it to me?

JOHN
Another ultimatum?

DANIEL

What would be the point? They never worked.

JOHN

I'm saving you from...

(beat)

You can pick up all the bloody go-go dancers you want.

DANIEL

You told me not to / come anymore.

JOHN

"I never wonder to see men wicked / but I often wonder to see them not ashamed."

DANIEL

You **told** me not to come anymore!

JOHN

You know this one.

DANIEL

I'm not ashamed -

JOHN

You don't know it?

DANIEL

You are the one who's married not me. *I* can sleep with whoever -

JOHN

Whoever -

DANIEL

-- Christ! **Who**ever I like, whenever I like.

JOHN

Yes you can.

(louder)

You can have it all.

DANIEL

Keep your voice down.

JOHN

You can fuck any Tom, Dick or Harry. Pick up any young thing that comes your way. Why change a habit of a lifetime?

Don't be so crass-

DANIEL

Fuck.

JOHN

(beat)

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

DANIEL

You're drunk.

JOHN

Wonderful!

John tries to get up to pour more gin. He doesn't succeed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's the gin, not the MS.

He tries to get up again. He gives up.

...

JOHN (CONT'D)

Fill her up for me will you Birdie?

Daniel doesn't.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(beat)

You didn't name the quote.

(beat)

The quote - who was it?

DANIEL

I don't know.

JOHN

Yes you do.

DANIEL

I don't want to play -

JOHN

Come on -

I said I don't want / to - DANIEL

Don't be a bore - JOHN

It's always about you isn't it. Everything always / on your terms. DANIEL

Here we go. JOHN

You had the chance you miserable sod. You had a choice. DANIEL

Leaving Margo was never / an option - JOHN

John? Is Daniel still with you? MARGO
(from the bedroom)

Yes dear, I'm still here. DANIEL

He's about to leave. JOHN

What? MARGO
(from the bedroom)

Daniel goes to the hallway that leads to the
bedroom door.

I'll come say goodbye before I go. John and I are catching up. You stay there. / You rest. DANIEL
(calling to her)

"The best of life / is but -" JOHN

Aright. MARGO
(from the bedroom)

Absurd.

DANIEL

...

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What did the Dr say last time you saw him?

JOHN

“Always laugh when you can, it is cheap medicine.”

DANIEL

It’s rude not to answer a question when asked.

...

JOHN

He says that MS doesn’t have to control my life, that **I** can control **it**.

DANIEL

What does that mean?

JOHN

Pills.

(beat)

Pills. Pills. / Pills...

DANIEL

Are your fingers any worse?

JOHN

Nope. About the same. I have tingling toes to match now. Oh, and I can get an erection again. That was a nice surprise.

DANIEL

No doubt meeting all those nice new people at the Labor Youth Movement helped with that.

JOHN

Jealous?

DANIEL

I just think it’s pretty sad, a man of your age.

...

JOHN

I don’t go Labor Youth meetings.

(beat)

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

I've been trying "alternative treatments".

(beat)

Political rally's...? It's the only thing I could come up with... She wouldn't want to go to a rally... She's so bored without you.

DANIEL

What's the treatment?

JOHN

Yoga.

DANIEL

What?

JOHN

You heard. I go to learn "Relaxation techniques..."

Daniel stifles a laugh.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(giving permission)

It's alright, you can laugh-

DANIEL

I'm sorry... it's just...

JOHN

Ridiculous?

Daniels laughing now.

DANIEL

You? Doing yoga?

Daniels smile is infectious.

JOHN

It's me and, four fat women in lycra and, the teacher is a stick insect with the longest arms I've ever seen.

DANIEL

I can't even imagine...

JOHN

She might have two elbows on either side of each arms because she does some things...

DANIEL

It sounds...

JOHN

And I'm the only one who farts.

DANIEL

/ Oh God.

JOHN

And there are mirrors all over the place so there's no escaping the cellulite. It's all just multiplied around me... A horror show.

DANIEL

What do you wear?

JOHN

I now am the proud owner of a pair of "joggers". I keep them at the gym so Margo doesn't suspect anything.

DANIEL

She might enjoy a bit of yoga -

JOHN

I'm there to relax.

DANIEL

What else? Tell me more...

Daniel pours himself another gin.

JOHN

The heifer, the biggest, insists on wearing lime green cycling shorts. It's like seeing sausage meat being squeezed into a radioactive skin. She loves to do her downward dog right in my face. I've tried every spot in the room but she's always right there.

(beat)

I think she fancies me.

DANIEL

Hard luck lady...

JOHN

Yes...

DANIEL

Do you remember Austria? What was she filming?

JOHN

Maiden / of the Mount.

Maiden of the Mount!

DANIEL

That was dreadful film.

JOHN

Yes it was. But the trip to Austria was fun. That sauna in the woods... Do you remember?

JOHN

How could I forget.

DANIEL

You were such a prude.

JOHN

Was not -

DANIEL

It took three shots of schnapps to get you out of that towel!

JOHN

Those apes were frightening -

DANIEL

I've never seen such hair on a man -

JOHN

Everything hanging out everywhere.

They laugh...

DANIEL

You didn't know where to look!

JOHN

Neither did you.

DANIEL

You were so English!

Margo enters, sobering the air.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Margo. How are you feeling?

MARGO

I heard you laughing.

(beat)

Please don't stop on my account.

(beat)

I thought I should check on...

She moves into the kitchen leaving them alone again.

...

JOHN

(quietly)

I miss you too Birdie.

...

MARGO

I'm afraid the lamb...

Daniel and John are in their own world, she sees.

MARGO (CONT'D)

You know I realized - as I was lying in bed, we have a wealth of dry snacks and microwavable meals that we could eat. We really should eat. Perhaps it was my hunger that brought on the headache.

Back to reality.

MARGO (CONT'D)

It's nice to hear you laugh John.

JOHN

Small tragedies should be laughed away.

MARGO

What's so tragic?

JOHN

Life my dear. Only life.

MARGO

I never know if your quoting or just being morbid...

Margo ducks back into the kitchen.

JOHN
Stay with me?

DANIEL
You're the one / who -

JOHN
Because I was afraid you would leave / me.

MARGO
(from the kitchen)
We have rice crackers -

DANIEL
I wouldn't leave you.

MARGO
(from the kitchen)
Maybe with marmalade?

DANIEL
Twelve years / John...

MARGO
There's sweet and sour pork -

DANIEL
That's a long time.

MARGO
I'll pop / that in the micro...
She turns the microwave on.

JOHN
I don't want to burden / you -

MARGO
We have left over stuffed mushrooms in the fridge from last night...

JOHN
I don't know what's going to happen to me.

MARGO
(beat)
(from the kitchen)
Well?

JOHN

(beat)

What are the mushrooms stuffed with dear?

MARGO

(from the kitchen)

Crab.

(beat)

So what would you like to have?

DANIEL

(towards the kitchen)

Let's have it all.

We hear the unpacking of plastic etc from the kitchen.

Daniel holds out his hand and John gently touches his finger tips. They love.

Margo quietly comes back in and watches them for some time.

MARGO

Come on, let's eat.

Daniel helps John up to the table and Margo comes back with a plate of cold stuffed mushrooms.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Stuffed mushrooms.

DANIEL

Delicious I'm sure.

They look at the plate.

MARGO

Well I'm starving.

She takes one and pops it in her mouth. Daniel follows suit.

...

Doesn't taste much like crab.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Or mushroom.

DANIEL

...

MARGO

It's a bit like eating a salty eye ball don't you think?

JOHN

How would you know what an eyeball tastes like?

MARGO

I was a zombie once -

DANIEL

Ah yes; Creatures up North.

MARGO

You remember!

DANIEL

How could I forget. You were the most beautiful undead thing I had ever seen.

The air is more settled now as they sit with each other.

...

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What else do we have here...?

MARGO

I forgot the marmalade for the crackers. How silly of me.

Margo goes to the kitchen.

JOHN

Birdie?

DANIEL

Yes dear?

JOHN

I will get very sick very quickly.

I know.

DANIEL

Margo re-enters with the marmalade.

MARGO

Here we are.

...And the microwavable meal is ready.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Like a yo-yo.

She goes again.

JOHN

You'll take care of Margo won't you.

DANIEL

Of course I will.

She returns with the plastic container wrapped in a tea towel.

MARGO

Well this one looks funny.

DANIEL

Oh?

MARGO

The sauce. It's bright pink. Look.

She shows them.

JOHN

It's the same color as your dress in Heavenly Angels.

MARGO

Yes... Oh John, you remember my dress!

JOHN

I was always your biggest fan dear, despite what *he* may say.

DANIEL

It's a close call.

(beat)

But I will admit a close second.

JOHN
You were so beautiful in that dress. With the small diamanté clip on your waist.

DANIEL
And that little net hat -

JOHN
And those long satin gloves...

They are holding hands now.

MARGO
That's where we met Daniel.

DANIEL
A thousand years ago now...

JOHN
(to Margo)
He followed you around like a puppy dog...

DANIEL
(to Margo)
I had never seen anyone as glamorous as you before... Standing on set in that pink dress with a halo around your head.

JOHN
(re the pork)
That color doesn't suit this pig.

MARGO
Pigs *are* pink silly.

JOHN
Not *that* pink!

Daniel makes a pig noise, they all join in and laugh.

The timer goes off again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
That thing!

MARGO
I've given up on Linda...

JOHN
Shall I turn the oven off?

MARGO
Might as well.

He gets up carefully.

MARGO (CONT'D)
(calling to John)
There's a byriani there if you want / to put it in -

DANIEL
If a byriani could make a sound, what sound would it make?

MARGO
Hmm...

JOHN
Don't go there Daniel.

MARGO
(re John)
Watch yourself the PC police is in the house!

DANIEL
Ne Naw Ne Naw -

Margo laughs...

DANIEL (CONT'D)	MARGO
Ne Naw Ne Naw Ne Naw Ne Naw Ne Naw...	Ne Naw Ne Naw Ne Naw Ne --

And her tears begin to fall...

DANIEL
What's wrong dear?

MARGO
Nothing.

(beat)
I knew you would cheer him up.

(beat)
You're just the tonic he needs.

Lights Down.

End of Play.