



A Common Woman

by Franca Rame and Dario Fo

Translated by Gillian Hanna

This is a scanned copy of the script for **Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company's** 1988-89 production of *A Common Woman*. The show comprised three one-woman plays by Franca Rame and Dario Fo, translated (and performed) for the company by Gillian Hanna: *Bless Me Father For I Have Sinned* (Italian production 1977), *The Rape* (1975) and *Coming Home* (1983).

Full information about the show is provided in its **Productions** page on the company's website (www.monstrousregiment.co.uk). Copies of the typescripts from which these scans were made are held in the company's archive at the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives.

These translations were published later, with only minor changes, in Franca Rame and Dario Fo's *A Woman Alone & Other Plays* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama: London 1991), an extensive collection of their work edited and introduced by Stuart Hood, with an introduction outlining her approach to translation by Gillian Hanna.

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BLESS ME FATHER FOR I HAVE SINNED

by

Franca Rame and Dario Fo

Translated by Gillian Hanna

Translation: © 1988 Gillian Hanna

Bless Me Father for I Have Sinned

As the lights come up, we see a confessional box centre stage. It is the only indication that the play takes place in a church. A woman enters dressed in a costume that makes her look like a gypsy. (Punk?) She is carrying an enormous bag. She moves cautiously. We get the feeling that she is being followed.

Jaysus, Mary and Joseph and the blessed ass!..don't say they're going to folly me right into the church! Now where can I hide?..In the sacristy..Well now where's the sacristy? This side of the choir or the other? (She's trying to find somewhere to hide all the while) Here's another two of the bastards....Sweet Jaysus they've got me trapped now..the confession box.. I'll hide in the confession box..(Goes to enter the box, but she stops) There's someone in there! There's a priest in there! Be God, these bloody priests get in everywhere! Well I'll make a confession then, so. Let's see if the polis have the neck to interrupt the Holy Sacrament...(She kneels down in the right hand side of the box. She speaks under her breath) Hello...ummm...I mean..Father..Father! God Almighty, he's asleep! (She knocks on the grille) Father, Father, wake up! Oh at long last! Father I want to make a confession and I'd like

to do it quick if it's all the same to ya...What do ya mean, it isn't possible..Oh you've fallen asleep again..Well, we'll have a bit uva chat and maybe then you'll wake up, what? Jaysus this is a new one on me, a priest who wants to go out for a cup of tay before he'll hear your confession! No, no, ya won't stir an inch from this or I'll throw a fit! It's me Holy Right to be confessed. I pay me taxes! What do ya mean, taxes don't come into it! If I'm not greatly mistaken we've a State Religion going here and if I'm not greatly mistaken it's the State pays your wages..us tax payers I mean: so I'm demanding me State Religion hears me confession..no taxation without confessionalisation!..Come on with ya now Father, hear me confession..I've such a tide of faith washing over me here, it's drowning me altogether...Pull yourself together now. Father and when we've finished, sure I'll stand you a cup of tay meself..Yes..well, will we begin? Alright then, so. ..What?..The last time I made a confession? I'll have to think about that for a minute, now. Of course I'm a believer, why else would I be here at confession? I'm a believing, practising, professing Catholic..the whole shebang ...! Twenty years...yes, the last time I made a confession was exactly twenty years ago - the day I got married..In church, of course..O the service was gorgeous altogether! Well to tell you the God's honest truth I

didn't want a church wedding. I did it just to keep his mother happy. She's a great believer. I'm a socialist! No, no I'm a believer too: a socialist believer! ...yes alright so, you'd be hard put to call me a great believer: Twenty years without making a confession, I'll admit that looks bad. But I've always been a great one for the self criticism..I do it nearly once a month at me Union meeting..Isn't that the some thing, now? Will we begin again? Yes, I'm ready.(She gets to her feet, solemnly) I solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but ...(Suddenly interrupts herself) What am I doing? Oh yes, I'm sorry Father, but ya know, I've been to that many trials..(Makes herself comfortable on the steps of the confessional) Oh I've been on trial times galore! (Takes out her knitting and begins to knit) Well now then, let's see..resisting arrest..grand larceny..and it wasn't so grand, was it, since I let myself get nabbed! If anything, it was clueless larceny! What do you think? No I am not a habitual thief..Only every now and again..no no, that was just my little joke, don't you know..Now, there was one little game -@ housewife's discount@, everyone does that, that's great crack..Terrific, really terrific! A whole gang of women - thirty or forty or fifty - from round and about go off to the supermarket for the messages.."How much is this?" "Three pounds" "Well we'll give you one pound fifty..that's an housewife's discount of fifty percent, and that still leaves you a fifty percent profit.." (She's amazed)..It's a sin, Father? A mortal sin? And what's inflation, if it's not a mortal sin? Well I did it

anyway..You'd better keep a running total of all me sins and then ya can tot up the penance at the end.Of course I've a family....A husband and a son.. no they don't steal.No, I don't live at home.. well, wherever I can, really...here and there..Oh, I know, I know..as a wife and a mother I'm not exactly a model of virtue.. well to tell you the God's honest truth..if I've turned into this dirty trollop you see here..it's just because I used to go beyond the beyond as a model of virtue. I'd have given me son the last drop of blood in me body.I even packed in me job for him..so's I could be near him and keep an eye on him personally..and it was a job I liked and all..I was shop steward and all..I watched over him like he was the Infant Jaysus Himself..And I ..well I felt like I was the the Holy Virgin..and as for the oul fella ..well he was St. Joseph, the ox and the blessed ass all rolled into one! Then the son grew up and he went to school and he got mixed up in those bloody politics..When he got to senior school, they were all getting involved in protests..you know, all the clashes with the police..United Ireland and whatnot..One time he came home to me, God he was massacred..blood from head to toe..I passed out with the fright, Father, I passed out! And from that day on, whenever he was a minute late, or if I heard an ambulance siren going, I'd start shouting: "It's me son! It's me son!" Father, Father, you've no idea what it's like to be a mother, Father! Mother of a provisional republican extremist! And then at home, the chiseler would be arguing with me and the oul fella morning noon and night..and you know me and him, we're both practising

Irish Labour Party believers! He used to call us every name under the sun. The nicest things he could find to call us were: "Social Democrats, liberal incense swingers!" God that used to really stick in me craw ! Oh God that used to make me spit! He was going up me nose, d'you see? (Raising her voice) "And where the merry hell are ya off to now? ". No, no Father, I'm not giving out to you..I'd hardly say 'merry hell' to you, would I? Really, I hardly even know ya..I used to say to me son:

"And where the merry hell are ya off to now?"

"I'm going out with the fellow patriots@

"And why? Aren't your Da and I your fellow patriots?"

"No, you're the FAMILY!!

And he'd spit the word 'family' at me like he was hurling a bucket of shi - i -...erm..(She suddenly stops and corrects herself) potting compost ...at me..

"No, no..yous, vous..Yez aren't fellow patriots", he'd say, "Yez are just hooligans.. Gets ..greasers, crawling up the Brits' arses, that what yez are!"

That's the sort of thing he'd say to me and the Da, d'ya see, Father?

(The next line is shouted like a slogan)

"Irish Labour Party's dumb, got their nose up British bum!..Irish Labour party's dumb, got their nose up.." and so and so forth. You know, Father it got to the stage where I'd start going on Sinn Fein demonstrations! Well, I couldn't just sit on me backside in the house

waiting for them to bring him home in a coffin, could I ..I'd get into the march, ten paces behind him so I could keep a sharp eye on him without being spotted. The worst of it was I had to shout the same slogans they were shouting so's I wouldn't stick out in the crowd. As long as it was stuff against the Brits that was fine..but when they started on things I believed in..screaming death to the Labour party at the top of my voice..Oh Jaysus, Jaysus Mary and Joseph, I felt sick to the stomach, Father..And then there was all the marching and the running...(She gets up and walks about as if she's on a demonstration..passes to the left of the confessional) And every time... (She realises the priest still thinks she's on the other side of the confessional, so she knocks on the grille) Father, I'm over here, Father...(Sits down) No I don't feel bad for going on the marches Father..it's just that every time I'd be shouting me head off with one of these slogans, wouldn't I find meself staring in to the eyes of someone from me Labour Party branch..maybe even the subscription secretary, standing there on the pavement..and hearing me coming out with all that stuff..and then they'd give me a sort of old fashioned look..And the end of it was they threw me out of the Labour Party. And all because I loved me son. Oh God, Love has really banjaxed me Father..It's really banjaxed me! You take a tip from me Father, don't you ever go and fall in love..Listen to this one, Father..There was a march one time, and I'd asked beforehand, "What sort of march is it tomorrow, Fellow Patriots?"

"Peaceful."

So I gets meself all done up like a dog's dinner for a peaceful demonstration: a pair of shoes with heels this high. (She mimes the height of the heels with her hand) A narrow little pencil skirt...Well there was a police charge..you'd seen nothing like it in a month of Sundays! We had the whole crowd of them up our backsides: Gardai, police dogs..Jesus, I even had the mounted police and the Customs and Excise after me! And me tearing off like an eejit on heels as high as Nelson's Pillar - if I'd fallen off them I'd 've broken every bone in my body..and the skirt pulled up to here so I could run faster..and every policeman in creation after me! And there's me, shouting "What the hell do yez want? Feck off out of this!!" Holy Mother, what a race..all the way down O'Connell Street and up Grafton Street and round Stephen's Green..I must have done the marathon, going like a bat out of hell! I was wrecked -sweating like a pig, the heart was lepping out of me..I was ruined altogether! I had soft boiled ovaries!..(Evidently the priest is reproaching her) Oh yes,I know, "That's not the right expression..." I'd like to see ya Father..Have you ever tried running in high heels? (Carries on with her story) Clouds of smoke! Rubber bullets! Tear gas! Incendiary devices! Molotov cocktails! And there was me..I'd lost the son..and I was shouting "Son, son, where are ya son?"..And every other son of every other mother was shouting back "I'm over here!" And then all of a sudden, didn't I catch a glimpse of the lad on the other side of the street in the

hands of a policeman who's belting him round his little white face-
"Whack, whack.."Well that was it, I let out a scream like a banshee! I
ran across the road.. never mind the smoke bombs whizzing past at
head height - and a woman's head height at that! I grabbed the
policeman by the helmet and sank me teeth into his ear..and if his
palsers hadn't arrived to drag me off.. well I won't tell you a lie..I'd
have eaten him whole!

I shouldn't carry on like that? But listen to me Father, he's my son.
I made him..I put nine months of hard work into making him: two eyes,
ten fingers, ten toes, all his teeth - and that bloody policeman was
going to ruin all my hard work in five minutes! So the son managed
to get away...Not me! They kicked the shite out of me and then threw
me into orison. Then I was out on trial. It went on and on it was
endless..and Jaysus, Father they went on and on about that bloody
ear!..And it wasn't anything to write home about after all..The judge
gave out to me in this tremendous voice: "You have attacked the ear
of the State!"What I went through! And all for love of the son! Oh
God,like I said, love has really banjaxed me, Father.! Now me
marriage..that was a love match alright..(She's inspired) O God, Father,
I loved that husband of mine ...(change of tone) before I married
him...No, no afterwards as well..but afterwards, when we'd set up house
and started to have our first raging shindigs ...(She stops suddenly
and tries to finds another word) ideological disputations...well you see
I didn't hold with the husband's

ideological-social-political-housekeeping. Well I worked eight hours a day just like him, only there was one great difference: when I got home I had to go on working the other eighty hours of the week as well: washing, ironing, cooking, making the beds. Himself? Oh no! In the door, straight into the armchair and wham! (Mimes turning on the television) Children's hour: Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men!!

"Well I'm not standing for this: I'm out all day, working like a slaveen", sez I, "I'm as shagged out as you are..Who ever said that Women's Liberation began and ended with a full time job? Well, lookat me..I've a full time job..but what about all this other work, the housework? Who gets stuck with that? I'm the bloody eejit who gets stuck with it! And who's paying me the wages for this job? Divil damn the one!! Grand sort of Women's Liberation I must say: Get married and find yourself doing two full time jobs!" And anywav the husband suffers from the asthma..nervous asthma..And when I'd got to the end of me tether..well, you know what I mean. Father..I just couldn't take any more..."I've had it up to here" I shouted,@I'm packin me bags!@ and aarrngh.. that brings on an attack..(Imitates the panting of an asthmatic) Hurhh, hurhh, hurhh...Flat out like a kippered herrin ..couldn't get a breath at all. Aaaaah!...Fut the heart crossways in me! "No, no, darlin, I won't leave you , I won't leave you! I'll stay with you for ever and ever!" So he gradually calmed down and the attack passed off and there I was, bugged again! And pregnant into the bargain!...Oh no father, I didn't think it was a disaster..I wanted this kid! He was part

of the five year plan! I was thrilled to be up the pole ...it was the real Alla Daley!! Nine months of gawking me guts up! In bed the whole time for fear of losing it! And in between vomiting attacks, I'd talk to meself in a passion of holy ecstasy! "This kid is going to transform me whole life," I'd say to myself, "What is a woman if she's not a mother? She's nothing! She's just a being of the female gender!". What a fuckin eejit I was!..Oh, sorry, Father, I meant what an awful gobshite...oh well, ya know what I mean, Father..! Yes, now I'm getting on to the sins..but don't ya see, if I don't give ya the run up to them then ya might get the wrong end of the stick..Well alright if ya say so, I'll skip over all that, and get to two years ago...Well, two years ago I discovered me son was inta drugs! How the hell should I know if they were hard drugs or soft drugs..I just heard the word 'drugs', and that was it, I was off..""He's a deviant...a dropout...a monster...! I'm screaming, tearing me hair out, "Where did I go wrong?", I asked meself, and then I asked the ould fella, "Where did you go wrong?" And all he could say was "Hurrhh, hurrhh..." (She repeats the asthmatic panting) And the son and all his shaggin pals weren't very impressed with me reaction: "Oh for the love of Mike will ya give over..heroin's one thing, that stuff can kill ya, but a joint every now and then, that's a different story altogether..". And there's me, wagging my finger at him, "I'm not as green as I'm cabbage lookin, that's a load of ballocks...drug taking is an ideological act and if ya don't give up this minute, I'll throw ya out into the street..you and all those

feckin pals of yours..and your little hoors as well..." Sez he, "What did ya say??!! That's a gross insult! I'm packing me bags..!" "Where are ya off to, ya little sparrowfart", sez I, "Round to your Granny's!?" "No, I'm leaving!" So I stick to me guns - I wasn't just talking for the sake of hearing my belly rattle - "Well, clear off, then, I don't give a tinkers damn what ya think.."..And the heart is crossways in me..bump, bump.. "I'd like to see how long ya'll stay away..I'll give ya three days..at the most...and then we'll be seeing ya running home to yer Ma..."

A week goes by. No sign of him. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep..and the culd fella .."Hurrhh, hurrhh...hurrhh, hurrhh..." (She repeats the asthmatic panting) I went looking for him..searched high and low..the sit-ins, the squats...Not a soul would open their mouths to me - well ya see, I was a mother! Archetypal symbol of reoression! Absolute bond of silence in the face of the enemy! "Aha! This lot won't utter a word to me because I'm a mother, is that it? Well, I'll banjax them..I'll malavogue the lot of them! I'll disguise myself.." As what? As a hippy..Yes, a hippy, Father! What are hippies? Well they're dropouts..spongers..layabouts...the ones who have a great life! Yes I know I was a bit old to be a hippy..."I'll be a tinker! Tinkers are ageless!" I said to meself..so I went off to the Oxfam shop and Cancer Relief and decked meself out..ya know the sort of thing..real Indian sari silk manufactured in Bradford - and I got meself done up like a dog's dinner..Tunisian sandals...a long Moroccan skirt..embroidered Afghan

coat, a Greek scarf from the Sinn Fein bring-and-buy - purple eyeshadow, a pink spot in the middle of the forehead, a gold cap stuck over the front tooth here - it was me sister's, it fell off one time three years ago when she sneezed - rings, glass necklaces and hoops in the ears...

So I took meself off to a house full of mixed hippies..males and females..and a few ould dossers flung in for spicers...I make me entrance...(She paces majestically to the other side of the confessional)...looking like a bloody Christmas tree! I was tinkling from head to foot! (She knocks on the grille)..I'm over here Father!..Will ya for God's sake pay attention! Now then, so..I make me entrance...for God's sake, even a dead dog would've lifted its leg at the sight of me! I take meself off on me own..go off into a corner and get sat down...dump me stuff and pretend I'm going to sleep..Then at the right moment I produce a little bottle of hooch I'd mixed up with my own fair hand! turps, cod liver oil, horse manure, a few shreds of roll-your-own tobacco, surgical spirit, iodine, a squeeze of toothpaste to give it a nice colour...Harpic...a drop of lemon juice, that never does any harm - and I start sniffing this concoction, with my eyes going round like Catherine wheels -solid gone, man! In three seconds flat, they're all in a circle round me. "What are you doing?" "Doing drugs, man". "What is it?" "Heavy, man". "Give us a go, will you!" "Well, be careful..I don't want any deaths on my conscience..." And away they went, poking my bottleen up their noses till I thought it was going to

come out of the top of their heads...."O man..this is heavy stuff.." Ya see what a power of good toothpaste can do ya - it can really blow your mind! Poor kids...well of course they were all over me..."Who are you? Where do ya come from?" I was an interesting item all of a sudden! O God, the tales I spun them, Father.."Me Ma's a direct descendant of Pocahontas..an the culd fella's a tinker from Connemara..I earn a bite casting spells and telling fortunes...and I live on chicken's blood and freshly slaughtered cats because I'm a witch"...No of course they didn't believe me. but they were very nice and let me stay with them...Me son? Never saw hide nor light of him.. Only once I caught a glimpse of him at a concert in the Phoenix Park.."That bloody little gurrier," I said to meself, "Now I'll get a hold of him"....So I'm trying to push me way over to him, when you wouldn't believe it, all hell suddenly breaks loose! All hell! They're running round like chickens with no heads, setting fire to the loudspeakers..and the stage..and the band..The polis wade in..Guess who gets nabbed straight off?..Right first time! So when they put the handcuffs on me, I sez, "Oh there yez are! I was just beginning to get worried!" They carted me off to prison so, but I was out again in a flash..three days later...because I had nothing to do with the fire.. So I come outside, and there's this great crowd of people: comrades and hippies and Sinn Feiners and feminists..they'd all come to meet me..They were waiting for me! They'd made a banner.."Free the witch Mammy!" Such a commotion, Father, a bloody great party! I'd no idea I'd

so many friends!...I hadn't done anything for them ...they just loved me..for being meself... There was a little girl right at the front holding out a hen: "Here's a nice cup of tay for you"..sez she..So that's how I really and truly began to live with these kids and I started to listen to what they had to say for themselves...At the start of it, I didn't understand a word..and then I did begin to understand. They were saying, "The personal is political...explore your own sexuality!"..Yes, Father, sexuality! Power to the people! Power to enjoyment! Power to the imagination! Make love not war!

(Sings)

@If you're going to San Fransisco, be sure to wear some flowers in your hair....@

Yes, Father, I'm calm...(She kneels down) Yes I'm listening..(She repeats the priest's words)...I have fallen into the abyss..the infernal abyss...moral degeneracy...moral disorder...O I see what ya want..order, is that it, Father? Order! ORDERS! RULES! REGULATIONS!

From the day I was born, my whole life long, I've had this rigmarole drummed into me..

One two, buckle your shoe,

Three four,close the door,

Five six, hands off your dicks,

Seven eight, don't be late,

Nine ten, do it again..

Stand up, sit down, be good,behave,

Your Mammy's your Mammy right into your grave.

Boys are boys and girls are dirt,

Hands off that thing that goes off with a squirt

(She is talking to an imaginary child sitting on her left)

Hands off the willy! Hands off the willy!

We don't play with the willy!! (Her voice getting languid) Little piss-pot... (She turns to an imaginary child on her right..she's suddenly angry) Little wizened cow!!

Well now, do ya want to know what I think, Father? Now pay attention, because I don't want ya to misunderstand me..I've found something out..Love is disorder! Life, liberty, fantasy..it's all disorder!..But you want to impose order on us, Father..making love just for the love of it, Father...without that millstone of engagements and dowries..."I'd like to introduce me parents..." It's gorgeous making love for the love of it, Father! I tell ya it's gorgeous! Well ya should try it before ya start to criticise! Father I did it once with a boy and I don't even remember his name..I remember his eyes, his nose, his mouth..I remember his hands and the things he said to me while we were doing it..."O God!..Mary, mother of God!...O Sweet Jaysus!..O that's good! O God, I died and went to Heaven!"...And he was an atheist! I'm a lost soul? Well now then, what would you say if I told you I'd found my way? I'm not a lost soul, I'm a free spirit and it feels terrific!! And I've

absolutely no desire to go back, to go home to me family..And that's what I told me son...Oh yes he came looking for me..He found me straight off..Ya should have seen him: smart suit, neat as a pin, short hair, tie. A right little toff he was...."Mother I've gone home! I got sick to the stomach of living like an outlaw..I've got my head together. I'm not smoking dope any more...Even Father's got his act together: he plays tennis, doesn't have asthma attacks any more...he's got a girlfriend, but if ya come home he'll give her the boot. COME HOME MOTHER"

(She mimes retching)

O God, I felt like throwing up! Yes, ya see, it all come to me in a blinding flash!...I could see meself back home..with all that shite: shopping, ironing shirts, never a moment to meself..ya know Father if I ever wanted to read the newspaper...I had to lock meself in the lav!
"No, son...I don't want..I'm not ready yet...ya see..." "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You're going round like an ould dosser!"..."I know, ya're right..And I won't go around like an old dosser any more. I'll find meself some little job..part time will do..just to eat and keep a roof over me head..But I want to spend the rest of the time with people...with women..I want to share what I've got with them ..I've a load of useful things inside me ya know...and in return I'll take what they want to share with me..their experiences..I want to talk..I want to laugh..I want to sing.. I want to sit and look at the sky..Did ya

ever know the sky was blue, me boy? I never knew that! No pet, I'm not coming home, not even if ya send a wagon load of polis to haul me back."

And that's exactly what they did! Sent a wagon load of gardai to fetch me home! ...Bad scrant to them ..that's what they did - me son and me husband laid a complaint against me: desertion of the family domicile! And to think, Father, the gardai had the bloody nerve to follow me right into the church..what do ya mean, where are they..They're over there - near the sacristy - do ya not see them?...Father, what are ya doing? Father, don't call them..Have ya gone mad?...Ya can't betray the sanctity of the confessional...(Runs to pick up her bag) Ya couldn't do such a...Shut yer bloody trap, will ya...(She runs towards the exit) No..I don't want to go home with the gardai! (Mimes being seized by the policemen and handcuffed) O alright then..let's go...as I'm an adult over the age of consent..I'll decide what to do with me life...(She stops suddenly, turns towards the confessional and shouts)..Spy! Spy! You're not a son of Mary's!! Spy! Spy! You're not a son of Mary's!!

Blackout. Music.

THE RAPE

by

Franca Rame and Dario Fo

Translated by Gillian Hanna

Translation: © 1988 Gillian Hanna

The Rape.

There's a radio playing. But I only notice it after a while.

It takes me a while to realise it's someone singing.

Yes, it's a radio. Romantic music: love .. heart ..moon ..June ..croon ..love ..

There's a knee, one knee, rammed into my spine ..the person behind me must be kneeling on the other one ..

Someone's gripping my hands with theirs. Strong hands ..twisting my hands in opposite directions.Twisting the left hand hardest..

I don't know why. I find myself wondering if he's left-handed.

I don't understand anything that's happening to me.

I'm terrified ..scared witless ..can't make a sound .. can't utter a word.

Everything filters into my brain slowly ..incredibly slowly ..

Jesus .. this is Bedlam ..everything's so mixed up ..

How did I get into the back of this van? Did they give me a shove and then watch me clamber in, or did they lift me ..pick me up bodily ..

I don't know.

It's my heart knocking against my ribs, that's what's stopping me thinking ..that and the pain in my left hand .. it's getting really unbearable now.

Why are they twisting it so hard?

I'm not moving a muscle.

An iceberg.

Now the one behind me has taken his knee out of my back ..he's found a more comfortable position ..he's got himself sat down and he's holding me between his legs.. from behind..that's the way they used to hold kids in the old days when they took their tonsils out.

That's the picture that floats into my brain.

Why are they squeezing me so hard?

I'm not moving .. I'm not screaming ..I can't scream. I've lost my voice ..

I don't understand what's happening to me at all.

They're still singing on the radio but it's not so loud.

What's the music for? Why have they turned it down now?

Maybe because I'm not screaming.

There are three others ..besides the one who's holding me.

I look at them .. there isn't much light .. not much room either ..

Maybe that's why they haven't stretched me out flat ..

I have the feeling they're very calm. Very sure of themselves.

What are they doing? Lighting a cigarette.

What the hell is going on? They're smoking? At a time like this?

Why are they holding me like this and smoking at the same time?

Something's going to happen. I can feel it ..I take a deep breath ..two

..three ..No it doesn't help. Doesn't clear my mind. I don't understand ..

I'm simply terrified ..

Now one of them's coming closer ..another one sits down on my right and one more on my left. I can see the red tips of their cigarettes.

They're breathing heavily ..they're very close.

Yes ..something's going to happen ..I can sense it ..

The one behind me tenses his muscles ..I can feel them ..circling my body.

He's not holding me any tighter, he's just tensed his muscles ..like he wants to be ready to hold me tighter.

The one who moved first gets himself between my legs .. he's on his knees ..he pushes my legs apart.

It's a very precise movement and he seems to be working in tandem with the one behind me because he immediately clamps his feet over my parted legs, to keep them spread wide open ..

I've got trousers on. Why are they spreading my legs when I've still got my trousers on? This is worse than if I was stark naked!

I'm distracted from thinking about this by a sensation I can't quite identify ...a sensation of heat on my left breast ..it's slight at first ..then more intense ..till it's unbearable ..

A burn.

The cigarettes ..through the sweater, right through to the skin.

I find myself wondering what you're supposed to do in this situation - I can't do anything at all ..can't speak ..can't cry ..

It's as if I'm outside myself ..I'm outside a window being forced to watch something appalling happening on the other side of the glass.

The one squatting on my right lights the cigarettes, takes a couple of drags and then passes them to the one between my legs.

They smoke them fast. The stink of the scorching wool must have unsettled them ..

They slit the front of my sweater open with a razor blade . They cut through my bra as well .. and there's a shallow cut in my skin ..later, expert medical opinion will measure the slash at eight and a half inches .. The one kneeling between my legs grabs my breasts in his open hands .. they feel icy under the burns ..

Now they're undoing the zip of my trousers .. and they all start undressing me; but they only take off one shoe, one trouser leg. The one holding me on the right is getting excited .. I can feel his erection as he rubs himself against me.

Now the one between my legs is inside me.

I think I'm going to be sick. I must stay calm. Must stay calm.

"Move your hips, whore ..show me a good time."

I concentrate hard on the words of the songs .. my heart is going to explode .. I want to drown in the chaos inside my head ..I don't want to understand what's going on ..I don't understand word .. I don't understand any language.

Another cigarette.

"Move your hips, whore"

I've turned to stone.

Now another one's inside me. He's thrusting harder than the first one. It hurts like hell.

"Move your hips, whore!"

The blade they used to slit my sweater open is waved in front of my face a couple of times. I can't tell whether they've slashed me or not ..

"Move your hips ..whore ..you're supposed to be showing me a good time!"

Blood's trickling down my cheeks into my ears.

Now it's the third one.

It's disgusting to feel a man inside you like this ..enjoying himself like a grunting wild beast..

"I'm dying .." I manage to stammer out .."I'm having a heart attack

They believe me ..they don't believe me . They quarrel.

"Let's get her out. No! ..Yes! .." Someone hits someone ..

They stub a cigarette out on my neck ..here.

It was at this point I think I finally passed out.

I can feel they're moving me ..the one that was holding my shoulders puts my clothes back on. He moves neatly. It's easy to do. He dresses me. I hardly move ..he was the only one that didn't take his clothes off ..I mean he didn't undo his flies ..He's nervous and upset because he didn't get a 'fuck' ..he's blubbering like a disappointed child, but I can sense his haste .. his fear. He doesn't know what to do about the ripped sweater ..he tucks the two strips into my trousers.

The van stops long enough for them to throw me out ..and then drives off.

I'm outside. I'm clutching at my jacket with my right hand to cover my bare breasts.

It's nearly dark. Where am I? Plants ..green .. grass ..

I'm in the park.

I feel ill. I mean I feel as if I'm going to pass out ..it's not just the physical pain ..it's the degradation ..the humiliation ..it's their spit on my face ..the sperm trickling out of me.

I lean my head against a tree ..even my hair hurts ..

Yes, they were yanking my hair to keep my head still.

I wipe my face with my hand ..covered with blood.

I turn up my jacket collar.

I walk in no particular direction ...I just walk ..

I find myself in front of the police station.

I lean against the front wall of the building, looking at it for a long time.

I think about what I'd have to cope with if I went in ..

I can hear the questions.

I can see their faces .. the smirks ..

I think about it.

I think about it some more.

And then I make my mind up ..

I'll go home.

I'll report it in the morning.

COMING HOME

by

Franca Rame and Dario Fo

Translated by Gillian Hanna

Translation: © 1988 Gillian Hanna

Coming Home

A woman mimes getting off a bus ..screech ..brakes ...the bell rings.
She looks round ..she's been jostled. She has trouble getting her
bearings.

Bleedin fog ..where's the name ..ah here it is ..."Nve Bevan Estate
..Clement Atlee House." So it must be over here ..careful now ..it'd be
easy to get the wrong block in this fog ..Bleedin blocks, they all look
the bleedin same! You'd think they'd have painted them different
colours - stripes, dots, squares ..parallelograms ..little flowers ..but
no, rows and rows of bleedin little boxes ..and every one the same
shit green colour!

(She turns to the audience)

This is it - the exact spot - the exact precise moment when the
balloon went up and my life went hurtling off the rails into total
disaster. I was already a bit upset anyway ... God, I don't know
whether I'm coming or going ..the entire day spent in bed with a man
..yes, me! A married woman with two kids. In a hotel bedroom. And it's
not even as if I was that crazy about him ..Well, he wasn't even my

lover or anything! I hardly even knew him ..well I mean I did know him before ..but I only got to know him properly today ..a bit too properly if you ask me.

It 's all my husband's fault .. it's all his fault I'm up shit creek without a paddle ..

Well anyway, this Horace ..yes, I'm telling you, that's the bloke I've been tangled up with in bed for hours ..I'd barely even set eyes on him before. He's a bloke who works in the same office as me. Yes, not bad looking ..Actually he's rather handsome ..But you see, to tell you the truth, 'handsome' isn't the be-all and the end'all, is it....there's a whole load of other things gotta come into it as well.. For starters, there's got to be that little something ..I don't know, the way he walks ..something in the tone of the voice ..the way he looks at me - you know, some little thing that presses all the right buttons and turns the lights on and bingo!..but Horace, well ..nothing! Horace had all the magnetism of a snail having a kip.

And anyway Horace doesn't smell right. Why? Doesn't that ever happen to you? If a man - or even a woman come to that - just doesn't have the right smell ..you know, the proper bouquet ..then it's dead duck from the start. There's no stopping me when it comes to smells ..I sniff everything and everyone ..Someone only has to pass by - that's it, I'm off: sniff sniff ..instant X-ray by nose.

What I'm saying is this Horace was a total non-starter ..even in the smell department ..he didn't smell of anything ..he was like an ice cube!!

And the only bit of him that I did know anything about was the bit that used to stick out of the cashier's window ..yes, Horace is the chief cashier. A bust. It never occurred to me that he might have legs and feet underneath. He was always "Half a Horace."

Yes of course I'd noticed he used to give me the once over me ..actually he used to track me down like a bloodhound ..he'd lift up his paw ..slowly, ever so slowly, his neck'd go rigid ..we'd say good morning ..and a huge arm would shoot out of his window, grab my hand and crush it like a nutcracker ..why is it that all men are obsessed with proving their virility by crushing your metatarsals ..and then for hours afterwards you've got to type one-handed !

Here we are ..this is the first block ..or maybe it's the second ..here's the sign ..if you could ever read it of course ..in all this fog ..Area Q. Row 2. Well that 2 could be a 9 ..and the Q could be a 0 ..and if this is 09 I'm bugged. It means I'm on exactly the wrong side ..three miles from home.

Maybe the Old Bill will come by ..On second thoughts, the only reason the Old Bill would come by here is if he's lost too.

I could stop someone ..oh yeah, great idea! It'd be just my luck to run into a sex maniac out taking advantage of the fog ..he'd leap on me, rape me in the first field on the left in among all the dog shit

..and then he'd leave me stark naked in the ditch ..after he's swiped my handbag of course. And that would really be the icing on the cake..that'd really put the tin lid on this lousy day I've had...Oh my God, it's enough to drive you screaming round the bend!

It got off to a really good start this morning with a flaming bustup with my husband ..about the way we'd made love the night before ..well, when I say 'we' made, that's just a figure of soeech ..he does all the making round here.

I got as far as twenty one ..I always count when he starts in on the bed business ..and that was it, he was over and done ..Yes,in twenty one seconds ..

What I'm saving is he treats me as if I'm one of the kids' video games... I'm the big yellow fish you have to chase into the blue maze ..hop, hop hop ..and gobble it down quick ..gnum gnum ..gotcha! ..yum, yum!

And then I had to go to the bathroom for a pee ..And I go back into the bedroom ..and look at him ..he's fast asleep already ..flat out on his paunch with his arse sticking up in the air ..So I rip off the blankets ..grab one of his precious Nike RoadRunners : WHAM!! A bloody great whack on his backside. He screams like a raging bull ..neighbours banging on the walls and the ceilings ..police

sirens..@neenah...neenah.@..Alright, everybody shut up! That's enough!

The party's over for tonight. But at 6.38 the next morning when the bleep bleep of the alarm clock woke him up ..there was I ..glaring at him ..and I gave him the lot ..the sum total of everything I'd totted

up on my pocket rage calculator: "I'm not going to let you lay a finger on me ever again! I've had it up to here with you!! I'm not going to be used as your slop bucket any more. I'm wiping the word 'humiliation' out of my brain. I'm going to get my own back! I'm going to stand in front of that shop where you prat about pretending to earn a living, and I'm going to kick up a stink the like of which you've never seen! I'm going to stand in front of the window beside all that other crap you sell with a placard saying " For sale: wife of Mr. Rogers, retail sales, washed and deodorised. full working order. Amazing reductions for Labour Party members, student nurses and UB40 holders ..Closed Saturday and Sunday."

All this time I was getting dressed. I was so furious I didn't even notice that I'd put on a blue and silver lame and lace number. And I was making myself up as if I was going to a fancy dress ball instead of the office. And in between insults I was hurling everything I could find that was mine into a holdall.

I'd packed my bags a few times before, but as soon as I'd got into the lift - or down to the ground floor at the most - I'd always turned round and gone back. But not this time! The count-down was unstoppable! I felt like a guided missile ..on the launch pad ..Ready to be fired.. All done up in lame and lace. I already had smoke billowing out from under my skirt!

"All systems go for take-off into the Universe?"

Don't drag the kids into this ..Still less your mother!

It's too late now! Engines are go ..Countdown! ..

Husband's voice: "Alright then, go, why don't you."

Wife's voice - mine: "Minus thirteen and counting ..twelve .."

"And don't come back!"

"Eleven ..ten ..Of course I won't come back ..what did you think, you'd speared me on the harpoon gun one day when you were out diving?"

Nine ...EIGHT!!

I can find as many men as I want ..men who'll respect me ..love me ..won't just use me when they feel like it ...Seven ..six! And don't you stand there smirking you self-satisfied bastard. I can find them. Actually I've found some already ..yes, that's right I've been unfaithful to you! SIX ...FIVE! ...well that wiped the smile off your face, didn't it? Unfai-ai-aithfu-u-u-! Four ..THREE!! Only they do it with a bit more style than you ..hop hop hop! My beloved twenty one second man! ...Two ..one! Lift-off!! We have lift-off!! Vrooom! Vrooom! One thousand metres and still rising!

(SHE SINGS AT THE TOP OF HER VOICE)

O husband mine,

O do not weep,

If I should lea-eave you-hoo-oo ...Vroom! Vroom!

I'm in orbit! Ten thousand metres ..Hu-u-usband ..I can hardly see you. You look a bit upset, dear ..a bit wobbly .. I think you'll just have to put up with it ..what do you think about that?

God, what a disaster with you lot these last few years. All those little girls of yours ..well it's true..these days girls drop their knickers in a flash ..but they put them back on just as fast and troll out of the door leaving you with a cold bum on the floor . They're so available:

"Fancy a kiss?"

"Sure, let's kiss!"

"Fancy a fuck?"

"Sure, let's fuck!"

And you still haven't got it into your thick heads that they're the ones who are fucking you ..you're screwed and double screwed!

And to think that all you're after is a bit of tender loving care, poor babies!

"Bloody women! Bloody bitches!"

Whee! You look so far away!

Oh God, my head's going round ...

(CHANGE OF TONE)

Oh hell, it really is going round, with all the muck I've been knocking back all day ..

Alright,that's enough loafing about doing sod all ..I've got to make my mind up ..I've got to go home.

And how am I supposed to face them after that scene with the missiles this morning?

Maybe it'd be better if I waited here in the street ..it must be just about time for him to get home too ..I don't want to get into a fight in front of his mother and the kids ..

Oh hell, now I come to think of it, I walked out this morning with out even saying goodbye to them ..

" Your mother can bring up the kids ..She'll be right in her element now...not having me under her feet any more .."

I must have really gone into orbit this morning ..

I trolled out of the house ..dragging that bloody bag behind me ..I was still in a right state when I got to the office ..actually I never got as far as the office ..I stopped at the pub underneath ..disaster these new opening hours, you know ..leading young office workers astray ..I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was him, Horace. The Hand Mangler. This time he was making do with crushing my shoulder blade .. I looked at him ..Crikey!! He was a whole person .. I mean he had legs as well. He invited me to join him at a table. He clocked that I was gob-smacked. I gave him a quick sniff on the side. Well, he smelt better than usual. He'd got hold of one of my hands, and he was managing to stroke it without breaking any bones. He was gazing at me, but with a different expression; he didn't look like a boiled sheep's head ..Actually he looked quite nice ...yes ..rather tasty...May be it was me ..maybe I just happened to be in the right mood ..of course the two dry martinis I'd poured down my throat must've helped.

"It's getting late. We ought to go up to the office", he says to me..
wolfing down two huge bread rolls as if they was Junior aspirin.

"The office? No chance. Not today. I feel too ill. I've got to go for a
walk ..I've got to get some air."

"I'll go with you."

"Thanks." I gulped down the Campari he'd ordered in one go - no
lemonade - I might as well have swallowed a glass of petrol .. We're
outside ..we're walking. God, there's blast of cold air whistling right
up my skirt! What the hell did I think I was doing putting on this
lace and lame number? My backside's freezing. My feet are killing me
and I've got a thick head ..

We're in Kings Cross, and I remember that I've got trousers and a
jumper in the bag. There's a hotel right in front of us.

"Listen shall we go in?"

He gapes at me. He's so pale I think he's going to pass out.

"I'm cold ..and I've got to change my clothes."

I go in. He follows me. I show them my Access card. He does the same.

His hands are shaking. Not me. I'm mega-cool.

I'm off my head! I'm completely off my head!

"I'll make you pay! I'll make you pay for those twenty one seconds!

Kids!! Your mother's a slag!"

Indescribable smell in the corridors: wellington boots, stale
smoke,tom cats. Disgusting room: the stink of two thousand bonkings
suspended in mothballs.

Before I can make my mind up to take my clothes off I smoke three cigarettes. Then I have second thoughts and I jump under the sheets fully dressed ..minus the shoes.

"What the hell am I doing up here?"

There are two little bedside cupboards ..I keep expecting the doors to burst open and my two kid's heads to pop out shouting:

"Mum! Mum! Don't do it! Don't do it!"

Suddenly I sneeze ..my feet are frozen ..I'm beginning to get a sore throat too.

"O Christ, I, going to get ill here ...I'm going to die in this room ..with this hand mangle I hardly know!"

I turn my head to look at him: he's as naked as the day he was born!!

"You've taken all your clothes off!" What's he up to now?

With one bound he hurls himself on the bed ..to grab me! I just manage to dodge out of the way ..Wham! Horace smashes straight into the picture of the Queen hanging over the bed - Annigoni - well it's an old hotel - What an arsehole! He's so dazed he starts saluting it ..

Then he picks himself up and starts trying to grab hold of me again .

"Stop!" I shriek "Horace,one moment please! For six years all I've seen of you is your upper half. For two yeears you've been shaking my hand.

For two hours I've been chatting to you ..and after only five minutes together in a bedroom you leap on me stark naked? What are you?

Some kind of sex maniac?

Well that seemed to upset him. All hell breaks break loose!! Horace bursts into tears and starts howling like a baby!

"What sort of kick do you get out of making an idiot out of me? You're destroying me ..Christ, I've got enough woman trouble on my plate without you starting in on me ..I'm practically impotent ..now you want to chop my balls off altogether!"

So then, in between the heart-rending sobs, he pours out the story of his life ..all his frustrations and neuroses going back (naturally) to his childhood ..at twenty two he still hadn't made his mind up whether he was A.C. or D.C. ...so he didn't go out with anyone ..he just J.Arthured like a goodun ..even behind his cashiers window .

At twenty three he took up boxing in search of his masculinityand immediately fell hopelessly madly in love with his trainer Francis, an ex welter weight champion .. a barbarian who couldn't see the light of love in Horace's eyes ..he used to rough him up ..and Horace was too besotted to look out for himself ..

He had to give it up after a few months because of the multiple fractures and terrible swellings all over his face ..

At twenty five he got married and separated in the space of a month ..to a good clean-living girl ..she was a dental mechanic ..

So now, having reached the age of thirty five, he divides his attentions and passions between Ali-Budhba, an Ethiopian who's the barman in the pub beside Waterloo Station and Tracy Rogers...from Peckham ..that's me!!

Yes, I am Tracy Rogers in person! And I have just found out that a barely breathing trunk of a man has been lusting after me in silent desperation for years ..I have been his dream woman ..the unattainable object of his desire ..

Now I'm listening to him, and I'm smoking, I'm stupefied ..There was me thinking he was a dreary old fart ..This Horace ..a man with no passion, no past ..and look what a tormented soul he turned out to be!

Well this really was a turn on!

He was holding both my hands very gently.

" You're the only woman I don't feel like running away from ..I feel strong when I 'm with you ..I feel almost like a man .."

" Wait and see, you'll find out that I'm Francis.the ex-welterweight boxing champion, Ali Budhba the Ethiopian ..and the qualified dental mechanic as well ..all rolled into one.."

I'm joking of course ..but he just smiles at me ..he doesn't even take offence.

I make the decision. I take my clothes off.

His face is still streaked with tears. I feel a bit awkward. If I haven't got the wrong end of the stick, I'm the first real woman he's ever had.

I can feel myself dripping honey from head to toe.

I'm taking on a big responsibility here. What happens if I make a mess of it too?

We fall into each other's arms.

"It's O.K! ... It's O.K! ..."

It's like being in a film ..a film with dozens of frames missing ..and then suddenly there are thousands too many ..and they're from a different film altogether ..Everything's rushing by ..and then suddenly everything's in slow motion ..I'm lying in cotton wool ..I'm floating in the sheets. Our words slow down .. our movements slow down ..I'm breathing bubbles like I'm swimming in Babycham ..My heart stops for minutes at a time.

Every now and then I try and get my breath back ..but he catches me up again and carries me off in a whirl ..up onto the mountain tops ..It's so beautiful! Finding out about yourself is so beautiful! After twenty years of doubt he's starting his life again ..he sighs ..he trembles ..he mutters strange phrases ..O Christ ..don't say I'm going to end up falling in love with Horace!

I stop him for a second:

"I'm warning you now, if you get carried away and call me Francis or Ali-Badhbú in a moment of passion, I'll open the window and throw you out!"

Well, that was a stupid thing to say ..it was a good job he was so neurotic already!

By the time we left the hotel it was dark. I'd put on the trousers and sweater I'm wearing now . I feel as if I'd had ten Turkish baths, two saunas and eight Swedish massages .. I must have lost half a stone ..We go into a pub near the station.

"Two cherry brandies".

"Want a bite to eat?"

"No thanks. I'm not hungry."

He wolfs down three rolls., two sandwiches, four slices of cake and a bag of dry roasted...

I'm going home. I got on the tube. When did I decide to do that? I'm pissed ..I force myself to keep my eyes open.

I have to get off at (the Elephant). It's foggy...

I come out and the bus is there already .. It's about to go ..And now here I am stuck in all this fog ..

And my husband who's decided not to come home ..

Maybe he's gone in already ..before I got back ..I can't hang about like this any more ..I'll go up. Staircase R. There's the lift. Am I really in the right place? I can't even get my bearings from the smell ..everything always smells the same here: stink of dustbins, cat pee and disinfectant from the bogs. Once I made a mistake and ended up two blocks further over. I was still on the the sixth floor The door was open and I went in. Fortunately it was one of the flats with different fittings: white formica. You see we didn't get any choice about the colour of the fittings in these flats - like we didn't get

any choice about the blackmail they get out of us for the rent -
they only come in two sorts: white formica or red formica . I've got
red formica.

Thank God the lift's already on the ground floor. The sixth floor
button is the worn out one.

What a load of rubbish! Who the hell writes all this stuff ..

Oh, here's a new one:

"How many men does it take to tile a bathroom?" @One if you slice him
thin@..

Here we are. This is my glorious great landing ..and here's the lovely
big damp stain .. and all the lovely flaking plaster that drops off the
wall if you so much as glance at it ..

Kick the bloody wall! ..Christ, a bloody landslide!

Never mind, they'll blame the kids.

Take a deep breath ...preparatory to reestablishing my presence in the
daily routine of my domestic shitheap.

Put the right key in the lock of the right door.

Bleedin lock, it's for ever sticking..

Ah, there we are ..In we go ..Pitch black as usual in the hall ..Aaargh!!

What's that? The coatstand! So they've thrown it out already have
they? That's nice! So you really thought I wasn't coming back, huh? Oh
well, away with the good life ..let's start chucking all the furniture
out!

Where are you, then? No answer? No-one at home?

Oh there she is, Saint Mother-in-Law herself, knitting away under her twenty watt bulb - well she doesn't want to waste the electricity, does she?

She barely turns round.

"Is that you? Back already?"

This is obviously meant to get me riled ...what she's saying is:

"Aha, bold as brass this morning, and now look at her, creeping back with her tail between her legs."

"Ha, I'm not falling for that one ..I'm not going to even deign to answer ..Lady FairIsle!"

Bleedin 'eck, look what they've done to my kitchen ..these plates are filthy ..these saucepans are disgusting ..thick with dirt ..typical, you don't miss a chance do you ..taking advantage of a crisis ..a poor woman finds herself wandering the streets in the bitter cold, starving hungry, dressed in blue lame and freezing her arse off ..she gets pissed on aperitifs ..goes into a hotel ..hang on a minute Trace! Walls have ears!.

O.K.! You lot! Come and wash up this festering heap of dirty dishes!

Now I see what's the matter ...they've got the telly on. Ki-i-i-ids!

Turn the sound down! How do expect me to tell whether you're home or not with that row going on?! I said turn it down!

Now what's that? It's him! The old man coming in ..he doesn't have to batter the door down!

Shh! I'd better keep my trap shut ..better not to pass any remarks ..I think I 'll stay in here out of harm's way ...I'll keep a rolling pin to hand ..just in case ..

What are they up to now?

(SHE LISTENS)

Listen to the two of them, mother and son, nattering away, thick as thieves ..that Welsh mumbo-jumbo of theirs ..they do it deliberately so you can't understand a word they say ..they're having a good moan about me - as usual - I don't know how you're supposed to stop yourself turning into a racist ..

God someone's just got slapped. Which one was it? The youngest - as usual ! Well of course, of course it would be ..because he's the one that takes after me! Well do-o-one! That's it, go on..give it to the one that's least able to defend himself!

Oh God, I'm shaking like a leaf ..I can't breath ..I'm one of those people who just can't take a whole day of making love on an empty stomach in a sleazy hotel - especially when I'm up to my eyebrows in Campari. What'll I do? Drop dead right here? ...No, better die in bed... Jesus, my head's buzzing ..I'm ill ..I can't undress myself ..I'll have to get under the covers the way I am ..that makes it twice today I've got into bed fully dressed ..Dear God, I must be in a bad way ..I don't even recognise the smell of my own bed ..the pillow ..the sheets ...just

a bleedin minute! I can smell a woman...and it's not me!! Didn't waste any time, did he that bastard! He's got another woman in already ..What am I talking about? In the afternoon? With Lady Fair-Isle in the sitting room? Mind you,I wouldn't put anything past that one.I bet she'd give Cynthia Payne a good run for her money.. ..she's air eady started hurling the furniture out ..Ooh my head! I've got fireworks exploding in my brain ..the room's going round ..I'm going to throw up ..What's happened? They've all gone quiet out there ! ..Someone's opened the bedroom door ..they're peering at me ..He's coming in ! Who's that man? Don't be a berk, who do you think it is? It's yourusband. What's going on now? Everything's gone wobbly ..like in a hall of mirrors .. The room's stretching out like a corridor ..my husband's all woozy ..he's gone a funny shade ..what's he doing? Ah...he's trying to give me something to drink ..God I hope it's not another Campari ...no it's soup ..I think ..

He said something under his breath .. Can't understand a word ..Oh well, let's get on with the soup ..

What're you doing? No, whatever you do, don't turn the light on ..my head's exploding ..Yes, yes, let's stay in the dark.

He's here ..he's sat down on the bed ..he's still for a bit ..we sit here in silence.

What the hell's that? Is that you touching my head?

Ah, you're stroking me ..that's nice ..yes, yes, run your fingers through my hair ..that's so nice ..but gently ..do it gently.

Is that you taking off my trousers? Sorry, I haven't a clue what's going on ..A second ago you were sitting up here by my head, and now all of a sudden you're down at my feet.

Yes, take my tights off ..gently ...oh that's so nice!

God I feel as if I'd been whizzed up in a blender all day.

Yes, my jumper as well ..oh I feel good ..God I'm peeing myself! Oh no, I spilt the soup ..all over me ..

I'm sorry, I'm pissed ..who said

"Me too!"

"You did?"

It sound like you're talking through a megaphone.

Go on, then, talk ..keep talking ..I like that booming sound ..Have you been drinking too? Night Nurse and brandy? You must be nuts! That stuff's lethal! Yes, yes ..I feel the same ..first I get bigger and bigger , and then I get smaller and smaller ..my foot's over there ..I've got one hand on the ceiling ..you're not angry with me any more? After this morning?

Oh thank God! ..No, me neither ..Don't be silly ..All that crap I was coming out with ..

Peace ! Sweet peace! Oh I'm so happy!

Ooh, I love my old man's smell tonight! ...sniff ...sniff...ooh I love it!

What a day! What a night! All day with Horace ..all night with my husband! Non-stop love making without a breather!

That's it ..from tomorrow on, I'm going to start drinking like a fish ..that'll give Lady Fairisle something to whinge about!

"What a way to carry on! It's not nice! A lady never drinks! What a disgrace!"

Fabulous! How long is it since we made love like this!

It's probably my fault he sometimes only manages to get up to twenty one seconds.

It's up to me to light his fuse - that's must be why he hasn't been going off at all! Oh Jesus, I'm in an twelve programme washing machine ..I'm talking rubbish ...I'm bursting into bloom like a gorse bush ...I'm sprouting blossoms that'll drive hornets insane! And he's saying:

"It's great! It's wonderful you came back this evening. I wasn't expecting you till tomorrow at the earliest .."

"Liar! You threw all the furniture out! You and that mother of yours!"

"My mother can go to hell ..I love you! I love you!"

"I was unfaithful to you today ..with a trunk of a man.."

"With who? Who cares ..I had it coming to me ..hold me tight ..I want you..I want you madly .."

"Alright, but look out .. if I see you thinking about Ali ..or the dental mechanic ..."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Nothing ..nothing ..I was kidding ..I'm pissed .."

God, what a night!Joan and Bungalow Bill (Sodom and Gomorah) had nothing on us!

"Don't make so much noise! You'll wake the kids up ..and your mother!"

No, no never mind ..talk to me .. scream ..I can't imagine anything more wonderful than waking her up .. her eyes on stalks and her nails chewed down to the quick hearing her son making mad passionate love to me!

O God, he's starting all over again, the big bear! I've had it this time! I'm going ..this time I'm really going to die ..I'm going ..ooh, what a great way to go!

(PAUSE)

Hmm? What? Where am I? Berk ..I'm in bed. My bed. It's coming back to me ..slowly .. now let's take this slowly ..it's slowly coming back to me

..

What's that clattering?

Ah. forks and plates. What time is it? Maybe it's dinnertime already ..maybe they're all in there having lunch.

Bloody hell, I went out like a light!

Oh God, the office! Don't be daft, it's Saturday.

Alright then, let's get this day on the road. I'm in a right state!

Head like a lead balloon ..muscles ..bones ..I'm wrecked all over.

That's my husband's voice:

"Shut up, you lot, your Mum's asleep"

"Bless him!"

Well I'd better get up then. Dressing gown? Where the hell's my
dressing gown? Oh never mind, I'll put on my trousers ..sweater
..shoes?

Here ..Oh Lord, I've still got the staggers ..

Open the door ...

Jesus H. Christ! Who are all these people? All these strangers sitting
round my dinner table?

A man who isn't my husband.

An old woman who isn't my mother-in-law.

Two children who aren't my children ..and the cat in the armchair isn't
mine either!

Oh God, they're all staring at me ..gobsmacked! Like goldfish!!

Suddenly everyone looks towards the hall. The key is turning in the
lock. The door's opening.. A woman comes in. She's wearing an overcoat
..she's carrying a suitcase .

"Mum! Mum!" the kids rush to meet her ..

Everyone's turning round to stare at me ..I feel like a vegetarian at
a meat packers' convention..

I go to the coatstand ..take down my coat ..pick up the holdall ...

"Sorry ..there seems to have been a bit of a misunderstanding ..oh
well, these things happen, don't they?!"