



Preview Script

“The Café Sirocco”

The Café Sirocco

By Tony Layton

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Tel : +44 (0)700 593 8842
www.playsandmusicals.co.uk
sales@playsandmusicals.co.uk

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Synopsis

Henry and Melissa, an unhappily married middle-aged couple, have each arranged a secret rendezvous with would-be lovers. Unfortunately for them, their liaisons take place at the same location, the Café Sirocco. Coincidentally, the people they are meeting are insurance clerks who happen to share the same office.

Lying becomes the order of the day when all concerned try to bolster their basically boring existence.

A cold north wind is the hand of fate that forces Henry and Lucy to leave the pavement table and to enter the café, bringing them, eventually, face to face with Melissa and Gareth. The fabric of lies begins to crumble relentlessly.

When the deceptions are laid bare a wind of change runs through all their lives and perhaps things will never be the same again.

Cast

André	The dapper, french owner of the Café Sirocco
Gareth South	Thirtyish, good looking and love starved
Henry East	Middle-aged, middle class philanderer
Lucy North	Thirtyish. Attractive. Smart. A working girl
Melissa Stratford-West	Attractive, sensuous middle-aged wife of Henry
Wino.	A vagrant (non-speaking role)

Running Time

Approximately 45 minutes.

Set

The stage is split between the outside and the interior of a trendy brasserie. There is a table stage right (on the pavement) and two tables stage left (inside the café). The set is divided centre stage by a swinging door. The café is situated on a south-facing British coast.

“The Café Sirocco.”

André is setting the pavement table with a menu, a flower in a vase and a bowl of nuts. He returns inside to set the other tables. A bedraggled wino approaches the pavement tables. He helps himself to a handful of nuts then sits at the table. André comes out and angrily shoos the wino away with his napkin. André sees that the nuts need replenishing and takes the bowl inside. Lucy enters stage right, approaches the pavement table and sits. André returns with the nuts. He picks up the menu on Lucy's table and presents it to her with an extravagant flourish. Lucy shyly accepts it, and buries her head into it. André returns inside. He puts on some typically french café music circa 1940-45. Gareth and Melissa enter stage right, passing Lucy who still has her head covered by the menu. Gareth opens the door for Melissa, and they enter the café.

Melissa	I didn't know this place existed.
André	Bonsoir, madame; m'sieur.
Melissa	So charming!
Gareth	Evening!

André helps them both to sit.

Melissa	Absolutely charming.
André	Welcome to the Café Sirocco. Enjoy your evening. I leave you to look at the menu.

André goes out to see Lucy who shakes her head and buries her head in the menu again. André enters the café and exits stage left to the kitchen.

Melissa How did you find this place. It's gorgeous.
Gareth One of my favourite haunts.
Melissa It reminds me of Boulogne.
Gareth Does it?
Melissa We used to summer there before it went all day-trippy.
Gareth It's happening everywhere.
Melissa Isn't it. St. Tropez's exactly the same. Full of coach trips and lager louts.
Gareth The seafood is fantastic here. The lobster's ... (*Touches his puckered lips with finger and thumb and draws them away quickly to indicate perfection*).
Melissa I could eat lobster all day, every day.
Gareth Lobster it is then. Waiter! And what do you say to a young, white, dry Bordeaux?
Melissa Perfect.
Gareth Waiter!

André enters quickly from the kitchen pad and pencil at the ready.

André Please, m'sieur. Andre, if you wouldn't mind. I prefer.
Gareth Certainly, Andre. We'll have your succulent lobster.
André Lobster for two. With salad?
Gareth (*Melissa nods*) Oui, oui, s'il vous plait.
André Merci. And may I suggest a beautiful liver pâté to start? I make it myself.
Gareth Sounds good. Why not.
Melissa Delicious!
Gareth And a white dry Bordeaux to wash it down.
André White dry Bordeaux. I 'ave just the thing. A fresh, young, exciting wine full of sunshine. Very special. Would madame like to come into the kitchen and choose her lobster? (*Melissa hesitates*). Or would she prefer I brought it out 'ere for her to look at before I ... popped it in the pot?
Melissa (*To Gareth*) You go. You choose. I couldn't ... you know ...
Gareth Sure. I know. I'll go.
Melissa Thank you.
André This way m'sieur.

Gareth and André exit to the kitchen. Fade stage left. Henry enters from stage right. He is wearing a white linen jacket with a carnation, a panama hat and sunglasses. He has shoulder-length blonde hair. He sees Lucy who looks up from her menu to look at him.

Henry Miss Lucille North?
Lucy Mr East?
Henry Henry.
Lucy Hello. Lucy, please.

Henry removes his hat and shakes hands with the nervous Lucy.

Henry At last we meet, Lucy. (*Asking to sit*) May I?
Lucy Sorry ... yes, please.
Henry So. Here we are.
Lucy Yes.
Henry Am I late?
Lucy Oh, no. I was early ... I think.
Henry Ah! So, here we are.
Lucy Yes. Here we are.
Henry At last.
Lucy Yes.
Henry Good. Hungry?
Lucy Not really.
Henry No?
Lucy Couldn't eat a thing, honestly.
Henry You're not on a diet, surely, with a figure like yours.

Lucy I grabbed a quick meal before I came out.
Henry Oh well ... how about a drink?
Lucy That would be nice, thank you. Grapefruit juice.
Henry Tot of gin to warm the cockles?
Lucy No, thank you. I'm afraid I'm not much of a drinker.
Henry Really?
Lucy Yes. Ever since the accident.
Henry What ... accident was that?
Lucy Well ...
Henry Can you talk about it?
Lucy If you don't mind, I'd rather not ... at the moment.
Henry Ah!

A brief awkward pause. They both search for a way out of it.

Lucy & Henry I ... sorry!
Henry No, please. After you.
Lucy I was just going to say ... you sound younger on the phone. No, sorry! What am I saying? I didn't mean that. I mean ... you sounded nice. Warm and friendly.
Henry So did you.
Lucy I sounded younger?
Henry No. You have a warm, gentle voice ... on the phone.
Lucy So, here we are.
Henry Absolutely. Did I sound very young?
Lucy Young ... younger ... a little. Not much.
Henry Ah! What did you think when I asked you for a date? I mean, one minute we were talking house insurance ... you were telling me about legal protection and that complicated rubbish and then out it came. What did you think?
Lucy Well I ...
Henry Suppose it happens all the time, does it?
Lucy No, not all the time. In fact, that was the first time.
Henry I don't believe it.
Lucy True.
Henry No.
Lucy True. Guides honour!
Henry Unbelievable.
Lucy Usually all the calls are monitored, but Mr Bailey, the Office Manager, he was out of the office that day ... having his wisdom teeth removed, or something. So...
Henry Fate!
Lucy Yes.
Henry Can I say something personal? Do you mind?
Lucy Personal? No. I suppose not.
Henry And this is not bullshit. This is really kosher. You're a very attractive woman, Lucy.
Lucy No ... I'm not.
Henry Yes, you are. And as soon as I saw you I thought, "Henry old son, this is your lucky day".
Lucy Don't believe you.
Henry I thought, "This is someone; someone at last you could have a meaningful relationship with".
Lucy How could you think that? You don't know me. You know nothing about me.
Henry How do we know these things? There are no words. It's a feeling ... it's some sort of instinct. A chemistry. There's something about you. There's a warmth there you don't find in many women. An aura.
Lucy An aura?
Henry Definitely. And that's the God's honest truth.
Lucy This is so, well ... what can I say? Now I'm blushing, I know.
Henry You look terrific.

Lucy You're married aren't you? Are you?
Henry No sir'ee. Not me. Not any more I'm not. Hey! Let's have some champers.
Lucy I couldn't poss...
Henry Come on! Push the boat out. You can't celebrate on grapefruit juice.
Lucy I don't know. I'm driving ... and ...
Henry Don't tell me you don't like a drop of the old bubbly.
Lucy I've got a very low threshold. Alcohol just ...
Henry One glass. What's the harm?
Lucy One glass then.
Henry That's more like it. Waiter!

Crossfade to stage left. André is pouring wine at the table.

André Voila!

André goes through the door to stage right.

Gareth Here's to ... us.
Melissa To us!
Gareth New horizons!
Melissa Yes. I like 'new. I need 'new'.
Gareth And to Tesco's and the wonderful delicatessen counter.
Melissa Don't remind me. Talk about embarrassing. Whatever possessed you?
Gareth It was all carefully planned. Took weeks.

André crosses and exits stage left.

Melissa I didn't know where to look. I had these rollmops in one hand and there you were pleading with me to have a dance there and then ... in front of the whole queue.
Gareth It worked.
Melissa I thought you were mad. "Where has this idiot escaped from", I thought.
Gareth But you danced.
Melissa You took one helluva risk. What if I hadn't danced?
Gareth I knew you would.
Melissa I nearly didn't. Then I saw that smile and that confident young face of yours, and I thought well, I've got to give you ten out of ten for ingenuity. And you made me laugh, which was important. I don't laugh enough these days.
Gareth Tell you the truth, I couldn't believe it myself. I couldn't believe I was doing it. It was like some 'out of body' experience.
Melissa What was it that impelled you?
Gareth From the moment I first saw you I knew I had to meet you. I had to, at least, talk to you.
Melissa A fatal attraction no less. Interesting. And when did you first see me?
Gareth Four weeks ago.
Melissa Four weeks?
Gareth Monday night ... 7 o'clock. Always quiet then at Tesco's.
Melissa That's why I go.
Gareth You were wearing a long, blue, chiffony dress, calf-length, and ... what was that perfume you were wearing?
Melissa Conquest!
Gareth I followed you around for half an hour soaking it all up, breathing it in.
Melissa You didn't.
Gareth At one point, at the fish counter, you looked at me and smiled.
Melissa Did I?
Gareth I smiled back. For ten minutes I smiled back ...but you didn't notice. Have you ever tried to smile for ten minutes? It's very difficult. I felt like a waxwork. I thought my face was going to set in this inane grin.
Melissa You poor thing.

Gareth I was desperate. I knew I had to see you again. I had to meet you. I went to Tesco's every night at the same time that week hoping ... praying to see you.

Melissa Really? That's very romantic.

André crosses over to stage right carrying champagne and two glasses.

Gareth And then I saw you. Monday night at ...

Melissa Seven o'clock. That's what my life has become you see, predictable.

Gareth You came through the swing doors and I was literally shaking. My hands were greasy with sweat.

Melissa No.

Gareth I was holding this tin of dog food. It squirted out of my hand, rolled along the floor, got under the feet of this woman who was backing up ... over she went ... cracked her back. Ambulance case.

Melissa That was you?

Gareth That was me.

Melissa No! How awful.

Gareth Naturally, I sent her flowers. Did what I could.

Melissa How kind.

Gareth I'm praying she's not going to sue.

Melissa And all because of me.

Gareth And all because of you.

Melissa I've got to ask. Why are you attracted to older women? Why are you attracted to me?

Gareth Age is irrelevant. It's what a person is, how they look, how they react ... their personality ... all that ... that's what counts ... not age. Real beauty is ageless.

Melissa Mm! Good enough for me.

Gareth *(Raising his glass)* Here's to you.

André crosses over to exit stage left. Crossfade to stage right. Henry is raising his glass to Lucy. She responds, takes a sip and gives a gentle cough.

Lucy So you've been married then.

Henry Have I been married! What an experience!

Lucy What happened?

Henry It wasn't all her fault. Looking back, she was very ill, up here *(pointing to his head)* most of the time.

Lucy No!

Henry Afraid so. Did what I could, naturally. Made the house safe ... you know, hid the knives.

Lucy Knives?

Henry Oh yes! She loved knives. She loved throwing them. I'd get home and ... whoosh ... a knife would slam into the door past my ear. It was bloody hairy, I tell you.

Lucy Was she trying to kill you, or what?

Henry I wouldn't go that far. When she took her pills she was as quiet as a lamb.

Lucy What happened to her?

Henry It was all very tragic. She loved to take on different characters. It all goes back to when she went to drama school.

Lucy She was an actress?

Henry Never made it professionally. Only local amateur stuff although she did get some extra work on 'Casualty' once. She was a road accident victim. No lines. Just had to bleed a lot.

Lucy I can't stand the sight of blood.

Henry Every day she'd be someone different. One day a tart, another a charming socialite.

Lucy How did you manage?

Henry You get used to it. You play along with it. You feed the fantasy.

Lucy How do you mean?

Henry For instance, I'd get home there'd be Marie Antoinette sitting in the lounge, fully rigged, eating cake.

Lucy Marie Antoinette?

Henry Oh yes! That was one of her favourites. I'd put on some Vivaldi to, you know, help sustain the illusion. I had to be careful. A sudden, unexpected glimpse of reality and she would have cracked,

just like that. I tell you, it was like living in a constant time warp. One day it was eighteenth century France, another day 1920's England, and so on.

Lucy She dressed up as well?

Henry To give her credit, her costumes were immaculate. Very well researched.

Lucy Amazing. So what happened to her?

Henry As I said, it was tragic. And yet at the same time it was funny in a twisted sort of way, which, in fact, made it all the more tragic, I suppose.

Lucy What did she do? What happened?

Henry It was a warm summer evening. I came home from the office exhausted, on my knees as usual, there she was in the garden, dancing ... completely starkers, except for a garland of flowers in her hair.

Lucy No.

Henry Starkers! She was playing a pile of old 78's on a wind up gramophone, you know, one with a big horn.

Lucy I know.

Henry The Paul Whiteman Orchestra. That was one of her favourites. I told her, I said, "What the hell do you think you're doing? We're on a major bus route. We get school buses passing and all sorts. You'll get run in". As usual, she laughed. She had this strange hyena-like cackle. What could I do? I couldn't leave her in the garden. I mean, our next door neighbour's a Magistrate for God's sake.

Lucy So, what did you do?

Henry I carried her inside. Naturally, that did it. Reality you see. Snapped! She hit the roof. She threw everything at me, chairs, books, vases and a couple of knives she'd hidden away. There was no controlling her. I was forced to lock myself in the bathroom.

Lucy That's terrible.

Henry The next thing I know, she's starting up my pride and joy ... my chrome-bumpered, wire-wheeled Morgan. I look out of the window. There she is dressed in a black negligée with a red boa around her neck. She looked up, waved, gave one of those horrendous cackles and slipped the car into gear. Then I noticed her boa was wrapped around the rear wire-wheel.

Lucy Oh, no!

Henry A couple of seconds later it was all over.

Lucy You saw all that.

Henry When I got down to her it was too late. She was practically decapitated. I'll never forget the look on her face. Her eyes were wide open and she had this fixed, horrific grin. She was still laughing at me.

Lucy places a consoling hand on Henry's arm. Crossfade to stage left. Melissa is laughing.

Melissa That is so funny.

Gareth And that's why I never married. She frightened the hell out of me.

Melissa What a waste. What a terrible waste.

Gareth So, what about you?

Melissa What about me?

Gareth I don't even know your name.

Melissa West. Melissa Stratford-West. And yours?

Gareth Gareth Andrew South.

Melissa You don't look like a Gareth. You need a Latin name. How about Gino? That's far more romantic.

Gareth Call me anything you like. Whatever turns you on. So, who is the beautiful Melissa Stratford-West?

Melissa Why don't you guess?

Gareth Give me your hand.

Melissa Fortunes? *(Placing her hand in his.)*

Gareth Warm.

Melissa Good blood.

Gareth Soft. Well manicured.

Melissa Are you going to read my palm?

Gareth Let's see. Good strong life-line. You're going to have a long, healthy life.
Melissa Splendid! What else?
Gareth I see two children.
Melissa Do you.
Gareth And here I see a new relationship blossoming. Yes! Here one dies ... here one begins.
Melissa Where?
Gareth Just there. See it?

Melissa is drawn close to him. Realising the tactic she draws back.

Melissa You're making it up. Anyway, you're way off. I don't have children and as for a relationship I have been married, but it was purely a business arrangement.
Gareth I don't believe it. You're not the type to marry for money.
Melissa Aren't I?
Gareth The way you dress, the way you move, the way you speak ... you're the romantic type.
Melissa Do you think so?
Gareth Perhaps you never met the right man.
Melissa Could be. On the other hand perhaps I'm a free spirit and I did meet the right man. He gave me security and I was free to indulge myself anyway I liked, without being shackled by romance.
Gareth And how do you indulge yourself?
Melissa All sorts of ways. I can travel if I want to. I can buy clothes when I want to. If I want to change my car I can. And when I feel creative, I can escape to Tuscany and write my romantic novel.
Gareth How can you write about romance if you don't have it in your life?
Melissa I'm very imaginative ... and I dream a lot.
Gareth Maybe I could make things more real for you.
Melissa A lot of men have tried. You'd have to work very hard at it. Very hard.
Gareth I'd like that.
Melissa You haven't told me what you do.
Gareth Me? I'm a GP. Small country practice.
Melissa Now that's a coincidence. The hero of my new book, he's a GP in a small country practice.
Gareth No!
Melissa Yes. Country doctors are very romantic figures, especially young dedicated doctors ... young, unmarried, dedicated doctors, like you.
Gareth Very unmarried.
Melissa Like my hero. He lives in this converted windmill by the river, alone. Every day he sees Rachel, a blonde lithe girl walking along the river bank. He wants to call out to her, but he's too shy. One day, she walks into his surgery. She's pregnant. She wants a termination. The father's a local waster. The doctor decides that he wants to marry the girl because he loves her and he wants to save the baby.
Gareth So, does he?
Melissa Haven't decided yet. What do you think he should do? *(Moving closer)*
Gareth Does she love him? *(Moving closer)*
Melissa She could grow to love him. She doesn't know him yet, but she's already strongly drawn to him. *(Holding his hand)*
Gareth Does she have a warm, loving nature?
Melissa She can appear cold and distant. With the right man she could release her pent-up emotions. She could be a very sensuous woman.
Gareth I'm sure she could. *(Kisses her hand)*

Crossfade to stage right.

Henry What was this accident you were talking about? Tell me.
Lucy It's so embarrassing.
Henry Come on!
Lucy You'll think I'm stupid.
Henry No I won't. What happened?

Lucy Have you heard of this winter depression thing? One in five commit suicide in Scandinavia through it.

Henry Get away.

Lucy True. Anyway, I get it. And last Christmas, it was a particularly dull and wet day and I was feeling extra lonely and down. So I went out and got well and truly plastered. Not like me at all. They said I was in the middle of the high street at midnight shouting 'Happy Christmas' to everyone. That's when it happened. A bus carrying old-age pensioners home from the panto had to swerve to avoid me. It demolished a bus shelter and went through a shop window. There was blood everywhere.

Henry Get away. Were you hurt?

Lucy Not a scratch. There they were falling out of the bus with broken arms and scratches and bruises, looking shocked ... and there I was laughing and rolling around on the pavement singing 'Jingle Bells'. I still shiver when I think about it.

Henry places an arm around her to comfort her, but she looks very uncomfortable and gradually eases herself away from him during the following dialogue, eventually making Henry look uncomfortable.

Henry Come here!

Lucy I've always wanted to be a botanist you know.

Henry That is a fascinating area of study.

Lucy I think so.

Henry What a drab world this would be without its flora.

Lucy I'm studying the relationship between insects and flowers and the patterns of evolution.

Henry Fascinating. Insects are so ... remarkable aren't they? And you do all this when you're not working.

Lucy It gets me out. Gets me away from human beings.

Henry I know what you mean. Human beings. What a mess, eh!

Lucy I'll never understand them.

Henry Every year they get worse.

Lucy They do.

Henry If there is such a thing as God up there all I can say is that he created the biggest dysfunctional family in history.

Lucy True! *(She laughs weakly)*

The wino has crept back on. He grabs the bottle of champagne and runs off.

Henry *(Standing to give chase)* Hey! Bloody cheek!

Lucy Don't!

Henry That's twenty quid a bottle that is.

Lucy It's all right. He must have been desperate. Let him have it.

Henry I mean ... what sort of world is this?

Lucy Sit down, Henry. There were only a few drops left anyway.

Henry *(He sits)* It's the bloody principle.

Lucy Relax.

Henry That's one for the book. Hope he appreciates it.

Lucy I'm sure he does.

They laugh.

Henry Yes, I'm sure he does. Can't believe this.

Lucy What?

Henry Normally, I'd be chasing around like a raging bull, but you have this calming effect on me. It's uncanny. And you're so easy to talk to.

Lucy Am I?

Henry You're kind, considerate, gentle. You take an interest. You listen. My wife, after a week ... she stopped listening. I thought she'd gone deaf.

Lucy I like listening. People always say I'm a good listener.

Henry Why weren't you snapped up years ago?

Lucy I'm choosy I suppose.

Henry There must have been a few boy friends.
Lucy One or two. There is someone I like.
Henry Ah!
Lucy He works in the office. He's another good listener, so we don't say much.
Henry Already I'm jealous.
Lucy There's a wind coming up.

Henry's arm at last falls away from Lucy's shoulder. Crossfade to stage left. André serves a salad to Gareth and Melissa.

André Your pâté entrée, madame, m'sieur. Bon appetit!

André moves across to stage right.

Melissa I've always felt aristocratic somehow. I could have been a countess once you know.
Gareth Mm! Very grand.
Melissa Grand is the word. He had this adorable castle in Tuscany surrounded by vineyards. Mad as a hatter. He was into hot air balloons. Always in them, or jumping out of them. He frightened me to death. He thought the world of me. Gifts poured through my door.
Gareth I could see you as a countess ... riding the estate, peasants falling at your feet.
Melissa He proposed to me every week, regular as clockwork, but what could I do? I was still married to dear old Rupert. Poor Rupert!

André moves quickly across stage.

André Bâtard! Bâtard!

André exits. Gareth and Melissa look a little concerned towards André.

Gareth What happened to him, to Rupert?
Melissa Oh, him. Erm ... heart attack.
Gareth Oh.
Melissa He was on the loo at the time, poor love. They say that's quite common don't they. It's all the straining ... then you'd know all about that.
Gareth Happens all the time. Every week. Sex is the other thing. They don't have sex for weeks then they go at it hammer and tongs. Poof! Finito!
Melissa I can imagine.
Gareth What you've got to do is have regular sex, say three or four times a week. Nothing better for the old ticker. *(He takes hold of Melissa's hand and feels her pulse).*
Melissa What are you doing? More prophecies?
Gareth Let's see how healthy you are.
Melissa Mmm! I love your warm hands. I bet all the old dears love them too.
Gareth I have my ... let's say ... geriatric moments.
Melissa Mind you don't get struck off. So what's the verdict, doctor.
Gareth You need exercise.
Melissa Do I.
Gareth Vigorous exercise.
Melissa That a fact.
Gareth Urgently.
Melissa Really.
Gareth A matter of life and death.
Melissa Have I got time to finish my meal?
Gareth Don't take too long.

They lean forward to prepare for a kiss. André enters, carrying another bottle of champagne. He is muttering angrily to himself. Melissa and Gareth watch him exit to stage right. They resume their kissing position.

Melissa If I go into a sudden decline you'll have to give mouth to mouth.
Gareth I love your lips.

They kiss. Crossfade to stage right, where André is pouring out the champagne.

André What can you do, eh? What can you do? What do they want? The clothes from my back? This world is crazy, no?
Henry Very kind.
André No problem. The least I can do.
Lucy Yes, very kind.
André Thank you, madame. Enjoy, enjoy! Mon dieu!

André exits through stage left.

Henry So, you sit opposite each other every day and hardly speak. He must be stupid.
Lucy He's very intense. He works hard.
Henry If you were opposite me every day I'd bring you flowers, I'd write little poems to you. *(He holds her hand)* I'd wine and dine you.
Lucy Got it! Isadora Duncan.
Henry What?
Lucy Isadora Duncan. *(Pulling her hand away)*. That's where I saw it. I knew I'd seen it somewhere. This film about Isadora Duncan, Vanessa Redgrave. At the end she's in this car and her scarf gets wrapped around the wheel ... like your wife.
Henry No. Is that what happened? Talk about coincidence.
Lucy The car pulls away, she's strangled and she's got this grotesque look on her face. I had nightmare's for days after that.
Henry Get away.
Lucy It's getting colder, don't you think.

Crossfade to stage left. André is clearing the table.

André The entree was good, no?
Melissa Magnificent.
André The lobster follows toute suite.

André exits stage left. Melissa stands.

Melissa Won't be a minute.

Melissa exits stage left. Lucy and Henry enter from stage right. They sit at the other table. Gareth sees Lucy but turns his back to her. Lucy appears concerned. Henry has his back to Gareth's table.

Lucy I don't believe this.
Henry What's that?
Lucy It's him. It's Gareth. The man in the office
Henry The intense one?
Lucy He's at the next table. What's he doing here. It's his darts night.
Henry Perhaps he's celebrating. Maybe it's his birthday.
Lucy His birthday's not until September.

André enters to replenish the nuts for Lucy and Henry.

André Ha!
Henry The wind was getting up so ...
André No problem. No problem. Yes, it's shifting round from south to north. Winter woollies back on again. What a climate. Poof!

André exits stage right to clear the table.

Lucy I'll just say hello. *(Lucy goes to Gareth's table)*. Hi Gareth!
Gareth Lucy. What a ...
Lucy ... coincidence! Thought this was your darts night.
Gareth Called off. Flu. Everyone's got it. Spread like wild fire.
Lucy Are you alone? Would you like to join us?
Gareth Sorry, I can't. I am with some one.
Lucy A girlfriend?
Gareth Sort of. Yes. We go back a long time.

Lucy Special is she?
Gareth A good friend, that's all. We keep in touch. See one another once a month or so.
Lucy That's nice.
Gareth And who's that?
Lucy Henry! Only a friend. He lost his wife. I was doing a bit of bereavement counselling. That's where I met him ... at bereavement counselling ... where I counsel ... every week. Once you have a rapport with someone it's good to ...
Gareth ... keep in touch.
Lucy Exactly. Yes. All part of the therapy.
Gareth You've never mentioned all this. I didn't know you went in for that sort of thing.
Lucy Didn't you?
Gareth Still waters.

Melissa enters.

Lucy *(Returning to her seat)* See you later.
Melissa Who's that?
Gareth Erm, a patient
Melissa Very pretty.
Gareth Try not to look at her too closely.
Melissa Why?
Gareth She's a bit on the unstable side.
Melissa No!
Gareth Happy one minute, down the next. Tragic. Very sensitive. I've done what I can for her. The truth is I've got to be very careful. I think she's got a crush on me.
Melissa Has she?
Gareth She's terribly morbid. Spends all her time in graveyards. She collects epitaphs.
Melissa Poor thing. People are peculiar.
Gareth I could write a book.

She holds Gareth's hand. Lucy sees this move. Melissa smiles at Lucy. They both look away.

Melissa She was looking at me.
Lucy She was looking at me. I don't believe him. She's more than a friend. She's holding his hand. Friends don't hold hands.
Henry Perhaps she's a special friend.
Lucy Doesn't look his type at all. Too old for a start, and too tartish.
Henry How old does she look?
Lucy She must be fifty if she's a day. Plastered with make-up. Dolled up to the nines.
Henry What do you bet that she's married, and your friend's her monthly toy boy.
Lucy She's fawning all over him. Can I have that gin now please, Henry.
Henry That's more like it. *(He turns towards stage left to attract André's attention).* Waiter!

Henry and Melissa see one another for the first time. They both turn their faces away quickly.

Melissa My God!
Henry Christ!
Gareth *(To Melissa)* What?
Lucy *(To Henry)* What?
Melissa *(To Gareth)* Listen! Listen! You're a ... a ... the husband of a friend. Your marriage is on the rocks. You're desperate. You need help. I'm trying to get you back together.
Henry Lucy ... do me a favour please. You're ... you're ... who the hell are you?
Lucy *(To Henry)* Are you ill?
Gareth *(To Melissa)* I'm sorry, I ...
Melissa Please. Just do it.
Henry *(To Lucy)* Believe me, I hate to do this.

Henry turns round to face Melissa.

Melissa Henry!
Henry Darling! I couldn't be sure. I thought it was you.
Melissa Come over here. Please! Join us. Both of you.
Henry Are you sure?
Melissa Of course.

Henry and Lucy move over to Melissa's table carrying their champagne with them. André enters. He serves a plated meal to Melissa and Gareth.

André Ha! You make friends. How nice.
Henry Two gins and ... can I get you ...?
Melissa We're fine thank you, Henry.
André Two gins. Ice and lemon?
Henry Please.
André *(Exiting)* Merci, m'sieur.
Henry So.
Gareth So.
Lucy So.
Melissa So, who's ...
Henry This is Lucy. She's ... she's a botanist.
Gareth Botanist?
Henry Lucy, Melissa.
Lucy Hello.
Melissa How do you do. No need to introduce you two is there?
Gareth No.
Melissa Gareth, this is my husband.
Gareth Husband?

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END of Preview Script

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Plays and Musicals
Lantern House
84, Littlehaven Lane
Horsham, West Sussex,
RH12 4JB
UK

E-Mail : sales@playsandmusicals.co.uk

Phone : +44 (0)700 593 8842
Fax : +44 (0)700 593 8843