

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Characters:

Mrs Potts – middle-aged, motherly, coffee shop proprietor

Georgia – early 40s, highly-strung, Oliver's wife

Oliver – mid 40s, complacent, Georgia's husband

Mark – late 30s, edgy, Georgia's lover

Setting:

A local coffee shop

Exit to kitchen stage right

Coffee table and two chairs centre stage

Coffee table and two chairs far stage left

Entrance to coffee shop stage left

Properties:

Empty coffee cup set on the table centre stage

Mrs Potts' tray

Georgia's dark glasses, handbag, mirror, wallet

Large suitcases (2)

Cup of tea

Arnica gel

Latte

Muffin

Suit (from the dry cleaners)

Bunch of flowers

Cup of black coffee

Glass of water

Mrs Potts enters from the kitchen stage right with a tray. She is clearing the empty coffee cup from table centre stage as Georgia enters from the street stage left.

Georgia is wearing dark glasses. She has a handbag over her shoulder and is wheeling two large suitcases.

Mrs Potts (sympathetic) Dark glasses?

Georgia (subdued) Yes, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts Again?

Georgia Yes, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts (shakes her head sadly but then sees the two suitcases) But it looks as if you've finally decided. Good for you.

Georgia Almost decided, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts Almost?

Georgia Almost, but not quite.

Mrs Potts (disapproval) Oh, I see. Well, dear. You know what I think ...

Georgia (resigned) Yes, Mrs Potts. I know what you think.

Mrs Potts They never change, you know. Never. They say they will but they won't ...

Georgia (indicating suitcases) Would you mind looking after these?

Mrs Potts (continuing) They tell you it won't ever happen again, and you want to believe them. But the truth is it will. You know it will. They can't seem to help themselves ...

Georgia Only for a few minutes. While I ... collect my thoughts.

Mrs Potts (continuing) But you can help yourself. You can and you should. Believe me. I know what I'm talking about. (registering Georgia's request) The suitcases? Yes, dear. Of course. I'll take them into the kitchen.

Mrs Potts exits with the suitcases.

Georgia sits at the table centre stage. She opens her handbag and looks for a mirror. She is about to lift up her dark glasses to examine her eye when Mrs Potts enters with a cup of tea. Georgia replaces the mirror and closes her handbag.

Mrs Potts (placing the cup of tea on the table in front of Georgia) Here you are, dear. A good strong cup of tea. I know you usually have a

cappuccino. But tea's much better for you at a time like this.
Now let me ...

Without giving Georgia an opportunity to object, Mrs Potts lifts up Georgia's dark glasses and examines her eye.

Oh, you poor girl.

Georgia How does it look?

Mrs Potts Well, it's not pretty. But I've seen a lot worse. Have you put anything on it?

Georgia Frozen peas.

Mrs Potts Witch hazel sometimes helps. Or arnica. Do you have any arnica gel? I'll fetch you some.

Georgia It's all right, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts It's no trouble. Have you been to the doctor? (*Georgia shakes her head.*) What about the police?

Georgia (*panic*) The police? No, Mrs Potts. I don't want to involve the police.

Mrs Potts (*disapproval*) Well, it's up to you. Of course it is. But you know what I think. Let me go and see what I can find.

Mrs Potts exits to the kitchen.

A pause before Oliver enters from the street.

Oliver Ah. There you are. I thought you were going to wait for me?

Georgia Was I?

Oliver Yes. But don't worry. No harm done. A quick question. Did you collect my suit from the cleaners?

Georgia Sorry. No. I forgot.

Oliver (*mildly displeased*) I see. Well, in that case, I'd better pop round and collect it myself. Order me a coffee, will you? I won't be a moment.

Oliver exits to the street. A brief pause before Mrs Potts enters from the kitchen with a muffin.

Mrs Potts There we are, dear. A muffin will cheer you up.

Georgia Thank you, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts (*grim*) So ... Where is he?

Georgia Oliver? He's collecting his suit from the cleaners.

Mrs Potts Is he coming here?

Georgia Yes.

Mrs Potts I'd like to give him a piece of my mind ...

Georgia Please don't, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts Right you are, dear. If you say so. But you know what I think ...

Registering that Georgia isn't listening, Mrs Potts exits to the kitchen. Oliver enters from the street.

Oliver The ticket.

Georgia Sorry?

Oliver (mildly irritated) For the dry cleaning. I need the ticket.

Georgia Yes. Of course. Just a moment.

Georgia looks in her handbag, finds the ticket and gives it to Oliver. Oliver is about to exit at the same time as Mark is entering from the street. There's a brief pause while Mark holds open the door. Oliver exits with a nod of thanks and Mark enters.

Mark sees Georgia and signals to her: "Can I join you?" but Georgia shakes her head to signal "No" as Mrs Potts enters from the kitchen with a tube of arnica gel. Mark takes a seat at another table.

Mrs Potts Here we are, dear. Arnica gel. A little past its sell-by date but I don't suppose that matters. Would you like me to ...?

Georgia No. Thank you. I'll ... Thank you, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts (seeing Mark) Sorry, my love. I didn't see you there. What can I bring you?

Mark Could I have a latte.

Mrs Potts A latte? Of course you can, my love.

Mrs Potts exits to the kitchen. Mark again signals to Georgia: "Can I join you?" and Georgia again signals "No". Mrs Potts enters and places the latte on Mark's table.

Mrs Potts There you are, my love. Can I bring you anything else? A croissant? A muffin? A Danish pastry?

Mark No, thank you.

Mrs Potts moves over to Georgia's table and sits down.

Mrs Potts Potts was the same, you know. Just the same. Mild-mannered. Such a sweet smile. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. (*pause*) I should have thrown him out the first time it happened. I should have done but I didn't. You want to believe them, don't you? God knows you want to believe them. But they never change. When I finally decided I'd had enough, Potts goes and has a stroke. Can you believe it? Out of the blue. A stroke. Couldn't move. Couldn't speak. Couldn't do a thing for himself.

Georgia Then you didn't ... ?

Mrs Potts Throw him out? I couldn't, could I? Not once he'd had his stroke. It wouldn't have been right. Even then I could see the rage boiling up inside him. Nothing he could do about it, of course. Nothing but sit there and boil. Raging and boiling. That's what finished him off in the end, the poor man.

Georgia (*puzzled*) Poor man?

Mrs Potts Well, yes. I know it sounds daft. But I still had feelings for him, you see, and feelings – well – they count for something, don't they? (*beat*) They say they're sorry and they mean it. They bring you flowers and chocolates and things like that, and they ask you to forgive them. You want to forgive them, and so you do. They explain how it happened. The same story every time. They tell it again and again and the more often they tell it, the more they believe it. Very soon you find yourself believing it, too. Ever so slowly – without them actually saying it – you find yourself thinking you're partly to blame. And slowly – ever so slowly – you take more of the blame. Until you begin to believe you are to blame and that it's your fault. But here's the thing, dear. It isn't. It really isn't. You know that, don't you?

Georgia (*wretched*) Yes, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts (*reflective*) No, they never change.

Georgia Don't they?

Mrs Potts (*standing*) No, dear. Never. (*to Mark*) Is everything all right, my love?

Mark I wonder if I could have a glass of water ...

Mrs Potts A glass of water? Certainly you can, my love.

Mrs Potts exits. Mark is about to join Georgia when Oliver enters with his suit from the dry cleaners. He also has a box of chocolates and a bunch of flowers.

Oliver (*giving Georgia the chocolates and flowers*) Here. I thought these might cheer you up.

Georgia (miserable) Thank you, Oliver.

Oliver sits.

Oliver Did you order me a cup of coffee?

Georgia shakes her head.

No? Not to worry. Now, then. How are you feeling? Any better?

Mrs Potts enters and stands beside Oliver.

Mrs Potts Yes?

Oliver (pleasant) Good morning, Mrs Potts. How are you today? Could I have my usual cappuccino and croissant.

Mrs Potts No croissants.

Oliver Oh. I thought I saw some in the window. Oh, well. Never mind.

Mrs Potts (to Georgia) Are you all right, dear?

Georgia nods.

Mrs Potts (under her breath but audible) Pig!

Mrs Potts exits.

Oliver Mrs Potts seems a little odd this morning.

Georgia (absent) Does she?

Oliver Have I offended her in some way, do you think? (sympathetic) You poor darling. Is there anything I can do?

Georgia No, Oliver. Nothing.

Oliver You're sure?

Georgia Quite sure.

Oliver Would you like me to have a look at it.

Georgia (flinching) No.

Mrs Potts enters with a cup of coffee which she puts unceremoniously in front of Oliver.

Oliver Thank you, Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts is about to exit when Oliver sees his coffee.

Oliver Oh, sorry, Mrs Potts. I asked for a cappuccino.

Mrs Potts Yes?

Oliver This is black.

Mrs Potts Is it? (*under her breath*) Swine!

Oliver What?

Mrs Potts exits.

Oliver Was she talking to me, do you think?

Georgia What?

Oliver I thought she said 'Swine'.

Georgia (*uninterested*) Really?

Oliver drinks his coffee.

Oliver Good God! This is filthy. (*calling*) Excuse me.

Georgia (*urgent*) Please, Oliver. Don't make a fuss.

Oliver But ...

Georgia Please.

Oliver Very well. But this really is undrinkable. (*beat*) Anyway, I thought you'd like to know. I've made a decision.

Georgia What decision?

Oliver (*announcement*) I'm not going to leave you on your own again. No more golf weekends. No more days away with the boys. That's it. Finished.

Georgia But you enjoy your golf weekends.

Oliver I do. I did. But I'd rather spend my time with you. (*humorous*) You need looking after, don't you? It seems that whenever you're out of my sight, you take a tumble or walk into things.

Georgia (*unconvincing*) No, I don't ...

Oliver You do, you know. Remember the time I came back from that business trip to Brussels. And after my golf weekend in Sandwich. (*still humorous*) One thing's for sure. I'm going to fix some protective padding round that telegraph pole.

Georgia Which telegraph pole?

Oliver The one outside the house, of course. That's twice – or is it three times? – you've walked into it. We can't have that happening again, can we? (beat) Seriously, Georgia. Tell me. Is everything okay?

Georgia Why do you ask?

Oliver (concerned) You've seemed so distracted lately. Sort of out of it. As if you've had things on your mind. (beat) I've been worried about you.

Mrs Potts enters.

Mrs Potts (to Georgia) Is everything all right, dear?

Oliver Well, no, actually. This coffee ...

Georgia (warning) Please, Oliver. (to Mrs Potts) Everything's fine.

Mrs Potts (clearly audible) Brute!

Oliver I'm sorry?

Oliver looks at Georgia and then at Mrs Potts. A beat before Mrs Potts exits.

Oliver I really can't drink this, Georgia. I'm going home to make myself something a little less disgusting. Are you coming with me?

Georgia No.

Oliver (surprised and slightly put out) Aren't you?

Georgia I'm staying and finishing my tea.

Oliver (mildly irritated) Okay. As you wish. Then I'll see you back at home. Do we need anything from the shops?

Georgia No. Nothing.

Oliver stands. Mrs Potts enters with a glass of water which she places in front of Mark.

Mrs Potts There we are, my love. You're sure you wouldn't like a croissant? (as Oliver prepares to exit) Monster!

Oliver pauses, shakes his head and exits. Mrs Potts exits. Mark stands and moves over to Georgia's table.

Mark May I join you?

Georgia nods.

Mark (sitting) I was worried about you.

Georgia (*subdued*) Were you?

Mark When I woke up, I found you'd gone.

Georgia I had to go home, Mark. You know that. I told you last night.

Mark I still don't understand why.

Georgia I know you don't. (*beat*) I felt ... I didn't want Oliver to come home to an empty house. It would have been wrong.

Mark Wrong? Why would it have been 'wrong'? That makes no sense. I'm sorry, Georgia, but it doesn't.

Georgia I don't know what else to say.

Pause.

Mark I really am sorry, you know.

Georgia Yes, Mark. I know you are.

Mark Truly I am.

Georgia Yes, Mark.

Mark It shouldn't have happened. But you must understand what it's been like for me. The thought of you leaving to go back to that man ... (*pause*) You know what you have to do.

Georgia (*muted*) Yes ...

Mark And it's what you want to do, isn't it?

Georgia (*uncertain*) Yes, Mark.

Mark Then why won't you do it? It's so ... I find it so maddeningly frustrating. It all gets too much for me and then ... You see what happens. I lose it.

Georgia (*quiet*) Yes, Mark. I'm sorry.

Mark It's only because I love you. That's the reason. You know that, don't you?

Pause.

Mark Do you still love him?

Georgia Oliver? No, Mark, I don't love him. But I am still fond of him.

Mark You don't love him but you do love me?

Georgia Yes.

Mark Say it.

Georgia I love you.

Mark Why?

Georgia (*puzzled*) Why?

Mark It's a simple question. Why do you love me?

Georgia Because ... (*shrugs her shoulders helplessly*) Because I do.

Mark Go on.

Georgia What would you like me to say? (*beat*) Very well. Because you make me feel wanted. Does that answer your question?

Mark (*taking Georgia's hand*) Then what are you waiting for? Why won't you leave him? Nothing's going to change, is it?

Georgia No.

Mark It isn't, is it, Georgia?

Georgia No, Mark. Nothing's going to change. (*pause*) Mrs Potts.

Mrs Potts enters.

Georgia Do you think I could have my suitcases?

Mrs Potts Your suitcases? Right you are, dear.

Mrs Potts exits.

Mark You have forgiven me, haven't you?

Georgia Yes, Mark.

Mark Because you know how ashamed I feel. Ashamed, wretched, humiliated. But last night ... It all became too much for me. I'm so sorry, Georgia. I promise you faithfully - faithfully - it will never happen again. (*beat*) Never.

Mrs Potts enters with the two suitcases.

Georgia Thank you, Mrs Potts.

Mark I'll take them to the car, shall I?

Georgia Yes, Mark.

Mark exits with the suitcases.

Mrs Potts (mildly confused) A friend, is he?

Georgia Yes, Mrs Potts. A friend.

Mrs Potts That's good. You need friends at a time like this. Well, then. There we are. You've finally decided.

Georgia Yes, Mrs Potts. I've finally decided.

Mrs Potts Good. I'm pleased for you. Because you know what I think, don't you?

Georgia Yes, Mrs Potts. (exiting) I do know what you think.

Mrs Potts watches Georgia go, then turns back to the table and sees the flowers and chocolates. She picks them up and is about to follow Georgia but then changes her mind. She stands centre stage holding the flowers and chocolates.

Oliver enters, looking for Georgia. He sees Mrs Potts holding Georgia's flowers and chocolates. A stunned moment while Oliver and Mrs Potts stand looking at each other.

THE END