

IT ISN'T YOU

Characters:

Karen – late 20's / early 40's, commercial lawyer

Jonathan – late 20's / early 40's, art teacher

Setting:

The living-room of a rented flat. Exit stage left to the hall and front-door. Exit stage right to the rest of the flat.

Downstage centre, a black rubbish bag, partly-filled (items to be discarded)

Downstage centre, a large reusable supermarket shopping bag, partly-filled (items to be donated to a charity shop)

Upstage centre right, on a chair, a pile of books, papers, photographs, ornaments etc (the last few items still to be sorted)

Upstage left, on a shelf, a stuffed teddy bear

Properties:

Teddy-bear

Two large suitcases

Books, papers, ornaments, knickknacks etc

Eco-friendly supermarket bag

Black rubbish bag

Sound:

Doorbell

Karen enters stage right, wheeling a large suitcase, and exits stage left.

A short pause and then Jonathan enters stage left, stops, picks up the teddy bear, stares at it for a moment, then, holding it by one leg, crosses to the pile of books, papers etc stage right and drops the bear on the floor beside them.

Jonathan begins to sort through the books, papers etc, putting some items into the rubbish bag and others into the supermarket bag.

Karen re-enters stage left.

Jonathan Anything here you want?

Karen No, thanks.

Karen exits stage right. A short pause and then Karen re-enters stage right, wheeling a larger suitcase.

Jonathan Here, Karen. Let me.

Karen (*sharp*) No. (*less sharp*) No, thank you. I'm fine.

Jonathan You're sure there's nothing here you ...?

Karen (*cutting him short*) Quite sure.

Jonathan (*indicating the supermarket bag*) I thought I'd take this lot to the charity shop ...

Karen (*indifferent*) Good idea.

Karen exits stage left.

Jonathan ... and the rest to the dump. (*picking up the bear and calling after her*) Karen. Don't forget your ...

A short pause while Jonathan and the bear stare at each other before Karen re-enters stage left.

Karen (*decisive*) Right. That's it. All ready to go.

Jonathan When's your taxi due?

Karen (*looking at her watch*) Three minutes. You?

Jonathan Laura's trying to find somewhere to park. It could take a while.

Karen Pity. I wanted to say goodbye.

Jonathan Why not wait for her?

Karen No, I don't think I will. Well, then ...

Beat.

Jonathan We're being very grown up about this, aren't we?

Karen We *are* grown up, Jonathan. And there's no reason not to be.

Jonathan No. I suppose not.

Karen Were you hoping for some histrionics? I could weep and scream and tear my hair if you like ...

Jonathan Please don't.

Karen And you could throw yourself on the floor and bang your fists.

Jonathan I'll do that once you've gone.

They exchange a sad smile.

Jonathan hands Karen the bear. She looks at it briefly, puts it on the floor and picks up the supermarket bag.

Karen (*absent-mindedly looking through the supermarket bag*) To be clear, Jonathan. It isn't you. You know that, don't you?

Jonathan (*dismayed*) You're not actually going to say it, are you?

Karen Sorry?

Jonathan It's such a cringeworthy line.

Karen I have no idea what you're talking about.

Jonathan 'It isn't you. It's me.' Wasn't that what you were going to say?

Pause while Karen gives Jonathan a long, hard look.

Karen You really thought that was what I was going to say?

Jonathan Well, weren't you?

Karen Oh My God!

Jonathan What?

Karen I'm appalled.

Jonathan Why are you 'appalled'?

Karen It doesn't matter.

Karen resumes looking through the supermarket bag.

Jonathan Tell me.

Karen Forget it.

Jonathan Karen ...

Karen Very well. I'm appalled to find you have such a low opinion of me.

Jonathan You've lost me.

Karen Do you really think I'd say something as trite – as miserably feeble-minded – as that?

Jonathan Well, no. I suppose not.

Karen Well, then ...

Beat.

Jonathan What were you going to say?

Karen You want to know?

Jonathan Yes.

Karen I was going to say: 'It isn't you. It isn't me. It's us.' You and me. The two of us. We weren't meant to be together. Simple as that.

Jonathan That's exactly what Laura said. Right from the start.

Karen (*taken aback*) Laura? Did she? I thought your sister liked me.

Jonathan She did. She does. According to Laura you're 'cool'. And you're 'smoking hot'. Although I'm not sure how you can be both at the same time. But there we are. She always thought you were much too good for me. And my mother agrees.

Karen But I've never met your mother.

Jonathan Laura's told her all about you. High-flying City solicitor. Ambitious, beautiful, charming. Whereas I ... They didn't want me to get hurt.

Karen And have you been?

Jonathan Hurt? No. Although I am sorry it didn't work out.

Karen Me, too. (*beat*) Claud said much the same thing: (*pompous*) 'Mark my words, Karen, my dear. It will all end in tears.'

Jonathan Claud? Remind me.

Karen My colleague. The divorce lawyer. You met him at that Easter drinks reception ...

Jonathan Oh, yes. Claud. The pretentious prig who knows nothing about Cubism.

Karen He does own a Picasso print ...

Jonathan Well, he shouldn't. It ought to be taken away from him.

Karen That's what you said at the time.

Jonathan And he said I was a lumpen oaf and I said he was an unutterable philistine. Or was it the other way round?

Karen Not really material. You tried to punch him ...

Jonathan You stopped me.

Karen Your eyes were popping and Claud was puce. It was really very, very funny. We were all a touch tipsy, weren't we?

Jonathan But you'd sobered up by the time we came home. Said I'd behaved abominably. Let you down and shown you up. We didn't speak for a week.

Karen (*absent-mindedly picking up the bear*) Was it as long as that?

Jonathan It happened quite a lot, didn't it?

Karen What did?

Jonathan We'd be absolutely fine while we were out but then, as soon as we were back in the flat, things would go wrong. We'd start getting irritable, niggly, quarrelsome. Squabbling about such trivial things. A dirty shirt on the bedroom floor ...

Karen A pair of tights in the washbasin ...

Jonathan Lost keys ...

Karen Running short of milk or bread ...

Jonathan An unpaid gas bill ... Each of us blaming the other.

Karen When in reality there was no one to blame. (*beat*) Remember your Sixth Form Art Exhibition?

Jonathan The one you couldn't come to.

Karen I was up to my eyes at work. I told you the night before and you were fine about it. But as soon as I came home ... Boom!

Jonathan Yes, I don't know what came over me. (*beat*) How about your Law Society dinner-dance?

Karen You had a parents' evening. And, to tell the truth, I really didn't want you to come.

Jonathan In case I had another go Claud?

Karen There was that. But, no. It was black tie and you'd have absolutely hated it. It made much more sense to go on my own.

Jonathan But then ...

Karen Oh, dear.

Jonathan You paid off the taxi. Opened the front door. And whoosh. We had a blazing row.

Karen I threw something at you.

Jonathan A cushion.

Karen Sorry about that.

Jonathan Better than the porcelain plate.

Karen Or the carriage clock.

Jonathan Much better.

Pause.

Karen (*putting down the bear*) I really am very sorry.

Jonathan There's no need to apologise.

Karen I'm not apologising. I was going to say: I'm sorry things didn't work out.

Jonathan Yes. So am I. Very sorry.

Karen Because we were so good, together, weren't we? Our holidays. Our nights out. The cinema. Theatre. The weekends away ...

Jonathan But here, back in the flat, living together ... We were a disaster.

Beat.

Karen Which is why we're doing the right thing. We are doing the right thing, aren't we?

Jonathan No point in clinging to the wreckage of a relationship.

Karen Is that what this is? A wreckage?

Jonathan Pretty much, isn't it? That's why you decided not to renew the lease?

Karen That was your decision.

Jonathan That's not how I remember it.

Karen Okay. Maybe it was our decision.

Jonathan Yes, maybe it was. *(beat)* There isn't anyone else, is there?

Karen Apart from Claud?

Jonathan I'm being serious, Karen.

Karen No, Jonathan. There isn't anyone else. You?

Jonathan No.

Beat.

Karen Something I meant to ask you. Those charcoal sketches you made of me. Where have they gone? I couldn't find them anywhere.

Jonathan I threw them out.

Karen *(dismayed)* You ...? Did you? When?

Jonathan A couple of weeks ago.

Karen Why?

Jonathan They weren't much good.

Karen I liked them. I might have wanted to keep them.

Jonathan You should have said.

Karen You should have asked me.

Jonathan We weren't speaking at the time. *(beat)* Sorry.

Karen That's okay.

SFX: *The doorbell rings.*

Jonathan That'll be your taxi.

Karen *(not moving)* Yes.

Jonathan *(picking up the bear and holding it out)* Don't forget your teddy bear.

Karen What?

Jonathan Your teddy bear.

Karen It isn't mine.

Jonathan Isn't it?

Karen I thought it was yours.

Jonathan Definitely not.

Karen Then ...

Jonathan You're quite sure it's not your teddy bear?

Karen I promise you. That bear has nothing whatsoever to do with me.

SFX: Doorbell rings again.

Jonathan Oh. Okay. *(beat)* You're going to think this is idiotic ...

Karen Am I?

Jonathan You being so rational and sane ...

Karen Go on.

Jonathan *(still holding the bear)* The thing is ... I've always hated this bloody bear. No. Much more than that. I've absolutely loathed it. I know it sounds ridiculous but I'm convinced it's malign.

Karen Malign?

Jonathan Yes. Toxic. Truly poisonous

Karen In what way?

Jonathan I believe this bear has put a hex on our relationship. I've felt it watching me with its horrid little beady eyes. I've wanted to chuck it out since the day we moved in here together, but I assumed it must have some sentimental value and you'd be upset if I ever suggested getting rid of it.

Karen I don't like I stuffed animals. I don't like dolls, either. They give me the creeps. I thought it must be some precious memento from your nursery. Something you had with you at boarding school. Or a gift from an aged aunt. That's why I didn't want to say anything.

Jonathan Foolish, aren't we?

Karen *(agreeing)* Aren't we.

Jonathan That bloody bear.

Karen Well, at least we have something to blame.

 Jonathan and Karen move together, a little shyly, to embrace.

SFX: Doorbell rings again.

Jonathan Your taxi.

Karen I'd better go. Give my love to Laura.

Jonathan Yes, of course.

Karen Tell her I'll be in touch.

Jonathan Take care.

Karen You, too. Bye.

Karen exits stage left.

Jonathan picks up the teddy bear and looks it in the eyes.

Jonathan It wasn't me. It wasn't her. It wasn't either of us. It was you, wasn't it? Go on. Admit it. No? In that case ... *(he throws the bear into the rubbish bag)*

Jonathan briefly round the room and then exits stage left with the rubbish bag and supermarket shopping bag

THE END