

NOT A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

Cast:

Timothy / TIM POLLARD / 'POLLY' — youthful middle-age, neat, trim, well-presented, soberly-dressed

Jacqueline ABBOTT / 'JACK' — smart middle-age, confident, professional, dressed fashionably for a funeral

Setting:

A churchyard

'A tree'

Clouds and intermittent rain

Exits from the churchyard stage left and stage right

Properties:

Timothy's compact, colourful, travel umbrella

Jacqueline's large, black, golf umbrella

Sound effects (optional):

Light rain

Distant thunder

Heavy rain

Loud thunder

Timothy and Jacqueline are standing — a little apart — with their backs to the audience. It's raining and both are holding up umbrellas.

They are watching an interment which is taking place at a short distance from where they are standing.

Timothy holds out his hand to check if it is still raining. Finding it isn't, he closes his umbrella.

Timothy	<i>(to himself)</i> Well, that's that then. Finished. <i>(more audibly)</i> Dead! Dead! And never called me mother.
Jacqueline	<i>(turning to Timothy)</i> I beg your pardon?
Timothy	<i>(turning to Jacqueline)</i> Oh, goodness. Did I say that out loud? The rain. It's finished. It's finished raining.
Jacqueline	Has it? <i>(holding out her hand)</i> So it has. <i>(closing her umbrella)</i> But that's not what you said, is it?
Timothy	No. Sorry. Stupid of me.
Jacqueline	Well?
Timothy	Well ... ?
Jacqueline	What <u>did</u> you say?
Timothy	Oh. Yes. <i>(abashed)</i> 'Dead! Dead! And never called me mother.' <i>(explanatory)</i> East Lynne? Victorian melodrama? No?
Jacqueline	No.
Timothy	Very famous in its day.
Jacqueline	<i>(unconvinced)</i> Really?
Timothy	I find things sort of slip out sometimes. Particularly when I'm feeling stressed. Which I am. Does that never happen to you?
Jacqueline	No. Never.
Timothy	I saw you in the church.
Jacqueline	Did you?
Timothy	You were hiding at the back.
Jacqueline	I wasn't hiding.
Timothy	Weren't you? It looked as if you were.
Jacqueline	I'd no wish to draw attention to myself, that's all. And there was no one there I knew.

Timothy Not a friend of the family, then?

Jacqueline No.

Timothy Nor a relation?

Jacqueline No. Nor a relation.

Timothy Me neither. Quite a crowd, wasn't it?

Jacqueline Yes.

Timothy But no one either of us knew. (*beat*) What did you think of the vicar?

Jacqueline Father Pilchard?

Timothy His name wasn't 'Pilchard', was it?

Jacqueline It might have been 'Pritchard'. Although he did have the look of a pilchard. And he plainly knew nothing at all about Tony.

Timothy Tony? Oh, yes. 'Tony'. No, I don't suppose he'd ever met him. Anton wasn't much of a churchgoer.

Jacqueline 'Anton'? Is that how you knew him?

Timothy Yes. Poor old Pilchard. Trotting out the same old sentiments about someone he's never met ...

Jacqueline A hard-working family man ...

Timothy A respected member of the community ...

Jacqueline Leaving behind his devoted wife ... Jane?

Timothy Joan?

Jacqueline That's right. Joan.

Timothy Was she 'devoted'?

Jacqueline No idea. We never talked about her.

Timothy Neither did we. Leaving behind his devoted wife, Joan and their three lovely daughters ... Names?

Jacqueline Doris, Daphne and ... Denise?

Timothy Really?

Jacqueline shrugs.

(*beat*) Punishingly ugly, aren't they?

- Jacqueline The daughters? Truly hideous. They must take after their mother.
- Timothy Difficult to tell under that veil. Who was the old duffer who gave the eulogy?
- Jacqueline A cousin of some kind, I think.
- Timothy He didn't seem to know 'Anton' any better than poor old Pa Pilchard.
- Jacqueline Nothing about his magnetic charm. His irrepressible joie de vivre.
- Timothy His lovely smile. His mischievous sense of humour. Do you know, at one point I began to wonder if I'd come to the right funeral ...
- Jacqueline It did say 'Anthony Wilson' on the service sheet ...
- Timothy It's not an uncommon name. There must be any number of Anthony Wilsons in West London.
- Jacqueline Although not so many being buried on the same day perhaps? And the photograph on the back ...
- Timothy Yes, that was Anton all right. Dear Anton.

Beat while Timothy and Jacqueline both remember Anthony.

- Jacqueline I expect the church was his wife's idea. I'm sure Tony would have preferred a humanist funeral.
- Timothy And a natural burial ground.
- Jacqueline Oh, God. (*pointing*) Look. They're coming this way.
- Timothy Quick. (*opening his umbrella*) Under here.

Timothy and Jacqueline conceal themselves behind the umbrella as the family and friends pass by, some exiting stage left and others stage right.

- Jacqueline Why did we do that?
- Timothy Silly, wasn't it? (*defiant*) We've as much right to be here as anyone else.
- Jacqueline (*suddenly uncertain*) Have we?
- Timothy Why not?

Jacqueline Yes, of course we have. You are ... ?

Beat.

Timothy Tim. Timothy. (*extending his hand*) And you're ... ?

Jacqueline (*taking his hand*) Jacqueline Abbott. Did you know Tony well?

Timothy Very well. You?

Jacqueline We were once colleagues.

Timothy You worked for Anton?

Jacqueline He worked for me. I was his boss. For a time, that is. Then we had to go our separate ways.

Timothy But you kept in touch?

Jacqueline Yes. We kept in touch.

Beat.

Timothy Are you planning to go to the reception?

Jacqueline I wouldn't want to intrude. You?

Timothy No, I think I'll give it a miss. (*pause*) Did you know that more people have sex at funerals than they do at weddings? (*beat*) Sorry. Stupid of me. It sort of —

Jacqueline Slipped out?

Timothy Exactly.

Jacqueline (*gently teasing*) You're sure you're not propositioning me?

Timothy (*too quickly*) Quite sure.

Jacqueline Well, that's not very gallant.

Timothy What I meant was ... Listen. If you're not going to the reception, why don't we go for a drink. There's a quiet little pub not far from here —

Jacqueline The Queen of Bohemia?

Timothy (*surprised*) You know it?

Jacqueline Tony used to take me there.

Timothy Did he? (*sudden realisation*) Wait. Jacqueline Abbot. You're not 'Jack', are you?

Jacqueline That's what Tony called me.

Timothy Oh, goodness!

Jacqueline Why so surprised?

Timothy You're a woman.

Jacqueline Well, yes. The last time I looked I was.

Timothy Sorry. Silly of me. It's just ... When Anton used to talk about 'Jack', I sort of assumed he was talking about a man.

Jacqueline I'm sorry to disappoint you.

Timothy Oh, you haven't. Not at all.

Jacqueline (*almost shy*) Did he talk about me a lot?

Timothy Yes. A lot. Sometimes too much if you really want to know. (*beat*) What about me? Did Anton ever mention me?

Jacqueline (*trying to remember*) Tim? Timothy? No, I don't think he did.

Timothy (*crestfallen*) Oh. I thought he might have done.

Jacqueline No. Sorry.

Beat.

Timothy He died so suddenly, didn't he? And much too young. I'm going to miss him terribly.

Jacqueline Yes. So am I.

Timothy Especially on Wednesdays.

Jacqueline Why Wednesdays?

Timothy Rehearsal nights. We sing in the same choir. We sang in the same choir. Both baritones. Last year we gave a series of concerts in Barcelona. And the year before that ... (*stops*) I think I'll give up the choir. It won't be the same. Not without Anton.

Jacqueline Barcelona?

Timothy Yes?

Jacqueline Tell me again who you are.

Timothy (*slightly puzzled*) Tim. Timothy. Timothy Pollard.

Jacqueline (*dawning realisation*) Timothy Pollard. You're 'Polly', aren't you?

Timothy That's right.

Jacqueline And you're a man.

Timothy (*not knowing where this is going*) Yes ...

Jacqueline Tony talked about you endlessly. I think he wanted to make me jealous.

Timothy Why would he want to do that?

Jacqueline Oh, you know. To keep me on my toes? Another woman in his life?

Timothy I'm not sure I —

Jacqueline Okay. It can't do any harm now, can it? I was Tony's mistress.

Timothy His — ?

Jacqueline Mistress. Yes. For the last twelve years. Why are you looking like that? It's not that much of a shock, is it?

Timothy Well, actually, yes, it is.

Jacqueline You thought Tony was a blissfully happy married man with a devoted wife and three pug-ugly daughters.

Timothy Well, no, but —

Jacqueline (*only half-joking*) Oh, I see. You think that an attractive man like Tony should have been able to do better for himself? A younger model perhaps? (*beat*) What's the matter?

Timothy Nothing.

Jacqueline What?

Timothy (*putting up his umbrella*) It's started to rain again.

Jacqueline (*holding out her hand*) No, it hasn't.

Timothy Oh. I thought it had.

Jacqueline So ... Are we going for that drink? (*beat*) Are you all right? You're looking a little green, you know.

Timothy Am I? Yes. The thing is ...

Sound of distant thunder.

Jacqueline What?

Timothy I am — I was — Anton's lover.

Jacqueline His lover?

Timothy I have been for years. Years and years.

Jacqueline (*shocked*) Oh, I see. (*beat*) Yes. I see.

Timothy You didn't know?

Jacqueline No. No, I'd no idea.

Timothy I'm sorry.

Beat.

Jacqueline (*pulling herself together*) You mustn't be. No need to be sorry. It's only that ...

Timothy Yes. I know.

Pause and sound of light rain.

Jacqueline I'm going to miss Tony so very much.

Timothy Yes, so am I. So very, very much. You're getting wet.

Jacqueline Am I? (*putting up her umbrella*) Well, that's that then. Do you still want to go for that drink?

Timothy (*dubious*) Umm ...

Jacqueline (*sad*) No. Neither do I.

Beat.

Timothy Well, that's that then.

Jacqueline Yes. (*beat*) Well, good-bye, Polly.

Timothy Yes, good-bye, Jack.

Jacqueline It was ... I don't know ...

Timothy It was, wasn't it?

Jacqueline starts to exit stage left. She pauses and looks back.

Timothy and Jacqueline exchange a final smile before Jacqueline exits.

Timothy (*to himself*) Dead! Dead! (*beat*) And never called me mother.

Timothy exits stage right.

Sound of nearby thunder.

THE END