

Family Matters (extract)

by
Anna Girolami

a short play, running time 15 minutes

Cast:

Maggie – a sixty-ish year old woman
Ted – her second husband
Janey – Maggie's daughter
Sam – President of the local Rose Society

© 2016 Anna Girolami, all rights reserved

*

TED: A bit of a tiff and then you walk out and never come back? Not a phone call, not even a Christmas card for fifteen years. Your mother worrying herself to a shadow.

MAGGIE'S RATHER SUBSTANTIAL
FIGURE COMES BACK IN WITH SAM.
THEY DISTRIBUTE THE REST OF THE
DISHES AND THEN SIT BACK DOWN.

MAGGIE: Anybody want mustard?

JANEY IS GLARING AT HER MOTHER.

JANEY: A bit of a tiff?

MAGGIE: What's that, darling?

JANEY: A bit of a tiff?! Is that what you think? Mum! Darren was hitting me.

MAGGIE: Yes, darling, I know. That's not my fault, is it?

JANEY: I just needed somewhere to go. Me and the girls. For a few days.

SAM: Um..is this a bad..? Should I just..?

MAGGIE: Yes, I know, darling. But it wasn't up to

me, was it? I'd just moved in here. Ted didn't want two small girls around the place. Did you, darling?

TED: What? I..

JANEY: I had to go back to Darren.

MAGGIE: Yes darling. I do know. I said I was sorry, didn't I? I really don't know what else you expect me to do.

JANEY: I had to go back to Darren.

MAGGIE: Yes darling. I know.

SAM: Ted, are those Madame Isaacs in that..?

TED: For pity's sake, Jane. You were a grown woman. You really can't expect your mother to run round after you all your life.

MAGGIE: I really am sorry, darling. Look, how can I make it up to you? There's a lovely trifle for afters.

JANEY: Come with me next week.

MAGGIE: I suppose maybe it would be..

SHE LOOKS TOWARDS TED, WHO
ENUNCIATES VERY SLOWLY AND
CLEARLY.

TED: Next Wednesday is the AGM, Maggie. I will be going and you will be driving me home. I hope that's clear enough, even for you to understand?

HE BANGS DOWN HIS FORK AND
STANDS UP.

I knew this little hussy would cause trouble.

HE STRIDES OUT TO THE KITCHEN.

JANEY: Mum, I'm so scared. Mum, please..?

MAGGIE: I don't know, Janey..

SAM: I'll just..um..Ted..um..

HE STANDS AND GENTLY GOES OUT.

MAGGIE: Any other time, Janey, I'd be with you like a shot. Like a shot. You know that.

JANEY LOOKS AT HER SADLY.

JANEY: Julia always used to say you'd end up alone. I never knew what she meant.

MAGGIE IS A LITTLE SHAKEN.

MAGGIE: Pfft! Julia! Your sister is a sad and bitter woman, Janey. I'm not alone. I've got Ted.

JANEY: He's got you, more like.

TED AND SAM COME BACK, TED HAS A JAR OF MUSTARD, SAM HAS A SPOON. THEY BOTH SIT DOWN.

TED: Quite right, darling.

MAGGIE: What?

TED: It does need a dab of mustard.

THE FOUR OF THEM EAT FOR A FEW MOMENTS IN SILENCE. SAM IS SHOVELLING DOWN HIS FOOD AS FAST AS HE DECENTLY CAN.

TED: Well, now seems as good a time as any to get down to business. Sam, about my nomination for..

SAM: I think..not, Ted..not this year.

TED TRIES TO BLUFF IT OUT.

TED: Well. No need to make up your mind just yet. There's nearly a whole week before the votes have to be in.

SAM STANDS.

SAM: Thank you for a lovely meal, Maggie. I told Sue I wouldn't be late. I'll see you soon, I'm sure.

HE AVOIDS LOOKING AT JANEY DIRECTLY, MUMBLES A BIT.

Nice to meet you, Jane. Hope it goes OK next week.

JANEY NODS BLANKLY AT HIM. TED IS STILL TRYING TO KEEP A GRIP ON THE SITUATION.

TED: I'll show you out.

THE TWO MEN GO OUT. MAGGIE STANDS TO CLEAR THE PLATES. AFTER A MOMENT, JANEY JOINS IN. THEY HEAR THE FRONT DOOR SHUT. TED COMES BACK IN, CHOLERIC WITH RAGE. HE GRASPS MAGGIE BY THE SHOULDER, ROUGHLY TURNS HER AROUND TO FACE HIM. SHE DROPS THE PLATE WHICH CLATTERS ONTO THE FLOOR.

TED: You stupid, stupid cow!

HE RAISES HIS HAND TO STRIKE BUT JANEY PUTS HERSELF IN BETWEEN THEM, BLOCKING HIS BLOW.

JANEY: No!

TED ROUGHLY SHOVES HER OUT OF THE WAY.

TED: This is all your fault, you little tart. Coming here and upsetting your mother. Get out of my house. I don't want you here.

MAGGIE: No! My baby!

TED: Either she goes - or you do.