



SPROUTS AND ALL THAT

By Irene Airton

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CHARACTERS

All the characters except JO are ladies of a certain age, but could be aged slightly up or down depending on the actors you have available.

LUPIN

Late forties/early fifties, Lupin is the hostess, gracious and pleasant but able to deliver the odd jibe if necessary.

JANE

Similar age to Lupin, but with a sharper tongue, Lupin and Jane's daughters are often in competition for parts in the nativity but they managed to stay friends. Jane does not suffer fools gladly, or indeed at all.

LIZ

A slightly quieter member of the group, but manages to hold her own against Jane and Lupin..

SUE

The gentler member of the group who often takes a little longer to grasp the nuances of the conversation.

JO

Twenties or early thirties. Jo is a female plumber and very glamorous.

MRS PATTERSON-SMYTHE

A similar age to Lupin and her friends or slightly older. A woman with a large personality and plenty of confidence.

GRANNY

Lupin's mother, who says very little but drinks a lot of sherry which she has hidden in close reach of the chair she sits in. When she does speak, she commands the room.

<SPROUTS AND ALL THAT>

INT. A SITTING ROOM WITH A CHRISTMAS TREE, A SOFA, CHAIRS AND A COFFEE TABLE SET FOR AFTERNOON TEA AND A SMALL TABLE NEXT TO GRANNY'S CHAIR. GRANNY IS SITTING DOZING IN HER CHAIR, WITH A BOTTLE OF SHERRY EASILY TO HAND. AS THE CURTAINS OPEN, LUPIN IS WANDERING AROUND, PLUMPING CUSHIONS, ADJUSTING ORNAMENTS ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE ETC WHILE SPEAKING ON HER MOBILE PHONE. THE DOOR TO THE HALL IS R AND THE DOOR TO THE KITCHEN IS L.

LUPIN

So, let me be clear, I want a turkey that's so organic it can trace its ancestors back to Ethelred the Unready... Yes, I know turkeys came from America like MacDonald's but a bit earlier, but my point is that it should be as organic as possible, and large. I'm expecting at least eighteen people and the one you sent last year was the size of an anorexic duck. To be honest, I've seen bigger sparrows.

Now, about the pigs in blankets, I want them in proper blankets this year, the bacon on the ones you sent last year was so thin they would have died of hypothermia. I could have read The Times through it. As for the stuffing..

(Doorbell rings and what is obviously a very small dog starts yapping off L in the kitchen.)

Excuse me, (to phone). Coming.
(to door).

(Pause, then they
both start again.)

(Into phone) I'll
have to call you
back about my
stuffing.

(Rings off and puts
head round entrance
to kitchen)

Quiet Brutus. Sit. Stay.

*(Dog stops yapping,
Lupin exits to the
hall. Granny wakes
up, looks round the
empty room and has
a swig of sherry,
then settles back
to sleep.)*

*Lupin re-enters with Jane,
business of taking off Jane's
coat, greeting, putting the coat
on a chair.*

LUPIN

Come in, come in. It's been ages
since we all got together.

JANE

Well you know how it is. If it's
not one thing, it's another.

LUPIN

Come and sit down and tell me
about it. You're looking very
well.

JANE

That'll be the valium. I was at the surgery at six this morning, that's the only way to get an appointment, ambush the doctors as they're getting out of their cars.

LUPIN

Well I can see you'd need a bit of a boost after the year you've had, what with your drains, your teeth and that ingrown toenail. Not to mention that problem with your back passage.

JANE

Oh, that's mended now. Bill put a new fence up, at least now I won't have to look at her across dusting in the nude.

LUPIN

It's a pity it took your Bill so long.

JANE

Apparently he had to order the fence posts from China. Twice. They arrived the same time her husband started doing karate and asked Bill to join him.

LUPIN

In the nude?

JANE

No, in the garden.

LUPIN

Oh, and how's your June?

JANE

She's fine, she had an audition
for a part in a flu medicine
commercial last week.

LUPIN

Did she get it?

JANE

No, she got the flu.

LUPIN

Ah well, it's a good thing she
wasn't up for diarrhoea medicine.

JANE

(puzzled) Why?

LUPIN

Because she might have...never
mind.

Doorbell rings. Dog yaps.

LUPIN

Quiet Brutus. Excuse me.

*LUPIN exits, JANE looks around and inspects the sandwiches
which may or may not meet with her approval. GRANNY wakes,
waits until JANE is distracted, has another swig of sherry
and goes back to sleep. LUPIN re-enters with LIZ and SUE.*

LUPIN

Look who's arrived.

General business with coat, air kissing etc.

LUPIN

Now that we've all arrived, I'll
just pop the kettle on.

*LUPIN exits to kitchen. Dog yaps, she yells at it, further
general greetings.*

JANE

How's your Bobby getting on with
his new job?

LIZ

At the butchers? Well he's still
got all his fingers.

JANE

Which is more than can be said
for poor Mr Archer. Forty years
as a butcher and never a scratch,
two days with your Bobby and he
ends up in Basingstoke A&E having
two fingers sewn back on.

LIZ

Well how was Bobby to know that
the knives were that sharp?

SUE

It's a butcher's, not a post
office. Lamb chops aren't like
stamps, they don't come
perforated. Of course the knives
are going to be sharp.

LIZ

Well he was given the sharpest
knife in the drawer.

SUE

Which is more than can be said
for your Bobby.

LIZ

There's nothing wrong with our
Bobby, he just hasn't found his
niche yet.

SUE

Well at least he lasted longer
than he did at the golf club.

LIZ

I wish I hadn't told you about
that. They should have made it
clear which bag had weed killer
and which bag had fertiliser. If
they had, Bobby would still be
working there.

SUE

And the golf club would still
have green greens.

RE-enter LUPIN with the teapot.

LUPIN

Here we are. I hope I haven't
missed much. Shall I be mother?

*Business of pouring and handing out tea. A cup is placed on
the table next to GRANNY.*

JANE

(Indicating granny)
Speaking of which,
how is your mother?

LUPIN

Deaf as a post, poor dear, but on the whole, mummy's fine now. Of course, she's had to give up smoking, but now she's sorted out her vaping she's as happy as Larry. She was sucking when she should have been blowing. Then the doctor doubled her water tablets, which is no fun when she has to cough. She has to get to the bathroom like Usain Bolt. Sandwich anyone? Egg and cress or smoked salmon and cucumber?

Oh before I forget, let me get your Christmas cards.

(Gets cards and hands them out).

I did pop in a round robin in case I'd forgotten to tell you in detail about Hubert and Persephone during the year.

JANE

I hate writing cards, I did mine in July.

(General mumble of agreement.)

LIZ

So do I. Every year we get one from Mick and Louise. I haven't a clue who they are. I think they came with the house.

SUE

We get one from Steve's cousin Jimmy. He's had more wives and

girlfriends than the England team. Last year I was in real trouble, I sent it to Jimmy and Paula.

LUPIN

Why was that a problem?

SUE

Paula was a wife and two girlfriends ago.

JANE

I can never remember the names of people's kids, so I always have to put 'and family'.

LUPIN

I do that, but I put 'et les enfants' it sounds a little less Lidl and a bit more Waitrose.

JANE

I wouldn't mind but I end up buying them, writing them and posting them. Bill prints out the sticky labels and thinks he should get the nobel prize for literature.

(Doorbell/dog)

LUPIN

Excuse me, that will be the plumber. I'm having a bit of trouble with my waterworks.

(Exits to front door)

JANE

I can't say I'm surprised. Apparently after all these years, Phillip has decided he's something of a handyman. It's the third time she's had to call the plumber out this year.

LIZ

Why? What's he done?

JANE

There was a squeaky floorboard so Phillip nailed it down, straight through a pipe. Ruined his collection of antique bus ticket apparently.

SUE

The second one wasn't his fault though.

JANE

No.

LIZ

What happened?

JANE

Persephone was looking after the school guinea pigs. They escaped, got under the floorboards and chewed through the plastic pipes. Made a terrible mess, didn't do the guinea pigs much good either when they reached the electric cable.