



## HAVING IT OUT

By Richard Smithson

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A Play

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# CHARACTERS

Jan : A woman aged about 60.

Bill : Her husband, a little older.

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SCENE : The sitting room in Jan and Bill's house, suggested by two armchairs side by side, occupied by the couple. Next to Jan, a small table. She reads a paperback novel, he reads a newspaper.

JAN: You'll never guess who I saw today. [**Beat.**] Haven't seen her for ages.  
BILL: [**Stifling a yawn.**] Oh yes?  
JAN: No, you'll never guess.  
BILL: No.  
JAN: It's no good pretending to listen Bill. I know you're not.  
BILL: No. Quite so. [**Pause. He cocks his head as if listening.**] What's that noise?  
JAN: What noise?  
BILL: Like a buzzing.  
JAN: Oh that. It's Peter strimming.  
BILL: Our Peter?  
JAN: No, of course not our Peter. Do you think he'd come all the way down here from London, do a bit of strimming and not call in to see us?  
BILL: No.  
JAN: The very idea. It's Peter next door.  
BILL: I thought they were going away.  
JAN: Did they say?  
BILL: Oh. No, not to me.  
JAN: Well they were actually. Mary told me.  
BILL: Oh, yes. I thought they were. [**Beat**] So why is Peter strimming?  
JAN: They must be back.  
BILL: A day early.  
JAN: Is it?  
BILL: They were supposed to be back on Thursday I think.

[**A pause, in which they return to their reading.**]

JAN: Oh, by the way Bill...  
BILL: What now?  
JAN: I've been meaning to mention it...  
BILL: I know. The fridge door's squeaking again.  
JAN: Oh, is it? No, it wasn't that.  
BILL: I've said I'll look at it, so I will. Don't fuss.

**[Pause, during which they read. Bill yawns.]**

JAN: **[Plonking her book down on the table.]** It's no good.  
BILL: I'm surprised you've read as much as you have, if it's that bad.  
JAN: I wasn't talking about the book. The fact is that .... well hearing Peter strimming has reminded me.....  
BILL: Were you going to do a bit of gardening?  
JAN: Certainly not. I leave that to you. Wouldn't dare interfere after last time.  
BILL: It's not a case of interfering. You made an honest mistake and we said we'd say no more about it. Dahlias can easily be mistaken for nettles, I know.  
**[Returning to his paper]**  
JAN: Bill, I... I was going to say ....  
BILL: **[Simultaneously]** It says here that... what is it dear?  
JAN: Well, I was going to say that the sound of Peter, strimming reminds me...  
BILL: **[Interrupting]** Ignore it. If you don't pay attention to things that annoy you, you stop noticing them. That's what I do.  
JAN: Do I annoy you Bill?  
BILL: Of course not dear.

**[There is a pause during which Bill continues to read the paper and Jan picks up her book again, only to sigh deeply and replace it. Bill yawns.]**

JAN: Bill, I feel I must say something.  
BILL: Oh yes dear? Must you?  
JAN: No, I feel I must tell you. I ..... I can't keep it from you any longer.  
BILL: No?  
JAN: I don't know why I should feel so guilty with things the way they are between us.  
BILL: No. Not at all.  
JAN: Are you actually listening Bill? I'm serious.