

ACT II

*The same. A few moments later. Mal is still Jill. Jill is still Mal. Mal sits on the stool at the dressing table. Jill sits on the bed. A silence. The first shock is over. Panic is beginning to set in. Particularly for him*

**Jill** I don't know what we're going to do. I don't.

*Pause*

I can't go to work like this. How can I go out looking like this?

**Mal** I don't see why not. I went out looking like that.

**Jill** Ah, but then you were you. Weren't you? Now you're me. And I'm you. Look at me.

**Mal** Put some make-up on. You'll feel a bit better.

**Jill** *Make-up?*

*Pause*

I mean, look at me.

**Mal** Don't keep saying that. It doesn't help.

**Jill** I mean — all this ... (*Indicating her breasts*) What am I going to do with these?

**Mal** I don't know. You were happy enough to stare at them before. You can sit in front of the mirror, now, can't you? Jiggle them up and down to your heart's content. You'll find the novelty soon wears off.

**Jill** I wish you'd stop making jokes, woman. What the bloody hell is there to laugh at?

**Mal** Nothing. Absolutely nothing, Mal. I'm sorry, I'm just trying to keep calm. One of us has to. Otherwise I think I'm going to have a panic attack. And that is not going to help either of us, is it?

**Jill** (*getting up; agitated*) What are we going to do? What the hell are we going to do?

**Mal** (*also rising*) Mal! Sit down, for God's sake. You're a grown man, now pull yourself together. (*Indicating the stool*) Sit! Sit!

*Jill sits*

Now listen, I would like you to know that I'm not exactly over the moon at being lumbered with all this, either. All these — extra bits.

I nearly died of fright in there, did you know that? And you left the seat up again.

**Jill** Sorry.

**Mal** Well, you won't be doing that any more anyway ...

**Jill** Look, will you just shut up, woman! What are the lads going to say? How can I face them like this?

**Mal** Well, you can't is the short answer. You'll have to stay here and I'll have to go to work.

**Jill** You can't do that. You can't do my job.

**Mal** I'm going to have to try, aren't I? I doubt you can do mine but you're going to have to try your best, as well.

**Jill** Oh, dear God!

**Mal** It's the only way, Mal. Think of the kids. Sam. You said it yourself, he's having identity problems. How's he going to react if he discovers his mother's his father and his father's his mother? We have to keep things as normal as possible.

**Jill** *Normal?*

**Mal** Look, with any luck it won't last. It may only be temporary. Just a temporary — personality exchange.

**Jill** Really? I've never heard of that.

**Mal** No, nor have I but it will have to do for now, won't it? And unless you want to lose your job, I'd better get ready for work. Dean'll be here soon.

**Jill** Oh, God. How can I face him?

**Mal** You're not going to have to, are you? I'm going to have to face him.

**Jill** What am I going to do?

**Mal** You're going to go downstairs and make sure Sam has something to eat before he goes to school. Then once you've seen him off, you come up here and get dressed. Make yourself presentable.

**Jill** (*head in hands*) This is a nightmare. I can't do this.

**Mal** I'll leave you a list of things to do. It's not difficult.

**Jill** I can't do it.

**Mal** (*sharply*) Mal! For God's sake, pull yourself together! (*More calmly*) Listen, Chrissie will be round later with Liam. I promised her we'd look round the shops together, you'll enjoy that.

**Jill** What, you mean dress shops?

**Mal** What other sort of shops do you look round? By the way, if you want to try anything on you're a size twelve, European thirty-eight.

**Jill** I'm not doing it, Jill. I cannot do it. I'm sorry. I'll be a laughing stock. No way!

**Chrissie** (*at length*) We need to talk about this. don't we?

*Silence. Jill does not react*

(*Gently*) We do, Mum. I'm sorry, I know you don't like to, but we do.

**Jill** Nothing to talk about, really.

**Chrissie** It's affecting us all.

*Jill shrugs hopelessly. Chrissie, almost subconsciously, rubs her shoulder*

What about Sam? Don't you care what it's doing to Sam?

**Jill** (*softly*) Do you think I'd still be here if it wasn't for Sam?

**Chrissie** There must be something we can do ... You're my mother. I hate to see you like this. You look terrible.

**Jill** Chrissie, saying that doesn't really help, love.

**Chrissie** Sorry.

**Jill** He's having an affair, Chrissie. That's all. It's what a lot of men do when they get — to a certain age. They feel — they need — you know — to re-establish themselves.

**Chrissie** Re-establish themselves? What does that mean?

**Jill** Ones like your father, anyway. Ones who can't bear to think of it gradually slipping away ...

**Chrissie** Well, Dad's still attractive. Fairly. He's not lost it. Much.

**Jill** No. And he's out there now, isn't he, proving to himself he hasn't? All the same, he's not the man he was.

**Chrissie** How do you mean?

**Jill** He was ... (*After a pause; smiling a little*) Then I'm not the woman I was, either. Look at me now.

**Chrissie** You still look —

**Jill** No, I don't. You said. I look terrible.

**Chrissie** You know I didn't mean —

**Jill** And you're quite right, Chrissie. It's six of one, my love. Not all him.

*Pause*

**Chrissie** Who is she, do you know?

**Jill** Oh, some tottie from the make-up counter at Debenhams, I don't know. I don't care, really.

**Chrissie** Well, you should care. I'd care. If Dean went off and started doing that, I'd ... *(She rubs her shoulder again)*

**Jill** Chrissie, you still love Dean. There's a difference.

**Chrissie** *(a beat)* And you don't love Dad?

**Jill** I don't know. Not much. Not really. Not just because of this. That's just a symptom. We've — gone our different ways, you know. As you do.

**Chrissie** *(unhappily)* I can't bear to think you don't love each other. You're my parents.

*Jill shrugs hopelessly. Chrissie sits miserably on the bed*

**Jill** It happens, darling. Nothing special.

**Chrissie** *(unhappily)* We are though. We're special. I think we are. We were. We used to be.

**Jill** We'll still be here for you, darling. Even if we separate. You know that. For you and Sam. Your Dad would kill for you. You know he would. If you asked him to.

**Chrissie** I know. *(Rubbing her arm again)* I don't think that would be a lot of use just at present.

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**Sam** Oh.

**Chrissie** Hallo.

**Sam** You, is it?

**Chrissie** This'll be me.

**Sam** Where's Mum?

**Chrissie** Getting dressed.

**Sam** Oh. *(Glancing briefly at his watch)* Right.

*He dumps down his bag and goes off to the fridge*

**Chrissie** You right, then?

**Sam** *(off)* OK.

**Chrissie** How's school?

**Sam** *(off)* OK.

**Chrissie** *(continuing with her task)* Good.

*Sam returns with a can of soft drink. He sits and watches her*

**Sam** That your baby out there, is it?

**Chrissie** That's the one.

**Sam** It's turning blue and choking, did you know?

**Chrissie** (*unmoved*) Oh, dear. Yes, he does that round about this time of day.

**Sam** Thought you'd like to know.

**Chrissie** And his name's Liam. For the hundredth time.

**Sam** Liam. (*He considers*) That's mail backwards. Did you know that?

**Chrissie** Yes.

**Sam** You should write on him, "please forward".

**Chrissie** (*mirthlessly*) Oh, ha-ha-ha.

**Sam** If his surname was Laylor. L – A – Y – O – R, Liam Laylor. Then he'd be Royal Mail backwards.

**Chrissie** So he would. Only his name's Snaith.

**Sam** H-tians. Liam H-tians. Not as good, is it? Sounds Dutch. Maybe you should consider changing your name. For the sake of the child.

**Chrissie** Maybe you should consider changing your jokes. For the sake of my nerves.

**Sam** (*getting up*) See you, then.

**Chrissie** See you.

*Sam moves to the door, leaving the can on the table*

*He runs into Jill, now dressed, who enters*

**Sam** Hi, Mum.

**Jill** Hallo, Sam ... Had a good day?

**Sam** Great.

*Sam goes out*

*Jill sees the can on the table*

**Jill** (*calling him back*) Sam! Back!

*Sam reappears*

In the bin. Please.

**Sam** Sorry.

**Jill** How many times do I have to say it?

*Sam returns and puts the can in the bin*

I think he's just waking up, Chrissie.

**Chrissie** Yes, it's nearly time for his feed ... I'll give him something.

**Sam** A food parcel.

**Chrissie** You'll get a clip round the ear in a minute.

**Jill** He's been very good. Not a squeak all day.

**Chrissie** He's saving it for later.

*Chrissie goes out*

**Jill** Did you bring another form?

**Sam** Form?

**Jill** You know, the permission form? For the Shakespeare?

**Sam** Oh, yes. Hang on. *(He puts down his bag and rummages through it)* No point though. He'll never let me do it, will he?

**Jill** He need never know.

**Sam** He'll find out. Good news is — we had the auditions today with Mrs Easterly and — ta-ra — I got the part I wanted ...

**Jill** Did you? Oh, good.

**Sam** She said I was right for it and I was. I was brilliant. Here. *(Handing Jill the form)* Hide it from him this time.

**Jill** I'll sign it now. Got a pen?

**Sam** Somewhere. *(He produces a pen)* Just sign there and the date.

**Jill** *(doing so)* Right. If you'd — like me to help you with your words or anything ...

**Sam** *(surprised)* Oh, well, thanks.

**Jill** Just take you through them, you know. If you want.

**Sam** May take you up on that, Mum. Maybe tomorrow. See you later ...  
*(He makes to leave)*

**Jill** Sam ...

**Sam** Yeah?

**Jill** Do you know yet if you'll be wearing tights?

**Sam** What?

**Jill** Only I think it would be easier for your dad if you weren't having to wear tights ...

**Sam** No, I won't be wearing tights.

**Jill** You won't?

**Sam** It's not that sort of part.

*Sam goes*

*(Off)* Goodness me, sister! Are you going to put that huge thing into his little tiny mouth?

**Chrissie** (*off*) Look, Sam, just sod off, will you!

**Jill** (*hurrying out*) Now, now, now. Stop that, you two. Sam! Stop teasing your sister ...