

Joey & Lydia

LYDIA. You took over very well last night, I hear, after your mother got herself a little - over-excited. You cooked a very good dinner...

JOEY. I only finished off what you'd got ready.

LYDIA. Your father said it was very good. And after that, he said, you washed up brilliantly.

JOEY. How can you wash up brilliantly? I mean either you wash up or you don't, and as my seniors were plainly bent on shouting insults at each other over the chess-board until about five in the morning, I thought if I'm going to get to bed at all I'd better wash up, now and alone. That's all, Mum. It's not worth three columns in next week's *Sunday Times* -

LYDIA. Still you did it.

JOEY (*in deepest suspicion*). Yes, I did. So?

Pause.

LYDIA. Now I told you, didn't I, that I was going off on a little holiday next week?

JOEY (*even more suspiciously*). Yes, Mum.

LYDIA. And that means that for about ten days your father's going to be all on his own.

After no response from JOEY.

All on his ownsome, Joey -

JOEY (*interrupting shrilly*). No, Mum. No! No! Not in a thousand years -

LYDIA. But Joey, your father would be so pleased -

JOEY. He'd be round the bend in twenty-four hours, and so would I.

LYDIA. That's not true. Now, let's think, you haven't got anything on for the next ten days, have you?

JOEY. I will have now.

LYDIA. You have to pay Jerry and Sue a pound a night for that room don't you?

JOEY. I'll pay them ten pounds a night for the next ten days. It'd be cheap at the price.

Pause.

LYDIA (*laughing politely*). You know, Joey, if you stayed on here for that - very short time - your father would be so awfully - touched - Really - I mean touched, Joey.

She knows it's a phony word as soon as she uttered it.

JOEY (*shrill again*). Touched? Are you bonkers? *Touched? Father?* He wouldn't be touched if I jumped in front of a bus to save him from getting hit by it. He'd just come back and say:

Imitating him better than does LYDIA.

'Extraordinary thing just happened, darling. A bus nearly hit me. I think I'll sue London Transport.' And you'd say: 'Where's Joey?' And he'd say: 'Joey? Now, why isn't he here - Oh yes, I remember. . . He's lying under a bus, somewhere.'-

LYDIA (*after trying to be angry, has to laugh*). You seem to have inherited your father's creative talent.

JOEY (*looking at his watch*). Well, that's yet to be proved, isn't it, in about seventeen minutes.

In alarm.

Mum, do you think he's going to make it?

LYDIA (*bravely*). Of course, he's going to make it. You know, Joey - I think, somehow, you mean rather a lot to him -

JOEY. Oh Mum, no one means a lot to him, and you know it. Not even you.

LYDIA. Now that's a very bad thing to say.

JOEY. Yes it is, but it's the truth. And one has to tell the truth.

LYDIA. Has one?

JOEY. Honesty, in this life, is just about the only thing that matters.

LYDIA. Is it?

JOEY. We both know that the only person who matters to Dad is Dad. Mum, you've admitted that to me often enough -

LYDIA. As a joke, perhaps.

JOEY. No, Mum, as the truth. Don't be dishonest, Mum, please...

Eagerly.

Is that him?