

Doing a Sylvia

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Characters

- Woman** Early to late 20s. Attractive, driven and fun. Can be bossy, masculine, dogmatic and feisty.
- Electrician** Early 30s. Common, genuine, family orientated. In love with The Woman circa 2000.
- Academic** Late 30s. Well spoken, intelligent, haughty, high-maintenance, published and well respected. In love with The Woman circa 2002.
- Musician** Mid 20s. Jazz pianist, confident, lively, smart, commitment-phobe. The Woman is in love with him circa 2006.

The stage is bare except for two clothes rails Stage Left and Stage Right which hold the costumes for the actors, who change in full view of the audience. Locations could be projected on to a small flat flown in above head height. There are two wooden chairs centre stage.

The music/fx in each scene should represent the location.

The two chairs, with additional props create the scene.

The female performer plays The Woman throughout the performance, changing costume occasionally to suit the location. The male performer plays all the male characters. The shift in role should be made obvious with costume and characterisation. More than one male performer could be used.

Scene 1
The Musician
Trendy Wine Bar
April 2006

Music Plays. As the audience enters The Musician is sitting on one of the chairs waiting. He has nearly finished his drink. We can see The Woman getting dressed in no particular hurry. The Musician finishes his drink and goes to get another. As the house lights fade the Woman adds the final touches to her hair and make up and enters.

Woman: Hello.

Musician: Hello. *He kisses her.*

Woman: Well... I mean fuck ...I'm sorry I'm late. Total nightmare with work, finished horribly late and erm...well...I'm here now aren't I? Better late than never I suppose, unless you're going somewhere really important that is. Not that meeting up with you isn't important of course, I mean it's very important that I meet with you, because you're erm...very...erm...you're very good at meeting people? I'm not, clearly, ramble

on and on you see...can't seem to stop myself. Anyway...

Musician: Anyway.

Pause. They stare at each other.

Woman: *[Smiling]* Anyway. Would you like a...

The Musician holds up the drinks.

Woman: Ah. Good, very good.

She sits. He hands her a drink.

Musician: Cheers.

Woman: Cheers.

Musician: He said you'd be late.

Woman: Sorry?

Musician: He said you'd be late.

Woman: Oh.

Musician: You have a 43 minute average, apparently.

Woman: Is that so?

Musician: That is indeed so.

Woman: Humm. Well I can't have achieved a PB tonight because you're only just taking the first few sips...

Musician: Of my second beer.

Woman: Oh. Well, it surely didn't take you 43 minutes to drink one beer? I shall have to reconsider this meeting if you're a 43 minute a pint kind of man. Don't want to be seen with someone who's a bit pooffy!

Musician: Quite. You were only 17 minutes late.

Woman: Well, in that case, I'm quite impressed with myself. I think I'll have a drink to celebrate! *[Pause]* Did he tell you what I drink?

Musician: Nope.

Woman: Oh.

Pause.

Musician: I asked.

Woman: Cheeky.

Musician: Thoughtful.

Woman: Nosey.

Musician: Courteous.

Woman: Presumptuous.

Musician: Selfless, gentlemanly, attentive, gallant.

Woman: Supercilious, snooping, pompous, old fashioned, pontifical, portentous, grandiloquent!

Musician: Interested?

Woman: Might be.

Pause.

Musician: So, how many people have you slept with then?

Woman: What?

Musician: It's important.

Woman: Not to me it's not.

Musician: Bollocks is it!

Woman: Funny you should mention bollocks - since you appear to think with them!

Musician: Doesn't everyone?

Woman: I don't have any...

Musician: Well that's obvious otherwise you'd have answered my question!

Pause.

Musician: I lost count at about 50...

Woman: Is that supposed to be macho? Good grief, 50 - Fuck me!

Musician: Well, I have been trying! Impressive huh?

Woman: What? Impressive how many sexually transmitted diseases you probably have...

Musician: And there it is - the assumption that I didn't put my wellies on! Mummy didn't drag me up you know!

Woman: Do you know, I think I'm loosing interest, actually.

She goes to stand.

Musician: Oh I don't think you are. You see, we make up our minds as to whether or not we want to sleep with someone in the first 7 seconds of meeting them. You made up your mind and so, in fact, did I. You can't go back on it now.

Pause.

You have been wondering whether I'm any good in bed though haven't you? Wondering if I'll be as good at sex as word association?

Woman: I hardly think a little playful banter and one gin and tonic - a single at that - constitutes guaranteed bedroom activity!

Musician: Oh you are sweet.

Woman: Don't you patronise me.

Musician: I'm not.

Woman: Fucking are!

He leans in to kiss her.

Musician: I'm seducing you, and you don't even know it...

They kiss.

Musician: I am good, by the way, very good indeed.
But if you're feeling patronised far be it
for me to...

Woman: I think what I'm feeling is anger. I always
want sex when I'm angry. So you're in luck.

Scene 2
The Electrician
The Confession
February 2002

*The Electrician is sitting with his back to
The Woman as she enters.*

Electrician: It's late.

Woman: Yes, listen I...

Electrician: Had to work.

Woman: Yes.

Electrician: I ate at Mums. She hasn't seen you in
nearly a month.

Woman: Well it's not my fault.

Electrician: Of course not, it's work. Same client is
it?

Pause.

Woman: Yes. Same man.

Pause.

Electrician: Must be very important to you.

Woman: He's important, to the company, yes.

Pause.

Electrician: And to you? What is he to you? Is he
important to you?

Pause.

Woman: Yes.

Pause.

It's just part of my job. I have to make it work.

Electrician: Yeah. But it feels like your job is more important to you than I am.

Woman: It *is* more important! Oh God, listen I didn't mean that.

Pause.

Electrician: Yeah you did. But that's not why you're breaking up with me is it?

Pause.

Electrician: I might not be clever with books and qualifications an' that - but give me some credit - I'm not stupid. I'm amazed it's dragged on for this long. I know what's going on here.

Woman: It wasn't a calculated thing. It wasn't planned, it just...happened.

Electrician: You just fell out of love with me?

Woman: No. Yes.

Electrician: I know I'm not good enough for you. I know that. But I wanted us to work. I wanted us to have a family together. Be happy. Be content. I wanted to look after you, take care of you, of us. You want a lot of things that I simply can't give you.

Pause.

Woman: I don't know what I want.

Electrician: But you know that you don't want me?

Woman: I'm not...

Electrician: Happy? Fulfilled? Intellectually stimulated?

Woman: Please don't...

Electrician: I have to though don't I? Because you can't.

Pause.

Woman: I don't know what to do. It's not you you're...

Electrician: No, no, no. I can't stand that. There's nothing wrong with me, I know that, I'm lovely! I know what I want. And that was you, you just exactly as you are. But me, exactly as I am isn't quite enough...

She goes to hold him, he stops her.

I'd like that...but I can't...

Pause.

I thought you loved me.

Scene 3

The Academic and The Electrician

Publishing House

January 2002

Woman: It's lovely to meet you at last. Everyone here is very excited about your work.

Silence.

Woman: We have the final draft of your manuscript to look through and sign off and a few covers and graphics to look through and then we're almost done.

Silence.

Woman: Oh, right, so here is your manuscript and here are some of the proof prints our design team have been working on. Take your time perusing them, but er, we need to finalize a decision so that we can meet the printer's deadline next week.

Silence.

Woman: We were also wondering whether you would be

prepared to sit for some promotional shots.

Academic: Of course.

Woman: That's wonderful. I've been such a huge fan of your work for so long, if you don't mind me saying so.

Academic: Not at all.

Woman: I can't tell you how excited I am about your new book. Your latest exhibition contains such intimate and beautiful pieces yet they appear so, so simultaneously estranged.

Academic: I do adore the intimate.

Woman: Oh goodness, are they based on personal experience?

Academic: Perhaps.

Woman: My college pals would be so completely jealous! We studied some of your earlier work and publications at university. I have to say that the majority of the group, and I think that included our tutor, had rather a crush on you.

Academic: But my dear, you speak in the past tense?

Woman: Yes, erm. Oh, oh dear, I believe you've made me blush.

Academic: Your face is really quite charming with a little colour.

Pause. She looks at him, him at her.

Academic: Quite charming.

Pause. Her mobile phone rings.

I think your telephone is ringing.

Woman: Oh. Oh God. Yes. Yes it is. Just erm, busy yourself with those prints for a moment and excuse me will you. Thanks. Hello.

The voice of the Electrician is heard.

Electrician: Alright baby cakes. And how is the sexiest woman in publishing?

Woman: Oh, hello Charles. I'm very busy at the moment, please be quick.

Electrician: It's Roberto not Charles - ooh bella I taka offa all of your clothesa, anda then I makea hot sex with you tonighta ci?

Woman: *[Sharply]* I'm afraid that's looking increasingly unlikely

Electrician: Alright, misery guts, going Mum's for grub tonight wanna come? Me and Dad are gonna watch the...

Woman: I'm with a very important client at the moment so I could arrange an appointment with you at a later date.

Electrician: Is that a yes? Mum's doing dinner for 8.

Woman: Is that so? Fine, 8 o'clock it is. Goodbye.

Electrician: Be good to see you, we're like ships pissing in the night at the...

Woman: Yes, yes...

Electrician: Oh and one last thing, what pants have you got on today? I'm very much looking forward to...

Woman: Lovely. Good bye Charles.

Electrician: You know you want to...
She hangs up.

Woman: Ever so sorry about that.
Pause.

Academic: Your lover I presume?

Woman: What?

Academic: Boyfriend?

Woman: Erm...

Academic: Well, I didn't have you pegged for a lesbian but I guess one should never make assumptions.

Woman: No. Not. Erm...college doesn't count. Ha ha. Erm, no. No one important.

Academic: Not as important as me I hope?

Woman: Erm...no, no, of course not you're very...

Academic: Important, yes. I am aware. So, these prints then, and this dreadful business of the photograph.

Woman: Ah, yes, I'd quite forgotten. Any thoughts?

Academic: Many my dear, many. All in good time. Now, I should like to invite you to my studio in town. Tonight.

Woman: Oh. But I'm afraid I...

Academic: You are aware that I hold previous exhibition work at my studio? Amongst other things.

Silence.

Academic: Perhaps we can drink a good bottle of red and talk about some work I'm thinking of purchasing, I'd very much appreciate your opinion.

Woman: Well, I'd...I'd be delighted.

Academic: Splendid. 8 sharp then. You have the address.

He leaves.

Woman: Well, I think I do yes...oh, right. *She picks up her phone.* Hello babe.

Electrician: Answer my question.

Woman: What question?

Electrician: The one I asked you before you rudely hanged

up on me.

Woman: It's hung up on me. *Pause, she looks.*
They're black and matching actually, only
ones left, need to do some washing.

Electrician: No need. Popped round yours earlier and put
some on for you, it's all hanged, sorry hung
out drying.

Woman: You did what?

Electrician: I hung it out. See I said hung that time,
I'm learning you know, I have a good
teach...

Woman: I heard what you said. I gave you a key to
my flat so you could let yourself in when I
was there!

Electrician: What's the fuck point of that?

Woman: The point is I don't want you in my home
when I'm not there!

Electrician: But I was trying to help...

Woman: I don't need your help. I'm a fucking grown
up you know.

Electrician: Listen...look, I won't do it again alright?
I'm sorry.

Woman: Too right you won't do it...

Electrician: Alright! Christ.

Pause.

Listen babes you're just tired, don't be
angry. Mum's got a load of food in and
we'll have a relaxing night when ya get back
from that 'orrible job of yours, I'll look
after you.

Woman: No. No you won't. I've got to see a
client. I'm going to be late.

Electrician: Again? But I never see you...

Woman: I have to. It's my job.

Electrician: Okay well I'll plate up some dinner for you and leave it on the side and...

Woman: I don't know how long it's going to take. Another time.

Electrician: Oh. Okay then. If you're sure.

Woman: I'm sure.

Electrician: Well I'll see you tomorrow then?

Woman: Probably.

Electrician: Probably?

Pause.

Electrician: Fine. I love y...

She hangs up. Blackout.