

The scene: A typical upper middle class lounge. There is a sofa in the centre of the stage and two single armchairs on either side of the sofa. There is a drinks cabinet with decanters and glasses stage right. The front door is stage left and a shelf with a hall that you can see into leads to the rest of the house stage right. A central staircase centre upstage leading to top storey, bathroom, bedrooms etc. Other decorations, such as a bookcase and flowers on a side table are optional extras.

Characters:

- Mr John Band – father, little bold, tends to drink a little too much**
- Mrs Joan Band – mother, very nice, fussy, motherly sort, floral dress**
- Mr James Band – son, 25 years old, hen pecked, neat and clean**
- Miss Mary Goodnight – very prim and proper, old Irish family**
- Leroy Specterovitz – he cleans up other people's mistakes**

Lights up on stage. James Band is sitting on the sofa on a cushion, legs tucked under him with a portable phone in his hand. He is just finishing a call. He gets up.

James: Okay, my love, I'll see you now. **(pause)** No I love you more. **(pause)** No, I love YOU more! No, I – **(breaks off as mother enters. Clears throat)** ahem.

Joan: Was that Mary? **(enters from kitchen side between bookcase and table)**

James: Yes, it was. She got a little lost, but she'll be here in about five minutes. **(gets up)**

Joan: **(fussing starts to fluff pillows)** Just look at the state of this place. Did you sit on these pillows? **(takes spray off coffee table and sprays the room and sniffs appreciatively)** That's much better, don't you think? I always think if a room smells nice, nothing else matters! Oh, she doesn't smoke, does she? **(pats down armchairs)**

James: Who Mary? Heavens, no. Doesn't drink either. Very conservative girl. **(tries to unsquash squashed cushion and and regards it with dislike)**

Joan: I'm glad she doesn't. Filthy habit, smoking. **(sprays again sharply for emphasis)**

James: Hey mom, did you bake those biscuits I like? **(replaces pillow on double sofa)**

Joan: **(stops cleaning)** They're in the oven right now. She's not allergic to nuts or anything like that, is she? Because I don't know what I'd do if she dropped dead in my living room! I've grown so fond of this house!

James: **(gives mom a strange look)** I don't think she is. But I'll double check with her just in case.

Joan: There's my good boy.

James: Um thanks, mom. Shall I check on those biscuits for you?

Joan: Not yet. **(checks watch)** They've got about 10 minutes still to go. Tell you what, why don't you mix your dad his drink while you're waiting. He's due back from his conference at any minute.

James: His usual Martini?

Joan: Yes. Stirred. Not shaken.

James: **(Goes to drinks cabinet)** Mom, shall I mix one for you as well?

Joan: Stop teasing me, James. You know I don't touch alcohol. I'll just drink my usual water and lemon juice. Can't have us both lounging, drunk, in front of Mary, can we, hahaha **(hysterical)(sits)**

James: Well she is quite important, you know. **(finishes mixing drink and leaves it there. Pours mom water and adds slice lemon to side during conversation and gives it to her)**

Joan: I know she is, dear. And I'm sure we'll love her!

James: She is. **(smiles to himself)** You know, I've never brought a girl home before.

Joan: I know, dear. Your father was becoming quite concerned, if you get my drift.

James: Mom! **(shocked)** It's not like that at all! Geez!! What was he thinking? It's not like I, I brought little boys home!!! It's just that,..... I.....

Joan: What dear?

James: Oh nothing. Never mind.

Joan: No, tell me dear.

James: Never mind, mom, it's just me being silly.

Joan: You're just nervous dear. It's quite natural. **(fixes his tie)**

James: Yes, that's it.

Joan: Good. I thought it was that. Now let me go and get those biscuits out of the oven shall I?
(exits via gap to kitchen)

James: Shoo!!! Maybe I need a drink. **(goes towards drinks cabinet)**

(enter John Smith through front door. He looks smart, in a business suit or tie and smart pants)

John: Is that my drink? Thanks, James.

James: Here you go, dad. **(hands drink to dad)** I was just about to pour one for myself.

John: Do you think that's really a good idea? I mean, do you want to make a good impression smelling of booze?

James: Oh. **(stops)** Yes, you're probably right. But then how come you're drinking, dad?

John: Oh? Well I'm not the one sitting next to her, and hopefully kissing her good night, eh?
(nosey)

James: Dad!

John: Well I assume you have, son? **(slightly apprehensive)**

James: Have what?

John: You know, kissed her?

James: Not that it's any of your business, but yes, I have. **(smiles sheepishly)** And now can we change the subject, please!

John: Fair enough. I'm just glad you finally brought a girl home, son. **(sit chair stage L)**

James: Yes. I heard. **(sarcastic)** Dad? **(sits down awkwardly on arm of sofa, moves cushion out of the way first)**

John: Yes?

James: It's just that... **(plunges into touchy subject)** dad, we always moved around so much when I was younger.

John: You know it was my job, James.

James: I know, I know.

John: Travelling salesmen do that. Once you've given the good book to every living soul in Hekpoort, sales just die. Then it's time to move to "Twee buffels met een koeel mors dood geskiet fontein."

James: I know that. It's just that, well, I thought most salesmen travelled and they came home to their families.

John: I, er, think it depends on the type of salesman, James.

James: Actually I looked it up. In the library. I found a book there. It was called "Life of a salesman" And it told me pretty much what I needed to know.

John: You looked up what the life of an average salesman is, in a book???? **(incredulous laughs)**

James: Yes. Where else would I find it?**(innocent)**

John: What? Oh. Well I don't know. **(lying as they've kept the internet from him)**

James: See? I knew I was right. But what I was trying to say is -

John: Well son, in a way you are right about the salesman thing, but, well, um, let's just say I liked to have you and your mom nice and close to me all the time. Kept you safe and all that. **(gets up and moves to SL)**

James: **(Follows dad)** I know, dad. But what I'm really saying is-.

John: But hey, we've been here in this house for nearly nine months now. Pretty long, hey? **(walks downstage)**

James: **(follows him)** That's true. Longest ever, even. Dad -

John: Might even settle down here, grow some roots. **(stands still)**

James: Dad!!!!- **(stands next to him trying to get his attention)**

John: Put some paint on the front fence. Paint over that other name on the letterbox. Meet the neighbours. No, **(changes mind as if he had recalled something)**....scrap that thought.

James: Dad, the point I was trying to make is that I'm not gay!!! I just never had a chance to meet girls! **(John looks at James in suprise)**

John: Well I'm sure you got plenty of chances to go out and meet them! A nice looking young guy like yourself! **(facing James)**

James: Dad, I was home schooled till I was twenty two!! From eight a.m. till 6 p.m. every day!! And after that I had to do homework till ten at night! I had a rip roaring social life! **(facing John)**

John: Your mother felt it was important that you got a good education. **(facing James)**

James: I wouldn't even know if it was good education!!! When I wrote to the university they wanted me to submit my matric results and guess what, I didn't even write the exams!! You left that little point out! **(Facing John)**

John: Well if you really want to – **(facing James)**

James: It doesn't matter, now!! I still can't believe you thought that of me! **(turns around and walks away towards alcohol cabinet)**

John: Well, I don't know what to say. You've never brought this up before. **(sits)**

James: Well you didn't bring up the fact you thought I was gay before, either! Maybe I will have that drink. **(by liquor cabinet)**

PAUSE

John: Hey is that a car outside? **(Jumps up and checks through window in a slightly over cautious manner)**

James: Gosh!! You're right. **(crosses stage to look out window)** She's coming up the front path!! Dad! Do I look okay?

John: Fine son, fine. James, I'm sorry. If it could have been any different, it would have. I promise you that. **(takes both of James' arms and faces him)**

James: That's okay. We can talk about it at another time. Let's just focus on Mary now. I really want her to get a good impression of us, dad!!

John: I'll be on my best behaviour, son.

(Sound Cue Doorbell Ring)

(James goes forward to answer it, but John steps in)

John: I'll get it.

James: But-

John: You can never be too careful, nowadays, son. **(James stops and then throws his hands up in exasperation and starts to clear glasses away. John goes to door, opens it a crack, has a quick peek up and down as if to assure himself there is no one else there)**

Mary: Mr Band? **(through door, shouting)**

John: Is that you, Mary? **(whisper)**

Mary: Yes. James told me you were expecting me. **(shouting)**

John: **(whips open the door, and pulls Mary in. She looks a little surprised)** Did you come alone? **(leans towards her, she leans away from him)**

Mary: Yes... I did. I thought it was safe to drive by myself at night, this is a safe little town, you know, not a scary place like Jo burg! **(clutches handbag with both hands)**

John: **(has a quick peek and look around outside the door, then closes it and bolts the door. Mary looks puzzled and slightly shocked)** Can't be too careful these days, my girl, can't be too careful.

Mary: Oh, of course! My dad says the same thing to me all the time!

John: As a loving father should! Now do come in and sit down. James has told us all about you! **(indicates the centre sofa)**

Mary: Thank-you **(sits down, handbag still on lap, sits in a slightly apprehensive manner)**

John: James. Sit down next to your girl, now.

James: Oh, right! Sorry! **(sits)**

John: Now my dear, what can I get you to drink? **(goes to liquor cabinet)**

Mary: Do you have a water?

John: Water and....?

Mary: Just water, thanks. My family doesn't drink. We're quite conservative, actually.

John: Churchgoers, hey? **(pours a mineral water and gives it to her)**

Mary: Every Sunday. We're strict Presbyterians. But my dad says we don't drink because alcohol clouds your judgement.

John: Aren't you Irish? I thought Irish were all Catholics.

Mary: My parents are from Belfast. That's Protestant. My dad says the Catholics are too soft in their approach. He's very old fashioned. That's why he likes James, so much, you see. **(smiles at James and they hold hands)**

John: I must admit that I'm a bit partial to alcohol myself, though. I like to drink what I call, the "AntiBond!" **(lifts glass to show her and takes a swig)**

Mary: The AntiBond?

John: Yes. Martini, stirred, not shaken, ahahaha! **(Mary laughs politely and James rolls his eyes as if it is the millionth time he has heard this joke)** Will you excuse me for just a minute, my dear? I have to go see where my darling wife has gone to. She really should have been here to greet our new guest. Joanie!! Joanie? **(calls)(exits into house)**

James: I'm sorry if my folks are a little weird. I did warn you.

Mary: That's okay. I think all people must start to develop quirks over the age of fifty.

James: No, they've pretty much always been like that. **(gets up to take her glass back to the liquor cabinet and ends up behind the sofa)**

Mary: Oh James Band, I love you so much. **(Grabs his hands and looks deeply into his eyes)**

James: I love you too, Mary Goodnight!!**(he kisses her)**

Mary: Even with your weird parents. **(kisses him back)**

James: Even with your conservative ones! **(kisses her back)**

Mary: James, when we are married will you kiss me every day?

James: Every day, every hour, every minute!!! **(kisses her furiously, starts to lean forward then falls onto sofa with his head in her lap)**

(John enters from the house door trying to appear casual. He looks quite concerned)

John: **(clears throat)** Ahem!

(James and Mary both get a huge fright and jump up back to sitting positions as far apart as they can get)

James: Dad! You scared the living daylights out of me! I was just looking for her, um, earring. She, um, lost it. **(bolts to sitting up straight position)**

Mary: Silly me! Hang on, here it is on the cushion! **(holds up something)**

John: But you're already wearing two ear rings. **(looks at her)**

Mary: Oh **(pause)**

James: It's from her, er, other piercing?**(improvising)**

Mary: Other piercing! What!! **(shocked)**

James: Oh, um yes. It's not only her ears that are pierced!

Mary: James!

James: Oh I know she's a little shy about it, but don't you think you should know everything about Mary?

Mary: James! **(squeaky)**

James: It's only right they should know the real you!

Mary: **(kicks James)** Rebel me! Haha!

John: Hmm **(thoughtful)** Hey, James, speaking of which, why don't you show Mary your bedroom?

Mary: What!!!!!!!!!!!!

John: Yes. Take her on a little tour as it were. I'm sure she'd love to see the rest of the house.

James: Oh, a tour? Of the house??

Mary: Oh, a TOUR! Of the HOUSE!!!!Thank goodness!! I mean, yes, I'd love to see the house! **(jumps up)**

John: Why don't you start with the far end of the house. Take your time. Twenty minutes, half an hour even, you know, nudge nudge, wink wink, say no more, say no more!

James: Dad!! **(to his dad)** Cool it! I told you before, she's very conservative!

John: With those piercings? Course she is. **(pats him on the arm).**

James: Dad!!

(James and Mary exit)

John: It's all right, the coast is clear, they've gone upstairs! **(herding Joan into room)**

Joan: Oh thank God. Oh, did you lock the kitchen door?

John: Right after you left.

Joan: I still can't believe it. Not again.

John: Right, so what happened?

Joan: I was taking the biscuits out of the oven, you know the ones that James wanted.

John: Yes?

Joan: I was putting on the icing and I was about to add the little nut sprinkles, you know the ones made from crushed almonds?

John: U huh?

Joan: Then out of the corner of my eye I saw the man. He was inside, by the kitchen window.

John: What did you do?

Joan: The only thing I could do. I did a round house kick, followed by a blow to the throat, then the groin area and finally I broke both his knees. Oh, and then I hit him with the baking tray and shoved his head in the gas oven.

John: Good girl. Although I would have followed the throat blow with a solar plexus punch, but I think yours worked equally as well. The biscuits?

Joan: Ruined. Flew all over the place.

John: Bastard. I really like those biscuits. Is he dead?

Joan: I think so. Do you want to go check?

John: Okay. **(starts towards door)**

Joan: Oh, don't smoke in there. The gas is still on.

John: I won't make THAT mistake again! Let me smoke first. **(Sits down and lights up a cigarette)**

Joan: Damn I need a drink! **(looks through bottles on liquor cabinet)** Where'd you stash my Tequila?

John: It's underneath. Behind the false back of the cupboard.

Joan: **(Fumbles under far back.)** Got it! **(pours neat tequila and downs it whilst still standing. Puts down glass)** So what now? Do we run, again?

John: I'm sorry. I know you love this house.

Joan: I do love it. And James has finally met a girl! **(takes the cigarette and takes a drag)**

John: Not a boy!!!

Joan: Yes, a real girl. **(takes another drag and passes it back to him)**

John: She seems very nice. Family sounds like they've got carrots stuck up their arses, though. Conservative bunch.

Joan: Well, the way we raised James, he couldn't help but turn out old fashioned. Maybe they'll suit each other!

John: So does that mean you want to stay then? **(takes final drag and puts out cigarette in the Martini glass he used earlier)**

Joan: Can we try for a little while longer? For James's sake?

John: Okay, for James then. But it'll be tricky. They'll probably send more. Hey, at least I won't have to give up that job making gravestones.

Joan: I know. And you'd just been promoted too. Head engraver. I'm so proud of you, John. You know, you'd think, after twenty five years, they'd give up.

John: They won't. But I think we can handle them! We've had twenty five years of dealing with this shit and I say we stay and fight, dammit!

Joan: What are we going to do with the one in the oven?

John: Leave that to me. I've got Specterovitz's number somewhere. Specterovitz is a 'cleaner', you know sorts out little problems like "dead bodies".

Joan: Oh! Who, Harry's cousin?

John: Yes. That's it. Never met Specterovitz personally, sounds nice though. Just had a new kid.

Joan: Oh that's lovely. It's always a special moment when you get a new baby. I still remember

when we got little James.

- John:** Yes, dear. Best decision we ever made, huh? Okay, let me just give Specterovitz a call. You stay here. **(picks up glass with cigarette in it and leaves room. Joan gets up, wipes table clean of ash and starts to spray the room with room spray again to hide the smell. She then gets another drink, hides the bottle and sits down on the sofa. She is busy drinking it when James and Mary enter)**
- James:** Oh, mom! You're here! Dad was looking for you.
- Joan:** Oh! **(gets a surprise and quickly hides drink under chair)** Yes I'm here. I, er was looking for your father, in fact.
- James:** I think he went to the kitchen to look for you. I'll go find him. **(starts towards door)**
- Joan:** **(jumps up to stop him)** Oh but we haven't been introduced yet!
- James:** Oh how rude of me! I am sorry. Mary, this is my mother! Mother, Mary!
- Mary:** Hi! **(little wave)**
- Joan:** Hello, dear!
- Mary:** Hello! You must be James's mother. Oh, your house is really lovely. And it **(sniffs)** smells divine in here!
- Joan:** I'm so glad you like it! **(ironic)** Did you find the place all right?
- Mary:** Well, I got a little lost, but I prevailed in the end. I honestly have no sense of direction, myself. I think some people are just born without one!! Thank goodness for GPS!
- James:** What?
- Joan:** Well you wouldn't know what GPS is, James because you don't drive! I prefer a good old fashioned map book any day. All this new technology is fine, but as your dad says, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" **(they all sit, James and Mary middle chair, Mrs Band chair stage right)**
- James:** True! Although I do want to learn how to drive, though. Even if it involves one of those G, sorry, what did you say it was called, Mary?
- Mary:** GPS. And, James, when we are married, I'll teach you to drive. How's that?
- James:** That would be great!
- Joan:** Did I hear you say what I thought I heard you say? **(slightly panicky false smile)**
- James:** Yes mom, you did. **(takes Mary's hand)** That's why Mary came over tonight, so we could tell you in person!
- Mary:** We're getting married!
- Joan:** Oh.**(pause)** Gosh. **(pause)** Oh that's nice, um. **(clearly not happy slightly panicky)**
- James:** Thanks, mom. I proposed last week.
- Mary:** On a little boat on the lake in the moonlight. It was so romantic!
- Joan:** It sounds it. But just how long have you two actually been going out?
- James:** Four months
- Mary:** Three days

James: And forty minutes!

Mary: I love you!

James: And I love you!

Joan: I think your father should hear this. **(a little grim)**

James: You're right mom. It's not fair, you being the first one to know. We should have told you when you were both together!

Mary: It's my fault. It just slipped out. I am sorry.

James: Don't be silly, Mary. No one's cross with you!

Joan: Yes it's quite all right, dear. **(a little impatient)**

James: Now where is my father? **(gets up)** Let me go look for him.

Joan: No, don't be silly, I'll go **(jumps up again and bumps into James)** He was on the phone, you see...

James: Oh mom, while you're up, how are those biscuits doing?

Joan: Biscuits??

James: The ones you made specially for Mary?

Joan: Specially for..... oh RIGHT!!! Stay right there!! I'd forgotten completely about them, haha!
(Joan gets up and gets halfway to the door)

(enter John. Starts talking outside the door first)

John: It's all sorted out, dear. The cleaner's on his way here. Problem solved. Now he says that -

Joan: John! They're sitting here, in the lounge!

(James and Mary both think this is a little odd)

John: What, did they send two cleaners?

Joan: No!! James and Mary!!

John: Oh!! Hello you two. I thought you would still be taking your little "tour"!! **(lewd sex gesture)**

Mary: Oh, sorry, it's just that it's not very big.

John: Not...very...big?

Mary: Oh yes. It was all over within about four minutes so we came back here.

John: Four minutes?

Mary: And we went in every room, too.

John: Good gracious!

James: Dad! Its a two bedroom house!! How long did you think it was going to take?

John: Well, er, I don't know. I like to take my time with these things.

James: Well I don't know how much more I could do!!! I mean, what more was I supposed to do?

Show her the paint on the ceiling?

John: Well you know what they say: **A bride was asked what she wanted to see on her honeymoon- "Lot's of lovely ceilings"**

James: Dad! What on earth are you talking about???

John: Oh, nothing, nothing.

Joan: You were talking about the er "cleaner" **(brightly)**

John: Joanie!! **(surprised she has brought up this subject in front of them but then realises she is talking in code.)** Oh!! The "cleaner!" Yes, the "cleaner's" on their way to clean the kitchen. They were passing through on their way to another job, luckily.

Mary: You have a cleaner come on Sunday to clean your house?

Joan: Oh, er, yes. They're ever so much more, er, efficient when you're watching them. It's so hard to get good help these days.

Mary: Oh I know what you mean. We once had a cleaner who stole the teaspoons. All of them. One by one, out of the drawer. In the end we were stirring our coffee with knives.

John: You must have been very "cut up" about it **(laughs at his own joke)**

Mary: We were!! **(doesn't get joke)** So we had to let her go. Is that what happened with your last cleaner?

Joan: In a way.

Mary: Where do you find all these cleaners ?

John: Oh I know someone.

Mary: You're lucky you found someone to work on Sundays. Most cleaners won't! Oh, do you think you could you give me their number, please. James and I might be needing them, in the near future!

James: Oh yes, dad, that reminds me. We have good news!

John: Good news?

James+ Mary+Joan: We're (they're) getting married!