



**Family Play**

# Family Play

by Matt Fox

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## **Family Play – by Matt Fox**

### **Characters**

**Alice – 8 years old**

**Charlotte – 22 years old – Alice’s mum**

**Caroline – 20 years old – Charlotte’s friend**

**Dylan – 24 years old – Charlotte’s boyfriend**

### **Act 1**

#### **Prologue – bare stage**

**Alice enters the stage alone.**

**Alice:** Hello. I’m Alice. I’m 8 year’s old.

Just so you know, I know this is a play. For the rest of it I’ll be pretending to be part of the action, but I just wanted to let you know that I know we’re acting...just in case anyone was confused.

My mum’s called Charlotte.

#### **Charlotte enters**

She’s 22 years old. Not very old at all for someone with an 8 year old.

#### **Alice leans forward and whispers**

She had me when she was 14. That’s only 6 year’s older than me...which is really really young to have kids.

#### **Whispers**

If I’m honest I don’t think I was planned...I was what my gran calls a ‘whoops’. I quite like being a ‘whoops’, makes me feel fun and unexpected, like winning a raffle you forgot you entered.

Charlotte’s a good mum though. Acts like a proper grown up. She’s always taken good care of me, even when I was really little and she was really young.

I’ve never met my dad. Don’t know who he is, what he looked like or anything. My mum’s never wanted to talk about it. I’m pretty sure she knows who he is...I’ve heard you remember that sort of thing. But she never wanted to say.

Mum lives with 2 people. There’s Dylan

### **Dylan enters**

He's mum's boyfriend. He's really nice and I really like him...but I'm only 8. I'm not sure proper adults feel the same. He's not exactly grown up...even though he's 24 and the oldest person in the house. But we get on; play Connect 4 and Junior Monopoly all the time. He never seems to go to work though...I think he'd prefer it if he was 8 too.

The other person is Caroline.

### **Caroline enters**

She's the second youngest in the house, after me of course, but the only other real adult apart from mum. Caroline's nice...not like Dylan, but still nice. She's also completely bonkers. Always seems to be worrying about what someone thinks or how she looks or what she should be doing. Never seems to worry about stuff that's actually important. She is nice though, and likes a cuddle when she's sad. No one's allowed to say she's bonkers.

So that's the household. We get on. No one ever seems to have any money and I'm sure mum sometimes feeds us those horse meat lasagnes...but I don't mind. I always thought horses looked a bit full of themselves...I prefer cows.

So I'm going to leave now...time to let the adults start this play properly. The next time you see me I'll be fully in character, and we won't be able to have these little chats.

Oh...and I believe that the adults use quite a lot of naughty words during the play...that's why I've been given these **(pulls out some earmuffs)**, so I can sit backstage and not listen to any unsuitable content.

See you soon...

**Alice leaves.**

### **Scene 1**

**Dylan, Caroline and Charlotte all come to life and seat themselves at the kitchen table. They have wine and beer.**

**Caroline:** And I couldn't believe that he thought it was ok to watch porn in the living room. It's disgusting and disrespectful. I can't have someone who does that in my life, let alone someone who does it in our living area.

**Dylan:** So what was he watching exactly?

**Caroline:** I told you, pornography. I couldn't believe it.

**Dylan:** Well porn comes in lots of forms, what exactly was it?

**Caroline:** I didn't care to ask...I just saw lots of flesh and heard grunting noises.

**Dylan:** Could have been American wrestling, or a documentary on pig farming?

**Caroline:** It was bloody porn. I know sexual grunting when I hear it.

**Charlotte:** Ok fine. He was watching porn and you told him to leave.

**Caroline:** It was in this house...the same house your daughter lives in. You can't have a child brought up in that sort of environment. I had to end it before he did it when Alice was here.

**Charlotte:** Well we've certainly never had anyone watching porn in this house before, have we Dylan?

**Charlotte and Dylan's eye meet**

**Dylan:** No certainly not...

**Charlotte:** And with poor Alice in the house.

**Dylan:** Disgusting...

**Caroline:** Exactly.

**They pause for a moment, Charlotte and Dylan supressing laughter.**

**Caroline:** It's just another indication of the sexualisation which is being normalised in this country.

**Dylan:** Oh Christ not this again...

**Caroline:** Not what? Women are being raped every day and the normalisation of porn and the objectification of women are all complicit...you bloody men and your uncontrollable urges.

**Dylan:** What? Are you suggesting I'm a rapist?

**Caroline: (Half under breath)** Well I can't possibly imagine why Charlotte would sleep with you otherwise...

**Dylan:** Why don't you just fuck off and extract whatever it is that you've got stuck up your arse.

**Charlotte:** Ok ok...Dyl, stop being a dick. Caz, I think you're being a bit unfair on this...just because men like tits, it doesn't make them all rapists...I may have even caught Dylan here cranking away on the internet a few times...and he's the archetypal feminist.

**Dylan:** And what about gay porn?

**Caroline:** What?

**Dylan:** There are no women in that...

**Caroline:** What's your point?

**Dylan:** Well it's not just women that get sexualised. And being sexualised is part of sex...you don't want to fuck a sexless being...

**Caroline:** Charlotte's right, you are a dick...

**Dylan:** What, because I can argue against you?

**Charlotte:** Right both of you just shut it...we all have to live here.

**Pause**

**Dylan:** Polls show that 9 out of 10 people like gang rape...

**Caroline:** You are such a fucking prick...this is serious and you're make jokes about it? I can't believe she (**indicated Charlotte**) puts up with you...you're a grade A twat.

**Caroline exits the room. Charlotte and Dylan sit for a while.**

**Charlotte:** She's right, you are a grade A twat...and you stole that from Jimmy Carr.

**Dylan:** She was annoying me...fucking porn rants...

**Charlotte:** Look she's had a really hard time of things...this is real stuff to her...you know what happened. You need to stop being such a wanker around her. She's nice.

**Dylan:** I just don't think she should paint all blokes with the same brush. I'm a good guy.

**Charlotte:** Well that's an overstatement...but I guess you're ok?

**Dylan:** Fucking walking sex god...

**Charlotte:** That's going a bit far.

**Charlotte and Dylan kiss.**

**Dylan:** Fancy a fuck then?

**Charlotte:** Well how could anyone resist such a sensitively put request?

**Dylan:** I'm the king of romance.

**Charlotte:** Come on then big boy...let's see what you've got.

**Charlotte and Dylan exit**

**Alice enters. She comes and sits at the kitchen table and pulls out a colouring/activity book. She sits and doodles. Caroline enters and sits at the table. She's clearly upset.**

**Caroline watches Alice colour for a while.**

**Caroline:** What you up to?

**Alice:** Colouring.

**Caroline:** Cool.

**Alice doesn't say anything else. Caroline watches her for a little longer.**

**Caroline:** Sometimes I wish I was your age again. Only concerned about colouring and going to school. Being an adult is really hard.

**Alice doesn't say anything**

**Caroline:** Human relationships suck...adults are horrible people. I might only be 20, but I've seen quite enough of the awfulness of the world to last me a lifetime. Men can be horrible creatures who treat women like commodities, and most women are too stupid to see it.

**Alice's eye flick across to at her briefly, but she doesn't say anything**

**Caroline:** Those boys who you're at school with are going to turn into the same thing when puberty hits them...you should make sure you tell them who's boss now before they start to knock you down.

**Alice: (not looking at Caroline)** Will do.

**Caroline:** This doesn't mean anything to you does it?

**Alice: (turns to Caroline)** What?

**Caroline:** What I'm saying...you don't have any grasp of it at all...

**Alice: (sighs)** You're saying that it's much better to be a child as children are still innocent to the nasty bits of the world. That I should make sure that I don't get pushed over by men as they're all horrible and will take advantage of me when I'm older.

**Caroline:** Well yes...but I didn't mean it to sound as black and white as that...I'm sure that there are good men in the world...

**Alice:** Like Dylan, he's not mean.

**Caroline:** He's not mean no...but I'm not sure he's good?

**Alice:** Well what's good? He's kind, fun, makes my mum smile? Seems good?

**Caroline:** Well yeah, but he's also lazy and opinionated and childish.

**Alice:** Well none of those things seem too bad...he doesn't murder people.

**Caroline:** No...but he does take advantage of them, abuses their kindness...I just think your mum could do better.

**Alice:** I thought we were talking about Dylan?

**Caroline:** We are...but he's your mum's boyfriend and I think she could better.

**Alice:** Why?

**Caroline:** Because I do...you wouldn't understand.

**Alice just looks at Caroline**

**Caroline:** You're really lucky to have a mum like Charlotte...good parents are hard to come by.

**Alice: (bemused)** Thanks...

**Caroline:** I mean I know it wasn't ideal that she had you so young...I know that's not what anyone would want to happen.

**Alice just looks at her**

**Caroline:** I mean we all want you to exist, but 14 is very young...

**Alice:** I know...

**Caroline:** But she's done so well with you, made you into the clever little girl you are today.

**Alice :** Uh huh.

**Caroline:** It is a shame you never knew your dad though, it would have been nice for you to have an effective male influence in your life...a good fatherly figure.

**Alice:** But I thought you said all men were horrible?

**Caroline:** Well I didn't mean all, some are horrible...most of the ones I've ever met. But some can be nice I'm sure.

**Alice:** Dylan's nice?

**Caroline:** Yes...but he's only nice.

**Alice:** I'm starting to get confused...

**There is a pause**

**Caroline:** Don't you worry about it...adult stuff.

**Alice looks at her for a moment then goes back to her book.**

**Caroline:** It's very good of your mum to let me stay here. There aren't many people who'd take someone in like this.

**Alice:** But don't you just help with the rent?

**Caroline:** Yes of course I do, but it's more than that...she saved me.

**Alice: (bemused)** Oh...well she is nice like that. She once glued the head back onto my doll.

**Caroline:** That's not quite what I meant...but don't worry.

**Charlotte enters the scene in a dressing gown.**

**Charlotte: (not initially seeing Alice)** Sorry, the old post coital cup of tea...he does insist...

**See's Alice**

**Charlotte:** What are you doing out of bed?

**Caroline:** She was talking to me...she's a very clever little girl.

**Charlotte:** Well she'll be a very kicked little girl if she doesn't go to bed right now.

**Alice gets up to leave.**

**Caroline:** I don't think you should make jokes about domestic violence...it normalises it.

**Charlotte:** Oh I wasn't joking...if you don't get to bed right now young lady I'll kick you in the bum.

**Alice laughs**

**Alice:** Night night

**Alice kisses Charlotte and then Caroline.**

**Caroline:** Goodnight Alice

**Charlotte:** Night missy.

**Alice leaves**

**Charlotte sits next to Caroline**

**Charlotte:** So you ok then?

**Caroline:** Yes you know...coping.

**Charlotte:** Good...

**Caroline and Charlotte sit in silence.**

**Charlotte:** Look I know Dylan's an insensitive twat sometimes, but he doesn't mean any harm.

**Caroline:** It's fine...I'm just overreacting...

**Charlotte:** And I think you probably just need to accept that blokes like porn...cos they all do, even the sincere ones who tell you they don't...they're animals.

**Caroline:** It just makes me sick to my stomach. Women getting fucked like dogs so men can wank off to it. What ever happened to romance and making love?

**Charlotte:** I'm not sure anyone should ever confuse love with screwing...they're exclusively different things...what me and Dyl just did was most definitely not 'making love'.

**Caroline:** I'm just not sure I should be mixing with anyone...I'm damaged goods....

**Charlotte:** You're fine...you just need to chill out and accept what life throws at you...it's not always just shit.

**Caroline:** Did anyone ever tell you how wise you are?

**Charlotte:** Look if you're aiming for a shag then I'm spent...you'll have to wait until morning for some lady love...

**Caroline: (embarrassed)** Oh no...nothing like that...I just meant...

**Charlotte:** I'm joking...Christ just lighten up sometimes...it makes life easier...

**They sit in silence for a moment**

**Charlotte:** Right...well I've left sleeping beauty long enough that he's probably snoring...so sod the cup of tea. Night night Caz.

**Caroline stands and indicates she wants a hug. Charlotte hugs her.**

**Charlotte:** It's all ok...stuff happens and people get over it...just don't do anything stupid...

**Charlotte looks at Caroline for a moment with an uncharacteristic intensity.**

**Caroline:** Yeah ok...glass half full and all that.

**Charlotte:** There you go...night night.

**Charlotte kisses Caroline on the forehead like a child and exits. Caroline watches her go. She then sits back down.**

**Caroline then grabs Alice's colouring book and begins to colour in a picture.**

**Caroline:** So I got my first boyfriend when I was 15. I realise that's quite old. I'd never really even kissed a bloke before then. I think it was a combination of late development and a pretty strict upbringing that made me wait...as far as I could see at school, boys were the most disgustingly childish creatures I'd ever met...I mean what is so funny about farting on people's heads, pissing through letterboxes or wanking into shower gel bottles? It's just gross. I had a few very close girlfriends, and we kept well away from those pricks.

Then I met Adam...he didn't belch in my face, snap my bra strap or attempt to grope my boobs in the dinner queue. He was into nice things like chess and reading books...ok so he was probably a geek, but so was I...he didn't seem to be entirely driven by his dick and could actually talk to me. I remember when I finally realised that I actually liked him and we kissed. It was really romantic...like something out of an Austen novel...not rutting like pigs in shit, just a very intense meeting of mouths. To be fair neither of us actually knew what the hell we were doing and there was definitely some clattering of teeth, but it was lovely...he didn't even try and feel my bum during it, which suggested that he was either a nice guy or he was concentrating so hard on not messing it up that he forgot to try anything else. Either way though, it worked for me. He made a clumsy attempt to ask me out, I made an even clumsier attempt to accept and we were a thing...nothing more spectacular

or exciting than my first ever romantic engagement...if it was 1594 we'd have then got married and lived happily ever after...but it wasn't 1594.

My folks never really liked me having a boyfriend, though how anyone could dislike Adam was beyond me...but they wouldn't let him stay in my room unsupervised, wouldn't let me out at night with him...wouldn't really let us be together at all unless it was at school with a thousand other people watching. My dad was particularly displeased...I was his and no one else was having me...mum just did what dad said...she always has...just smile and nod and go along with it.

Me and Adam carried on though, made the best of the time we were allowed, discussed books and managed a cheeky snog when we found an empty corridor...it was difficult though.

I didn't really blame him when he dumped me for Emma Baker...it was a shock, but I didn't blame him. She was more grown up than me, she'd been out with loads of boys...she wasn't prettier, but she had a worldliness which I completely lacked...she was known for giving out handjobs to all her boyfriends, so eventually Adam's maleness did just come through. I was disappointed though...I thought he was better than that. I'm sure we'd have got more physical if he'd just given me some time...

But that was that, I was alone again, my girlfriends had all got bored when I spent all my time with Adam and the boys didn't want me as they knew I hadn't let him fuck me...

Best years of your life being a teenager...

**Caroline stops speaking and finishes the picture she's colouring, signing it at the bottom. She then holds it up to the audience.**

**Caroline:** Perfect...all within the lines.

**Caroline then gathers up all the empty bottles/glasses and exits the room with them. She leaves the picture she's coloured on the table**

**Scene ends**

## **Scene 2 - Morning**

**Alice enters wearing pyjamas with a mobile phone and sits fiddling with it.**

**Dylan comes in with a cup of tea and sits with her.**

**Dylan:** Does your mum know you've got that?

**Alice:** She always lets me play with it...I understand it better than her

**Dylan:** I bet you do...I still can't work an iPhone...I'd much prefer to go back to the old Nokia I had when I was a kid...nothing but phoning and texting...I could do all of that...

**Alice:** This stuff's been around since I was born, I'm the iPhone generation...it's in our DNA to use these things...

**Dylan:** I think I'm probably just thick...

**Dylan opens a packet of cigarettes, puts one in his mouth and goes to light it.**

**Alice looks up and coughs loudly**

**Alice:** Bronchitis.

**She coughs again**

**Dylan dutifully puts the cigarette away again.**

**Dylan:** I've got a job interview this afternoon.

**Alice doesn't react**

**Dylan:** It's for a warehousing job...could be fun...

**Alice doesn't react**

**Dylan:** It'd be nice to help your mum out a bit more with the bills...

**Alice:** Yeah...can't just live on my child allowance and tax credits...

**Dylan:** I love your mum, you know that don't you?

**Alice:** I guess.

**Dylan:** I really do love her...I was thinking of seeing if she might marry me actually.

**Alice:** Weddings are expensive...

**Dylan:** Well yeah, but normally you only do them once. I was thinking that I'd save the money I got from my new job...If I get it...and I'd give her the big day she's always wanted.

**Alice:** Are you sure that's what she's always wanted?

**Dylan:** It's what every girl wants isn't it?

**Alice:** Not me...seems like a colossal waste of time and money.

**Dylan:** But your mum's never had a chance for something nice like a wedding...always had you to look after...not that I think you're a mistake or anything?

**Alice:** I think we can all agree that I definitely was a mistake...people don't usually choose to have babies at 14...

**Dylan:** You're too smart for your own good...I think it would be nice to treat your mum to a big day that's about her...so I can tell the world publicly that I love her.

**Alice:** She'd probably just prefer you to help with the gas bill...those ones with the red tops have started coming through the door again...I think that might be better than getting her a big cake and a dress that makes her look like a lemon meringue pie.

**Dylan:** You're just too young to understand.

**Alice:** I thought I was too smart for my own good?

**Dylan:** Just shut up...

**Alice rolls her eyes and goes back to the phone. Charlotte enters half changed into a supermarket uniform.**

**Charlotte: (to Alice)** Why am I the only person who thinks it's a good idea for you to be dressed before we try and leave for school? **(to Dylan)** And don't you have a job interview to dress up for?

**Alice and Dylan just sit there**

**Charlotte:** Bloody well move, both of you.

**Dylan and Alice exit.**

**Charlotte sits down and pulls out a large envelope. She then opens it and pulls out a college prospectus. She flicks through it.**

**Charlotte:** I got knocked up at 13...which is young. I don't recommend it. Not for any moral reason, more just practical things. Being pregnant when you're still growing sucks, having to wear a school uniform with a huge baby bump is embarrassing and generally being seen as some sort of benefits scrounging chav whore leaves a lot to be desired. There's nothing that Daily Mail readers like more than a teen mother to hate. I've never told Alice who her dad is...I know who he is. Despite all the suggestions that I was some kind of cum dumping hole for every lad in the town, I actually only slept with one boy, once, before I was 16. Unfortunately that one boy seems to have had some kind of turbo impregnation sperm, which didn't need a second go. But I've never told Alice who he is and I doubt I ever will.

I wasn't raped or abused or anything like that. I just had a clumsy teenage shag and ended up 'in the club' as my dad would say. When I found out I kept it quiet and then when I had to tell someone, I made out that the father was someone else and that my boyfriend didn't have to worry about it. I even told him that I'd cheated on him with a different bloke, so he'd dump me and get on with his life. It seemed the nicest thing to do. There wasn't any point ruining two people's lives, and as I was the one carrying the thing, it seemed I was stuck with the problem.

My parents were great after they got over the shock and disappointment. They helped me out, so I actually finished school, I even had a crack at some A-levels, but Alice was doing the terrible twos by that point and I couldn't do it. I decided to move out when I got to 18 and Alice was in school; I got a shit job at ASDA and 4 years later here I am...living the single parent's dream, jobless boyfriend, mentally unhinged lodger who doesn't pay any rent, and a daughter who's brighter than all of us.

It's fine though, people have worse lives, no one's trying to kill us and I've not be forced to suck dicks for a living yet...it's just not exactly what I'd planned to be doing. It would have been nice to do all the stuff you're supposed to when you're a teenager...experiment, fall in love, get fucked up and screw anything that moves...

But...I've decided I might try and do some sort of course, in something or other. Not one of those pointless wanky courses in tourism or childcare...something that's actually worth studying...just not sure what yet...

**Alice enters in her school uniform**

**Alice:** What you got there?

**Charlotte:** None of your business...a catalogue of old lady pants.

**Alice:** Well you do need those.

**Charlotte:** So are you ready then?

**Alice:** Dressed, homework not too creased and an apple for the teacher...

**Charlotte looks at her.**

**Alice:** I made that last bit up.

**Charlotte: (sarcastic)** Derr, really?

**They exit**

**Charlotte: (shouting)** Taking Alice to school...would be good if one of you ladies of leisure could do the washing up whilst I'm gone...

**There's no answer and they leave.**

**Caroline then enters the scene in a dressing gown. She has a cup of tea with the teabag still in. She sits down and dips the teabag in and out of the cup.**

**Dylan enters**

**Dylan: (grunt)** Hello

**Caroline doesn't react, just dunking the teabag again.**

**Dylan shambles about some more and then sits down opposite Caroline.**

**Dylan:** Got an interview today...

**Caroline:** Good.

**Dylan:** Warehousing

**Caroline:** Cool

**Dylan:** Look I'm sorry for what I said last night, it was uncalled for.

**Caroline:** It's fine

**Dylan:** OK

**They sit in silence.**

**Caroline: (Attempting to break the silence)** So what does warehousing consist of?

**Dylan:** Not too sure to be honest...I'm guessing it happens in a warehouse?

**Caroline:** That would seem a fair assumption.

**Dylan:** I just applied for all the jobs that need no skills, qualifications or experience.

**Caroline:** Good plan.

**Silence**

**Caroline:** So do you think you'll get it then?

**Dylan:** Dunno...I'm not brilliant at interviews to be honest.

**Caroline:** Me neither.

**Dylan:** Have you ever actually had a job?

**Caroline:** Yeah of course I bloody have...loads of them...

**Dylan:** I've had loads too...but I'm not sure that's an entirely good thing at 24. I wish, if only for Charlie's sake, that I could stop fucking them up and getting sacked.

**Caroline:** I just wish there was something that I wanted to do. I've tried shops, cafes, restaurants, bars...but I never really saw the point of any of them. I just want to do my own thing.

**Dylan:** I just struggle with actually getting to work on time and doing what they want...I'm not great at being told what to do. I actually just wish I was Alice's age and could just fuck about all day.

**Caroline:** I can see the appeal...I spent several hours colouring in one of her pictures yesterday. Here... **(she hands the picture to him)** it was very therapeutic.

**Dylan:** So did you manage to come up with any rent money this month?

**Caroline:** Did you?

**Dylan:** I gave her a bit of what was left of my dole money, but it's not much at all...

**Caroline:** Well I gave her a bit of the allowance my parents send...but it was a difficult month so some had to go on cheering myself up.

**Dylan:** Yeah I needed some new trainers as well...and I'm saving for a wedding.

**Caroline:** Wedding? Who are you marrying?

**Dylan:** Well I'm hoping it might be Charlie.

**Caroline:** Charlotte? Have you asked her yet?

**Dylan:** Well no...I wanted to get this job first.

**Caroline:** And do you think she'll say yes?

**Dylan:** Well I hope so...I think it's what we need to do.

**Caroline:** Why?

**Dylan:** Well...because that's what people do isn't it...

**Caroline:** Have you spoken to Alice about this?

**Dylan:** Why would I?

**Caroline:** Have you spoken to her?

**Dylan:** Well yeah, just now actually.

**Caroline:** And what did she say?

**Dylan:** Well she's just a kid, she didn't understand.

**Caroline:** What did she say?

**Dylan:** Well she said I should spend the money on the gas bill.

**Caroline:** She might have a point.

**Dylan:** Well what the fuck do you know about it? You're just some spoilt little rich kid who has no idea about how things really work...Alice has more experience of real life than you...

**Caroline:** Excuse me? Mr, I want to make Charlotte my little wife at home who can cook and clean for me...oh and also earn all the money so I can sit around and wank off to daytime TV.

**Dylan leans over Caroline and is momentarily menacing**

**Dylan:** Listen to me...you're a worthless, self-indulgent little bitch, who'd be better off hanging herself from a tree than trying to give me advice on mine and my girlfriend's life...why don't you pull that stick out your arse out and fuck off back to the lezzy prep school you came from...

**Caroline is stunned for a moment**

**Caroline:** I knew that underneath that laissez-faire facade you wear there was something rotten....but your utter **(pauses)** 'cuntishness' has even surprised me...Charlotte wouldn't marry you if your tiny little dick was the only one left in the world.

**Dylan:** Well she's not interested in your bony little twat either...

**Caroline pauses and then spits in Dylan's face**

**Caroline:** Prick

**She exits**

**Dylan:** Cunt.

**Dylan exits**

**Scene ends.**

**Scene 3 – evening**

**Alice enters dressed in ballet clothes and practices a dance around the kitchen. 'Habanera' from Carmen plays whilst she does this.**

**Near the end Charlotte comes in and watches the final part.**

**Charlotte:** Very nice...but you're cheating on that last turn and generally your arms look scrappy. You won't get a distinction unless you actually practice.

**Alice:** And what am I doing now?

**Charlotte:** One practice, two days before the exam isn't exactly putting everything into it is it?

**Alice:** There's no point trying too hard, a pass will get me onto the next grade, which is the whole point of the exam.

**Charlotte:** My god you're cynical for one so young.

**Alice:** I've learned from the best.

**Charlotte sits down**

**Alice:** Can you actually afford to send me to dancing?

**Charlotte:** Of course I can...and anyway I went to school with Miss Sophie so she's not exactly charging me the going rate for you.

**Alice:** Did Dylan get his job then?

**Charlotte:** Dunno...but I doubt it. He's never had much luck with them before.

**Alice:** Why didn't you go out with someone who could get a job?

**Charlotte:** It's not that easy...Dylan's a nice guy. I'm not with him for his money.

**Alice:** What are you with him for?

**Charlotte:** You're probably too young to know.

**Alice:** I know about sex mum.

**Charlotte:** Of course you do...but you're still too young to understand.

**Alice:** I'm 8.

**Charlotte kisses Alice on the head**

**Charlotte:** You're going to make a very impressive adult. I actually think you spending so much time with Dylan is a brilliant idea. He's exactly the sort of man you should avoid at all costs when you grow up...you need to find yourself a winner.

**Pause**

**Charlotte:** Now go and do your homework...or you'll end up a jobless bum like Dylan.

**Alice makes a face, but leaves.**

**Charlotte then grabs a bottle of wine and a glass and sits down. She pours a drink.**

**Charlotte:** I've not heard from Alice's dad since I left school. He was a bright kid, so I'm sure he's got a degree and a decent job by now. It's weird but I consider it one of the best things I ever did not telling him about Alice. She's a great little girl, and I'm sure he'd have liked getting to know her, but he'd have felt obliged to not do the stuff he could do, and waste his life. His parents still live round here...one day when Alice is an adult with a first from Cambridge I might find out where he is and get in contact...they'd still have loads of time to get to know each other, but without all the shitty bits.

I've had various blokes since Alice was born...they've mainly been innocuous. Largely they've all been fine shagging me when they thought I was free and single, but the morning after when Alice has marched in and asked them who they are, they've tended to excuse themselves and get going. To be honest I've always assumed they'd guess from the stretch marks. Dylan was different though; met him in ASDA whilst he was working there for a bit...before the inevitable sacking for persistent lateness. We just got on, I told him about Alice and he thought it was cool. I never really thought he'd set the world alight, but he wasn't a complete twat so I kept him...and 3 years later he's still here. He's a nice playmate for Alice, particularly as none of my friends have got kids yet; and he's good for an orgasm occasionally. It's not star-crossed romance, but for a single mum working in a supermarket it's ok.

Then there's Caz...I'm not sure she's ever gonna be 100% sane, but there's something genuinely caring about her, despite the excruciating levels of self-interest. If you're ever feeling truly awful then she'll hug you and tell you you're lovely...Dyl tries, but it's not his forte. Sometimes I think women can just do feelings and intimacy better than blokes...where largely it's just about cumming as quickly as possible...

I do sometime wish I could stick Caz and Dyl in that machine from 'The Fly' and finally end up with a perfect, cross-gendered partner...unfortunately though, I don't think the science is quite there yet...

**Dylan enters**

**Charlotte:** How did it go then?

**Dylan makes a face**

**Dylan:** Not well.

**Charlotte is clearly disappointed**

**Dylan:** I think I just get flustered...it does mess up my plan a bit though.

**Charlotte:** What plan's that?

**Dylan:** Nothing...it was a rubbish job anyway...they'd have wanted me to start at 6am every morning...who wants to do that? I should be doing something better.

**Charlotte:** Well anything would have been better than nothing.

**Dylan:** What do you mean?

**Charlotte:** Well even if you'd have had to get up a bit early, you'd have been bringing some actual money into the house...there's only so much overtime I can get.

**Dylan:** Your bloody girlfriend wound me up this morning as well, which meant I wasn't in the right state of mind

**Charlotte:** If you mean Caroline, I think you need to find more fearsome people to be wound up by...she's clearly got issues.

**Dylan:** But she uses them as an excuse to be a dick.

**Charlotte:** Just stop making fucking excuses for yourself...you fucked it up and you've now got to go back to square one and look again.

**Dylan:** I'm just not someone who likes working.

**Charlotte:** No one fucking well likes doing a shitty job for bugger all pay, but unfortunately that's the system we're living in.

**Dylan:** Well I choose not to be part of it.

**Charlotte:** You choose not to be part of it?...well why don't you pack your bags and go and choose to live in a skip then...because currently you're choosing to live somewhere that requires rent to be paid and as it's only me paying it, I'm choosing to kick your lazy fucking arse out into the fucking street.

**Dylan:** Now you're being overdramatic.

**Charlotte is enraged**

**Charlotte:** No you useless prick, I'm being a grown up...I'm being a functioning member of the human race who thinks about more than themselves for 2 minutes. How fucking dare you tell me I'm being anything other than undeservedly charitable to a complete fucking loser.

**At that moment Caroline breezes into the room wearing a new jacket.**

**Caroline:** So what do you think?

**Charlotte and Dylan stop looking at each other and turn to Caroline.**

**Charlotte:** Of what?

**Caroline:** New jacket...I saw it and just had to have it.

**Charlotte:** Looks expensive.

**Caroline:** It was...but sometimes you've got to treat yourself. I was feeling a bit down after a certain conversation with a certain insensitive male.

**Dylan:** Look why don't you just...

**Charlotte:** It's lovely...this just isn't quite the time.

**Caroline:** I presume Mr caveman here didn't get his job then?

**Dylan:** No Mr caveman didn't...but at least he tried...rather than pissing all his money away on clothes.

**Caroline:** Well maybe you should have, then you wouldn't look like such a fucking tramp.

**Dylan:** How much rent did you give Charlie this week then Caz? Was it fuck all?

**Caroline:** How much of your unemployment benefit did you piss away on booze and fags 'Dyl'?...was it all of it?

**Dylan:** You are without doubt the most self-interested uptight bitch I've ever met.

**Caroline:** And you're the laziest drain on public funds I've come across.

**Dylan and Caroline just stare at each other**

**Charlotte:** Right both of you just shut up...you'll wake Alice.

**Caroline:** Well I am going to my room...you've **(indicating Dylan)** completely ruined the lovely mood I was in.

**Caroline exits**

**Dylan: (doing an impression of Caroline)** 'You've completely ruined the lovely mood I was in'.

**Charlotte:** Why don't you just shut your stupid fucking mouth and piss off. I'm absolutely sick of both of you selfish arseholes.

**Dylan:** Well fine...I'll go and stay at Lee's then...if you're gonna be a cow about things.

**Charlotte:** You just do that...

**Dylan exits**

**Charlotte sits down and pours herself some wine. Alice enters unseen and watches hers**

**Charlotte:** Sometimes I wish I could just leave. Leave the selfish wasters behind and do what I want for once. God I wish I'd been more sensible and not got knocked up. Without a kid I could have been anything I wanted, but with Alice to look after I've just got this life of drudgery. I should have followed my teacher's advice and got an abortion.

**Alice makes a noise and Charlotte turns to her**

**Alice:** Sorry mummy.

**Alice exits before Charlotte can speak.**

**Charlotte:** Oh no...Alice

**Charlotte exits after Alice.**

**Scene ends**

#### **Scene 4**

**Scene changes to Charlotte's bedroom, with a double bed .**

**Charlotte is sat with Alice on the bed, singing to her.**

**Charlotte:** I'm so sorry baby.

**Alice:** It's ok.

**Charlotte:** No its not, I shouldn't have even thought the things I said. You're honestly the best thing in my life right now. The only thing that's actually working out well. I just get so frustrated sometimes with people.

**Alice:** Do you mean Dyl and Caz?

**Charlotte:** Well yes. They are enough to try the strongest of patience.

**Alice:** I think I'd find them frustrating as well.

**They sit together for a moment.**

**Alice:** Well I'd better go to bed...got a long day tomorrow.

**Charlotte:** Doing what?

**Alice:** You know...the usual.

**Charlotte:** Of course...

**Charlotte kisses Alice and Alice exits. Charlotte sits for a moment. There's then a knock at the door and Caroline enters.**

**Caroline:** Hi.

**Charlotte:** Hi.

**Caroline:** Look I'm really sorry I paraded around in my jacket. I know you can't afford to buy nice clothes.

**Charlotte: (ignoring the remark)** Its fine...don't worry about it...it's a lovely jacket.

**Caroline:** Thanks...and sorry for arguing with Dylan...I just wish he wasn't such a constant dick.

**Charlotte:** Yeah...well just leave him be...he's got a good heart.

**Caroline: (under breath)** And no brain.

**Charlotte:** That's just what I mean...leave him alone...yeah he's not all that bright but he's better than a lot of men I've met.

**Caroline:** Ok...

**Caroline sits next to Charlotte on the bed and put her head on her shoulder. Charlotte puts her arm round Caroline and hugs her.**

**Caroline:** I don't know what I'd do without you...you're the best person in my life.

**Charlotte:** Well I'm not going anywhere.

**Caroline:** After all that stuff that happened with my dad I didn't think I'd ever trust anyone again. But I found you.

**Charlotte: (wanting to change the subject)** Yeah...well what are friends for.

**Caroline:** I didn't think I'd ever feel close to a person again. When someone you're related to does what he did, breaks that bond of trust, it completely fucks with your head. I still see him sometimes, leering over me, still smell his breath, feel his fingers. Without you I'd have probably killed myself by now.

**Charlotte:** Well I'll always be here for you and Alice.

**Caroline:** You've got to look out for Alice, you've got to make sure that she's not exposed to the awfulness of the world. Got to protect her from it all.

**Charlotte:** Well she's a smart girl...she can look out for herself.

**Caroline:** That's not enough, I was a smart girl and look what happened to me. You need to keep her safe at all times. People can be savage when they want to be, and I'd hate for that innocent little girl to see the things I have.

**Charlotte:** OK ok. You have my word that I'll look after her.

**Pause**

**Caroline:** I really don't know what you see in Dylan.

**Charlotte:** Hey look, Dylan's not going to win boyfriend of the year, but he's not savage. He's a genuinely nice, if incredibly lazy, guy. There are much worse people I could be with.

**Caroline:** But he's not as clever as you and me, not at our level.

**Charlotte:** He's smarter than he looks...

**Caroline just looks at Charlotte**

**Charlotte:** He's also not complicated...and he's pretty good in bed.

**Caroline:** Complicated's not always a bad thing...I think you're more complicated than you pretend to be.

**Charlotte:** I'm too busy to be anything other than domestic and dull...especially with you three to look after.

**Caroline:** It is ok to think about yourself occasionally...to do what you want sometimes...

**Charlotte:** Not when Alice has to be at school or dancing or choir or whatever else she has on...

**Caroline:** She doesn't have to do any of those things right this moment...for the next few hours you can do what you want to do.

**Charlotte looks at Caroline**

**Charlotte: (in an American accent)** Are you trying to seduce me Mrs Robinson?

**Caroline:** Maybe...a little....

**Caroline pushes herself to Charlotte and they kiss. Charlotte is slightly taken aback, but doesn't stop her.**

**Charlotte:** This is really wrong.

**Caroline:** We can discuss it in the morning...

**Caroline kisses Charlotte again**

**Scene ends**

**Scene 5 - Bedroom next morning**

**Alice enters the bedroom and Caroline & Charlotte are under the covers. She grabs her mum's phone which is on the bedside table and sits on the end of the bed playing it. After a moment Charlotte stirs and emerges from the covers. She sees Alice and initially doesn't seem to realise who she's in bed with.**

**Charlotte:** You know you should at least ask to play with that. I might have embarrassing text messages on there.

**Alice:** I just go straight to the games. I don't want to read what your boring friends have to say.

**Charlotte:** So have you got everything ready for school?

**Alice:** Yep

**Charlotte:** Had breakfast?

**Alice:** Yep

**Charlotte:** Done your teeth?

**Alice:** Uh huh

**Charlotte: (indicating the person next to her)** Well that's one up on you isn't it Dyl?

**Suddenly Charlotte remembers who she's in bed with and starts to panic.**

**Charlotte:** Well anyway, I think it's probably time that you got your coat on ready to leave.

**Alice:** But we don't have to go for half an hour.

**Charlotte:** Well yeah, but it's best to be in good time.

**Alice:** We're never in good time...we're always late, and it's never bothered you before?

**Charlotte:** Well why don't you go and watch TV or something?

**Alice:** Are you trying to get rid of me?

**Charlotte:** No.

**Alice: (to the figure next to Charlotte)** She's trying to get rid of me Dyl...tell her to stop.

**There's no response from the figure.**

**Alice:** Tell her that you like me coming in to see you guys in the morning.

**No response**

**Alice:** Dyl?

**Alice then lifts up the covers at the foot of the bed and exposes one of Caroline's feet.**

**Alice:** That's not Dylan's foot.

**Alice then grabs the foot and start to tickle it. Eventually Caroline can't take it anymore and laughs, she then pulls her head out from under the covers.**

**Caroline:** Stop!

**Alice:** Caz?

**Caroline:** Hi Alice.

**Alice:** Why are you in bed with my mum?

**Charlotte:** We were having a sleepover.

**Alice just looks at Charlotte**

**Alice:** I'm not an idiot mum.

**Silence**

**Charlotte:** So what do you think?

**Alice:** Well I think Dylan's going to be a bit cross.

**Charlotte:** Well we might not tell him...

**Caroline:** Straight away...

**Charlotte:** Might keep this one a bit quiet?

**Alice:** You have to tell him.

**Charlotte:** Sometimes its best to try and not hurt people's feelings, just protect them from things that might upset them.

**Alice:** That sounds like lying to me.

**Charlotte:** No it's completely different to lying isn't it Caz.

**Caroline:** Yes completely different.

**Alice:** I've not seen you smile this much for a while Caz?

**Caroline:** Well I've not been this happy for a while.

**Charlotte: (attempting to change the conversation)** I really do think you need to get ready for school now Alice. Me and Caroline need to chat.

**Alice:** You can chat in front of me...I know about things.

**Charlotte:** This is one of those times when I can't...so bugger off and find something to do.

**Alice: (annoyed)** OK fine...

**Alice leaves**

**Caroline:** Should you say bugger in front of an 8 year old?

**Charlotte:** I don't think that will be the most memorable part of the morning for her to be honest.

**Caroline:** I suppose not...do I really look happier than I've ever looked?

**Charlotte:** You look ok...you're not crying which is an improvement.

**Caroline:** I've finally realised who I am...what I've been doing wrong all these years.

**Caroline gets out of bed and paces. Charlotte just watches her**

**Charlotte:** Really?

**Caroline:** Yes...no wonder I never had any luck with boyfriends...it's not a boyfriend I was looking for...

**Charlotte:** Well let's not get ahead of ourselves...

**Caroline:** I always thought there was something wrong with me...always thought that I was to blame, but it's just that I wasn't made for men...I was made for beautiful caring women like you...I can't believe it's taken me 20 years to understand.

**Caroline leaps back onto the bed at Charlotte.**

**Charlotte:** OK...well I've got to get my daughter to school, and then get to work...

**Charlotte gets out of bed, throws on some clothes in a rush. Caroline talks whilst she's doing this.**

**Caroline:** And to have discovered the real me with you of all people...the one who's been so kind and caring to me...the one who's taken me in and looked after me when no one else gave a shit.

**Charlotte:** Glad to be of service...see you tonight....

**Charlotte exits**

**Caroline:** I always thought lesbians were fat ugly women with shaved heads. That's the impression my parent's always gave. 'Bull Dykes' was what dad called them...I did once hear someone say lipstick lesbian, but I assumed that was a sexual practice. But sex with a girl...it's not like the horrible, sweaty grunting ordeal of sex with men...not getting poked in the groin by some pissed bloke with

his trousers round his ankles. That was making love...beautiful love...it felt like it would never end. Oh brave new world...Dylan wouldn't even know that was a Shakespeare quote...let alone a Huxley novel. Charlotte and I can discuss art, literature, life and love...star crossed lovers destined to live out our days surrounded by beauty and passion.

I'm going to buy myself breakfast, and a present...I deserve it.

**Caroline exits**

**Scene ends**

**Scene 6 - afternoon**

**Dylan is sat in bed with all the signs of a massive hangover. He sips from a cup of tea and then a bottle of beer alternatively.**

**Alice comes in and sits next to him. She has a game of Connect 4.**

**Alice:** Want to play?

**Dylan:** Alright...but you always bloody win.

**Alice:** It's just tactics...you should study how I play, you might learn something.

**They start to play**

**Alice:** How's your head?

**Dylan:** Sore. You shouldn't ever start drinking...it's bad for you.

**Alice:** I won't...it just makes grownups do silly things.

**Dylan:** Well I drink too much...and it stops me doing what I should. Sometimes I think I might lose your mum if I don't get my act together.

**Alice:** Yeah probably.

**Dylan:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Alice:** Yeah you'll probably lose my mum if you don't sort yourself out...

**Dylan:** Well thanks for the vote of confidence.

**Alice:** Well she won't hang around forever for you...

**Alice then wins the game of Connect 4**

**Alice:** Beat you again...

**Alice leaves before Dylan can talk anymore. Dylan sits and ponders for a moment**