

RICK & SUSAN

ACT II

Darkness

We hear the sound of Susan's groan as she comes out of her swoon. As she opens her eyes, the Lights come up. It is a few seconds later. She is lying on the grass rather as at the start of the play, only this time Rick is bending over her

Rick Mum?

Susan stares at him

Mum?

Susan (*bemused*) Ricky? (*She sits up with difficulty*) Ricky? I dreamt you spoke to me. Are you speaking to me? Is it you?

Rick Yes, it's me. It's Rick speaking.

Susan What's happened? (*Smiling*) It must be Mother's Day. Or have you got special dispensation?

Rick No, I've left the group.

Susan You have? When?

Rick Oh—three months ago. Something like that.

Susan Why didn't you come and see us before?

Rick I had one or two things to sort out.

Susan Oh. I see. Well, I don't know what your reasons for leaving were, but I can't pretend that I'm not delighted at the news. If it means we'll be able to see you occasionally. Talk to you like a normal human being.

Rick (*non-committally*) Yes.

Susan Where are you living now? Not still in Hemel Hempstead?

Rick No, I've moved back into London. South London.

Susan I see. And so? What are you doing? Have you got a job?

Rick Not just at present, no.

Susan Must be difficult, then? Making ends meet? Oh, this feels so odd talking to you—like a stranger. Do you have a room in South London?

Rick No, we've got a flat.

Susan We?

Rick Me and this girl.

Susan Oh? You've got a girl-friend?

Rick Well, she's more than that, really.

Susan (*smiling rather coyly*) A lover, then?

Rick No. Really, more of a wife, really . . .

Susan (*blankly*) A wife?

Rick Yeah.

Susan You're married.

Rick Yeah.

Susan When? When did you marry?

Rick About two months ago. Tess, she was with the group, too and—

both decided we'd had enough really. I mean, we'd got what we could from it . . .

Susan Yes, yes . . .

Rick And we felt we'd grown, you know, through it.

Susan Yes. Good. Yes.

Rick So we left. And we thought maybe we should give things a week or two, you know, just to see them in perspective. You know?

Susan Yes.

Rick And—things seemed OK so we got married. You know.

Susan Where?

Rick Where?

Susan Where did you get married?

Rick Some registry office, I can't—

Susan Which one?

Rick (*slightly irritably*) I don't know which one, Mum. It doesn't matter, does it?

Susan No, no. No. (*After a slight pause*) You didn't even tell us. Send us a—card.

Rick No.

Susan And you haven't brought her with you . . .

Rick No.

Susan Tess? That's her name?

Rick Yeah.

Susan Did you have to get married? Was she . . . ?

Rick No, of course she wasn't. We wouldn't have got married just because of that.

Susan Then why did you?

Rick Why does anybody? We love each other.

Susan Oh, yes. Of course. I just thought perhaps—

Rick What?

Susan You'd got married as another way to get back at us. Your father and me. Silly idea, is it?

Rick It's a bloody ridiculous idea.

Susan Yes. (*She sits up with a little cry of grief*) Oh . . . sorry. I'll be all right in a moment.

Rick (*muttering*) I knew you'd take it like this—

Susan Well, what did you expect?

Lucy appears at a distance from them

Lucy (*calling softly*) Mother . . . Mother . . .

Susan Oh, do go away . . .

Rick What?

Susan Nothing.

Lucy, a little hurt, sits at some distance from them and watches unobtrusively

You haven't told your father yet, I take it?

Rick No.

Susan What on earth's he going to say?

Rick Quite a lot, probably. Not a man of few words when several spring to mind, is he?

Susan (*laughing*) Oh, that's very good, Ricky. Sums him up exactly. When I think what he and I could have achieved with our lives if he hadn't insisted on discussing everything first . . . (*brightening*) Well, we must make up for lost time, mustn't we? The first thing is to meet Tess. Get to know her. You must both come and stay, that's what you must do.

Rick No, the point is that Tess is a trained nurse, you know, and she's got this offer of a job. Overseas.

Susan Overseas?

Rick Yes. So we'll probably both be going pretty soon.

Susan Where?

Rick Thailand.

Susan Thailand? (*Blankly*) That's miles.

Rick Yes.

Susan (*distressed again*) Oh, Ricky . . . What are you going to do there? In Thailand? While she's—nursing?

Rick I don't know. Help out, you know. Sort of odd-job man, probably.

Susan Do they have odd-job men in Thailand?

Rick They soon will do.

Susan So we aren't even going to meet this—Tess? Tess. Not a terribly attractive name, is it? Tess. A bit lumpen, isn't it? Are we going to see her or not?

Rick No. It's not possible this time round. I'll be staying a couple of days. I'm planning to sell off a few old things of mine. Raise a bit of spare cash. Then we're both off at the end of next week.

Susan Well, she could come down while you were here, couldn't she?

Rick No, she's got her own stuff to sort out, you see.

Susan She could come for the day? For lunch?

Rick I'd rather she didn't.

Susan You would?

Rick Yeah. I don't really want her coming here yet.

Susan Why? Because of your father? Well, we can keep him out of the way, can't we? They need hardly meet at all. Don't worry, I'll arrange things . . .

Rick It's only partly Dad.

Susan Well, who else? (*After a slight pause*) Me?

Rick Yeah. Just a bit. Sorry.

Susan You don't want me to meet her?

Rick No. Not yet. Maybe in a couple of years. We'll see.

Susan A couple of years? What am I supposed to do? Fly out to Thailand for tea? Don't be ridiculous. Why can't I meet her now?

Rick I can't go into it now, Mum. I'd just rather you didn't, that's all.

Susan I feel I have a right to know why.

Rick Because—Tess is fairly—well . . . I suppose you'd call her unsophisticated, in a way. And a bit shy. With people.

Susan Gauche, I think, is the word you're looking for.

Rick No, not gauche. She looks at things simply, that's all. She's straightforward. I just don't think she could cope with you. Not with your attitude.

Susan What attitude?

Rick Well . . . I remember how you used to be with girls I used to bring home.