

A FAMILY AFFAIR

A ONE-ACT COMEDY

By Christopher Owen

Winner of the RAFTA One-Act Play Festival 2009

RUNNING TIME 43 MINUTES

Copyright: Christopher Owen
Tel: 020 8888 1751.
info@christopherowen.co.uk
www.christopherowen.co.uk

CHARACTERS:

DILYS, in her forties.

MIRIAM, Dilys' sister, in her forties.

BRIAN, Dilys' husband, in his forties.

THE COMEDY IS SET IN DILYS AND BRIAN'S DINING ROOM IN THEIR HOUSE SITUATED IN A SMALL TOWN IN WALES.

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE OVER SUNDAY LUNCH.

Running time: 40 minutes.

Dilys and Miriam are sisters who have always been jealous of each other especially where men are concerned. Brian, Dilys' husband, is caught in the middle. However, it turns out he has a few surprises up his sleeve.

**DILYS AND MIRIAM AND BRIAN ARE SEATED AT THE DINING TABLE
THEY ARE EATING THEIR SUNDAY LUNCH.**

DILYS AND MIRIAM ARE DRINKING WINE WITH THEIR MEAL. BRIAN IS DRINKING BEER.

Dilys: You like the roast beef, Miriam?

Miriam: Very nice, Dilys.

Dilys: Brian?

Brian: What? Yes, very nice.

THEY CONTINUE TO EAT.

Dilys: (TO MIRIAM): More gravy? You don't seem to have got very much.

Miriam: No, no. I'm fine, thank you.

A BRIEF PAUSE WHILE DILYS PICKS UP THE GRAVY BOAT AND HELPS HERSELF TO MORE GRAVY, AFTER WHICH SHE SPEAKS.

Dilys: There's plenty more of everything, roast potatoes, sprouts, carrots, if you want them.

MIRIAM PICKS UP THE GRAVY BOAT AND HELPS *HERSELF* TO MORE GRAVY.
THIS DOES NOT GO UNOBSERVED BY DILYS.

A BRIEF PAUSE WHILE THEY CONTINUE TO EAT.

Miriam: It's very nice of you and Brian to have me over.

Dilys: Well, it's the first Sunday of the month, Miriam. Since your Harry died, we've always got together on the first Sunday of the month. We can't have you on your own week after week. That's how I've always looked at it – one's own sister on her own, having Sunday lunch on her own all the time. That's so, isn't it, Brian? With the children grown up and living so far away – John in Dundee, Gwyneth in Canada – it's been nice for Brian and I to have the company. That's how I've looked at it over these last few years.

A PAUSE WHILE THEY CONTINUE TO EAT, WITH BRIAN HELPING HIMSELF TO MORE GRAVY, AND THEN CONTINUING TO EAT.

Dilys: I'm worried about you, Brian.

Brian: (WITH HIS MOUTH FULL): Worried?

Dilys: What's going to happen to you while I'm in London?

Brian: (WITH HIS MOUTH FULL): Don't talk like that, Dilys.

Dilys: I do talk like that.

BRIAN IS POURING HIMSELF MORE BEER.

Dilys: I'm not leaving, not without seeing you're settled. Someone to look after you - eh, Miriam? Look at him. He can't pour a glass of beer without spilling it. Spilling it on the tablecloth. He'll not manage on his own, that's for certain. He pretends he'll manage on his own, but you and I know differently.

Miriam: (LEANING OVER AND MOPING UP THE BEER BRIAN HAS SPILT ON THE TABLECLOTH): He needs someone to keep an eye on him, that's for sure – see he takes proper care of himself.

THEY CONTINUE TO EAT.

Miriam: The Yorkshire pudding's delicious, Dilys. I don't know how you do it. Delicious, isn't it, Brian?

Brian: Lovely.

A PAUSE AS THEY CONTINUE TO EAT.

Dilys: And what about you, Miriam?

MIRIAM LOOKS AT DILYS SUSPICIOUSLY.

Miriam: What about me, Dilys?

Dilys: Every since your Harry died – when was it? – eighteen months is it now?

Miriam: Over two years now, Dilys. Your own sister – you’d think you’d remember how long it is since Harry died.

Dilys: You on your own in that big house. Talking to yourself at night, making conversation with those men on the television.

Miriam: I’ll have you know I do no such thing.

Dilys: You told me yourself. Don’t you sit there trying to deny it. That man on News At Ten, with the suit, you know him better there in your living room with the lights out than you know your own neighbours.

Miriam: You haven’t met my neighbours, Dilys.

Dilys: All on your own as you are – it’s not healthy, Miriam.

A PAUSE AS THEY CONTINUE TO EAT.

Dilys: Look at that roast potato, Brian. Look at that roast potato on the tablecloth, won’t you?

BRIAN HURRIEDLY PUTS THE POTATO BACK ON HIS PLATE.

Dilys: That’s a sign, an indication of things to come, that’s what it is. It’s a warning.

Brian: I’ll manage. You have a nice few days in London. A nice few days shopping. Don’t you worry about me.

Dilys: I do worry. I worry about both of you.

Miriam: Don't you worry about me.

A PAUSE AS THEY CONTINUE TO EAT

Dilys: You can't see what's staring you in the face, Miriam, that's the truth of it. You'd not appreciate the significance of Noah's Ark rising up outside your bedroom window, if you saw it. You'd see it, you'd say, oh, look, it's raining.

Miriam: It would be, Dilys. It would be raining. Noah's Ark floating up past my bedroom window, it'd not be far off the mark to say it was doing just that.

Dilys: You'd not see the wider significance. That's what I'm saying. Never could. Even when we were children. Mam used to say our Miriam can't see the wood for the trees.

IN A SHOW OF IRRITATION, MIRIAM ABRUPTLY PICKS UP THE SALT CELLAR, ADDS SALT TO HER FOOD, AND EMPHATICALLY RETURNS THE SALT CELLAR TO THE TABLE. THE ACTION IS IGNORED BY DILYS, BUT NOT BY BRIAN WHO SENSES TROUBLE.

Dilys: (CONTINUING TO EAT): I'm not leaving for London, not until I feel assured you and Brian have agreed to settle down together.

Miriam: Settled down?

Dilys: Wedding bells, Miriam.

Miriam: God, Dilys, what are you talking about?

Dilys: Don't break down, for heaven's sake, Miriam.

Miriam: I'm not breaking down.

Dilys: Don't break down, Miriam, that I couldn't bear. Brian and I are getting divorced.

BRIAN STARES AT DILYS. HE IS BOTH ASTONISHED AND SUSPICIOUS.

Miriam: You're divorcing?

Dilys: (CONTINUING TO EAT): We've gone our separate ways, Miriam. You know that. Brian knows that. Don't you, Brian?

Brian: No.

Dilys: Don't pretend you don't know. It's not been what a marriage ought to be, not for a long time. That potato is back on the tablecloth again.

BRIAN PUTS THE POTATO BACK ON HIS PLATE.

Dilys: While I'm in London I shall be seeing a solicitor. Get things moving.

Miriam: This is news to me, Dilys – you and Brian divorcing.

Brian: You've not said anything to me about this.

Dilys: I've only recently decided. Eat up. It'll get cold.

Brian: Don't you think we should discuss this?

Dilys: No.

Miriam: You're divorcing him?

Dilys: Our marriage is over, Brian, you know that. Don't pretend you don't know. (LOOKING AT MIRIAM AND BRIAN'S PLATES): You're not eating your roasted parsnips. I made them specially. Don't you like them?

Miriam: Yes.

MIRIAM AND BRIAN IMMEDIATELY EAT A PIECE OF PARSNIP.

A PAUSE AS THE THREE OF THEM CONTINUE TO EAT.

Dilys: You and Brian, I want you married. I want you to look after each other.

BRIAN AND MIRIAM GAWP AT HER IN GUILTY DISBELIEF.

Brian: Hang on a mo, Dilys.

Dilys: You and Brian, Miriam, it's what you want after all. Brian knows he'll crack up if he's left on his own. More sprouts? Carrots?

DILYS SPOONS SPROUTS AND OTHER VEGETABLES ONTO THEIR PLATES.

Dilys: Your English Literature class, Miriam – Friday evenings – is it still Dickens you're studying in class, is it? Been studying Dickens, how long is it now? Since Harry died, is it? Well, you can't hurry Dickens. I'll say this for him, he wasn't a man to spare himself when it came to the words. If Dickens could say something in a single sentence, you can be sure he'd manage to say it in three or four paragraphs. Not a mean man when it came to literature. How was the lunch, Miriam? On Friday?

Miriam: Friday?

Dilys: Friday before your English Literature class. You and Brian. Weavers Restaurant off the High Street. Bronwen Leppard saw you going in. Bronwen Leppard comes over to me in Zarathustras – the bookshop – you know, Miriam – the bookshop, Brian – opened last week – High Street – organically written novels – that sort of thing – they give you a rose as you go in, you eat it as you come out. A mouth full of rose petals. Bronwen Leppard manoeuvres her skinny tumble-down frame to me in the teach-yourself-self-assertion section. Old mother gossip herself, she says: 'I saw your Brian and your sister Miriam going into Weavers Restaurant – Friday' she said. They were holding hands,' she said.

Brian: I was just a lunch, Dilys.

Dilys: Funny you didn't tell me you'd been. Don't you think? Bronwen Leppard knows you've been. *She* knows, so does everyone else, that's for sure. The whole town, I'd not be at all surprised.

Miriam: Lunch, Dilys. Lunch. What's so significant about that? So we forgot to tell you. It didn't seem important. How long have we known each other? I mean you and me and Brian?

Dilys: It'd have been nice to know though, wouldn't it? You and Brian having lunch at Weavers Restaurant. Nice to know what you had and that, don't you think? It was nice, was it? What you had? What was it? What did you have?

Miriam: I can't remember what I had, Dilys.

Dilys: Did you have the same? Brian?

Brian: What? No.

Dilys: Well, whatever you had it's no concern of mine – chicken, veal, it's none of my business, I know that – shepherd's pie, Dover sole – you had Dover sole, Miriam?

Miriam: Dilys.

Dilys: I can tell. Dover sole. It's written all over your face. Brian, he'd have had the trout. Friday, he's trout. That's my guess. Not that it has anything to do with me.

Miriam: He was beef.

Dilys: Beef? Brian was beef, Friday? Well, I wish you'd have told me. If you'd told me you two were going to have lunch together, just the two of you, Friday, and Brian here was to have beef, I wouldn't have gone out specially and bought this joint, now, would I? I'd have chosen something different. You don't want to have red meat too often, do you? Not twice in one week. Not with Brian's high cholesterol.

Miriam: We just didn't think to tell you, Dilys. Did we, Brian?

Brian: What? No. No. It sort of escaped my memory, you see.

Dilys: You take your sister-in-law out to lunch, and you don't remember to tell your wife?

Brian: Well, I don't know how it came about really. We were talking about Weavers Restaurant and Miriam said she'd not been there, and I said, no, I haven't, and she said, well, I wonder what it's like then? And I said, if I remember rightly, I said, I hear it's very good. And she said she'd heard it was very good too, see. And I don't know how it happened, (*contd over*)

Brian: (*contd*): but then one of us, I don't know if it was me, or maybe – was it you, Miriam? – one of us anyway said why not give it a try? And I think it was me who said Friday would be best as I didn't have a meeting to go back to, so to speak, at the bank, so to speak, and Miriam said – didn't you, Miriam? – she said, Friday'd be nice, as it would be just before her English class, so to speak, and so we went, see. Only we'd have told you, but, well, it didn't seem to be of much interest perhaps, you see.

Dilys: What about the film at the Plaza? After the lunch at Weavers Restaurant?

BRIAN AND MIRIAM KNOW THEIR AFFAIR HAS BEEN RUMBLED.

Dilys: What was it? Au Revoir Les Enfants, was it, Miriam? Matinee performance. Mrs Harris, the French teacher at St David's was there, along with the boys and girls in her third year French class. Mrs Harris says to me: 'I saw your husband and your sister Miriam at Au Revoir Les Enfants', she says. 'Such a nice surprise', she says, 'not enough people still interested in foreign films these days,' she says. I didn't know you liked French films, Brian.

BRIAN DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

Miriam: (**BOLDLY**): Well, he does. You like French films, don't you, Brian?

Brian: What? Well, yes. It was something new. Yes.

Dilys: You've discovered hidden depths in Brian, Miriam. Perhaps you should go again.

Miriam: (**ON THE OFFENSIVE**): We are.

Dilys: Oh. You are?

Miriam: Next week. Tuesday afternoon.

Dilys: Tuesday afternoon, is it? Well, you don't seem very busy at the bank just now, do you, Brian?

Miriam: We're going to see Les Enfants Du Paradise. Jean Louis Barrault.

Dilys: Les Enfants Du Paradise, is it, Brian?

Brian: Well, you see, the film we saw, you see, Revoir what's-it -

Dilys: Au Revoir Les Enfants.

Brian: Well, you see, Miriam says as how you start to enjoy French films more once you've seen one or two of them. Only I had a difficulty, see, in following it, what with the subtitles and all that, and Miriam says, well, one needs practice, in reading the subtitles and seeing the pictures on the screen at the same time. Well, not quite at the same time, but almost, so one can know what they're saying, and at the same time, pretty well see what they're doing, sort of expressing themselves, what they look like. So she said as how this Les Enfants – Enfants what's-it -

Miriam: - Du Paradise.

Brian: - Du Paradise was on, see, and she thought it'd be a good one for me to see, so as to get experience. So I said right-oh. Well, with going more and more into Europe and that, she said a greater knowledge of the French language would be helpful, to me as a bank manager.

Dilys: An assistant bank manager.

Brian: Yes. So we went, see.

Dilys: You didn't tell me anything about it.

Brian: No.

Dilys: Why was that?

Miriam: We didn't want you to know, Dilys.

Dilys: You didn't? Well. More sprouts, I think.

A PAUSE AS, WITHOUT ASKING MIRIAM AND BRIAN IF THEY WANT ANY MORE, DILYS SPOONS MORE SPROUTS ONTO EACH OF THEIR PLATES.

BRIAN GETS HIMSELF ANOTHER BEER FROM THE SIDEBOARD.

Miriam: Brian and I are planning to go away together for a weekend.

Dilys: A weekend?

Miriam: Aren't we, Brian?

Brian: Well, we've talked about it.

Miriam: We have.

Dilys: Where do you have in mind? Brian?

Brian: Bangor.

Miriam: Rome.

Dilys: Rome, is it?

Brian: I thought you said you'd like to go to Bangor.

Miriam: Not Bangor.

Dilys: A long weekend would this be, Miriam?

Brian: You've not said anything about Rome.

Dilys: Rome's a much better idea than Bangor, Brian.

Brian: I thought you said how you'd not been to Bangor for a long time, and wouldn't it be nice to go there, and I said, yes, and maybe we could go, sometime to Bangor - maybe, you said, we could make a weekend of it, so to speak, round trip sort of thing. Go on the Saturday, back on the Sunday, call in at Criccieth on the way, sort of thing.

Miriam: I don't want to go to Bangor. I want to go to Rome.

Dilys: Rome is much more romantic, Brian. Miriam wants to go somewhere where it's romantic, don't you, Miriam? The two of you, Italian skies, breakfast on the veranda. You'll need to get yourself some suitable clothes. You can't go in that old jacket. (*contd over*).

Dilys: (*contd*): That might be alright for Bangor and such like, but Rome, you need something more lightweight. More debonair. You'll have to wash your hair. You know that, don't you? The Italians don't like people with dirty hair. Or dirty fingernails.

Brian: I'm not going to Rome.

Dilys: Now then, Brian, don't be a spoil sport, don't upset the poor woman. Miriam has always loved you, Brian. Ever since you first took me out, ever since our first date – I eighteen, she seventeen – I'll admit to be a year older than Miriam - ever since that day you took me out dancing at the town hall, you remember? – you asked Mam's permission, could you take me out dancing, and she said it'd be alright but you had to bring me back in one piece and a virgin by eleven o'clock. And we got home and there was Mam, and there was Miriam of course, and Miriam, she took a shine to you straight away as was to be expected with Miriam, eh, Miriam? Couldn't bear me to have anything of my own, anyone of my own. That's so, isn't it?

Miriam: Don't you listen to her. What nonsense you do talk. I never even noticed Brian. (TO BRIAN): Not then. Not at that time. Don't listen to her.

Dilys: Fact is, anything, anyone I had, she'd have to have.

Miriam: What absolute rubbish.

Dilys: Peter – what about Peter Jenkins? You remember Peter Jenkins. Veronica Jones' boyfriend. He and I went dancing, he walked me home, you were green with envy, Miriam.

Miriam: What Peter Jenkins? I don't remember any Peter Jenkins. Such nonsense.

Dilys: He had a scar where he had had his appendix removed. You remember. You told me about it. Who first found out that Peter Jenkins had an appendix scar? Miriam. How long did that take her to discover?

Miriam: I don't remember any scar. She's making it up.

Dilys: Then there was Mark Wisbey. You remember Mark Wisbey? The teacher from Wrexham. Wendy Prior's fiancée. I met him, such a nice young man, at their engagement party. Miriam was knocked for six by Mark Wisbey. That night he took me to the cinema, she kicked up one hell of a row. You'd have thought it was her fiancée I'd gone off with.

Miriam: Mark Wisbey was taking me out, you know that, Dilys. You told him I was in bed with the flu. I waited for him outside the town hall for over an hour. That's what our Dilys is like.

Dilys: The trouble with Miriam was that she could never ever come to terms with the fact she wore a bra size 36 B cup and I wore a 36 C. Then of course I got an A level in maths – she couldn't bear that. Then there was you, Brian. You've no idea the tears and tantrums we all had to put up with from Miriam when I started going out with you.

Miriam: You stole him from me, damn you.

Dilys: I did not. Brian hardly knew you existed, for God's sake.

Miriam: Brian and I were going out. We went to Barmouth for the day.

Dilys: You did not. (TO BRIAN): You did not, did you? Barmouth?

Miriam: You tell her. Tell her, Brian. Barmouth. That Thursday afternoon – you took the time off work. Tell her.

Brian: Barmouth, was it?

Miriam: We lay on the beach.

Dilys: We were going steady and you took Miriam to Barmouth?

Brian: I don't remember that.

Miriam: You put your hand up my skirt – you'd not remember a thing like that?

Dilys: You put your hand up Miriam's skirt, for God's sake?

Miriam: (To Brian): You think I let *any* boy do that, do you? You think it didn't mean a lot to me at the time?

Dilys: So you were two-timing me, were you, Brian?

Miriam: And it wasn't the only time. Was it? Don't just sit there chewing. Don't sit there pretending. The alley back of Johnson's Hardware. I suppose you don't remember *that*.

Dilys: Johnson's Hardware?

Miriam: What did you say to me then, Brian? You remember that. You said how you preferred me to Dilys. You said I was different. You said I was a better kisser. That's what he said.

Dilys: You said she was a better kisser than me? When was this?

Miriam: Last week.

Dilys: Last week?

Miriam: He'd said it before – when I was nineteen, when he took me to Barmouth.

Dilys: You said this, Brian?

Miriam: He'd have married me – he would - if you hadn't got yourself pregnant.

Dilys: I did not.

Miriam: You planned it, you did.

Dilys: I did not. I certainly did not.

Miriam: Your John was born seven months after your wedding, don't you deny it.

Dilys: So? It doesn't mean I planned it. You've no proof. Making your unfounded accusations. I'm not discussing it. That's it.

Miriam: Everyone knew you planned it. It's always been the same. She accusing me of trying to take her boyfriends off her. What about Harry? My husband? Christmas, only a year before he died? Christmas Eve, on the landing, and no mistletoe to excuse her antics. (*contd over*)

Miriam: (*contd*): Her hands where they shouldn't be. Trying to upset him. She tried to come between me and Harry. Harry going about the house for weeks after like a spaniel, his jaw all loose and hanging. You didn't know that, did you, Brian?

(HITTING THE TABLE): Eh, Brian? (FOOD FLIES ALL OVER THE TABLE). Answer me.

Brian: No.

Miriam: My Harry.

A PAUSE AS BRIAN PICKS UP VEGETABLES AND PIECES OF MEAT OFF THE TABLECLOTH AND RETURNS THEM TO THE PLATES FROM WHENCE THEY CAME.

Dilys: You go off with Miriam. You're welcome to her, Brian. I'm divorcing you, I told you. I'm going to London on the six twenty seven. You take her to Rome. Don't bother to come back.

Brian: I'm not going to Rome.

Dilys: Bangor then. Bangor.

Brian: I'm not going to Bangor.

Miriam: What?

Brian: I'm going to Keswick.

Dilys: Keswick, is it?

Miriam: You haven't said anything about Keswick. You didn't ask *me* if I wanted to go to Keswick?

Brian: We're not going to Keswick.

Dilys: You're not going to Keswick?

Miriam: Why say Keswick then?

Brian: *I'm* going to Keswick.

Dilys: *You're* going to Keswick?

Miriam: You're going to Keswick on your own, are you?

Brian: No. I'm going with Rosemary.

Miriam: Rosemary?

Dilys: Who's Rosemary?

Brian: Someone.

Dilys: Well, of course she's someone, Brian. We didn't expect her to be no one.

Miriam: You're making this up, are you? Is that what you're up to, is it? Playing us along, are you? Rosemary? Who is this woman, for God's sake? - sitting there, poking at your food.

Dilys: Who is she, Brian?

Brian: She works at the bank. A clerk at the bank

Dilys: Clerk at the bank?

Miriam: She works at the bank – your bank? You're going to Keswick with a woman who works at your bank?

Dilys: Is that what you're saying, is it?

Brian: Yes.

Miriam: You're going to Rome with me, and you're going with the woman in the bank to Keswick?

Dilys: This Rosemary woman?

Brian: I'm not going to Rome. I'm not going with you. Not going anywhere with you, Miriam. I'm going with Rosemary.

Dilys: To Keswick?

Miriam: You deceive your wife and your wife's sister with that woman? That woman Rosemary is married. You know that, do you, Brian?

Dilys: Married, is she?

Miriam: Married. That Rosemary woman, I've heard her talk about her husband. Cashing a cheque at the counter, she telling one of the customers about her husband.

Dilys: What's she say about him?

Miriam: From what I heard her say he's a man of regular habits. He has to have his dinner half six on the dot.

Dilys: And she's going off with you, Brian, to Keswick, is she?

Miriam: You do know what you're doing, do you, Brian?

Dilys: I very much doubt that her husband is going to get his dinner at half past six on the dot on the day she and Brian go off to Keswick. Who else are you going out with?

Brian: Angharad.

Miriam: Angharad?

Dilys: Angharad Evans?

Brian: No. Angharad Roberts.

Dilys and Miriam: Angharad Roberts?!

Dilys: Angharad Roberts is married to Roberts the butcher – to the man who sold me this joint of beef!

Miriam: Angharad Roberts, for God's sake?

Dilys: What's going to happen if Roberts the butcher finds out, Brian? – finds about you and his wife? Where are we going to get our meat from then, I'd like to know?

Miriam: Angharad Roberts?

Dilys: Where do you and this Angharad Roberts woman meet then?

Brian: The alley at the back of Johnson's hardware.

Dilys: Back of Johnson's hardware?

Miriam: That's our place, that is – the back of Johnson's hardware!

Dilys: That's Miriam and your place, Brian.

Miriam: What do you think you're doing, taking that woman to our place?
Eh?!

(GETTING NO IMMEDIATE RESPONSE FROM BRIAN – HITTING THE TABLE): Brian?!

FOOD FLIES ALL OVER THE TABLE.

A PAUSE AS BRIAN PICKS UP VEGETABLES AND PIECES OF MEAT OFF THE TABLECLOTH AND RETURNS THEM TO THE PLATES FROM WHENCE THEY CAME.

Dilys: What are you planning then? You going away with Angharad Roberts as well Rosemary, are you?

Brian: Yes, I am.

Miriam: I see. You're taking that Rosemary to Keswick, are you? Where are you intending to take Angharad Roberts?

Brian: London.

Dilys: Oh no, you're not taking Angharad Roberts to London. I'm going to London.

Miriam: Dilys is going to London.

Dilys: I'm not sharing London with you and Roberts the butcher's wife. I'm not having you and that Roberts woman bumping into me in Selfridges in Oxford Street. I'm not risking that, Brian.

Brian: We're not going to Selfridges.

Dilys: You don't know – that woman Angharad Roberts might want to go to Selfridges.

Miriam: Very popular store is Selfridges. A favourite with women visiting London.

Dilys: I'm not having you and that woman bumping into me and Alan in Oxford Street or anywhere else in London, let me tell you.

Miriam: Alan?

Dilys: So let that be understood.

Miriam: Who's Alan?

Dilys: Alan Phillips.

Miriam: Alan Phillips?

Dilys: I'm not having you turn up out of the blue while we're set on enjoying ourselves.

Miriam: Not the Alan Phillips I used to go dancing with?

Dilys: Do you know any other?

Miriam: We haven't seen Alan Phillips for twenty years.

Dilys: You may not have done, Miriam.

Miriam: When did you start seeing Alan again?

Dilys: Oh, quite recently, Miriam.

Miriam: You didn't tell me.

Dilys: Of course I didn't tell you. I had enough from you the first time I told you I was seeing him – and that was over twenty years ago.

Miriam: (TO BRIAN): Did you know about this?

Dilys: Why should Brian know, Miriam? Brian's got his Rosemarys and his Angharads. So there we are.

Brian: Alan Phillips used to go around with Angharad Roberts.

Dilys: No, she didn't.

Brian: They used to go out together. She told me.

Dilys: She wouldn't even have known Alan Phillips. Alan Phillips, Brian, had left, had gone into the army, long before Angharad Roberts' parents came to live here.

Miriam: Brian was always a liar.

Brian: He met her later – when he came out of the army.

Dilys: Alan was in the army for 14 years. She'd have been a married woman by then, for God's sake. What are you talking about?

Brian: She was. She was married to -

Brian and Miriam: - Roberts the butcher.

Dilys: Alan never told me he knew Angharad Roberts.

Miriam: Alan Phillips hasn't told you the half of it, Dilys.

Dilys: I don't believe you. You just saying that. Well, you can go off with that woman, both of them. I couldn't care less. I'm going to be in London with Alan. So that's that. Six twenty seven. Right. You had enough, have you? God what a mess. Time for pudding. You'll have pudding, will you? Gooseberry tart. Made it specially. So don't say you won't have any, Miriam. Gooseberry tart, your favourite, Brian. Come along.

DILYS CLEARS THE PLATES OFF THE TABLE

Dilys: (TO BRIAN AND MIRIAM): Don't just sit there. Give a helping hand.

WITH BRIAN AND MIRIAM'S RELUCTANT HELP, DILYS TAKES THE PLATES TO THE SIDEBOARD, FROM WHERE SHE FETCHES THE PUDDINGS.

Dilys: There we are. Cream. Help yourself to cream. What worries me is what you're going to do, Miriam, with Brian and me in London and spoken for and so forth. You on your own in that big house of yours with no one but that man on News At Ten to talk to? Such a shame for you, you by yourself, and no man of your own. Devastating for you, I'd say. You will promise me not to have a nervous breakdown?

Miriam: I can manage for myself, thank you.

Dilys: Have you got any man in mind you could approach, try your little tricks on?

Miriam: I'm not without my friends, Dilys. So don't you think I am.

Dilys: You'll be alright then. You could try Mr Roberts – Roberts the butcher – Brian's Angharad's husband. He'll be on his own one would imagine, at least while his wife's in London.

Miriam: I can look after myself without any help from you, Dilys.

Dilys: Roberts the butcher – a bit overweight, of course – what would he be ? Twenty two stone?

Miriam: I'm not the least bit interested in Mr Roberts, thank you very much.

Dilys: There's Mr Cartwright. Now, he's a very nice man.

Miriam: I don't know who you're talking about.

Dilys: Mr Cartwright, came to unblock the drains. Wart on the side of his nose. (INDICATING THE SIZE OF THE WART): Out here.

Miriam: I don't know any Mr Cartwright. He's not a man whose services I've engaged. You can be sure of that.

Dilys: You were here. When he came to do the drains. Quite charming, very polite, did wonders with the blockage. Wart. Out here.

Miriam: I don't know him.

Dilys: False teeth. When he laughed the top set fell out. He'd do very well for you, Miriam.

Miriam: I'm not listening to you, Dilys.

Dilys: Teeth fell on the floor, he picked them up, wiped them clean on his shirt tails. For goodness sake, Miriam, you wouldn't forget a man like that. We'll have to find you someone. Brian and I won't feel happy, him going to Keswick, me going to London without finding you someone suitable.

Miriam: For God's sake! If you want to know, I am seeing someone.

Dilys: Oh?

Brian: You're seeing someone? Who?

Miriam: What's that you, Brian?

Dilys: Quite right. It has nothing to do with you, Brian.

Miriam: If you want to know –

Dilys: It doesn't matter, Miriam.

Miriam: - If you want to know it's my dentist.

Dilys: Your dentist?

Brian: He's homosexual.

Miriam: He's not.

Dilys: He's homosexual as sure as day is day, Miriam.

Miriam: Only part of him is gay.

Dilys: Which part would that be, Miriam? I'd have thought that would have been a major consideration, knowing you as we do.

Brian: He lives with that instructor at the swimming baths.

Miriam: They've separated.

Brian: They have?

Miriam: He's moved out.

Dilys: Who has?

Miriam: My dentist.

Dilys: Where's he living now?

Miriam: You don't think I'd be stupid enough to tell you, do you?

Dilys: So you're hitching yourself up to a partial homosexual, are you?

Miriam: Believe me, Dilys, he's not homosexual with me, partially or otherwise.

Dilys: I can imagine. Well, thank God for that. Miriam is catered for. She's taken care of.

Miriam: He's a very gentle considerate man.

Dilys: I'm sure he would be.

Miriam: He understands me.

Dilys: It goes without saying.

Brian: What's happened to his partner, the instructor at the swimming pool?

Dilys: Why, Brian? Are you interested in this swimming pool instructor?

Brian: I'm just asking, that's all.

Dilys: You have an interest in homosexuals, have you?

Miriam: He's not a homosexual. Not now.

Dilys: (TO BRIAN): Don't you like the pudding, the gooseberry tart, that your fiddling about with it? (TO MIRIAM): The instructor at the swimming pool, your dentist's ex – is *he* only partially homosexual then?

Miriam: How should I know?

Dilys: It's sad to think he's stuck there on his own. If only part of him is homosexual, Miriam, perhaps you'd should take him on as well. Can't have him left out in the cold. You think you could manage both of them? I mean, if the two of them, your dentist and the swimming instructor, are only partially homosexual – say *half* homosexual - that might imply that half of each of them is also heterosexual, and, when I was at school, two halves made a whole. So should you take on the both of them, Miriam, it'd be no more than taking on one whole homosexual and one whole heterosexual. You can show the one to the kitchen and the other to the bedroom.

Miriam: I don't think you realize just how vulgar you can be, Dilys.

Dilys: You should be able to manage that, don't you think?

Brian: They used to live at the back of the railway, didn't they, the dentist and the swimming instructor?

Dilys: Back of the railway, did they? That's where your swimming pool instructor would still be living, I suppose, would he? What street would that be, Brian?

Miriam: Don't tell her.

Brian: Hutchinson Street.

Miriam: Don't tell her! (HITTING THE TABLE): I said don't tell her!

EVERYONE'S PUDDING FLIES ALL OVER THE TABLE AND ON BRIAN'S TIE.

A PAUSE AS BRIAN PICKS THE PIECES OF TART OFF THE TABLECLOTH AND RETURNS THEM TO THE PLATES FROM WHENCE HE DECIDES THEY CAME. HE THEN WIPES HIS TIE. DILYS RETURNS TO EATING HER PUDDING.

DILYS: Well, I'm not the one to stand in your way, Miriam. I'm pleased for you. And I hope the three of you will be very happy.

Miriam: I'm not discussing it.

Dilys: No. When are you going to London then, Brian?

Brian: Tomorrow.

Dilys: I'm going on the six twenty seven. So that's it then. When are you seeing your dentist, Miriam?

Miriam: Tuesday.

Dilys: Tuesday? And the swimming instructor? Well, of course, you haven't arranged that yet. Coffee anybody? Miriam? If you're going to drive home this afternoon after all the wine - .

Miriam: Alright.

Dilys: Well, either you do or you don't.

Miriam: Yes, yes. Thank you.

Dilys: Brian?

Brian: Thank you

Dilys: Do you think you might like to serve it?

Brian: Right.

HE RISES AND GOES TO THE SIDEBOARD TO FETCH THE CUPS, SAUCERS, MILK AND THE COFFEE OFF ITS HOTPLATE.

Dilys: Don't forget the sugar for Miriam. Is it still three sugars, Miriam?

BRIAN HAS BROUGHT EVERYTHING OVER TO THE TABLE.

Dilys: There we are. What did you think of the roast beef? A little tough going this week. Don't you think?

BRIAN IS POURING THE COFFEE

Dilys: Do you think the cabbage could have been cooked a bit longer, Brian?

Brian: It was very nice, Dilys.

Dilys: Miriam?

Miriam: Yes. Yes. Very nice.

Dilys: Roberts the butcher hasn't done so well on this occasion – that's my opinion.

BRIAN ACCIDENTALLY MISSES POURING THE COFFEE INTO THE THIRD CUP AND POURS IT INSTEAD ONTO THE TABLECLOTH.

Dilys: In the cups, Brian.

BRIAN POURS COFFEE INTO THE THIRD CUP.

Dilys: Well done.

DILYS HELPS HERSELF TO MILK.

Dilys: Milk, Miriam?

MIRIAM POURS MILK INTO HER COFFEE.

Dilys: Brian?

BRIAN POURS MILK INTO HIS COFFEE.

DILYS SEES THAT THERE IS A LITTLE BIT OF CREAM LEFT IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CREAM JUG.

Dilys: Is that a little bit of cream left over? Only enough for one, I think.

MIRIAM REACHES FOR THE CREAM JUG AND POURS ALL OF IT INTO HER OWN COFFEE.

Dilys: Well, I expect I'll have plenty of opportunity for cream in London. Well, here's to the future. (RAISING HER COFFEE CUP IN A TOAST). Cheers.

DILYS DRINKS.

THEN MIRIAM UNENTHUSIASTICALLY RAISES HER CUP AND DRINKS.

THEN BRIAN DOES THE SAME.

THE END