

THE WOLF SHEPHERD

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CHARACTERS

SARA, 37 years old.

MANUEL, 29 years old.

JACQUELINE, 55 years old.

PACO, 32 years old.

The action of the play takes place in the living room of a modest flat. On the right of the stage there is a sofa with a coffee table beside it. There is a small lamp standing on the coffee table. On the left of the stage there is a table and three chairs. Behind the table there is a passage that leads to the kitchen and to one of the bedrooms. At the start of the passage we can see the bathroom door. Behind the sofa there is a door that opens to another bedroom, and there is a mirror hanging on the wall. In the middle of the back wall is the front door of the flat that opens onto the staircase landing.

1.

It is 11 o'clock at night. We can hear the sound of a shower and a male voice singing an indistinct melody. SARA is tidying up some objects that are lying about; a shirt, some trousers and some worn out boots. Once she has collected everything she disappears down the passage and immediately returns with her hands empty. She picks up a motoring magazine from the table and leaves it on the coffee table beside the sofa. She arranges the cushions on the sofa and looks around to see if everything is in order. She switches on the lamp on the coffee table and turns off the main light, creating a more intimate ambience.

SARA pauses in front of the mirror on the wall and studies her reflection carefully. She removes her slippers and her simple cotton dressing gown. We see she is wearing a short sleeveless nightie with lace edging which just covers her groin. It is intentionally sexy but it also seems cheap and vulgar. The noise of the shower stops.

MANUEL (OFF)

Sara, the towel?

SARA

I left it for you on...

MANUEL (OFF)

... It's here, I've got it.

SARA checks her hair in the mirror. She smiles and turns until she is in profile. She places her hands on her stomach and examines it, first directly, and then in the mirror. She smiles again, this time more out of nervousness than joy. She slowly caresses her stomach with both hands. In the meantime MANUEL continues talking from the bathroom. SARA appears not to be listening to him.

MANUEL

What we've got doubts about is the side door, well not me, it's Paco. Everything else is perfect. It's only got a little scratch all along the right hand side and a few dents here and there. Other than that it's perfect. A bit of filler and it'll be perfect.

(Short pause)

It burns a bit of oil but the mechanic told us with the mileage it's done that's normal. It's perfect, you'll see.

(Short pause)

The thing is that side door. If it wasn't for that fucking side door... Paco's got it into his head that he wants a side door and you know what he's like when he gets something into his head... Of course I'd like a side door as well, fucking right I would, but if it doesn't have one it doesn't have one, no problem.

(Short pause)

All our lives... All our fucking lives we've worked with a van with no side door. But when Paco gets something into his head...

MANUEL emerges from the bathroom barefoot with only a small white towel around his waist. He is finishing drying his hair with a hand towel. His big build is thrown into relief. On seeing Sara:

MANUEL

... Blimey Sara, and that get-up? You look lovely.

SARA

(Shyly) Do you like it?

MANUEL

A lot.

SARA

It's new.

MANUEL sits on the sofa and stretches out a hand to SARA.

MANUEL

Come here precious.

SARA smiles mischievously and slowly approaches the sofa. MANUEL takes her hand and with a tug pulls her onto his lap.

MANUEL

And you've painted your toenails.

SARA looks at her feet with a childish gesture. MANUEL picks up the motoring magazine from the table beside him.

MANUEL

Look, that's it. The white one. Don't tell me it isn't alright?

SARA

(Disappointed) Hum.

MANUEL

See? It's even got a **Luton body** so there won't be any height problems, we'll be able to load anything.

SARA

Yeah.

MANUEL

Look, windows. It's unusual for removal vans to have rear windows but this one's got them, look (he holds the magazine closer). It's also got rear seats that

we'll keep folded down for work but we'll be able to put them up to go away for the weekend, to the beach or the mountains, or wherever we fancy. With our very own van.

SARA

...

MANUEL

Do you like it?

SARA

Yes, of course.

MANUEL gets up with the magazine in his hand, without noticing SARA'S disappointment, he continues enthusiastically.

MANUEL

Let's see if Paco gets that side door out of his head and we go for it. I've talked to the owner and he said he can keep it for us for a while, until we get the money we need. That is we give him a deposit, like normal. If didn't ask for a deposit he'd be an idiot. Paco says he wouldn't buy a van from an idiot and me neither. Don't you like it?

SARA

Yes of course I like it but...

MANUEL

What then? Didn't you say that you'd like to get out of the city at weekends?

SARA

Oh ever so much Manuel. It's what I'd like most.

MANUEL

So when we've got the van we'll celebrate. We can go to the mountains, spend the day and sleep there. Make a fire, drink beer and grill some chops. What do you reckon?

SARA

Great, that'd be great. I'm dying for us to go.

MANUEL

Paco's also mad about the idea of spending a night in the mountains.

(Manuel continues without noticing Sara's disappointment)

He knows a place that's even got a river.

SARA

Yeah.

MANUEL

He was there when he was six or seven. He says that at night you can hear the trout jumping. Can you imagine it? Being there, next to the river, fishing and eating, eating and fishing.

(Sara leaves her disappointment aside and smiles tenderly at Manuel's enthusiasm)

We'll buy a fishing rod, you'll see.

(Sara's smile disappears)

Apparently it was the last trip he made with his mum and dad before the accident, you know. The poor little fellow. What a bloody shame, eh? **He's never got over it.** He doesn't like talking about it but one day he told me that he dreams about that place. And he says that it's so real that it seems... real. He dreams he's fishing in that river. And he catches tons of trout and his dad is splitting his sides laughing - he says his dad was a great bloke - and that each trout he catches he throws to his mum who catches it with the barbecue grill as if it was a tennis racket - apparently she loved cooking - and that later, of course he wakes up and there's no trout, no river, no nothing.

(Manuel scratches his head and forces a smile)

Paco has some dreams... I never remember mine. Do you remember yours?

SARA

I don't have dreams.

MANUEL

No misses, dream we all dream, what happens is that some people remember them and others don't. But we all dream. Well, that's what Paco says.

SARA

(Upset) Paco knows everything.

MANUEL

(Oblivious to Sara's sarcasm) Paco's a star. Let's see if once and for all he can forget about that fucking side door and...

SARA

Why don't you park the van for a moment and come here silly billy.

MANUEL'S eyes fall on SARA'S nightie again and he jumps on her. He hugs her and repeatedly kisses her neck. SARA smiles pensively with a vacant look.

SARA (holding him back) Wait a second you brute.

MANUEL

I don't know if I can and it's your fault.

SARA

Stop, I'm serious. I want to tell you something.

MANUEL

Tell me and in the meantime I'll keep eating you up.

SARA breaks away and stands up.

SARA

For fuck's sake Manuel!

MANUEL

What's up with you?

SARA is clearly agitated though she tries to hide it.

SARA

Nothing, nothing's up. It's just... I'm trying to talk to you and... Nothing's up,

nothing, I'm a little tense that's all.

MANUEL

Is it work?

SARA

No, no.

MANUEL

If that bastard nurse bothers you again I'll knock his head off, I told you before. I'll go over there and I'll knock that stupid pigeon head of his right off.

SARA

No, it's not work Manuel. (Agitated, raising her voice) I just want to tell you something, talk, that's all. I don't think that's so strange! Or at least it shouldn't be!

Pause. MANUEL is angry. He picks up the magazine and turns the pages compulsively. SARA, with her head lowered, pushes her hair behind her ear and comes nearer.

SARA

I'm sorry darling, I'm a bit on edge and... and sometimes... (heatedly) sometimes I'm scared you'll get tired of me.

MANUEL

(Putting down the magazine) Why do you say that?

SARA

I don't know. I'm such a fool. I love you so much that...

SARA takes MANUEL'S face with both hands and kisses his lips. MANUEL takes her arm and pulls her towards him. He sits her on his lap and attempts to kiss her again. SARA tries to wriggle away. They laugh. MANUEL moves his mouth closer to SARA'S lips. She stops him, putting her finger to her lips.

SARA

Sshh... We said talk. Do you fancy a glass of wine?

MANUEL

Go on, just a glass. We could open the Rioja.

SARA

That's all there is.

MANUEL

(Preparing to get up) I'll open it.

SARA

Sit back, I'll do it, you just relax. Back in a moment.

(She walks towards the kitchen. Before going out she turns back towards Manuel)

And don't fall asleep, I know what you're like.

SARA goes out. MANUEL smiles wearily. He flexes and massages his neck. He picks up the motoring magazine and begins to flick through it, this time calmly. He studies one of the photos.

MANUEL

(To himself) Yes mate, with a side door it'd be the dogs's bollocks.

The doorbell rings.

MANUEL

(In the direction of the kitchen) Are you expecting anyone?

SARA cannot hear him. The doorbell rings again, this time twice. MANUEL gets up grumpily.

MANUEL

I'm coming, bloody hell.

MANUEL opens the door. Behind it we see a woman, JACQUELINE, attractive and well made up. Her clothes are elegant with a bohemian touch, which suits her. She is wearing large sunglasses like a tiara, large circular earrings, brown high-heeled boots and possibly a padded bra to enhance her figure. She is also wearing a coat and a handbag slung over her shoulder. She is carrying a travel bag and a large suitcase with wheels. MANUEL studies her

with surprise.

MANUEL

Yes?

JACQUELINE

You must be Manuel, am I right? (To herself, observing his torso) Though you could well be Marc Antonio.

MANUEL

Yes, I'm Manuel and who are you?

JACQUELINE

I've been dying to meet you. I'm Jacqueline but you can call me Jackie.

MANUEL

Nice to meet you. How can I help you?

JACQUELINE

You're funny, I like your sense of humor. I'm Sara's mother.

JACQUELINE reaches for MANUEL'S face and kisses him on the cheek leaving a trace of lipstick. MANUEL remains confused.

JACQUELINE

Can you lend me a hand?

MANUEL

Yes, sure.

JACQUELINE gives him the travel bag and enters. MANUEL touches his cheek in bewilderment and also picks up the suitcase. JACQUELINE enters as far as the middle of the living room, leaves her handbag on the sofa, and looks around. MANUEL enters behind her and closes the door. Although she hides it well, we begin to notice that JACQUELINE has had one too many. She talks with a compulsive brazenness.

JACQUELINE

So this is your little love nest. (Slyly) Not bad, (to herself) in fact I've seen a lot

worse.

JACQUELINE takes off her coat and gives it to MANUEL, who does not know what to do with it.

MANUEL

Sara's in the kitchen, she's coming. Please sit down Mrs... Espinosa.

JACQUELINE

(Sits on the sofa) Don't call me 'Mrs' darling, it makes you seem younger than you really are.

(She studies him at length with obvious delight)

So you're... Manuel.

MANUEL, still carrying the coat and suitcase, blushes as if he were naked.

JACQUELINE crosses her legs seductively. MANUEL watches, clearly flustered. He leaves the suitcase to one and hangs the coat on the back of a chair.

JACQUELINE

I didn't picture you like that at all. I don't know why but I thought you'd be older. Sara's always had a weakness for men twice her age. You know, that old story about looking for a father figure, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

(While she talks she produces a metal cigarette case and puts a cigarette in her mouth)

She's always been very unstable and quite frankly, no matter how much she hides behind it, I don't believe it's because she grew up without a father. In truth, it's better not to have one than to have a father like her grandfather. (She offers a cigarette)

Would you like one?

MANUEL

No, no. I don't smoke. I gave it up.

JACQUELINE

Well done you. I could give it up as well but I don't want to. I love smoking, I

adore it. And since they've banned it I like it even more. Have you got a light darling?

MANUEL

Well no, no, I haven't.

JACQUELINE digs her hand into her bag.

JACQUELINE

Don't worry I must have half a dozen in here.

MANUEL raises a finger as if wanting to say something. JACQUELINE looks closer into the huge bag crammed with bits and pieces.

JACQUELINE

Here's one. Look, I haven't seen this one for a while! This bag's like a lost property office. Once I found some panties that I thought I'd lost years ago.

MANUEL

(Referring to smoking) It's better you don't...

JACQUELINE

Of course darling it may not be the best place to keep your panties but...

MANUEL

Smoking.

JACQUELINE

What?

MANUEL

It's not allowed in here. Well you can but out on the balcony.

JACQUELINE

I'm sure that'll be because of Sara, won't it? She's got a phobia about tobacco. Ever since she was little. She used to say my mouth was a dirty stinky chimney. Nice things to say to a mother, don't you think?

SARA enters with a glass of wine in each hand.

JACQUELINE

Hello darling. What a pretty dress. Why, is there a fancy dress party? Let me look at you.

SARA is struck dumb. JACQUELINE gets up and walks towards her.

JACQUELINE

Give your mother a kiss.

SARA does not move a muscle. JACQUELINE gives her a kiss and takes the two glasses of wine.

JACQUELINE

Thank you darling, now that is a proper welcome. I'm parched after that journey.

JACQUELINE gives a glass to MANUEL and almost empties her own in one gulp. SARA and MANUEL exchange a quick glance.

JACQUELINE

Well... tell me. How's everything? Or has the cat got your tongue? (laughs)

SARA still does not speak. JACQUELINE smiles at MANUEL, who grimaces in an effort to smile and turns back to SARA.

JACQUELINE

Sara darling, you're going to frighten Manuel.

SARA

I'll be back.

SARA half turns, picks up her dressing gown from the chair and heads towards the kitchen. Before she leaves the room:

JACQUELINE

Sara darling, you're not going to hide under the bed, are you? (Laughs. To Manuel) That's what she always used to do when she was little.

SARA stops without turning around.

SARA

I'm going to get another glass.

SARA exits.

JACQUELINE

Bring the bottle then darling, my glass seems to have got a hole in it. (Laughs. To Manuel) It was the same story when she was little. She was very shy, quite the opposite of her mother. When someone spoke directly to her she'd blush all over and be struck dumb. They always used to say "have you swallowed your tongue? Has the cat got your tongue?" The poor little mite used to get so nervous that sometimes she'd even throw up. At school they used to call her dumbty dumbty and the exorcist girl. Because of the vomiting, of course (laughs).

MANUEL nods without really knowing how to react. SARA enters looking annoyed with an empty glass and the bottle of wine. She is now wearing her dressing gown again.

JACQUELINE

It's true, isn't it darling?

SARA fills her mother's glass without looking at her.

SARA

Fortunately I haven't heard a word.

MANUEL

Well, I'll leave you to it. I'm off to bed. I've had a hard day and it'll be the same story tomorrow.

JACQUELINE

You going already? What a shame. Don't you fancy another glass?

MANUEL

No, I'll let you two catch up. I'm sure you've got a lot to talk about. (To Jacqueline) Nice to meet you Mrs... I'm sure we'll see each other another day.

JACQUELINE

Tomorrow to be precise (laughs). Sleep well.

MANUEL

Good night.

MANUEL touches SARA'S cheek, who she forces a smile, and exits. JACQUELINE watches him go. She empties her glass and gets up to take the bottle.

JACQUELINE

(Looking towards the passage) You've chosen well this time, he looks like a real stud. Attractive but a little rough around the edges, like those old film stars. He reminds me of Marlon Brando in Cleopatra, or was it Richard Burton...?

SARA

Mum...

JACQUELINE

(Pouring herself another glass) I can't remember at the moment but with that little towel number he looks like a Roman centurion.

SARA

Mum...

JACQUELINE

(Turning towards Sara) And that granny's dressing gown doesn't suit you at all, and with that poundshop nightie darling... (takes a long swallow)

SARA

Mum...

JACQUELINE

You've got to smarten yourself up darling, you've always been a mess, just look at your hair. (Leaves the almost empty glass on the coffee table) Come here and I'll tidy it up a little.

SARA

Mum!

(Silence)

What the fuck are you doing here?

Darkness.