

RON and JAN, an unremarkable middle-aged couple, are seated on a sofa positioned downstage centre. They are both gazing at a television set, which is at an imaginary fixed point somewhere beyond the fourth wall. RON is holding a television remote control. RON and JAN may, from time to time – especially during moments of heightened emotion – look away from the screen, but, until otherwise indicated, they never look at each other. After some considerable time RON raises the remote control and changes the channel. The image on the television that now confronts them causes them to recoil in disgust.

Urghhhh! JAN

Oh! – Oh! – Erghhhh! RON

Oh, no...Urghh!...Erghhhh! JAN

Gawd, whatever's this, then? RON

Oof! I dunno. Ooh, look! Ooh, don't! Oof!  
(Suddenly.) JAN

Ooh, yes I do, yes I do! They were all talkin' about it at work today. It's some documentary. "Major Surgery" I think it's called – summit like that. Set in an 'ospital. Ooh, no...ooh, look!

I gotta turn it luv. I can't 'andle operations – not on top o' your beef stroganoff. RON

Yeah, yeah, turn it, turn it! JAN

(RON lifts the remote control and changes the channel several times.)

Oh, wait, wait, wait! Go back, go back!

JAN

(RON points the remote control at the television and clicks back through the channels.)

Stop! Stop! Forward!

JAN

(RON clicks forward through the channels.)

There!

JAN

(After a moment.)  
What?

RON

Look...it's 'er...what's 'er name?

JAN

Who?

RON

You know... 'er!

JAN

No, I don't.

RON

Yes you do. It's 'er...look.

JAN

I dunno who you're talkin' about.

RON

(A little frustrated.)  
You know, what's 'er name?

JAN

(Insistent.)  
I don't know.

RON

JAN

Oh, 'onestly, sometimes! *Er!* She was in that...that film...with that actor.

RON

What actor?

JAN

The short one with the...the dark hair. Oh, you know. She played an expensive prostitute and 'e was...well, I don't know what 'e was, really...A doctor, I think...or a chemist. Or was 'e a fishmonger? 'E wore a white coat, whatever 'e was. Least, I think 'e did?

(Beat.)

Or am I thinkin' o' summit else?

RON

I dunno what you're talkin' about?

JAN

Yes ya do – where she was in love with 'im, but 'e weren't in love with 'er, but she decided to confess 'er love to 'im anyway, but 'e told 'er 'e didn't 'ave no feelin's for 'er an' 'e went an' married someone else, an' she cried an' cried an' almost 'ad a nervous breakdown, an' then 'e discovered 'e didn't love 'is wife after all, but 'e did still 'ave feelin's for 'er, so 'e went to 'er 'an told 'er 'ow 'e felt, but she was still 'urt, so she told 'im she didn't love 'im no more, so 'e went back to 'is wife, an' then she cried an' cried an' went to 'is work an' told 'im she did love 'im really, an' then 'e cried an' said 'e couldn't understand 'ow 'e'd let 'er slip through 'is 'ands in the first place, an' so 'e got divorced an' they 'ad a big weddin', an' then she got pregnant an' 'ad a baby, but it died soon after she 'ad it, so she...she...That's all I remember.

RON

(With an air of confidence.)

Ohhh...I think I know the one you mean.

JAN

(With relief.)

Yeah, that's the one!

(Beat.)

RON

No...No, that's not 'er.

JAN

'Course it is, look!

RON  
(Squinting.)  
No...No, it's definitely not 'er. She's too old.

JAN  
Are you sure?

RON  
Positive. This one's much too old.

JAN  
(Somewhat crestfallen.)  
Oh.

RON  
Looks a bit like 'er though, I'll grant you that.

JAN  
Mmm...anyway, this'll do...

(They both make themselves more comfortable on the sofa. Beat.)

JAN  
'Ere we go...

RON  
Janice?

JAN  
Yes, luv?

RON  
(Tentatively.)  
Janice, I...Well, there's...Ya see, I 'ave to...

JAN  
What is it, luv?

RON  
(Taking a deep breath.)  
I need to tell ya something, Janice, and I...Well, I don't want to tell ya, but...but I 'ave to tell ya.

JAN  
All right, Ron, I'm listenin'.

RON

Well, the thing is, is...it's about our son.

JAN

Craig? Oh Gawd, don't tell me 'e got caught shopliftin' again? That little bugger, wait 'til I get 'old of 'im. I'll wring 'is bloody neck! I will, I promise!

RON

No, no, it's not that, Jan, it's not that.

JAN

'Cause if I 'ave the law 'round 'ere one more time, knockin' on our door, pointin' their finger at me, askin' questions about that little sod, I'll kill 'im! I swear I will, I'll kill 'im. And I'd go to prison, an' I'd be 'appy doin' it – 'cause I'd get a damn sight more peace an' quiet in there than I do now with that little shit stirrin' up trouble every ten minutes. I can't take it, Ron – me nerves can't take it.

RON

It's not that, Jan, I told you it's not.

JAN

Well, what is it then?

RON

Well, it's...it's a bit more complicated...than that.

JAN

What d'ya mean?

RON

What I mean is what I said, 'cause...like I said, I weren't gonna tell ya, Jan, 'cause...well, it weren't important...not to me, anyway. But now I got to, see? I got no choice.

JAN

(Becoming impatient.)

Ron, tell me what it is, for Gawd's sake.

RON

(A beat.)

I...I'm not 'is father.

JAN

You what?