

and middle-aged. He's got what he thinks is a very good line in romantic banter and chat-up lines. Maudie likes to think she is immune to all this; she's heard it a hundred times before and is not going to be seduced by his 'tongue'. She is down-to-earth, knows what she wants and speaks her mind. This evening she has come to the pub resolved once and for all to issue an ultimatum to Moth. But notice that as soon as Moth comes on to her with his romantic ways she 'swoons' and gives in to him. Maudie keeps trying to rally herself to her cause and cut Moth off each time he goes for her purse strings. To make this scene really effective you must find a subtle balance between the comedy and a genuine feeling for the plight of both Maudie and Moth.

The Woman Who Cooked Her Husband

Debbie Isitt

Scene 5. Hilary and Kenneth's house somewhere near Liverpool, England.

Hilary (40s) is dressed in a green taffeta outfit, green tights and shoes. She wears her hair in a beehive. She is an expert cook and homemaker. Her husband, Kenneth (40s), is an ageing Teddy boy with a passion for Elvis Presley. His costume is a green taffeta drape coat with black drainpipe trousers. After nineteen years of marriage, Kenneth embarks on a secret affair with Laura. He is terrified of approaching middle age and this affair makes him feel that 'I can put it off for a good few years, I'm starting again and I feel just like a teenager'. Laura has been pushing Kenneth to leave Hilary, but he wants to wait until the time is 'right'. At the same time, Hilary is beginning to suspect that Kenneth might be having an affair, but when she confronts him he strenuously denies this. Eventually Laura decides to have a showdown with Hilary. Their emotional confrontation (which can be found on page 178 of this volume) ends with Laura announcing that Kenneth is leaving Hilary in favour of Laura. This scene follows soon after as Kenneth arrives home completely oblivious of the drama that has just ensued.

KENNETH. Hi Hilary - I'm home - what's cooking?

HILARY. Have you had a good day at work?

KENNETH. Yep! What about you?

HILARY. I've had a great day.

KENNETH. How come?

HILARY. No reason. I just had a really great day.

KENNETH. What's for dinner? I'm starving.

HILARY. Nothing . . . I'll do you a salad.

KENNETH (*searching*). Where's my album?
HILARY. What album?
KENNETH. My *Aloha Hawaii* album.
HILARY. I don't know.
KENNETH. You don't know? Come on, you've spent the day tidying up, you must have moved it.
HILARY. I haven't touched it Kenneth.
KENNETH. Bloody hell!
HILARY. Did anything interesting happen to you today?
KENNETH. What do you mean, 'interesting'? What sort of question is that? What are you getting at with your 'interesting'?
HILARY. Nothing. I like to hear what you get up to.
KENNETH. What's 'get up to'? Why would I want to 'get up' to anything? It's work, a job - what's the matter with you?
HILARY. Nothing's the matter with me.
KENNETH. Always asking weird questions - why don't you just get off my back.
(*Pause*)
HILARY. Your album's in the bin.
KENNETH. What?
HILARY. I trod on it. It cracked - I threw it in the bin.
KENNETH. For God's sake, woman, that's my best record!
HILARY. You should have put it away.
KENNETH. What's wrong with you, can't you watch where you're putting your big feet?
HILARY. Yes.
KENNETH. On top of everything else now you're accident-prone.
HILARY. It wasn't an accident.
KENNETH. You did it on purpose.
HILARY. Yes.
KENNETH. What do you mean?

HILARY. I trod on your stupid record on purpose.
KENNETH. You broke my record - on purpose!?
HILARY. I JUST SAID SO, DIDN'T I?
KENNETH. You've got to be joking - people don't go around breaking my things for no reason.
HILARY. I'm not people, I'm your wife, and I had a good reason.
KENNETH. Why?
HILARY. I don't like it.
KENNETH. What?
HILARY. The record. It gets on my nerves.
KENNETH. You don't go around breaking other people's records just because they get on your nerves.
HILARY. I do.
KENNETH. Right. Give me the money.
HILARY. No.
KENNETH. Give me the money to buy a new one.
HILARY. No - get lost.
KENNETH. YOU are completely mental - I can't believe it.
HILARY. Why are you home so late?
KENNETH. The traffic was bad, why do you think? You break my record, you haven't cooked dinner, you give me the third degree on what I do every minute of the day - God knows why I married you.
(*Pause*)
HILARY. I saw Laura today.
(*Pause. In the background, the Rossini Overture plays, indicating KENNETH's emotional panic.*)
KENNETH. Who?
HILARY. Laura - you don't know her. Someone I met once at a party.
KENNETH. Oh yeah? What, like an old friend?
HILARY. Not really a friend. More an acquaintance.
KENNETH. Yeah? ... And?

HILARY. Nothing.
KENNETH. Nothing?
HILARY. Nothing.
KENNETH. Fine.

HILARY. How long has it been going on?

KENNETH. What?

HILARY. How long?

KENNETH. I don't know what you're talking about.

HILARY. It could have been going on for years.

KENNETH. WHAT!?

HILARY. You could have been sleeping with me, eating with me, pretending to be faithful to me for years and years - you might at least let me know when it started.

KENNETH. Please, Hilary - I don't know what you mean.

(**HILARY** begins pushing him out of her side of the house. He walks backwards, tripping up the steps, refusing to be forced out.)

HILARY. Have there been any others? Come on, let's hear it, how many have you slipped it into?

KENNETH. Eh...

HILARY. Why, Kenneth? Is it my body that repulses you? My personality? The way I speak - what?

KENNETH. You're - you're ... hysterical! You don't know what you're saying.

HILARY. Hysterical? I'm not hysterical ... I want you out. Out of this house tonight - I want you to get out and stay out - you can pack a bag and that's all - you take nothing - do you hear - nothing - everything in this house is mine, it's mine - it's all I've got and I'm keeping it - you've got her - now go ...

(During the following dialogue - until the blackout - the *Rossini Overture* increases in volume until it drowns out their voices so we only see the hysteria as she shouts at him to go.)

KENNETH. Go where?

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HILARY. Now Kenneth - quick.
KENNETH. But I don't know what you mean? Have you been drinking?

HILARY. You're a very sad man - very sad.

KENNETH. You can't just throw me out on the street - what am I supposed to have done? You haven't even told me what I've done.

HILARY. Go!

KENNETH. If this is about Laura - I do know a Laura, but nothing's gone on between us - why won't you just talk to me? I hardly know her - there's no way I would have -

HILARY. Just - get - out - of - my - house.

KENNETH. You'll feel different tomorrow - I'll call round.

HILARY. How could you - how could you!

COMMENTARY: This play portrays a high-energy emotional journey. The playwright suggests in her foreword that each character 'has its own route and the action flares when the paths are crossed. Most of the work should be done out of the scene, building up the emotional truth ready to enter the scene so that the actors can just "be" there during the scene ... The play should be served up at a fast, furious pace with savage emotional input, clear fast thought changes and an innocence that keeps the play alive and real ... Dialogue exchanged with wit and passion ... but never completely hiding the pain that runs very deep amongst all three characters.' Hilary has had some time to mull over her revenge. Her new-found knowledge of the true state of affairs has given her an unaccustomed strength. She starts on an ironic note which catches Kenneth off guard but her controlled anger grows into rampant hysteria as Kenneth refuses to confess. Kenneth is slow to catch on that his secret has been revealed. His web of lies and deceit gradually unravels before him. Hilary has obviously decided that she

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