

A FOOL'S WAGER

by

Philip Ayckbourn

Characters

Jessica Rose – mid twenties

Laura Carter – mid twenties

Rick Hart – mid twenties

Place – The action of the play takes place in the living room of Jessica and Laura's second floor flat.

Scene 1 – Friday 8.30 a.m.

Scene 2 – Saturday 11.00 a.m.

Scene 3 – That evening 7.15 p.m.

Scene 4 – Later that evening.

Scene 5 – Monday 10.00 a.m.

Scene 6 – Monday 7.00 p.m.

Scene 7 – Later that evening.

Scene 8 – Wednesday 7.00 p.m.

Scene One

Time – Friday 8.30 a.m.

SR exit leads to the front door and SL exit to the rest of the flat. There are french windows DSR with a parapet area in front. An outside ledge leads to a kitchen window DSL. The significant piece of furniture in the flat is a dressing screen USR. A Roman centurion helmet is placed on a side table somewhere in the room. Rick's coat hangs on a coat hook.

Lights up. Rick enters SL, with Jessica clinging onto him. Rick is dressed as a Roman centurion and carries his overnight bag. Jessica is dressed in her dressing gown and holds a teddy bear.

Rick Now, Jess, you need to let go.

Jessica No.

Rick I'm already late.

Jessica I want to hold you forever.

Rick You want me to lose my job?

Jessica Do you love me more than anything?

Rick More than anything.

Jessica More than anyone?

Rick More than anything and anyone, okay. Now, Jess, come on, let go.

Jessica More than your other girlfriends?

Rick They're not girlfriends, they're friends who happen to be girls, that's all. You're my girlfriend.

Jessica Your only girlfriend?

Rick My one and only true girlfriend. Now don't be jealous, I've told you, it's not good for you to be jealous, not good for either of us.

Jessica Oh, a whole weekend without you.
Rick I said I'd come.
Jessica No, it's just too soon. Next time, I promise. I need to tell Mum and Dad about you first; how wonderful you are, how clever, how talented –
Rick How sexy?
Jessica No, not that.
Rick Okay, now kiss and let go.

Rick kisses Jessica.

Caius Rickus needs to go to battle. (*Picking up centurion helmet*) 'Insure with Centurion Protection for all your insurance needs'.
Jessica Where are you today?
Rick Outside the supermarket – Tesco. (*Putting on coat*) I need a proper acting job. I'll call you later.
Jessica Oh.
Rick Have a nice weekend... without me.
Jessica Oh.
Rick Jess –
Jessica Be good, won't you.
Rick As Caius Rickus?
Jessica No, as you.
Rick Jessica –
Jessica I just don't like to think of you in the company of other girls, without me.
Rick Well you're just going to have to trust me then, aren't you. Now, I am extremely late. I love you.

Rick kisses Jessica.

I'll call you.
Jessica Soon.
Rick Yes.
Jessica Very soon.
Rick Yes, bye.

Rick exits SR.

Jessica (*Calling*) Rick.

Rick enters SR.

Rick What?
Jessica One last kiss.

Rick kisses Jessica.

Rick Bye.

Rick exits SR.

Jessica (*Calling*) I love you Rick.

Jessica takes out her mobile and types a text. After a few moments her mobile beeps. She reads and smiles. She types another. After a few moments her mobile beeps again. She reads and smiles again. Laura enters SR. She is dressed in an evening outfit.

Hi Laura.
Laura Hi.
Jessica Well... how was it, your night?

Laura throws her bag down.

Laura Oh dear.
Jessica Yes.
Laura Daniel?
Jessica Daniel decided to disappear with another woman.
Jessica Ah.
Laura I've come to the conclusion that men are completely and utterly rotten.
Jessica Not all men, Laura.
Laura All men, without exception. I presume your night was wonderful.
Jessica He's so perfect.
Laura No man is perfect, Jessica.
Jessica Rick is. He is. You don't know him like I do.
Laura Perhaps, but I know men better than you and in my experience, men appear to be one thing, but in truth they always prove another.
Jessica Not Rick, never Rick.
Laura Well if it pleases you to think so.
Jessica I know so.
Laura You're so naïve and innocent, sweet, Jess. You'll learn.
Jessica I don't want to learn and to become a sour cynic like you, thank you very much.
Laura Then stay a fool, I don't care.
Jessica I'm not surprised you can't find yourself a decent man with such a negative attitude.
Laura Right... I think I'm going to bed.
Jessica Oh, I'm sorry, Laura, I don't mean to be horrible... it's just... I know Rick and – despite what you say – he is... perfect. Sorry. You should be happy for me; happy that I'm in love with such a wonderful, gorgeous man. Laura?

Laura Yes... of course... I am.
Jessica You'll find someone, Laura – someone like Rick – you'll see. You just need to be a little more trusting... a little less cynical. Friends?
Laura Yes.
Jessica Really?
Laura Absolutely... always... friends.
Jessica Oh, Laura.

Slight pause.

Laura Well... maybe you're right.
Jessica I am.
Laura And maybe Rick is perfect.
Jessica He is.
Laura At least I'm sure he wouldn't do anything to destroy your perfect picture of him – admit to anything anyway.
Jessica What do you mean?
Laura Well, if he did something... 'bad' say.
Jessica Bad?
Laura Yes.
Jessica Like what?
Laura Oh, nothing too bad, just something perhaps that he'd rather not tell you about.
Jessica Like what?
Laura Oh... say... if he kissed another woman.
Jessica Another wom – who?
Laura No-one in particular... just a woman – a girl – a pretty one of course.
Jessica Well he wouldn't. Why would he want to, he's got me?
Laura Yes perhaps but... he's at a party, having fun... he's had one or two drinks... he dances with pretty girl... they

Jessica dance closer... a little closer... they kiss.
Jessica No, they don't.
Laura It happens. A kiss, a harmless little kiss... or two. Nothing serious. Nothing he should concern your pretty little head with.
Jessica Sorry.
Laura You're saying it's not possible?
Jessica I am.
Laura Temptation, my dear, sweet, Jessica, is a powerful beast.
Jessica If you're trying to make me doubt Rick, Laura, I'm afraid it's not working. Sorry.
Laura So Rick is beyond all temptation then is he?
Jessica Yes, he is.

Laura chuckles to herself.

Laura What?
Laura Hmm?
Jessica What is it?
Laura What?
Jessica You laughed.
Laura Oh.
Jessica What about?
Laura Nothing.
Jessica Tell me.
Laura No, nothing – a stupid thought. I should go to bed.
Jessica Tell me.
Laura Well... we shall never know shall we... unless...
Jessica Unless?
Laura Unless somehow Rick could be put to the test... to see... if he might be tempted.
Jessica What sort of test?

Laura I don't know.
Jessica Think of something. Humour me.
Laura Okay... how about this? You're going away this weekend aren't you?
Jessica Yes.
Laura What's Rick doing tomorrow night?
Jessica Nothing... I don't think.
Laura You could ask him here to have dinner with me.
Jessica With you?
Laura Yes. You can tell him that I'm all alone and it would be nice if he came over for dinner to keep me company.
Jessica And...?
Laura I'd cook him something – edible hopefully... we'd have some wine... some music... perhaps a little dance together... and then...
Jessica And then he'll kiss you will he? You?
Laura Don't sound so surprised, I can be quite seductive when I want to be.
Jessica Ha!
Laura I'm confident he would.
Jessica In your dreams perhaps.
Laura Well... maybe you'd like to put a little bet on it?
Jessica A bet?
Laura Sure, why not? A little wager.
Jessica That he will kiss you?
Laura Yes.
Jessica All the money in the world.
Laura Well, perhaps not that, but let's say for... a good bottle of champagne?
Jessica Ha! Is that all?
Laura That or nothing.
Jessica Okay, for a good bottle of champagne then.

Laura Okay.
Jessica But how will I know?
Laura Know?
Jessica If he does – if he does kiss you – which he won't – how will I know it?
Laura Well... I'll tell you.
Jessica You'll tell me!
Laura Sure. Isn't my word good enough for you?
Jessica Yes but... you have a bet to win.
Laura Well, if you can't trust me...
Jessica Okay.
Laura Okay?
Jessica Okay.
Laura It's a bet then?
Jessica It's a bet.

They shake hands.

Laura Tomorrow night?
Jessica Tomorrow night.
Laura Well... now I need my bed, it's been a long night. Let me know what he says.
Jessica I will.

Laura exits SL. Jessica thinks and then types a text on her mobile. She thinks again. She dials her mobile.

(To Phone) Oh hi Mum, it's me... Yeah, fine, you?...
Ah. Listen Mum, I can't come tomorrow, I have to work... I know... Yes, I know. I'll come up Sunday...
Yes... Yes... Yes... Listen Mum I have to go, I'm late...

Say sorry to Dad for me... Okay Mum... Yes, I will –
bye... Bye.

Jessica hangs up. Her mobile beeps. She reads the message and smiles.

(To herself) No way, Laura... no way.

She exits SL. Brief scene change music.

Scene Two

Time – Saturday 11.00 a.m.

Laura enters SL, in her dressing gown, holding a cup of tea.

Laura *(Calling off SL)* Jess? You up? Jess? You're going to miss your train. Jess? Ah.

She picks up a remote control and turns on TV. A news channel plays. She watches for a few moments and then exits SR. She enters SR, with a newspaper. Jessica enters SR, carrying a shopping bag. Laura switches off TV.

Jessica Morning.
Laura Oh... morning.
Jessica Lovely day.
Laura Is it?
Jessica It is. Beautiful. Sunny and bright.
Laura Good. Well that's the weather. Aren't you supposed to be catching a train?
Jessica Oh... yes – no.
Laura Huh?
Jessica My parents had to cancel today.
Laura Oh.
Jessica Possibly go tomorrow.
Laura Ah. Been shopping I see.
Jessica Yes.
Laura Early... for shopping.
Jessica Seemed a pity to lie in bed on such a beautiful morning.
Laura Yes. Well I'm going back to bed. Oh, I suppose our little bet is off then?

Jessica Off?
Laura Yes.
Jessica No.
Laura No?
Jessica Why should it be?
Laura Well, since you're not going to be –
Jessica Don't worry, I won't be here.
Laura Has he said yes?
Jessica He will. Better dig out that old recipe book if you're wanting to impress him.
Laura Listen, Jess, perhaps this is a stupid idea. I don't want it to jeopardise our friendship.
Jessica It won't. But if you're scared of losing.
Laura No. I'm actually more concerned about winning.
Jessica Well, that's not going to happen. Seven-thirty okay for you?
Laura Fine.
Jessica Good.
Laura Right. And you won't be here?
Jessica No.

Laura exits SL.

(To herself) No, Laura, Jessica won't be here... but Annika will be.

Jessica takes out a wig from the shopping bag. She looks off SL. She puts on the wig and studies herself in the mirror.

(Dutch accent) Goedemorgen. Hallo, I am Annika from Holland. Very pleased to meet you ja.

She takes her mobile and dials.

(To mobile in her usual voice) Hi, Rick... Good, you?... Where are you?... Ah... Oh, I'm just leaving. Listen, Rick, tonight, my flatmate, Laura, she's all alone, I was wondering if you might have dinner with her. She says she'll cook you something... Yes... Okay, good. Seventy-three... Yeah... Oh, there's a friend of mine – a Dutch girl called Annika – staying the night... No, she'll be visiting friends most probably, you may not see her. Better go... I love you... Lots and lots and lots... Bye.

She hangs up. She takes out an outfit from the shopping bag and holds it up in the mirror.

(Dutch accent) I am Annika from Holland. Hallo, I am Annika from Holland. Very pleased to meet you. Good, good.

She takes off the wig and puts things back in the bag and exits SL. Brief Scene change music.

Scene Three

Time – That evening 7.15 p.m.

Laura enters SL. She wears an evening outfit. She checks her appearance in the mirror.

Laura *(To herself)* Hey, beautiful. One hot chick. Yes you are, one hot babe. Yeah. What am I doing? I'm seducing my flatmate's boyfriend for a stupid bet. This is sad. Oh, Laura you are tragic, a hopeless case... No, you're not, you're gorgeous, incredible... You're nervous. What do I have to be nervous about? Relax, Laura. Relax. Music.

She takes remote and turns on the hi-fi. Soft music plays.

Too seductive. Too soon.

She changes to another station. Very lively and upbeat music plays. She turns it off.

Too wild. Nothing, not yet.

She goes to the mirror again.

Hair up, hair down?

Jessica enters SL, disguised as Annika. She wears slightly tinted glasses.

Jess/Ann Up... down... up...
Down, I think.

Laura What!
Jess/Ann Goedenavond. I am Annika from Holland. You must be Laura, ja? (*As Jessica*) It's me – Jess.
Laura Jessica! What the hell are you doing?
Jessica You didn't think I could *not* be here did you?
Laura Jessica! And why are you dressed like that?
Jessica Disguise.
Laura Oh God! I don't believe this.
Jessica I just need to see things for myself.
Laura You –
Jessica Don't worry, I'll be discreet.
Laura Discreet, dressed like that! I knew you didn't trust me.
Jessica I do – it's just... I want to see for myself. You'll hardly notice me.
Laura And who is this – this –
Jess/Ann Annika from Holland.
Laura Yes, who is she? What is she doing here anyway?
Jess/Ann I'm a friend of Jessica's –
Laura Without the stupid voice please.
Jessica I'm – she's a friend of mine – Jessica's. We went to school together. She's here for the weekend – visiting friends.
Laura Is she.
Jessica Yes.
Laura Then she can go out and visit some.
Jessica But –
Laura I am not doing this with you here. Besides he's certain to recognise you?
Jess/Ann I think nee.
Laura I think ja. Out!
Jessica But –
Laura He'll be here any minute. Out! Out!

Laura pushes Jessica towards the door.

Jessica Laura!

Doorbell.

Laura Now that's him, isn't it. Upstairs to your room and stay there.

Jessica I'll hide behind here.

Jessica runs behind the dressing screen.

Laura Oh no you don't.

Laura grabs Jessica.

Jessica Ow!

Laura To your room.

Jessica Ow! You're hurting me. Ow! Laura!

Laura Fine, do what you like, I don't care. But this bet is off. It is not what we agreed.

Jessica Answer the door. He's waiting.

Jessica moves behind the screen. Laura answers the telephone intercom.

Laura (*To intercom*) Hi. Push the door.

Jessica Good luck.

Rick enters SR, carrying a bottle of wine.

Laura Hi, Rick.
Rick Hi, Laura.
Laura Come in.
Rick Thanks.
Laura So...
Rick How are you?
Laura Good... good... good.
Rick Good.
Laura You?
Rick Good.
Laura Good.
Rick Everything.... okay?
Laura Yes, just... thinking – about dinner.
Rick Ah. (*Offering wine*) I bring gift to white woman.
Laura Oh... thanks. White woman thanks Chief Rick.
Rick Chief Rick say 'no problem'.

Awkward pause.

So –
Laura So... aperitif?
Rick Sure. Whatever you're having.
Laura Gin and tonic?
Rick Sounds good.
Laura Okay... relax.
Rick Thanks.
Laura I'll be back.
Rick Good.
Laura Just... relax.
Rick Thanks.
Laura Yes.

Laura exits SL. Rick checks himself in the mirror. His mobile beeps. Jessica puts her head around the screen and observes. Rick reads a text on his mobile. He senses he's being watched. He turns around, but Jessica has hidden. Rick approaches the screen. Laura enters SL with drinks.

Laura (*Distracting him*) Here we are.
Rick Thanks.
Laura Cheers.
Rick Cheers. Wow! Gin and tonic, with the emphasis on the gin.
Laura Too strong?
Rick No, no.
Laura So... this is weird isn't it – you and I here together... without Jess.
Rick Yes.
Laura Feels like we're having a secret liaison.
Rick Hardly secret.
Laura No... true, hardly secret. So... thanks for coming.
Rick Thank you for inviting me.
Laura Pleasure. I hope you like pasta.
Rick Pasta's good.
Laura Good. That's what we're having... for dinner.
Rick I thought as much.
Laura So... Jessica's a lovely girl isn't she?
Rick Yes... she is.
Laura Her first serious boyfriend – you are. But she hasn't had that many.

Jessica looks around the screen (unseen to Rick).

One disaster called Gordon. Gordon – ha! Training to be a

dentist. His own teeth stuck out like this. Bad advertisement for dentistry. That didn't last long. Another one called Stuart. Very short and overweight, Stuart – ha, ha!

Rick Ah. Why are you telling me this?

Laura Oh... no reason... conversation. Actually Jess and I have a little disagreement.

Rick Oh, what about?

Laura About men.

Rick Oh?

Laura A minor disagreement, nothing serious.

Rick Which is?

Laura Well, she says that not all men can be tempted – by another woman. I say all men can be tempted.

Rick I see. Unless they prefer men of course.

Laura True. But they still can be tempted – by another man.

Rick Yes... women too, let's not forget women, they also can be tempted.

Laura Absolutely – women too – equally so. What do you say, Rick? Have you ever been tempted by another woman – since you've been with Jessica?

Rick Now, that would be telling, wouldn't it?

Laura Yes. Have you?

Rick If I told you, you'd tell Jessica.

Laura Not me. I can keep a secret.

Rick Why do you want to know?

Laura Curiosity. Have you ever been tempted to... kiss another woman – since you've been with Jessica?

Rick No.

Laura No?

Rick No.

Jessica smiles triumphantly and disappears behind the screen.

An interesting conversation.

Laura Sorry.

Rick Talking of other women, is she here?

Laura Who?

Rick What's her name? The Dutch girl – Annika is it?

Laura Annika! You know about Annika?

Rick Yes. Why, is she a secret?

Laura Oh... no... Jess told you about Annika then did she?

Rick She did. Well?

Laura Oh – no, she's out – I think... unless she's hiding here somewhere.

Rick Maybe she is.

Rick moves towards the screen.

Laura Dinner's ready! Perhaps we should eat – if that's all right with you.

Rick Yes, good with me.

Laura Okay. Perhaps you'd like to go through. You know the way.

Rick Sure.

Rick goes to the SL exit. Laura hangs back.

Coming?

Laura Yes, just... put some music on.

Rick Okay.

Rick exits SL. Jessica appears from behind the screen.

Jessica So far so bad.
Laura I've told you, the bet's off.
Jessica Okay... okay I'll go.
Laura You will?
Jessica Sure, it's obvious you won't win so I'll save you the embarrassment of losing. Have a nice evening.

Jessica crosses to SR exit.

Laura Wait you! Okay, if you must watch, then watch.
Jessica Our bet's still on?
Laura Yes, it is.
Jessica That's the girl, fighting spirit.
Laura But you stay behind there and not a sound okay.
Jessica Better not neglect your guest.

Laura crosses to SL exit.

Aren't you forgetting something?

Jessica indicates remote. Laura takes it and selects suitable music. She exits SL. Jessica goes to the mirror and checks her appearance. She crosses to the SL exit and attempts to listen. She thinks for a moment. She crosses the room and exits through the SR french-windows. She takes off her boots and sidles along the ledge. She arrives at the SL window. She looks through, but is unable to see anything. She thinks again. She exits around the side of the building SL. Hi-fi music changes and briefly plays one track after another to indicate the passing of a couple of hours. Music ends.

Scene Four

Time – Later that evening.

Jessica enters SL outside the front of the building. She sidles back along the ledge as Laura enters SL.

Laura Hey? Psst? We're coming through. Hey?

Laura checks behind the screen. She goes to the SR exit.

(Calling off) Jess? Jessica?

She exits SL. Jessica picks up her boots and enters through SR french-windows. She crosses to the SL exit and looks off. She then hurries over to the dressing screen, but drops a boot. She hesitates. Rick enters SL, carrying a glass of wine.

Rick Oh, hello there?
Jess/Ann Oh... hallo.
Rick Annika, I presume?
Jess/Ann Ja... ja... Annika. Goedenavond.
Rick Goedenavond. Rick.
Jess/Ann Hi, Rick.
Rick *(Picking up boot)* Looking for this?
Jess/Ann Ja. Thank you.
Rick So, I hear you're a friend of Jessica's?
Jess/Ann Ja.
Rick Here for the weekend?
Jess/Ann Ja, the weekend.
Rick Been out have you, tonight?
Jess/Ann Ja, visiting friends – having fun.

Rick Good.
Jess/Ann And you, Rick – having fun?
Rick Yes, having fun.
Jess/Ann Laura is your girlfriend ja?
Rick Oh no, not Laura.
Jess/Ann Nee?
Rick No. Just a friend.
Jess/Ann Ah.
Rick No, my girlfriend is Jessica.
Jess/Ann But Jessica is not here.
Rick No.
Jess/Ann Ah, I see. Make good fun with another girl when girlfriend is away.
Rick Oh no...
Jess/Ann I understand.
Rick No I don't think you do.
Jess/Ann Naughty business ja?
Rick No.
Jess/Ann Shh! I don't tell Jessica.
Rick I don't think you understand.

Laura enters SL, carrying a glass of wine.

Laura Feel free to put some more mus – ah! Annika? What are you doing back... so early?
Jess/Ann Goedenavond, Laura.
Laura Yes, goedenavond... Annika. Well...?
Jess/Ann Ah, my friends sleepy. Ah – me too.
Laura Ah.
Rick Annika thinks that you and I are having a secret thing together.
Laura Does she?

Rick I've told her we're not, but I don't think she believes me.
Laura We're just friends.
Rick See.
Laura Well, you must be wanting your bed now, Annika, being so very tired.
Rick Why not join us for a drink?
Jess/Ann A drink?
Rick Yes.
Laura I'm sure Annika –
Rick Just a little one. Do you like wine, Annika?
Jess/Ann I... yes, I do.
Rick Good. (*Wine glass*) Hold this. Be right back.

Rick exits SL.

Laura What are you doing?
Jessica I was trying to hide. He caught me.
Laura Oh!
Jessica Don't worry, he doesn't know it's me.
Laura You fool.
Jessica Anyway, perhaps it's fortuitous.
Laura Huh?
Jessica Perhaps you need a little assistance.
Laura I do not need assistance, thank you.
Jessica Perhaps two girls might double your chances of success.
Laura What?
Jessica Well, he might kiss me. If he does, you win. If he kisses you, you win again: win, win.
Laura You're the one who needs assistance – psychiatric assistance. This bet is off.

Jessica notices Rick approaching.

Jess/Ann So I said 'you will lose and I will win'.

Rick enters SL with a glass of wine.

Rick What's this?

Jess/Ann A game tonight – with a friend of mine.

Rick What game?

Jess/Ann Ping pong.

Rick Oh. Here you are. Have this one.

Rick exchanges glasses with Jessica.

Jess/Ann Thank you.

Rick Well... cheers.

Jess/Ann Cheers.

Laura Cheers.

Rick So, Annika...?

Jess/Ann Ja?

Rick Is it true what they say about you Dutch girls?

Jess/Ann I do not know, what do they say about us Dutch girls, Rick?

Rick They say you like to have fun.

Jess/Ann Yes, we Dutch girls like to have fun, Rick.

Laura We English girls like to have fun too, Rick.

Jess/Ann Maybe, but not as much fun as we Dutch girls like to have.

Laura I disagree.

Rick Now, girls, let's not argue... it's not a competition. Is it?

Jess/Ann No.

Laura No.

Rick I'm sure you both like to have fun.

Jess/Ann Dutch girls kiss better than English girls.

Laura No they don't.

Jess/Ann Yes they do. Our lips are sexier. Don't you think so, Rick?

Rick Girls, girls – you both have beautiful lips.

Jess/Ann Well, one thing's for certain, we dance a hundred times better than English girls dance.

Laura What rubbish!

Jess/Ann It is true. English girls cannot dance.

Laura Well, we shall see. You like to dance, Rick?

Rick Sure – but...

Laura takes the remote.

Laura Let's see what we've got then, shall we?

Laura turns on the hi-fi. Suitable dance music plays.

Jess/Ann Ja, that's good.

Jessica moves to the music.

Come on, Rick.

Rick moves to the music. Jessica dances with Rick (but no physical contact).

You dance good, Rick.

Rick Thanks.

Laura dances and vies for Rick's attention. Rick dances with Laura. Jessica makes her dancing a little more sensual. Rick

dances with Jessica. Laura copies Jessica. Rick dances with Laura. Jessica takes Rick's hands and places them on her body. They dance. Laura does the same. This exchange culminates in Rick being pulled by the arms by both girls. Rick breaks off.

Ladies, ladies, please! Enough of this.

Rick takes the remote and switches off the music.

Jess/Ann Oh, you are not having fun, Rick?
Rick Yes, too much fun. I should go.
Jess/Ann Go.
Rick Yes, probably for the best.
Jess/Ann Oh.
Rick Laura, thank you for a very pleasant evening – and an interesting dinner. Annika, it was a pleasure to meet you too.
Jess/Ann And you, Rick.
Rick Enjoy your stay in England.
Jess/Ann Thank you.
Rick I'll let myself out. Goodnight.
Jess/Ann Goedenacht.
Laura Night.

Rick exits SR.

Jessica Well... a success I think.
Laura You're a fool. I'm going to bed.

Laura exits SL.

Jessica *(To herself)* Oh dear. Sour grapes, Laura... sour

champagne grapes. I knew you would be true, Rick.

She goes to the mirror.

Dag, Annika.

She removes her wig and glasses She exits SL. Brief scene change music.

Scene Five

Time – Monday 10.00 a.m.

Doorbell. Pause. Another doorbell. Laura enters in her dressing gown SL. She answers telephone intercom.

Laura *(To intercom)* Hello?... Oh... hi. You've just missed her, she left for work about five minutes ago... Me?... Okay, push the door.

Rick enters SR. A caveman costume is visible underneath his coat.

Hi, Rick.

Rick Hi, Laura.

Laura Fred Flintstone today is it?

Rick *(Dryly)* Yabbadabbadoo.

Laura You want to talk to me?

Rick Yes.

Laura What about?

Rick I think you know what about, Laura.

Laura Ah.

Rick Yes.

Laura It wasn't my idea – well... but she wanted to do it. I tried to dissuade her – honestly.

Rick Why?

Laura She – we... wanted to see if you would be tempted – by another woman... to kiss another woman.

Rick Ah, your little disagreement, of course.

Laura Yes. Sorry.

Rick So, who was I supposed to kiss – or not to kiss – you was it, or Annika?

Laura Well, me... initially.

Rick Oh?

Laura Annika was Jess's idea. She wanted to be here, to see for herself.

Rick I see.

Laura I told her to hide, I was sure you'd see through her ridiculous disguise, but you discovered her. When did you realise she was Annika?

Rick Practically immediately.

Laura Ah, yes. Will you forgive her... and me? She only did it to prove to me how much she trusted you.

Rick She's a fool.

Laura Yes.

Rick So, she won your little argument then it seems.

Laura Yes, I suppose I owe her a bottle of champagne.

Rick Oh, for a bottle of champagne was it? A bet, how sporting.

Laura Sorry.

Rick Hm.

Laura So...

Rick Yes... so... well now, Laura...

Laura Yes?

Rick Perhaps now you might do something for me.

Laura What?

Rick Perhaps we can talk about it over a cup of coffee. Do you have coffee?

Laura Yes.

Rick After you.

Laura exits SL, followed by Rick. Brief scene change music.

Scene Six

Time – Monday 7.00 p.m.

Jessica enters SR carrying a shopping bag. She is texting a message on her mobile. She then takes out a new dress from the bag and holds it up against her in the mirror. Laura enters SL wearing an evening outfit.

Laura Hi.
Jessica Hi. Going out?

Laura goes to the mirror and applies make-up.

Laura Yes, hot date.
Jessica Oh, who?
Laura Dimitri.
Jessica Dimitri?
Laura Met him last night. Greek.
Jessica Exotic.
Laura Yes.
Jessica *(Holding up dress)* What do you think?
Laura Nice.

Slight pause.

Jessica We are still friends aren't we, Laura?
Laura Sure.
Jessica You're not angry with me then?
Laura Angry? No, why should I be?
Jessica Well... Saturday night... that stupid bet of ours.
Laura Oh... I've forgotten that. But I haven't forgotten I owe

you a bottle of champagne... good champagne.
Jessica Oh, you don't have to give me that.
Laura Oh no, you'll have your champagne, you won the bet, fair and square.
Jessica Well, if you must.
Laura I must.
Jessica Just so long as we're still friends.
Laura Absolutely... absolutely.

Slight pause.

Jessica Rick's taking me out tonight.
Laura Oh, where?
Jessica A restaurant – an expensive one apparently.
Laura Ooh.
Jessica Yes, better get changed. He'll be here soon.

Jessica exits SL, with dress and shopping bag.

Laura *(To herself)* That's what you think.

Laura looks off SL. She takes her mobile and dials.

(To phone) Hi, Rick, it's me, Laura... Yes, I'm good. You?... She's getting ready... Right... Yes... Yes, don't worry... Honestly, I'm fine... No, I understand... Yes... Okay... Perhaps in a couple of minutes... Sure... Okay... Okay... Yes... Bye.

Laura hangs up. Jessica enters SL, wearing her new dress.

Jessica Well?

Laura Fantastic.

Jessica goes to the mirror and applies make-up.

Jessica So... Dimitri?

Laura Yes.

Jessica Tell me about him.

Laura Dimitri?

Jessica Yes, what's he like?

Laura Oh... he's nice.

Jessica Nice?

Laura You know...

Jessica No. Tell me more. What does he look like?

Laura Ah... he's... Greek looking – good looking... well, you'll see for yourself, he'll be here any minute.

Jessica Okay. I'm intrigued. What are you doing?

Laura Oh... not sure yet. I'm letting him decide.

Jessica's mobile rings. She answers.

Jessica *(To mobile)* Hi Rick. Are you outside?... What, cancel!... Why?... Tonight?... But can't they find someone else?... Are you sure?... Oh... Yes, so am I... No... Yes... Yes, I'll be fine... Yes, I'll just watch TV or something, I suppose... Sure... Okay... Yes, I love you too... Yes, bye.

Jessica hangs up.

Laura Oh!
Problems?

Jessica He has to work tonight.

Laura Ah.

Jessica Oh! I've bought this new dress and everything. Oh!

Laura Oh. Don't worry, there'll be other occasions.

Jessica But I wanted to go out tonight. Oh!

Doorbell.

Laura That's him. Do I look okay?

Laura answers telephone intercom.

(To intercom) Hi, Dimitri, push the door.

Rick enters SR, disguised as Dimitri. He wears lightly tinted glasses.

Rick/Dim Hey babe.

Laura Dimitri.

Rick/Dim *(To Jessica)* Hey babe.

Laura Dimitri, this is my flatmate, Jessica.

Jessica Hi.

Rick/Dim Nice place. Artistic. Good strong colours. It speaks of women with passion, yet sensitive hearts. I should know, I'm a musician. You like good music, babe?

Jessica Yes I...

Rick/Dim Then you like my music.

Jessica What do you play?

Rick/Dim Guitar – bass guitar. *(Imitating sound of bass guitar).*

Good music. You look sad, babe. What's the matter?

Laura Poor, Jess, she was expecting to go out tonight.

Rick/Dim Oh?

Laura Her boyfriend has to work instead.

Rick/Dim Oh no, babe, that's too bad, a beautiful girl like you, this is not good.
Jessica No... well...
Rick/Dim I'm so sorry.
Laura Well, perhaps if Dimitri doesn't mind, Jess can come out with us tonight.
Rick/Dim Sure thing.
Jessica Oh...
Rick/Dim Good with me.
Jessica But I don't want to –
Laura No.
Rick/Dim No problem.
Jessica Really?
Rick/Dim Hey.
Laura You're all dressed up, ready to go.
Rick/Dim We're all dressed up and ready to go. We all have good time together, huh?
Jessica Well... only if you're sure.
Laura Sure, sure.
Rick/Dim Big sure babe.
Laura Okay?
Jessica Okay.
Rick/Dim Okay. Let's go ladies.

They exit SR. Brief scene change music.

Scene Seven

Time – Later that evening.

They enter SR, singing rowdily.

Laura Oh God! Enough! You're unstoppable, Dimitri, unstoppable.
Rick/Dim Unstoppable! That's me. We all have good time yeah?
Laura Too much good time.

Laura sits.

Rick/Dim And now... more good time.

Rick takes a bottle of ouzo from his pocket.

Laura Ouzo!
Laura Oh!
Jessica Yeah!
Rick/Dim The drink of the Greek gods.
Jessica Hurray for the gods!
Rick/Dim Hurray for the gods! Glasses, glasses!
Laura Is it sensible, Dimitri?
Rick/Dim Sensible! To hell with sensible!
Jessica Come on, Laura. Where's your stamina?
Laura Ah!
Rick/Dim See, Jess is up for it. Party girl!
Jessica Party girl!
Rick/Dim Ouzo! Come on, glasses, glasses! Go, go! Someone.
Laura Go on, Jess, I can't move.
Rick/Dim Go, go!

Jessica exits SL.

Laura Well, you're convincing.
Rick I'm an actor, it's my job to be convincing.
Laura Here.

Laura makes a small adjustment to Rick's wig.

Rick Thanks. You're doing well.
Laura I'm enjoying myself.
Rick Me too.

There hold a look between them.

Laura What now?
Rick We drink some ouzo and then at some point you pretend to fall asleep.
Laura I think I can manage that.

Rick notices Jessica returning SL.

Rick Sit, sit.

Laura sits. Jessica enters SL, with three shot glasses.

Jessica Here we are.
Rick/Dim Good, good. So everyone, take your glass. Laura?
Jessica Laura.
Rick/Dim I pour... like this. Now, this is how we do it in Greece. (*Demonstrating*) You stamp your foot three times... turn around... now look into each other's eyes... and drink.

Drink all. Now with me. Stamp foot... turn... look into each other's eyes... and drink. Good?

Laura Oh!
Jessica Good.
Rick/Dim Another?
Jessica Another.
Laura Ah!
Rick/Dim Again, again.

Rick pours.

Stamp foot... turn... look... drink. Ah! This is what makes Greek men, men... and the women too. You like?

Jessica Yes.
Rick/Dim Okay, I teach you traditional Greek dance now.
Jessica Okay. Come on, Laura.
Laura Not me. You do it. I'm sitting this one out.
Jessica Lightweight.
Rick/Dim You and me, Jess.
Jessica Okay.
Rick/Dim Okay start like this. Like this. Now right foot here. Yes, good. And this foot here. Yes again... and again... and again. You're good, a natural Greek woman. And... So this is how we Greeks dance. For centuries we dance like this. We love to dance. Every occasion: weddings, religious festivals, victory in war, for fertility... even to cure illness. For everything. Always to dance. Good?
Jessica Yes.
Rick/Dim Good girl... beautiful girl.
Jessica How am I doing Laura? Laura?
Rick/Dim Laura sleeping.
Jessica Laura?

Rick/Dim Shh. Have you ever been to Greece, Jessica?
Jessica No.
Rick/Dim No?
Jessica No.
Rick/Dim Okay, I take you. You will like. I will show you the Acropolis in the sunset; the Aegean sea: blue and incredible; we ride horses together in the mountains. We do that together yes?
Jessica Well... I'd love to, Dimitri, but I don't think my boyfriend would be too happy about that.
Rick/Dim Ah, boyfriend! Where is this boyfriend of yours tonight anyway?
Jessica He's working.
Rick/Dim Working, pah! If I were this boyfriend of yours I would not be working, I would be here with you... kissing you... this beautiful... beautiful woman.
Jessica Well...
Rick/Dim He is obviously a fool, not to be here with you.
Jessica Ha...
Rick/Dim Do you know, Jessica how beautiful you are? Have you any idea how beautiful you are?
Jessica Dimitri... Laura...
Rick/Dim Ha, Laura, she is nice, but you are gorgeous.
Jessica Shh, she'll hear you.
Rick/Dim Laura is asleep, very asleep.
Jessica Dimitri, please, it's Laura you're interested in remember, not me.
Rick/Dim Jessica, you must understand I am interested in all women; all women interest me. I love women: tall women, short women, thin women, big women. Women with dark hair, blonde hair, red hair; Asian women, European women – it does not matter to me. I am a

connoisseur of women. I will travel the world to love women... and I do. But, Jessica, and this is no lie, you must trust me when I tell you this: there is something about you which is unique... incredible – do not turn away from me, Jessica – I must look into those eyes of yours... those magnificent eyes. How can any man resist those eyes... those eyes.
Jessica Dimitri, please...
Rick/Dim Please, Jessica, I will ask you for only one thing tonight... just one thing.
Jessica What?
Rick/Dim Just a kiss –
Jessica Dimitri –
Rick/Dim One kiss from those beautiful, beautiful lips.
Jessica No... no.
Rick/Dim Yes, Jessica. Only that. Nothing more. A kiss. One kiss. Where is the harm? What is the harm in one little kiss? Who will know? Who will tell? No-one. Jessica, Jessica. It is only us, together... this moment... our secret... our secret kiss. Kiss me.

They kiss.

Good? Again, one more.

They kiss again.

So... Jessica, Jessica, Jessica.
Jessica What?
Rick/Dim Are you not ashamed of yourself?
Jessica Ashamed?
Rick/Dim To be such a hypocrite. You would make a test for Rick to

examine his heart when your own heart can be so easily
as false.

Rick removes his wig and glasses.

Jessica Rick... Oh God!
Rick I think you lose your champagne, Jess.

Laura stands.

Jessica Laura! Oh!

Jessica breaks and runs off crying SL. Pause.

Laura Well... It looks like you've won.
Rick Have I?
Laura Ah.
Rick Yes.

Slight pause.

Laura Well, perhaps I should go. Perhaps I should...
Rick Yes.
Rick Thanks for...
Laura Oh... my pleasure – well...
Rick Yes...
Laura Yes...
Rick Yes I... I... I should... I should...

They kiss.

Sorry I...

Laura No, me – sorry I...

They kiss again.

Rick Sorry.
Laura Yes.
Rick It's been a... confusing night.
Laura Yes, it has.
Rick I'd better... night then.
Laura Yes... night.

Rick exits SR.

(To herself) Rick... Rick... Rick. *(Calling as she exits)*
Jessica? Jessica?

Laura exits SL. Brief scene change music.

Scene Eight

Time – Wednesday 7.00 p.m.

Jessica enters SL. She clutches her teddy bear and she stares at her mobile. She crosses to the mirror and looks at herself.

Jessica (To herself) Fool.

She dials mobile.

Answer... oh answer, Rick... please... please... oh!

She hangs up. She takes the remote and turns on TV. Laura enters SL, wearing an evening outfit. Jessica switches off the TV. Laura goes to the mirror and puts on make-up. Pause.

Laura Come on, Jess, we can't be enemies forever.

Jessica Yes we can. You betrayed me.

Laura You betrayed yourself.

Jessica I hate you.

Laura You hate yourself.

Jessica Yes... but I hate you more.

Laura You should be happy for me.

Jessica Don't even talk to me.

Laura I'm in love with a wonderful, gorgeous man.

Jessica In love – ha!

Laura hums to herself as she puts on her makeup.

Oh stop it.

Laura What?

Jessica You know what.

Laura I can't help it, I'm happy.

Laura continues humming. Jessica covers her ears and stamps her feet.

Jessica AHHH!

Laura Okay, okay, I'll stop, I'll stop.

Jessica Thank you.

Slight pause.

Laura How do I look?

Jessica Terrible.

Laura Well, I must say you were right about one thing, Jess and I was wrong.

Jessica About what?

Laura When I said no man is perfect. Well, this man is.

Jessica So, who is he then, this wonderful, gorgeous man.

This Mr. Perfect, whom you've only known for five minutes but claim to be desperately in love with?

Laura Oh I know him... quite well actually?

Jessica Oh?

Laura Oh yes, it's one of those 'friends things' that's grown into something unexpected but incredible. He could in fact be 'the one'.

Jessica Please! Well... who is he? Do I know him?

Laura Let's be friends and I'll tell you.

Laura holds out her hand. Jessica declines.

Okay, suit yourself. (To herself) Mobile? Upstairs.

Laura exits SL. After a few moments the doorbell rings.

Jessica *(Calling)* He's here... your Mr. Perfect... Oi! Oi!... Oh.

Jessica answers telephone intercom.

(To intercom) Yes?... *(Surprised)* Rick?... Yes, push the door.

Jessica quickly goes to the mirror and tidies herself. Rick enters SR.

Rick Hi.
 Hi, Jess.

Laura enters SL.

Laura Hi, Rick.
Rick Hi, Laura.

A look of horror appears on Jessica's face.

Laura Ready?
 I'm ready.

Laura takes Rick's arm.

Jessica Rick?... Rick?..
Laura Sorry about this, Jess. It was inevitable. Wasn't it, Rick?
Rick Yes, it was... inevitable.
Jessica Oh Laura... how could you? Rick?

Rick See you around, Jess.
Jessica Oh!

Rick and Laura exit SR.

Oh!... Oh!...

Jessica starts to sob. She picks up her teddy bear and hugs it. She then throws it violently to the floor. She sits and puts her head in her hands and weeps uncontrollably. Rick and Laura enter silently SR. They are both dressed in clown costumes. They move downstage. Rick clears his throat. Jessica looks up.

What!

Rick and Laura commence their mime show: Rick and Laura hug. They mime a kiss together. They take hands and spin happily. Rick indicates his watch. They wave at each other and blow kisses as they pretend to part. Rick looks across to Laura suspiciously. He gets an idea. He puts on a false nose, moustache and glasses. He approaches Laura. He goes down on one knee. He produces fake flowers. Laura takes them. Rick attempts to kiss Laura. Laura refuses Rick's advances and hands back flowers. Rick tries again. Laura turns away. Rick tries again. Laura takes flowers. She throws them over her shoulder. They mime a protracted kiss together. Rick removes his false nose and glasses. Laura falls to her knees, pleading forgiveness. Rick points dismissively towards the SL exit. Laura pleads again. Again Rick dismisses her. Laura crosses to SL exit. She turns and pleads once more. Rick points to the exit. Laura exits sadly SL. Rick holds out his hand to Jessica. Jessica approaches Rick and takes his hand. Rick removes his clown's wig.

Rick Jessica, I hope you have learnt something from this. We must trust each other. Hm?

Jessica nods.

Good. No more foolish games... or bets.

Jessica shakes her head.

Jessica Promise?

Rick I promise.

Rick Okay. I love you.

Jessica I love you.

Rick My one and only true girlfriend.

They kiss. Laura enters SL with three glasses of champagne.

Laura Ahem! Champagne.

Laura gives a glass to Rick. She withholds Jessica's glass.

Jessica Friends now?

Jessica Friends.

They shake hands. Laura gives Jessica her glass.

Rick Good. Well now, here's to...

Jessica To trust... and to friendship.

Rick Yes, to trust and to friendship.

Laura To trust and to friendship.

They raise their glasses and drink.

Lights down..

Props List

Scene 1

Centurion helmet (*Set on stage*)
Rick's coat (*Set on stage*)
Overnight bag (*Rick*)
Teddy bear (*Jessica*)
Jessica's mobile (*Jessica*)
Laura's bag (*Laura*)

Scene 2

TV and music system remote (*Set on stage*)
Cup of tea (*Laura*)
Newspaper (*Laura*)
Shopping bag containing a wig and outfit (*Jessica*)
Jessica's mobile (*Jessica*)

Scene 3

TV and music system remote (*Set on stage*)
Tinted glasses (*Jessica*)
Bottle of wine (*Rick*)
Rick's mobile (*Rick*)

Scene 4

TV and music system remote (*Set on stage*)
Glass of wine (*Rick*)
Glass of wine (*Laura*)
Glass of wine for Jessica (*Rick*)

Scene 6

Shopping bag containing a new dress (*Jessica*)
Jessica's mobile (*Jessica*)
Make-up (*Laura*)
Laura's mobile (*Laura*)
Make-up (*Jessica*)
Wig and tinted glasses (*Rick*)

Scene 7

Bottle of ouzo (*Rick*)
Shot glasses x 3 (*Jessica*)
Wig and tinted glasses (*Rick*)

Scene 8

TV and music system remote (*Set on stage*)
Teddy bear (*Jessica*)
Jessica's mobile (*Jessica*)
Make-up (*Laura*)
Clown costumes (*Laura and Rick*)
Fake flowers (*Rick*)
Glasses containing champagne x 3 (*Laura*)