

Jack Yes, I think. If you're worried about it, ask Coventry.

Faulkland Why Coventry?

Jack He's a member of the RAC.

Faulkland *muses. Opens the magazine again and then puts the magazine down. Stands.*

Faulkland She's not coming is she?

Jack Who?

Faulkland My fiancée. Whatsaname?!

Jack Julia?

Faulkland Yes, Julia!

Jack There's an army car in the yard.

Faulkland Why did she join the army?

Jack The girls want to do their bit.

Faulkland I don't want her exposed to soldiers, they're trained to be naughty. And why didn't she ask my permission? We have telephones. This isn't the past.

Jack Relax. She's yours. You're engaged. And also related.

Faulkland What is your honest opinion about cousins marrying?

Jack For you, love trumps any possible birth defects.

Faulkland I bet she's met someone who's not her cousin, and she's realised that their babies will have the right number of fingers. Jack! She's left me!

He slumps onto his bed.

Jack Lydia said –

Faulkland It's alright for you, your sweetheart's here.

Jack Lydia Languish is not my sweetheart. Yet. But I have a plan.

He holds up the newspaper.

I've found a jumble sale in Yapton.

Faulkland They're all mad in Yapton.

Jack Lydia's gone liberated and modern so I thought I might introduce her to that chap who lives in a wardrobe.

Faulkland Smelly Clive?

Jack Introduce her to Smelly Clive, and offer up a lot of sensitive guff about the human condition, show her how much I care about the world and things.

Faulkland You could give Smelly Clive a bath.

Jack Brilliant! Disgusting, but brilliant!

Faulkland First date. Walk, jumble sale, give a tramp a bath.

There's a knock at the door.

Jack Come in!

Enter Scunthorpe carrying a wooden decoy duck.

Jack What can we do for you, Scunners?

Scunthorpe That's been given that branny Mark II.

Jack Lydia's Hurricane?

Scunthorpe Supercharged Merlin 20, and twelve guns.

Faulkland Twelve?!

Scunthorpe Top speed three hundred and forty-eight.

Jack has put a cushion over his crotch. The other two look at him.

Jack Bit of a hard-on.

Faulkland Why are you carrying a wooden duck?

Scunthorpe That ATA lass –

Jack – Lydia Languish.

Faulkland Gave you a wooden duck?

Scunthorpe I were refuelling that kite of hers –

Jack When you found a wooden duck?

Scunthorpe No, she asked us if I were up for gooin' t' Slug 'n' Ferret for a pint.

Faulkland Jack! You have a rival.

Jack With a wooden duck.

Scunthorpe I ses, 'Sorry, luv, I'm up to us neck in shit for a good two hours yit'. She smiles and touches us arm, theecere.

Jack On the tattoo?

Scunthorpe Then later on, I finds this pinned t'front o' me locker.

Faulkland She pinned a wooden duck to your locker?!

Scunthorpe *produces a chamois leather with lipstick writing.*

Scunthorpe Na, this 'ere chammy leather. (**Scunthorpe gives Jack the chamois.**)

Faulkland Lipstick on leather!

Jack Lydia Languish!

Faulkland What's it say?

Jack (*reads*) 'Meet me at one o'clock over by the clematis. No need to wash.'

Faulkland Are you going?

Scunthorpe Course not! I'm soft on t'maid, Lucy. That's why I've got t'duck.

Faulkland/Jack Obviously.

Jack That new tattoo, what's it, you know, of?

Scunthorpe It's a pythion with a baby donkey in his gob.

Jack And Lydia likes it?

Scunthorpe She said it wor 'beautiful, and moving'.

Jack Where did you get it done?

Scunthorpe Tangmere.

Faulkland Jack. No.

Scunthorpe Will you tell her that I'm not –

Jack – available?

Scunthorpe Aye.

Jack Scunners, I'd do anything for you.

Scunthorpe Ta, sir, you're a pal.

He leaves. Jack closes the door and pulls out the note.

Jack I've never had a tattoo.

Faulkland Forget the tattoo, what about the accent?

Jack Bugger me! I'll go t'foot of our stairs!

Faulkland Actually –

Jack Wang that watter over 'ere or do I 'ave to do it mesen.

Faulkland – that's rather good.

Jack I pretend to be Scunthorpe, she falls in love with me, then big reveal, it's actually me!

Faulkland Over-privileged Jack Absolute –

Jack Too late, she's in deep and half way up the aisle.

Faulkland But Lucy will kill Dudley for –

Jack No, she'll kill me because I'll be Dudley. I'll tell her that Dudley is nuts about her; obviously not interested in Lydia –

Faulkland Because he gave you the lipstick leather.

Jack – which I can show Lucy, proving Dudley's disinterest in Lydia.

Faulkland What could possibly go wrong?

Acres flings open the door.

Acres Cocks out?! No?! I'll get you next time, matey!

Faulkland What do you want, Bob?

Acres We're under siege from beautiful ladies! You ever heard of Julia Melville?

Faulkland She is here!

Jack She's Roy's first cousin and also his fiancée.

Acres You lucky bastard! The double! Helluva Sheila! I saw her last week singing in a pub in Hastings.

Faulkland That's not possible. Julia does not sing in pubs.

Acres Every night in the King's Arms. Two G and Ts and your Julia's on the table belting out the first verse of 'Who Wants to Look Up My Jumper?'

Faulkland Never!

Acres shows a photograph.

Acres Is that her?

Faulkland Julia!

Acres *(points)* That's me on the left, in the banana hat.

Faulkland Ohhh!

He opens a window, breathes, gets some air.

Jack He's a bit jealous.

Acres Of me?! No way! Don't get me wrong, I definitely would, but I'm in actual love, proper skin chimney, mate.

Jack Who's the lucky girl?

Acres The dame with the plane.

Jack Lydia Languish?

Acres Mate, she made my tummy went funny, and I haven't thunk about anything else since I seen her.

Jack A rival.

Acres Ah bumtits, she's not your flippin' girl is she, Jack?

Jack Lydia is sweet on our fitter.

Acres Dudley?

Jack Sorry, Bob.

Acres But I'm desperate. Don't know anything about girls. Growing up in the outback, there was one girl in the next town, but that was six hundred miles away.

Jack You just have to be yourself.

Acres But Lydia's classy, she won't be interested in a sheep shagger from down town Olaboolabong.

Jack Do you know what really impresses that quality of girl?

Acres Fresh milk?

Jack No. Bees.

Acres Bees?

Jack Ya.

Acres What, like honey bees?

Jack Bees represent fidelity, hard work and, of course, fertility.

Acres Alright!

Jack I've given the gift of bees to loads of girls.

Acres Roy? Do you give girls bees?

Faulkland Twice,

Acres Where am I gonna get some fuckin' bees?!

Jack I know a chap in Tangmere. Give me a lift, I'll introduce you.

Acres Let's go! Oh, there's a big ugly brown job downstairs.

Jack *Army?*

Acres Yeah. The dickhead's so far up his own arse that it squeaks when he walks. He's asking for you, mate.

Jack My father.

Acres Really?! Oh. Sorry. When I said he looks like a dickhead, what I meant was, he looks like the kind of dickhead who might surprise everyone one day by being a really great dad.

Jack Clear the trip with Gov.

Acres *closes the door.*

Faulkland My Julia?! Singing?! In pubs?! If a girl says she loves a chap, then the least she can do is not talk to anyone and never leave the house.

Jack You realise you sound insane?

Faulkland I'm not mad, I'm just –

Jack – what is it?

Faulkland I'm terrified that I'll die without ever having done it.

Long silence. Enter Sir Anthony. Faulkland stands and salutes. Jack remains seated.

Sir Anthony My son!

Jack You look extraordinarily well, father.

Sir Anthony It is my intention to continue to plague you for the foreseeable future. So, this is the RAF is it?

Jack Yes. Lovely, isn't it. You know Roy, he's Julia's fiancée.

Sir Anthony And cousin.

Faulkland Yes.

Sir Anthony Weird. Was that an upside downer I saw on the way in?

Jack The Australian? Yes. He's a friend.

Sir Anthony Friends are dangerous, Jack. Look what happened to Jesus.

Jack Can I offer you a biscuit?

Sir Anthony Biscuits?! Biscuits?! I didn't die at Ypres so that a bunch of suede shoe'd puppies could lounge about sucking up biscuits.

Jack You didn't die at Ypres.

Sir Anthony That's what I said! I said, 'I didn't die at Ypres'.

Faulkland If you'll excuse me, I've got to . . . um . . . Hoover my aeroplane. Jack?

Jack Oh. Yes. Where did you leave Julia, father?

Sir Anthony Kitchens!

Faulkland *leaves.*

Sir Anthony Long-haired freak. Now, Jack. I have decided to bequeath to you the estate. Congratulations, you now own Devon.

Jack That's very generous. Why?

Sir Anthony Because we are under attack.

Jack The Nazis?

Sir Anthony The Inland Revenue. If I die in peacetime, the death duties will bankrupt us. But they've just passed a new law and if I'm killed on active military service we don't pay a penny.

Jack You're trying to get yourself killed?!

Sir Anthony Not easy when you're running a training camp in Stodmarsh. I've been eating a lot of elderly fish paste sandwiches but, unfortunately, I have the constitution of a pike.

Jack Whereas, I could die any day. I see.

Sir Anthony Brilliant, isn't it.

Jack But if you bequeath the estate to me, and I die, doesn't the law also stipulate that you can never live within its acres ever again. You'd be making yourself homeless.

Sir Anthony I shall live on your wife's estate.

Jack My what?

Sir Anthony Your wife. Did I not mention her?

Jack I don't have a wife!

Sir Anthony Ooooh, Jack my boy, the filly I've rounded up for you has fifty-seven thousand acres in the Midlands. In her own name!

Jack I can't marry a complete stranger!

Sir Anthony If you want the estate, you must take the livestock with it!

Jack It's totally unreasonable to expect me to marry someone I've never met.

Sir Anthony It's totally unreasonable for you to object to someone you've never met!

Jack But, father, I've fallen in love!

Sir Anthony Then fall out of love this instant! The Absolutes have owned Devon for seven hundred years, I'll be damned if we're giving it up for some cow-eyed barnaid.

Jack I'm sorry, father, I cannot obey you in –

Sir Anthony – I have heard you for some time with patience. I have been cool. Quite cool. I am compliance itself if not thwarted. No man on this earth is more liberal than I, but don't put me in a frenzy!

Jack But, father, you, better than anyone, know the power of love.

Sir Anthony Don't you dare mention that damned woman!

Jack When mother eloped with your butler, you were bereft.

Sir Anthony (*bit hard*) Yes . . . I miss him.

Jack I cannot marry a woman not of my choosing!

Sir Anthony You'll do as I say, ya puppy!

Jack It is my human right.

Sir Anthony Human rights?! Human rights?! Oh, they've got to you as well have they?!

Jack Please listen –

Sir Anthony Not a word! Not one word! You give me your promise to marry this instant, right now –

Jack – I cannot marry some rich old mass of ugliness.

Sir Anthony Damn you, boy, the lady shall be as ugly as I choose! She shall have a hump on each shoulder; her one good eye shall roll around her head like a marble; she shall be totally bald, and yet her beard, sir, shall sprout in tufts from her face and hang fulsomely about her knees! She shall be all this and yet I'll make you ogle her all day, and sit up half the night writing sonnets to her beauty.

Jack Father, please understand –

Sir Anthony Why are you flying off the handle?! Why can't you be cool like me?! Drop your passion! What the devil good can passion do, you insolent, recalcitrant youth! You rely on the mildness of my temper, you play on my

reputation for humanity. Take care! The patience of a saint can be overcome at last. I give you sixteen minutes to consider Miss Lydia Languish –

Jack Lydia?

Sir Anthony Sixteen minutes! And, if at the end of it, you agree, without any condition –

Jack But, father –

Sir Anthony Be quiet! I'm shouting! If after sixteen minutes you agree to do everything on earth that I choose, I may forgive you. If not, hell's bells, man! Don't enter the same hemisphere as me! Don't dare to breathe the same air or use the same light as me but get yourself an atmosphere and a sun of your own! I'll see you are run out of the airforce, I'll disown you! Disembowel you! I'll unget you! I'll hunt down every last one of my sperm and rip them from your ungrateful body one by one! And damn me if I ever call you Jack again!

He exits.

Scene Four

11:00

Dispersal area, gardens. Enter Lucy.

Lucy (*aside*) Lydia's tryna nick my fellah! Swanning in here wiv her *Cockney rhyming slang*. Equality my arse'ole! The closest she's ever got to reading a book is walking around with *Das Kapital* on her 'ead to improve her posture. She finks Mary Wollstonecraft is a kinda knitting. She must fink I'm fick expectin' me to deliver her a love letter to my Dudley! She ain't even put 'is name on the fink. I could give this to anyone. The next chinless wonder to patronise me is gonna get it.

She sees Khatri who is reading a book.

Lucy 'Ello Tony. Cleaning your bike again?

Khatri No. This is called 'reading a book'. This is a book.

Lucy (*aside*) And there we are. (*To Khatri*.) Got a love letter for you here.

Khatri A love letter!? For me?! Understandable. I am terribly handsome.

Lucy Listen, Romeo, d'yer wannit? Or shall I sling it?

Khatri Press it into my eager palm, swift-heeled Mercury.

Lucy Ten bob innit.

Khatri Ten?!

Lucy You can't put a price on love.

Khatri You're right! Here's twenty!

Lucy (*aside*) He's mental.

He gives her twenty shillings. She hands over the letter. Khatri rips it open and reads. Khatri looks at her suspiciously.

Khatri (*aside*) Lydia Languish! Of course! When she told me to carry her bag I felt Cupid's arrow cleave my heart and its wobbling nock thrill my trembling oesophagus to the point of coughing. Such seminal moments are foundations of love. I must respond with concomitant emission of passion. I shall return!

He dashes off to the table to write his response.

Lucy (*aside*) Twenty bob. This is 1940, you can buy an 'ouse for a fiver.

Scunthorpe enters, carrying the decoy duck.

Scunthorpe Miss Lucy.

Lucy Oh, you found it then?

Scunthorpe Aye. Nice spot to 'ide it.

Lucy I know, lovely there innit.

Scunthorpe 'Ere yer go.

Lucy You don't give the duck back to me.

Scunthorpe No?

Lucy You hide it somewhere and I have to look for it, and if I find it, I hide it for you, and that's the beginning of round two.

Scunthorpe Oh. I gerrit. T'rific. I'm in.

Lucy Oh, lovely.

Scunthorpe *goes off and hides the duck somewhere we don't see.*

Khattri *enters putting the finishing touches to his poem.*

Khattri Finished! I have written *several* poems in response.

Lucy Go on then.

Khattri This may be a little beyond you.

(*Reads.*)

'Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of -'

Lucy Sorry, Tony, can I stop you there. You wrote that did yer?

Khattri Just now, yes.

Lucy It does sound a lot like 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven' by W.B. Yeats.

Khattri Great minds. It happens. Try this one.

He pulls out another poem and begins to read.

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds -'

Lucy That's Shakespeare though innit.

Khattri (*he produces another*) 'How do I love -'

Lucy Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Khattri (*another*) 'I -'

Lucy Rabindranath Tagore.

Khattri I hadn't even started!

Lucy 'I seem to have loved you in numberless forms, numberless times?'

Khattri *looks at the paper. Reads.*

Khattri Yes.

Lucy You did poetry at Oxford, didncha?

Khattri Those idiots found my own poetic style overly . . . demented.

Lucy Girls like demented.

Khattri Really?

Lucy Oh yeah. Nothing more attractive than someone who's not afraid to be, you know, weird. Go on. Write one now. For Miss Lydz.

Khattri I shall! Give me space.

He goes upstage and begins to write. Scunthorpe returns.

Scunthorpe I've hid it.

Lucy Lovely. So I go looking for it now, and if I find it, that's the end of round one. Then I hide it again for you to look for.

Scunthorpe Round two.

Lucy Innit. If it goes to three rounds, it means you care.

Scunthorpe About the duck?

Lucy About me.