

"Celebration" by Harold Pinter

"But darling, that's naked aggression. He doesn't normally go in for naked aggression. He usually disguises it under honeyed words. What is it sweetie? He's got a cold in the nose, that's what it is."

This is late Pinter, very late. First performed at the **Almeida** in 2000 in a double bill with his first play, "The Room" (1957). The cast included Keith Allen, Lindsay Duncan and Lia Williams. A television adaptation in 2007 included Michael Gambon, James Bolam, Penelope Wilton and Colin Firth.

The play is set in a posh restaurant with the action at two separate tables. At Table One, 'strategy consultants'¹ Lambert and his brother Matt (East End boys made bad) dine with their wives, Julie and her sister Prue, celebrating the wedding anniversary of Julie and Lambert. At Table Two, a younger couple, Suki and Russell chat and squabble. The talk exposes betrayal and distorted memories in a vicious battle of wits. The managers of the restaurant Richard and Sonia, and a waiter (given to 'interjecting' absurdist monologues), wander into the action from time to time.

Wonderfully rude, brutal and achingly funny, this is vintage Pinter. Not one to take your maiden aunt to. Also, not suitable for a first date. 😊

Paul Cockcroft

Cast

Lambert	Brother to Matt, husband to Julie.
Matt	Brother to Lambert, husband to Prue.
Prue	Sister to Julie, wife to Matt.
Julie	Sister to Prue, wife to Lambert
Russell	Suki's husband, a banker.
Suki	Russell's wife, formerly his secretary.
Richard	Restaurant manager.
Sonia	Assistant restaurant manager
Waiter	'Interjector' of absurdist reminiscences of his grandfather

¹ Think Tony Soprano and 'waste disposal'.

TABLE ONE

A restaurant. Two curved banquettes.

WAITER

Who's having the duck?

LAMBERT

The duck's for me.

JULIE

No it isn't.

LAMBERT

No it isn't. Who's it for?

JULIE

Me.

LAMBERT

What am I having? I thought I was having the duck?

JULIE

(to WAITER) The duck's for me.

MATT

(to WAITER) Chicken for my wife, steak for me.

HAROLD PINTER

WAITER

Chicken for the lady.

PRUE

Thank you so much.

WAITER

And who's having the steak?

MATT

Me.

He picks up a wine bottle and pours.

Here we are. Frascati for the ladies. And Valpolicella for me.

LAMBERT

And for me. I mean what about me? What did I order? I haven't the faintest idea? What did I order?

JULIE

Who cares?

LAMBERT

Who cares? I bloody care.

PRUE

Osso Buco.

LAMBERT

Osso what?

CELEBRATION

PRUE

Bucco.

MATT

It's an old Italian dish.

LAMBERT

Well I knew Osso was Italian but I know bugger all about Bucco.

MATT

I didn't know arsehole was Italian.

LAMBERT

Yes, but on the other hand what's the Italian for arsehole?

PRUE

Julie, Lambert. Happy anniversary.

MATT

Cheers.

They lift their glasses and drink.

HAROLD PINTER

TABLE TWO

RUSSELL

They believe in me.

SUKI

Who do?

RUSSELL

They do. What do you mean, who do? They do.

SUKI

Oh, do they?

RUSSELL

Yes, they believe in me. They reckon me. They're investing in me. In my nous. They believe in me.

SUKI

Listen. I believe you. Honestly. I do. No really, honestly. I'm sure they believe in you. And they're right to believe in you. I mean, listen, I want you to be rich, believe me, I want you to be rich so that you can buy me houses and panties and I'll know that you really love me.

They drink.

RUSSELL

Listen, she was just a secretary. That's all. No more.

CELEBRATION

SUKI

Like me. I would never do all those things now. Never. Out of the question. You

RUSSELL

What do you mean, like you? She was nothing like you. I would never do all those things now. I'm a grown-up woman and not a silly

SUKI

I was a secretary once. I would never do all those things now. I'm a grown-up woman and not a silly

RUSSELL

She was a scrubber. A scrubber. They're all the same, these secretaries, these scrubbers. They're like politicians. They love power. They've got a bit of power, they use it. They go home, they get on the phone, they tell their girlfriends, they have a good laugh. Listen to me. I'm being honest. You won't find many like me. I fell for it. I've admitted it. She just twisted me round her little finger.

SUKI

That's funny. I thought she twisted you round *your* little finger.

Pause.

RUSSELL

You don't know what these girls are like. These secretaries.

SUKI

Oh I think I do.

HAROLD PINTER

RUSSELL

You don't.

SUKI

Oh I do.

RUSSELL

What do you mean, you do?

SUKI

I've been behind a few filing cabinets.

RUSSELL

What?

SUKI

In my time. When I was a plump young secretary. I know what the back of a filing cabinet looks like.

RUSSELL

Oh do you?

SUKI

Oh yes. Listen. I would invest in you myself if I had any money. Do you know why? Because I believe in you.

RUSSELL

What's all this about filing cabinets?

CELEBRATION

SUKI

Oh that was when I was a plump young secretary. I would never do all those things now. Never. Out of the question. You see, the trouble was I was so excitable, their excitement made me so excited, but I would never do all those things now I'm a grown-up woman and not a silly young thing, a silly and dizzy young girl, such a naughty, saucy, flirty, giggly young thing, sometimes I could hardly walk from one filing cabinet to another I was so excited, I was so plump and wobbly it was terrible, men simply couldn't keep their hands off me, their demands were outrageous, but coming back to more important things, they're right to believe in you, why shouldn't they believe in you?

HAROLD PINTER

TABLE ONE

JULIE

I've always told him. Always. But he doesn't listen.
I tell him all the time. But he doesn't listen.

PRUE

You mean he just doesn't listen?

JULIE

I tell him all the time.

PRUE

(to LAMBERT) Why don't you listen to your wife? She stands by you through thick and thin. You've got a loyal wife there and never forget it.

LAMBERT

I've got a loyal wife where?

PRUE

Here! At this table.

LAMBERT

I've got one under the table, take my tip.

He looks under the table.

Christ. She's really loyal under the table. Always has been. You wouldn't believe it.

CELEBRATION

JULIE

Why don't you go and buy a new car and drive it into a brick wall?

LAMBERT

All right. Tell me. Does she love me?
She loves me.

MATT

No, she loves new cars.

LAMBERT

With soft leather seats.

MATT

There was a song once.

LAMBERT

How did it go?

MATT

Aint she neat?
Aint she neat?
As she's walking up the street.
She's got a lovely bubbly pair of tits
And a soft leather seat.

LAMBERT

That's a really beautiful song.

MATT

I've always admired that song. You know what it is?
It's a traditional folk song.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

It's got class.

MATT

It's got tradition and class.

LAMBERT

They don't grow on trees.

MATT

Too bloody right.

LAMBERT

Hey Matt!

MATT

What?

LAMBERT *picks up the bottle of Valpolicella. It is empty.*

LAMBERT

There's something wrong with this bottle.

MATT *turns and calls.*

MATT

Waiter!

CELEBRATION

TABLE TWO

RUSSELL

All right. Tell me. Do you think I have a nice character?

SUKI

Yes I think you do. I think you do. I mean I think you do. Well . . . I mean . . . I think you could have quite a nice character but the trouble is that when you come down to it you haven't actually got any character to begin with - I mean as such, that's the thing.

RUSSELL

As such?

SUKI

Yes, the thing is you haven't really got any character at all, have you? As such. Au fond. But I wouldn't worry about it. For example look at me. I don't have any character either. I'm just a reed. I'm just a reed in the wind. Aren't I? You know I am. I'm just a reed in the wind.

RUSSELL

You're a whore.

SUKI

A whore in the wind.

HAROLD PINTER

RUSSELL

With the wind blowing up your skirt.

SUKI

That's right. How did you know? How did you know the sensation? I didn't know that men could possibly know about that kind of thing. I mean men don't wear skirts. So I didn't think men could possibly know what it was like when the wind blows up a girl's skirt. Because men don't wear skirts.

RUSSELL

You're a prick.

SUKI

Not quite.

RUSSELL

You're a prick.

SUKI

Good gracious. Am I really?

RUSSELL

Yes. That's what you are really.

SUKI

Am I really?

RUSSELL

Yes. That's what you are really.

CELEBRATION

TABLE ONE

LAMBERT

What's that other song you know? The one you said was a classic.

MATT

Wash me in the water
Where you washed your dirty daughter.

LAMBERT

That's it. (to JULIE) Know that one?

JULIE

It's not in my repertoire, darling.

LAMBERT

This is the best restaurant in town. That's what they say.

MATT

That's what they say.

LAMBERT

This is a piss-up dinner. Do you know how much money I made last year?

MATT

I know this is a piss-up dinner.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

It is a piss-up dinner.

PRUE

(to JULIE) His mother always hated me. The first time she saw me she hated me. She never gave me one present in the whole of her life. Nothing. She wouldn't give me the drippings off her nose.

JULIE

I know.

PRUE

The drippings off her nose. Honestly.

JULIE

All mothers-in-law are like that. They love their sons. They love their boys. They don't want their sons to be fucked by other girls. Isn't that right?

PRUE

Absolutely. All mothers want their sons to be fucked by themselves.

JULIE

By their mothers.

PRUE

All mothers –

CELEBRATION

LAMBERT

All mothers want to be fucked by their mothers.

MATT

Or by themselves.

PRUE

No, you've got it the wrong way round.

LAMBERT

How's that?

MATT

All mothers want to be fucked by their sons.

LAMBERT

Now wait a minute –

MATT

My point is –

LAMBERT

No my point is – how old do you have to be?

JULIE

To be what?

LAMBERT

To be fucked by your mother.

MATT

Any age, mate. Any age.

HAROLD PINTER

They all drink.

LAMBERT

How did you enjoy your dinner, darling?

JULIE

I wasn't impressed.

LAMBERT

You weren't impressed?

JULIE

No.

LAMBERT

I bring her to the best caff in town – spending a fortune – and she's not impressed.

MATT

Don't forget this is your anniversary. That's why we're here.

LAMBERT

What anniversary?

PRUE

It's your wedding anniversary.

LAMBERT

All I know is this is the most expensive fucking restaurant in town and she's not impressed.

CELEBRATION

RICHARD *comes to the table.*

RICHARD
Good evening.

MATT
Good evening.

PRUE
Good evening.

JULIE
Good evening.

LAMBERT
Good evening, Richard. How you been?

RICHARD
Very very well. Been to a play?

MATT
No. The ballet.

RICHARD
Oh the ballet? What was it?

LAMBERT
That's a fucking good question.

MATT
It's unanswerable.

HAROLD PINTER

They all drink.
Good, was it?

RICHARD

How did you enjoy the evening?
Unbelievable.

LAMBERT

I wasn't impressed.
What ballet?

JULIE

You weren't impressed?
None of them could reach the top notes. Could they?

MATT

Yes.
Good dinner?

RICHARD

I bring her to the opera every week.
Fantastic.

MATT

Very well. Best in a party.
Top notch. Gold plated.

LAMBERT

we're here.
Delicious.

PRUE

What anniversary?
My wife wasn't impressed.

LAMBERT

It's your wedding anniversary.
Oh really?

RICHARD

All I know is this is the most expensive fucking
I liked the waiter.

JULIE

CELEBRATION

RICHARD

Which one?

JULIE

The one with the fur-lined jockstrap.

LAMBERT

He takes it off for breakfast.

JULIE

Which is more than you do.

RICHARD

Well how nice to see you all.

PRUE

She wasn't impressed with her food. It's true. She said so. She thought it was dry as dust. She said – what did you say darling? – she's my sister – she said she could cook better than that with one hand stuffed between her legs – she said – no, honestly – she said she could make a better sauce than the one on that plate if she pissed into it. Don't think she was joking – she's my sister, I've known her all my life, all my life, since we were little innocent girls, all our lives, when we were babies, when we used to lie in the nursery and hear mummy beating the shit out of daddy. We saw the blood on the sheets the next day – when nanny was in the pantry – my sister and me – and nanny was in the pantry – and the pantry maid was in the larder and the parlour maid was in the laundry room washing

HAROLD PINTER

the blood out of the sheets. That's how my little sister and I were brought up and she could make a better sauce than yours if she pissed into it.

MATT

Well, it's lovely to be here, I'll say that.

LAMBERT

Lovely to be here.

JULIE

Lovely. Lovely.

MATT

Really lovely.

RICHARD

Thank you.

PRUE *stands and goes to* RICHARD.

PRUE

Can I thank you? Can I thank you personally? I'd like to thank you myself, in my own way.

RICHARD

Well thank you.

PRUE

No no, I'd really like to thank you in a very personal way.

CELEBRATION

JULIE

She'd like to give you her personal thanks.

PRUE

Will you let me kiss you? I'd like to kiss you on the mouth?

JULIE

That's funny. I'd like to kiss him on the mouth too.

She stands and goes to him.

Because I've been maligned, I've been misrepresented. I never said I didn't like your sauce. I love your sauce.

PRUE

We can't both kiss him on the mouth at the same time.

LAMBERT

You could tickle his arse with a feather.

RICHARD

Well I'm so glad. I'm really glad. See you later I hope.

He goes. PRUE and JULIE sit.

Silence.

MATT

Charming man.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT
That's why this is the best and most expensive restaurant in the whole of Europe – because he *insists* upon proper standards, he *insists* that standards are maintained with the utmost rigour, you get me? That standards are maintained up to the highest standards, up to the very highest fucking standards –

MATT
He doesn't jib.

LAMBERT
Jib? Of course he doesn't jib – it would be more than his life was worth. He jibs at nothing!

PRUE
I knew him in the old days.

MATT
What do you mean?

PRUE
When he was a chef.
Lambert's mobile phone rings.

LAMBERT
Who the fuck's this?

He switches it on.

CELEBRATION

Yes? What?

He listens briefly.

I said no calls! It's my fucking wedding anniversary!

He switches it off.

Cunt.

HAROLD PINTER

TABLE TWO

SUKI
I'm so proud of you.

RUSSELL
Yes?

SUKI
And I know these people are good people. These people who believe in you. They're good people. Aren't they?

RUSSELL
Very good people.

SUKI
And when I meet them, when you introduce me to them, they'll treat me with respect, won't they? They won't want to fuck me behind a filing cabinet?

SONIA comes to the table.

SONIA
Good evening.

RUSSELL
Good evening.

CELEBRATION

SUKI

Good evening.

SONIA

Everything all right?

RUSSELL

Wonderful.

SONIA

No complaints?

RUSSELL

Absolutely no complaints whatsoever. Absolutely
numero uno all along the line.

SONIA

What a lovely compliment.

RUSSELL

Heartfelt.

SONIA

Been to the theatre?

SUKI

The opera.

SONIA

Oh really, what was it?

HAROLD PINTER

SUKI

Well . . . there was a lot going on. A lot of singing.
A great deal, as a matter of fact. They never stopped.
Did they?

RUSSELL

(to SONIA) Listen, let me ask you something.

SONIA

You can ask me absolutely anything you like.

RUSSELL

What was your upbringing?

SONIA

That's funny. Everybody asks me that. Everybody seems to find that an interesting subject. I don't know why. Isn't it funny? So many people express curiosity about my upbringing. I've no idea why. What you really mean of course is – how did I arrive at the position I hold now – maitresse d'hotel – isn't that right? Isn't that your question? Well, I was born in Bethnal Green. My mother was a chiropodist. I had no father.

RUSSELL

Fantastic.

SONIA

Are you going to try our bread-and-butter pudding?

CELEBRATION

RUSSELL

In spades.
SONIA *smiles and goes.*

RUSSELL

Did I ever tell you about my mother's bread-and-butter pudding?

SUKI

You never have. Please tell me.

RUSSELL

You really want me to tell you? You're not being insincere?

SUKI

Darling. Give me your hand. There. I have your hand. I'm holding your hand. Now please tell me. Please tell me about your mother's bread-and-butter pudding. What was it like?

RUSSELL

It was like drowning in an ocean of richness.

SUKI

How beautiful. You're a poet.

RUSSELL

I wanted to be a poet once. But I got no encouragement from my dad. He thought I was an asshole.

HAROLD PINTER

SUKI

He was jealous of you, that's all. He saw you as a threat. He thought you wanted to steal his wife.

RUSSELL

His wife?

SUKI

Well, you know what they say.

RUSSELL

What?

SUKI

Oh, you know what they say.

The WAITER comes to the table and pours wine.

WAITER

Do you mind if I interject?

RUSSELL

Eh?

WAITER

I say, do you mind if I make an interjection?

SUKI

We'd welcome it.

CELEBRATION

WAITER

It's just that I heard you talking about T. S. Eliot a little bit earlier this evening.

SUKI

Oh you heard that, did you?

WAITER

I did. And I thought you might be interested to know that my grandfather knew T. S. Eliot quite well.

SUKI

Really?

WAITER

I'm not claiming that he was a close friend of his. But he was a damn sight more than a nodding acquaintance. He knew them all in fact, Ezra Pound, W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, George Barker, Dylan Thomas and if you go back a few years he was a bit of a drinking companion of D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, W. B. Yeats, Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf and Thomas Hardy in his dotage. My grandfather was carving out a niche for himself in politics at the time. Some saw him as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer or at least First Lord of the Admiralty but he decided instead to command a battalion in the Spanish Civil War but as things turned out he spent most of his spare time in the United States where he was a very close pal of Ernest

HAROLD PINTER

Hemingway – they used to play gin rummy together until the cows came home. But he was also boon compatriots with William Faulkner, Scott Fitzgerald, Upton Sinclair, John Dos Passos – you know – that whole vivid Chicago gang – not to mention John Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell, Carson McCullers and other members of the old Deep South conglomerate. I mean – what I'm trying to say is – that as a man my grandfather was just about as all round as you can get. He was never without his pocket bible and he was a dab hand at pocket billiards. He stood four square in the centre of the intellectual and literary life of the tens, twenties and thirties. He was James Joyce's godmother.

Silence.

RUSSELL

Have you been working here long?

WAITER

Years.

RUSSELL

You going to stay until it changes hands?

WAITER

Are you suggesting that I'm about to get the boot?

SUKI

They wouldn't do that to a nice lad like you.

CELEBRATION

WAITER

To be brutally honest, I don't think I'd recover if they did a thing like that. This place is like a womb to me. I prefer to stay in my womb. I strongly prefer that to being born.

RUSSELL

I don't blame you. Listen, next time we're talking about T. S. Eliot I'll drop you a card.

WAITER

You would make me a very happy man. Thank you. Thank you. You are incredibly gracious people.

SUKI

How sweet of you.

WAITER

Gracious and graceful.

He goes.

SUKI

What a nice young man.

TABLE ONE

LAMBERT

You won't believe this. You're not going to believe this – and I'm only saying this because I'm among friends – and I know I'm well liked because I trust my family and my friends – because I know they like me fundamentally – you know – deep down they trust me – deep down they respect me – otherwise I wouldn't say this. I wouldn't take you all into my confidence if I thought you all hated my guts – I couldn't be open and honest with you if I thought you thought I was a pile of shit. If I thought you would like to see me hung, drawn and fucking quartered – I could never be frank and honest with you if that was the truth – never . . .

Silence.

But as I was about to say, you won't believe this, I fell in love once and this girl I fell in love with loved me back. I know she did.

Pause.

JULIE

Wasn't that me, darling?

LAMBERT

Who?

CELEBRATION

MATT

Her.

LAMBERT

Her? No, not her. A girl. I used to take her for walks along the river.

MATT

JULIE

Lambert fell in love with me on the top of a bus. It was a short journey. Fulham Broadway to Shepherd's Bush, but it was enough. He was trembling all over. I remember. (to PRUE) When I got home I came and sat on your bed, didn't I?

LAMBERT

I used to take this girl for walks along the river. I was young, I wasn't much more than a nipper.

MATT

That's funny. I never knew anything about that. And I knew you quite well, didn't I?

LAMBERT

What do you mean you knew me quite well? You knew nothing about me. You know nothing about me. Who the fuck are you anyway?

MATT

I'm your big brother.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

I'm talking about love, mate. You know, real fucking love, walking along the banks of a river holding hands.

MATT

I saw him the day he was born. You know what he looked like? An alcoholic. Pissed as a newt. He could hardly stand.

JULIE

He was trembling like a leaf on top of that bus. I'll never forget it.

PRUE

I was there when you came home. I remember what you said. You came into my room. You sat down on my bed.

MATT

What did she say?

PRUE

I mean we were sisters, weren't we?

MATT

Well, what did she say?

PRUE

I'll never forget what you said. You sat on my bed. Didn't you? Do you remember?

CELEBRATION

LAMBERT

This girl was in love with me – I'm trying to tell you.

PRUE

Do you remember what you said?

LAMBERT

PRUE

LAMBERT

PRUE

LAMBERT

PRUE

LAMBERT

PRUE

HAROLD PINTER

TABLE TWO

Richard comes to the table.

RICHARD

Good evening.

RUSSELL

Good evening.

SUKI

Good evening.

RICHARD

Everything in order?

RUSSELL

First class.

RICHARD

I'm so glad.

SUKI

Can I say something?

RICHARD

But indeed –

SUKI

Everyone is so happy in your restaurant. I mean women *and* men. You make people so happy.

CELEBRATION

RICHARD

Well, we do like to feel that it's a happy restaurant.

RUSSELL

It is a happy restaurant. For example, look at me. Look at me. I'm basically a totally disordered personality, some people would describe me as a psychopath. (to SUKI) Am I right?

SUKI

Yes.

RUSSELL

But when I'm sitting in this restaurant I suddenly find I have no psychopathic tendencies at all. I don't feel like killing everyone in sight, I don't feel like putting a bomb under everyone's arse. I feel something quite different, I have a sense of equilibrium, of harmony, I love my fellow diners. Now this is very unusual for me. Normally I feel – as I've just said – absolutely malice and hatred towards everyone within spitting distance – but here I feel love. How do you explain it?

SUKI

It's the ambience.

RICHARD

Yes, I think ambience is that intangible thing that cannot be defined.

HAROLD PINTER

RUSSELL

Quite right.

SUKI

It is intangible. You're absolutely right.

RUSSELL

Absolutely.

RICHARD

That is absolutely right. But it does – I would freely admit – exist. It's something you find you are part of. Without knowing exactly what it is.

RUSSELL

Yes. I had an old schoolmaster once who used to say that ambience surrounds you. He never stopped saying that. He lived in a little house in a nice little village but none of us boys were ever invited to tea.

RICHARD

Yes, it's funny you should say that. I was brought up in a little village myself.

SUKI

No? Were you?

RICHARD

Yes, isn't it odd? In a little village in the country.

CELEBRATION

RUSSELL

What, right in the country?

RICHARD

Oh, absolutely. And my father once took me to our village pub. I was only that high. Too young to join him for his pint of course. But I did look in. Black beams.

RUSSELL

On the roof?

RICHARD

Well, holding the ceiling up in fact. Old men smoking pipes, no music of course, cheese rolls, gherkins, happiness. I think this restaurant – which you so kindly patronise – was inspired by that pub in my childhood. I do hope you noticed that you have complimentary gherkins as soon as you take your seat.

SUKI

That was you! That was your idea!

RICHARD

I believe the concept of this restaurant rests in that public house of my childhood.

SUKI

I find that incredibly moving.

HAROLD PINTER

TABLE ONE

LAMBERT

I'd like to raise my glass.

MATT

What to?

LAMBERT

To my wife. To our anniversary.

JULIE

Oh darling! You remembered!

LAMBERT

I'd like to raise my glass. I ask you to raise your glasses to my wife.

JULIE

I'm so touched by this, honestly. I mean I have to say -

LAMBERT

Raise your fucking glass and shut up!

JULIE

But darling, that's naked aggression. He doesn't normally go in for naked aggression. He usually disguises it under honeyed words. What is it sweetie? He's got a cold in the nose, that's what it is.

CELEBRATION

LAMBERT

I want us to drink to our anniversary. We've been married for more bloody years than I can remember and it don't seem a day too long.

PRUE

Cheers.

MATT

Cheers.

JULIE

It's funny our children aren't here. When they were young we spent so much time with them, the little things, looking after them.

PRUE

I know.

JULIE

Playing with them.

PRUE

Feeding them.

JULIE

Being their mothers.

PRUE

They always loved me much more than they loved him.

HAROLD PINTER

JULIE

Me too. They loved me to distraction. I was their mother.

PRUE

Yes, I was too. I was my children's mother.

MATT

They have no memory.

LAMBERT

Who?

MATT

Children. They have no memory. They remember nothing. They don't remember who their father was or who their mother was. It's all a hole in the wall for them. They don't remember their own life.

SONIA comes to the table.

SONIA

Everything all right?

JULIE

Perfect.

SONIA

Were you at the opera this evening?

JULIE

No.

CELEBRATION

PRUE

No. I met a chap who was born in Yorkshire, England, and he didn't speak a lick of English.

SONIA

Theatre?

PRUE

No.

JULIE

No.

MATT

This is a celebration.

SONIA

Oh my goodness! A birthday?

MATT

Anniversary.

PRUE

My sister and her husband. Anniversary of their marriage. I was her leading bridesmaid.

MATT

I was his best man.

LAMBERT

I was just about to fuck her at the altar when somebody stopped me.

HAROLD PINTER

SONIA

Really? They loved me so much when I was their only
daughter.

MATT

I stopped him. His zip went down and I kicked him
up the arse. It would have been a scandal. The world's
press was on the doorstep.

JULIE

He was always impetuous.

SONIA

We get so many different kinds of people in here,
people from all walks of life.

PRUE

Do you really?

SONIA

Oh yes. People from all walks of life. People from
different countries. I've often said, 'You don't have
to speak English to enjoy good food.' I've often said
that. Or even understand English. It's like sex isn't it?
You don't have to be English to enjoy sex. You don't
have to speak English to enjoy sex. Lots of people
enjoy sex without being English. I've known one or
two Belgian people for example who love sex and
they don't speak a word of English. The same applies
to Hungarians.

CELEBRATION

LAMBERT
Yes. I met a chap who was born in Venezuela once
and he didn't speak a fucking word of English.

MATT
Did he enjoy sex?

LAMBERT
Sex?

SONIA
Yes, it's funny you should say that. I met a man from
Morocco once and he was very interested in sex.

JULIE
What happened to him?

SONIA
Now you've upset me. I think I'm going to cry.

PRUE
Oh, poor dear. Did he let you down?

SONIA
He's dead. He died in another woman's arms. He was
on the job. Can you see how tragic my life has been?

Pause.

MATT
Well, I can. I don't know about the others.

HAROLD PINTER

JULIE

I can too.

PRUE

So can I.

SONIA

Have a happy night.

She goes.

LAMBERT

Lovely woman.

The WAITER comes to the table and pours wine into their glasses.

Do you really?

WAITER

Do you mind if I interject?

Oh yes. People from all walks of life. People from

different countries. I've

MATT

What?

English. Or even understand English. It's like you can't it?

You don't have to be here

WAITER

Do you mind if I make an interjection?

Two Belgian people for ex-

MATT

Help yourself.

a word of English. The waiter answers in Hungarian.

WAITER

It's just that a little bit earlier I heard you saying

CELEBRATION

something about the Hollywood studio system in the thirties.

PRUE

Oh you heard that?

WAITER

Yes. And I thought you might be interested to know that my grandfather was very familiar with a lot of the old Hollywood film stars back in those days. He used to knock about with Clark Gable and Elisha Cook Jr and he was one of the very few native-born Englishmen to have had it off with Hedy Lamarr.

JULIE

No?

LAMBERT

What was she like in the sack?

WAITER

He said she was really tasty.

JULIE

I'll bet she was.

WAITER

Of course there was a very well-established Irish Mafia in Hollywood in those days. And there was a very close connection between some of the famous Irish film stars and some of the famous Irish gangsters

HAROLD PINTER

in Chicago. Al Capone and Victor Mature for example. They were both Irish. Then there was John Dillinger the celebrated gangster and Gary Cooper the celebrated film star. They were Jewish.

Silence.

JULIE
It makes you think, doesn't it?

PRUE
It does make you think.

LAMBERT
You see that girl at that table? I know her. I fucked her when she was eighteen.

JULIE
What, by the banks of the river?

LAMBERT waves at SUKI. SUKI waves back. She whispers to RUSSELL, gets up and goes to Lambert's table followed by RUSSELL.

SUKI
Lambert! It's you!

LAMBERT
Suki! You remember me!

CELEBRATION

SUKI

Do you remember me?

LAMBERT

Do I remember you? Do I remember you!

They sit.

SUKI

This is my husband Russell.

LAMBERT

Hello Russell.

RUSSELL

Hello Lambert.

LAMBERT

This is my wife Julie.

JULIE

Hello Suki.

SUKI

Hello Julie.

RUSSELL

Hello Julie.

JULIE

Hello Russell.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT
And this is my brother Matt.

MATT
Hello Suki, hello Russell.

SUKI
Hello Matt.

RUSSELL
Hello Matt.

LAMBERT
And this is his wife Prue. She's Julie's sister.

SUKI
She's not!

PRUE
Yes, we're sisters and they're brothers.

SUKI
They're not!

RUSSELL
Hello Prue.

PRUE
Hello Russell.

SUKI
Hello Prue.

CELEBRATION

PRUE

Hello Suki.

LAMBERT

Sit down. Squeeze in. Have a drink.

They sit.

What'll you have?

RUSSELL

A drop of that red wine would work wonders.

LAMBERT

Suki?

RUSSELL

She'll have the same.

SUKI

(to LAMBERT) Are you still obsessed with gardening?

LAMBERT

Me?

SUKI

(to JULIE) When I knew him he was absolutely obsessed with gardening.

LAMBERT

Yes, well, I would say I'm still moderately obsessed with gardening.

HAROLD PINTER

JULIE

He likes grass.

LAMBERT

It's true. I love grass.

JULIE

Green grass.

SUKI

You used to love flowers, didn't you? Do you still love flowers?

JULIE

He adores flowers. The other day I saw him emptying a piss pot into a bowl of lilies.

RUSSELL

My dad was a gardener.

MATT

Not your granddad?

RUSSELL

No, my dad.

SUKI

That's right, he was. He was always walking about with a lawn mower.

CELEBRATION

LAMBERT

What, even in the Old Kent Road?

RUSSELL

He was a man of the soil.

MATT

How about your grandad?

RUSSELL

I never had one.

JULIE

Funny that when you knew my husband you thought he was obsessed with gardening. I always thought he was obsessed with girls' bums.

SUKI

Really?

PRUE

Oh yes, he was always a keen wobbler.

MATT

What do you mean? How do you know?

PRUE

Oh don't get excited. It's all in the past.

HAROLD PINTER

MATT

What is?

SUKI

I sometimes feel that the past is never past.

RUSSELL

What do you mean?

JULIE

You mean that yesterday is today?

SUKI

That's right. You feel the same, do you?

JULIE

I do.

MATT

Bollocks.

JULIE

I wouldn't like to live again though, would you? Once is more than enough.

LAMBERT

I'd like to live again. In fact I'm going to make it my job to live again. I'm going to come back as a better person, a more civilised person, a gentler person, a nicer person.

CELEBRATION

JULIE

Impossible.

Pause.

PRUE

I wonder where these two met? I mean Lambert and Suki.

RUSSELL

Behind a filing cabinet.

Silence.

JULIE

What is a filing cabinet?

RUSSELL

It's a thing you get behind.

Pause.

LAMBERT

No, not me mate. You've got the wrong bloke. I agree with my wife. I don't even know what a filing cabinet looks like. I wouldn't know a filing cabinet if I met one coming round the corner.

Pause.

HAROLD PINTER

JULIE

So what's your job now then, Suki?

SUKI

Oh, I'm a schoolteacher now. I teach infants.

PRUE

What, little boys and little girls?

SUKI

What about you?

PRUE

Oh, Julie and me – we run charities. We do charities.

RUSSELL

Must be pretty demanding work.

JULIE

Yes, we're at it day and night, aren't we?

PRUE

Well, there are so many worthy causes.

MATT

(to RUSSELL) You're a banker? Right?

RUSSELL

That's right.

CELEBRATION

MATT
(to **LAMBERT**) He's a banker.

LAMBERT
With a big future before him.

MATT
Well that's what he reckons.

LAMBERT
I want to ask you a question. How did you know he was a banker?

MATT
Well it's the way he holds himself, isn't it?

LAMBERT
Oh, yes.

SUKI
What about you two?

LAMBERT
Us two?

SUKI
Yes.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

Well, we're consultants. Matt and me. Strategy consultants.

MATT

Strategy consultants.

LAMBERT

It means we don't carry guns.

MATT and LAMBERT *laugh*.

We don't have to!

MATT

We're peaceful strategy consultants.

LAMBERT

Worldwide. Keeping the peace.

RUSSELL

Wonderful.

LAMBERT

Eh?

RUSSELL

Really impressive. We need a few more of you about.

That's right.

Pause.

CELEBRATION

We need more people like you. Taking responsibility.
Taking charge. Keeping the peace. Enforcing the
peace. Enforcing peace. We need more like you.
I think I'll have a word with my bank. I'm moving
any minute to a more substantial bank. I'll have
a word with them. I'll suggest lunch. In the City.
I know the ideal restaurant. All the waitresses have
big tits.

SUKI

Aren't you pushing the tits bit a bit far?

RUSSELL

Me? I thought you did that.

Pause.

LAMBERT

Be careful. You're talking to your wife.

MATT

Have some respect, mate.

LAMBERT

Have respect. That's all we ask.

MATT

It's not much to ask.

LAMBERT

But it's crucial.

HAROLD PINTER

Pause.

RUSSELL

So how is the strategic consultancy business these days?

LAMBERT

Very good, old boy. Very good.

MATT

Very good. We're at the receiving end of some of the best tea in China.

RICHARD and SONIA come to the table with a magnum of champagne, the WAITER with a tray of glasses. Everyone gasps.

RICHARD

To celebrate a treasured wedding anniversary.

MATT looks at the label on the bottle.

MATT

That's the best of the best.

The bottle opens. RICHARD pours.

LAMBERT

And may the best man win!

JULIE

The woman always wins.

CELEBRATION

PRUE

Always.

SUKI

That's really good news.

PRUE

The woman always wins.

RICHARD and SONIA raise their glasses.

RICHARD

To the happy couple. God bless. God bless you all.

EVERYONE

Cheers. Cheers . . .

MATT

What a wonderful restaurant this is.

SONIA

Well, we do care. I will say that. We care. That's the point. Don't we?

RICHARD

Yes. We do care. We care about the welfare of our clientele. I will say that.

LAMBERT stands and goes to them.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

What you say means so much to me. Let me give you a cuddle.

He cuddles RICHARD.

And let me give you a cuddle.

He cuddles SONIA.

This is so totally rare, you see. None of this normally happens. People normally – you know – people normally are so distant from each other. That's what I've found. Take a given bloke – this given bloke doesn't know that another given bloke exists. It goes down through history, doesn't it?

MATT

It does.

LAMBERT

One bloke doesn't know that another bloke exists. Generally speaking. I've often noticed.

SONIA

(to JULIE and PRUE) I'm so touched that you're sisters. I had a sister. But she married a foreigner and I haven't seen her since.

PRUE

Some foreigners are all right.

CELEBRATION

SONIA

Oh I think foreigners are charming. Most people in this restaurant tonight are foreigners. My sister's husband had a lot of charm but he also had an enormous moustache. I had to kiss him at the wedding. I can't describe how awful it was. I've got such soft skin, you see.

WAITER

Do you mind if I interject?

RICHARD

I'm sorry?

WAITER

Do you mind if I make an interjection?

RICHARD

What on earth do you mean?

WAITER

Well, it's just that I heard all these people talking about the Austro-Hungarian Empire a little while ago and I wondered if they'd ever heard about my grandfather. He was an incredibly close friend of the Archduke himself and he once had a cup of tea with Benito Mussolini. They all played poker together, Winston Churchill included. The funny thing about my grandfather was that the palms of his hands always seemed to be burning. But his eyes were elsewhere. He had a really strange life. He was in

HAROLD PINTER

love, he told me, once, with the woman who turned out to be my grandmother, but he lost her somewhere. She disappeared, I think, in a sandstorm. In the desert. My grandfather was everything men aspired to be in those days. He was tall, dark and handsome. He was full of good will. He'd even give a cripple with no legs crawling on his belly through the slush and mud of a country lane a helping hand. He'd lift him up, he'd show him his way, he'd point him in the right direction. He was like Jesus Christ in that respect. And he was gregarious. He loved the society of his fellows, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Igor Stravinsky, Picasso, Ezra Pound, Bertholt Brecht, Don Bradman, the Beverley Sisters, the Inkspots, Franz Kafka and the Three Stooges. He knew these people where they were isolated, where they were alone, where they fought against savage and pitiless odds, where they suffered vast wounds to their bodies, their bellies, their legs, their trunks, their eyes, their throats, their breasts, their balls –

LAMBERT

(*standing*) Well, Richard – what a great dinner!

RICHARD

I'm so glad.

LAMBERT *opens his wallet and unpeels fifty-pound notes. He gives two to RICHARD.*

LAMBERT

This is for you.

CELEBRATION

RICHARD

No, no really -

LAMBERT

No no, this is for you. (to SONIA) And this is for you.

SONIA

Oh, no please -

LAMBERT *dangles the notes in front of her cleavage.*

LAMBERT

Shall I put them down here?

SONIA *giggles.*

No I'll tell you what - you wearing suspenders?

SONIA *giggles.*

Stick them in your suspenders. (to WAITER) Here you are son. Mind how you go.

Puts a note into his pocket.

Great dinner. Great restaurant. Best in the country.

MATT

Best in the world I'd say.

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

Exactly. (to RICHARD) I'm taking their bill.

RUSSELL

No, no you can't -

LAMBERT

It's my wedding anniversary! Right? (to RICHARD)
Send me their bill.

JULIE

And his.

LAMBERT

Send me both bills. Anyway . . .

He embraces SUKI.

It's for old time's sake as well, right?

SUKI

Right.

RICHARD

See you again soon?

MATT

Absolutely.

SONIA

See you again soon.

CELEBRATION

PRUE

Absolutely.

SONIA

Next celebration?

JULIE

Absolutely.

LAMBERT

Plenty of celebrations to come. Rest assured.

MATT

Plenty to celebrate.

LAMBERT

Dead right.

MATT *slaps his thighs.*

MATT

Like – who's in front? Who's in front?

LAMBERT *joins in the song, slapping his thighs in time with MATT.*

LAMBERT AND MATT

Who's in front?

Who's in front?

HAROLD PINTER

LAMBERT

Get out the bloody way
You silly old cunt!

LAMBERT and MATT laugh.

SUKI and RUSSELL go to their table to collect
handbag and jacket, etc.

SUKI

How sweet of him to take the bill, wasn't it?

RUSSELL

He must have been very fond of you.

SUKI

Oh he wasn't all that fond of me really. He just liked
my . . . oh . . . you know . . .

RUSSELL

Your what?

SUKI

Oh . . . my . . . you know . . .

LAMBERT

Fabulous evening.

JULIE

Fabulous.

» CELEBRATION

RICHARD

See you soon then.

SONIA

See you soon.

MATT

I'll be here for breakfast tomorrow morning.

SONIA

Excellent!

PRUE

See you soon.

SONIA

See you soon.

JULIE

Lovely to see you.

SONIA

See you soon I hope.

RUSSELL

See you soon.

SUKI

See you soon.

They drift off.

HAROLD PINTER

JULIE (off)

So lovely to meet you.

SUKI (off)

Lovely to meet you.

Silence.

The WAITER stands alone.

WAITER

When I was a boy my grandfather used to take me to the edge of the cliffs and we'd look out to sea. He bought me a telescope. I don't think they have telescopes any more. I used to look through this telescope and sometimes I'd see a boat. The boat would grow bigger through the telescopic lens. Sometimes I'd see people on the boat. A man, sometimes, and a woman, or sometimes two men. The sea glistened.

My grandfather introduced me to the mystery of life and I'm still in the middle of it. I can't find the door to get out. My grandfather got out of it. He got right out of it. He left it behind him and he didn't look back.

He got that absolutely right.

And I'd like to make one further interjection.

He stands still.

Slow fade.