

A Pot of Tea

SET

Opens in dim light, at a 1960's tearooms of at least two table settings (tablecloth and sugar container), one DR and one DL, with two chairs at each.

There is an entrance UL to offstage tearoom counter and UR to Tearoom entrance.

DIRECTORS NOTE

The play should advance at measured pace, particularly in the final scene, to allow thoughts and romance to blossom.

CAST

Alice is 45 +, unmarried and cautious.

Doug, a 45+ quiet dentist

Joy (Mrs Roberts) is a warm, pleasant tearoom owner in her 60's

Nelly Willament, the town gossip, is in her 60's

Alice (voice from a central speaker, lights increase as Doug enters UR crosses and exits UL and returns to take his seat at table DL. He reads his newspaper.)

My story, takes us back to 1963 and concerns my old friend, Douglas Campbell. He was born in Devonshire, England but he grew up here. He is a local, through and through. A very respectable man.

After his war service in Egypt, he trained at Dunedin University as a dentist and shortly after he returned to.... (*local town*) to set up his practice.

In 1947, he married his childhood sweetheart, Rosalind. They had two children- Felicity and Simon. Rosalind was a very beautiful woman. She wore her hair high and her dresses bright and flowing. Everybody noticed Rosalind and that was her downfall. Other men were attracted to her and she was attracted to other men.

Two years ago, she left Douglas, Felicity and young Simon. She left them to escape her life here and into the arms of Ray Donaldson, an insurance salesman.

Stage is now fully lit.

Joy (*bringing teapot and cup*) Well, My Campbell, it's a nice day, then.

Doug Thank you, Mrs Roberts (*still reading*).

Joy It is sad about that plane crash in the Kaimai's. Such a pity.

Doug Yes.

Joy Did you see the Court Notices?

Doug No.

Joy Well, if I might say, your name is in it. Divorces. Douglas and Rosalind Campbell, decree nisi. I am so sorry, ...Douglas.

(Doug continues to read)

You are a good man, Mr. Campbell. You are a good to those children. She shouldn't have done that to you.

Nelly *(enters UR)* Good morning, Mrs Roberts, I have just heard some interesting news. They are going to let Terry Flynn out of jail. Constable Pamment told me an hour ago. He was meant to be in for another two years but his mother is sick and they are letting him out on good behaviour.

Hello, Mr Campbell.

(continues) Anyway, that is not all. His daughter has just become pregnant to the Mayor's son. Well, so I am told. You can't tell yet. She is such a skinny kid, but Beryl at the hairdresser's reckons she saw them behind the bike sheds. Kids today! Can I have a pot of tea and bikkies, please, Mrs. Wheeler?

(Joy exits UL)

Mr. Campbell, how have you been? *(he continues reading)* You are keeping well then? I hear that there is a nasty bout of whooping cough going about. Very nasty.

(she moves to a window) Still, the weather is getting warmer. It is a nice day.

Your boy, Simon isn't it? I understand that he goes to the Workshop. Such a pity. Some of the children there are quite nice. They make baskets there, don't they? And teddy bears. Still, so long as they are happy.

Joy *(returns with serving of tea and biscuits at DL table)* Here we are Nelly Willament. One pot and a piece of shortbread.

Nelly *(sits at DL table)* Thank you, Mrs Joy Roberts. That looks perfect. *(quietly)* Mr. Campbell seems very quiet today. What is going on?

Joy *(she sits)* It is his marriage. It's in the paper. The divorce has come through.

Nelly I don't know what he saw in her. She was a hussy. If it wasn't the policeman, it was the butcher. If it wasn't him it was the postmaster... or the milkman. She was anyone's and everyone knew. Except him.

Joy It was hard to believe. She was the minister's daughter and he is such a gentleman.

Nelly A gentleman. I don't know about that. He is a dentist.

Joy He is a fine man.

Nelly I think that Rosalind left him because he wasn't very good at ...it. They reckon it is ...not very big at all.

Joy (*disbelieving*) Who told you that? (*stands*)

Nelly I hear all sorts of things. My neighbour reckons he bats for the other side but I don't believe that. It is what he does in that dental surgery that should worry us. (*they are both now standing DL*)

Joy What are you talking about, Nelly Willament!

Nelly (*whispering*) I hear that he has been playing around with his lady patients. You know, touching and things.

Joy On his chair?

Nelly He gives you so much laughing gas you can't say no. You lie back as if you enjoy it.

Joy I don't believe it.

Nelly Well, my friend, Flo, will not go to see him unless she is wearing her girdle.

Joy Nelly Willament, I have heard quite enough. Those afghans that you ordered are still in the oven. You will have to call back. I need to clear up. (*she picks up Nelly's cup DL*)

Alice (*enters and speaks to Joy*) May I have a pot of tea please.

Nelly I will call in later. (*to Doug*) It was lovely chatting to you. Bye. (*she exits UL*)

Alice (*she sits and places bag under table*) Douglas...Douglas Campbell? (*Douglas looks up*) ...It is? Hello Douglas (*reaches out uncertainly*). Alice.... Watson.

Doug (*rises*) Oh. Hello. Alice Watson?

Alice (*crossing to him*) I haven't been here for years but we went to school together. We both lived in Harris Street.

Doug Of course.

Alice How are you?

Doug It has been quite a while.

Alice I had heard.... that you and Rosalind...

Doug Yes. We separated two years ago. We are divorced now.

Alice I am sorry. You seemed so happy. I didn't know.

Doug Please. Join me. If you wish.

Alice (*they sit*) I was just passing through. I live in Hamilton now. I drove over to stay with my Aunt for a few days. She still lives out along the quarry road.

Doug It **has** been a long time. I still remember you from school days.

Alice Don't take me back.

Doug They were fun times. Old Nobby ringing the bell to start the day, school milk, and the French teacher. What was her name? Miss Weaver. 'Weave the spinster'. She never did get married.

Alice I have never married.

Doug Oh.

Alice I guess Mr. Right never found me.

Doug I find that hard to believe. You look so smart, so bright. Where have you been hiding yourself?

Alice I have a full life. I have been caring for my mother; but she died last November. I work at Farmers; in ladieswear. I am in charge of the millinery department. I go to the pictures. On Sundays I teach Sunday School. I enjoy it. I play the piano. (*she pretends to play and sings, quite happily*) 'He's got the whole world in his hands, He's got the whole wide world in his hands...' (*she laughs*). We all have fun.

Doug (*chuckles*) You always could sing. I remember you and Rosalind in the school choir.

Alice We'll she was the soprano. I was just in the chorus. She always did take the lead. She wanted to be the star.

Doug Yes, she did.

Alice At netball, she just had to be the captain.

Doug She was wing attack.

Alice I was the goalkeeper. (*pause*) Do you miss her?

Doug I hear that she is happy now.

Alice And you? Are you happy?

Doug I do miss her. Everything has changed. I was always taught to forgive. So, I forgive her and wish her well. Felicity misses her mother, but she is in the sixth form now. She will start work at the State Advances next year. She is looking forward to that. You should have seen her at the school ball. She brought back memories.

Remember our school dances. The fox trots, the maxinas, the military two-step, the waltzes. Each bracket would start with...

Alice The girls on one side....

Doug The boys on the other....

Alice and Doug (*together*)....and they would rush across to find a partner.

Alice There were always too many girls.

Doug (*thoughtfully*) I remember dancing with you.

Alice Rosalind was the one. They were all keen on her.

Doug Now, Alice. Next time you want to dance, I will come running over....so long as it is not a polka. I can't remember the steps.

Alice One two three, One two three. Spinning around. One two three.

Doug Oh no.no! I'd just trip over. (they laugh)

Nelly (*enters*) Hello, Douglas. (*to Alice*) Good morning. Have we met? I know most people in town but...

Doug This is an old friend of mine, Miss Thomas, from Hamilton.

Alice It is nice to meet you. I was just leaving (*rises*)

Nelly Was that your Wolsey parked outside?

Alice (*leaves quickly leaving bag behind*)

Nelly She seems nice, Douglas.

Doug Yes, she is. While you are here, Nelly Willament, I do have an appointment available this afternoon for your root canal, if that suits?

Nelly (*quickly*) Oh! I don't think so Mr Campbell. I...I was just going off to croquet. (*she exits*)

Alice (*enters*) I think that I left my bag. Oh! (*sees bag*)

Doug Alice. Alice, I am glad that you came back. I wanted to say something to you....
Would you like another cup of tea?

(*They sit down together, at peace, lights dim as music plays*)

THE END