

MICHELLE is seated, painting her toe nails. She is wearing a brightly coloured top and leggings. Her hair is styled and she is wearing make-up. She is half humming, half singing along to 'A Kind of Magic' by Queen which is playing on her mobile phone.

After a few moments, JUDY enters. She is wearing a long, shabby coat over a home-knitted jumper, a tie-dyed skirt and sandals. Her hair is untidy and she is wearing no make-up. She is carrying a shopping basket and a supermarket carrier bag, both full with purchases.

MICHELLE: (Without looking up from her toe-nails) You took your time.

JUDY: I got waylaid when I popped back to my house.

MICHELLE: What did you forget?

JUDY: Nothing. Just thought it best to let Oscar out for another quick wee.

MICHELLE: As opposed to a slow one.

JUDY: I wasn't sure how long we'd be, you see - I don't want a damp patch on my tufted rug again.

MICHELLE: You should leave him in the kitchen, Judy. On the lino.

JUDY: Goodness, no. He wouldn't like that, bless him.

MICHELLE: He's a dog, he'd be fine.

JUDY: Oh no, he never settles when he can't snuggle up on the sofa and watch television. He'll be quite happy once Holly and Phil are on.

MICHELLE: It's Eamonn and Ruth today.

JUDY: Oh dear, that'll up-skittle him.

MICHELLE: He'll be fine.

JUDY: I'll open a tin of salmon for him at tea time.

MICHELLE: You spoil him.

JUDY: I don't.

MICHELLE: You treat him like a child.

JUDY: He is! He's my little baby.

MICHELLE: You want your head testing.

JUDY: (*Holding up her basket*) I'll just unpack this in the kitchen.

JUDY walks towards the kitchen door.

JUDY: Did you find your heavy-based pan by the way? I forgot to look for mine.

MICHELLE: Yes, it was at the back of the cupboard. I've put it ready on the side.

JUDY takes the shopping through to the kitchen, leaving the door open when she goes through so her conversation with MICHELLE can continue.

MICHELLE: I don't know why you didn't get a cat, like me, they're much more independent, far less trouble.

JUDY: (*From offstage*) I'm not so keen on cats.

MICHELLE: Trust you to be different. Everyone else gets cats, but you have to get a dog.

JUDY: (*From offstage*) They always seem to look at you in a judgemental way, cats. Makes me uneasy.

MICHELLE: A cat wouldn't wee on your rug - it'd use a litter tray.

JUDY: (*From offstage*) Litter trays can make your house smell though.

MICHELLE: What're you saying?

JUDY: (*From offstage*) Oh, I'm not talking about your house, Michelle. Your house doesn't smell.

MICHELLE: I know it bloody doesn't. I'm very particular about that – I've got a Glade Plug-in in every room.

JUDY appears in the door way

JUDY: I like the one you've got in here at the moment.

MICHELLE: Mountain Breeze.

JUDY: It's lovely. Very clean, very . . . mountain-y.

JUDY disappears into the kitchen again

JUDY: (From offstage) I couldn't get any sage in Tesco's so I had to nip to Sainsburys . . . then I could only get dried.

MICHELLE: What? No fresh?

JUDY: (From offstage) Couldn't find any.

MICHELLE: With the herbs, near the salad?

JUDY: (From offstage) There wasn't any. There was plenty of parsley . . . and basil. But no sage.

MICHELLE: Must be out of stock.

JUDY: (From offstage) Dried will be alright though, won't it?

MICHELLE: It's not ideal but it'll do the trick.

MICHELLE continues to paint her toe nails. JUDY can be heard unpacking in the kitchen.

MICHELLE: What was the hold-up at yours anyway?

JUDY: (Appearing in the doorway) Beg your pardon?

MICHELLE: You said you got waylaid when you were at your house.

JUDY: Oh, yes. It was Michael from next door.

MICHELLE: Oh, not him again! What now?

JUDY: He brought 'round some shepherd's pie for me.

MICHELLE: When will he get it into his thick skull that you're vegetarian? First chicken casserole, now shepherd's pie.

JUDY: Oh no, this time it was veggie. He'd gone out 'specially and bought some Quorn mince or something.

MICHELLE: Does he not think you can cook for yourself? (*Beat*) Did you give him a slice of that disastrous lemon drizzle cake you made? Is that what it is?

JUDY: No, I didn't . . . besides it wasn't that bad.

MICHELLE: What d'you mean? Even the garden birds were turning their beaks up at it! One blackbird didn't whistle for a week, it was so dry.

JUDY: I'm sure it's nothing to do with his opinion on my cooking ability, he's just being kind. He says he has to cook for himself and his mother so what's an extra portion.

MICHELLE: As long as he doesn't try and give you a portion of anything else.

JUDY: Oh, don't be silly.

MICHELLE: I'm not. He might have taken a fancy to you . . . stranger things have happened.

JUDY: I don't think so.

MICHELLE: He's unmarried, you live by yourself. He might have taken a shine to you.

JUDY: No.

MICHELLE: He's always 'round . . . you can never get rid of him.

JUDY: I think he's just a bit lonely, his mother's not much of a talker. She's never been the same since that weirdo flashed at her in Homebase car park.

MICHELLE: He's never been the same since either. She put a lot of force behind that tin of emulsion she had in her hand.

JUDY: Anyway, I'm sure Michael is just being thoughtful.

MICHELLE: Well, let me know if he gets a bit too pushy and I'll put a stop to it for you.

JUDY: That won't be necessary, I'm sure.

MICHELLE: That sort of thing is easily remedied.

JUDY: Yes, I know. But it's not a problem, thank you.

JUDY goes over to the window and pulls the nets to one side to look outside.

MICHELLE finishes painting her last toe-nail.

MICHELLE: What d'you think?

JUDY: (Not turning) Mmmm?

MICHELLE: My nail varnish.

JUDY: What about it?

MICHELLE: What do you think of the colour?

JUDY moves over to have a closer look.

JUDY: Erm . . . it's quite . . . purple.

MICHELLE: It's very purple. And your point is?

JUDY: It's nice.

MICHELLE: No, go on.

JUDY: Well . . . erm . . . for me purple always brings to mind bruising . . . as if you've dropped a heavy weight on your feet.

MICHELLE: My toes look nothing like they've been bruised.

JUDY: No.

MICHELLE: It's a completely different shade of purple.

JUDY: Very much so.

MICHELLE: Then why say it?

The front door bell rings.

JUDY: Ooh, whoever can that be?

MICHELLE: Saved by the bell.

JUDY goes to the window and pulls back the nets

JUDY: It's Pauline. She's early.

MICHELLE: No, she isn't.

JUDY: You said half past ten.

MICHELLE: I told Emma to come for ten thirty but I told Pauline to get here a few minutes early.

JUDY: Shall I let her in?

MICHELLE: That is the general course of action when someone rings the doorbell.

JUDY exits through the hall door. The front door can be heard opening as MICHELLE slips on a pair of flip flops.

PAULINE: (Offstage) Morning Judy.

JUDY: (Offstage) Hello Pauline.

PAULINE: (Offstage) How are you?

JUDY: (Offstage) Very well, thank you. Come in, do come in.

The front door can be heard closing. JUDY leads PAULINE into the living room. She is an older woman wearing a short jacket over a light cardigan, a pastel-coloured top, cropped trousers and comfy shoes. Her hair and make-up are understated and neat. She is carrying a cloth carrier bag.

PAULINE: Good morning, Michelle.

MICHELLE: Morning Pauline, thanks for coming.

PAULINE: Not at all, not at all. It's a pleasure . . . well, not a pleasure but you know what I mean.

MICHELLE: Yes, of course. Judy, would you do the honours?

JUDY: Absolutely. Can I take your coat, Pauline?

PAULINE: Thank you.

PAULINE takes her coat off and hands it to JUDY.

MICHELLE: Ooh, I like your top. Lovely colour.

PAULINE: Thank you . . . M and S.

MICHELLE: You can't go wrong, can you?

PAULINE: Is that where yours is from?

JUDY: Oh God, no! You wouldn't be seen dead in Marks and Sparks, would you, Michelle?

MICHELLE glares at JUDY.

JUDY: I'll just hang this up in the hall.

JUDY exits to hang up the coat and returns.

MICHELLE: Take a seat, Pauline. Don't stand on ceremony.

PAULINE: Am I okay anywhere?

MICHELLE: Take your pick.

PAULINE sits down and notices MICHELLE's toenails.

PAULINE: Oh gracious! Are you alright, dear? They look sore.

MICHELLE: What?

PAULINE: Your toes. Did you drop something on them? Ouch.

JUDY: Told you.

MICHELLE: Yes, thank you, Judy.

PAULINE: Sorry?

MICHELLE: It's my nail polish – it didn't quite look this shade in the bottle.

PAULINE: Oh! I see. Sorry.

MICHELLE: That'll teach me for being adventurous – I'll be sticking to red next time.