

'When the bough breaks...'

An extract from the play by Phil Tong

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SCENE 1.0

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE ON A BARE STAGE WITH JUST TWO WOODEN CHAIRS.

THE RAPIDLY CHANGING CONTEXT AND TIME FRAMES WITHIN THE PLAY SHOULD BE SIGNIFIED BY THE USE OF SPACE, SOUND AND LIGHT IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE FREE-WHEELING STYLE OF THE TEXT TO HAVE MAXIMUM IMPACT.

CHARACTERS ENTER AND EXIT AS STATED; WITNESSING THE ACTION WITHIN THE OTHER CONTEXTS AS PART OF THEIR WIDER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION.

RACHEL, A WOMAN IN HER EARLY FORTIES ENTERS HER FLAT DRESSED CASUALLY. SHE IS FOLLOWED BY A YOUNG WOMAN IN HER EARLY TWENTIES. THIS IS HER DAUGHTER LORNA WEARING A COAT. SHE HAS JUST ARRIVED AT THE FLAT.

You'd better come in.

RACHEL

Now there's a welcome.

LORNA

What did you expect?

RACHEL

Not this, clearly.

LORNA

Then what?

RACHEL

Honestly? I don't know.

LORNA

RACHEL
I find it's always a good idea to have an exit strategy before you start anything.

That's very aggressive. **LORNA**

Is it? **RACHEL**

You know it is. **LORNA**

And what you're doing isn't? **RACHEL**

THE MOMENT IS HELD BETWEEN THEM

Is that what this is? Your exit strategy? **LORNA**

I didn't start it **RACHEL**

Didn't you? **LORNA**

No. **RACHEL**

Seems like you had it all planned. **LORNA**

You have no idea. **RACHEL**

Clearly. **LORNA**

AGAIN THE MOMENT IS HELD

I couldn't just carry on the way things were. **RACHEL**

Why do you always have to exaggerate, Mum? **LORNA**

I don't expect you to understand, Lorna, but I did think you might appreciate... **RACHEL**

LORNA

That you needed to get away? A new start? A blank canvas?

RACHEL

Yes.

LORNA

But it's not. Is it? We're all still here! You can't just wipe us out.

RACHEL

That's not what I'm trying to do.

LORNA

No? Well, you could have fooled me!

MAGGIE ENTERS. SHE STANDS APART FROM THEM AND WATCHES.

RACHEL

I didn't set out to hurt you, Lorna. And if I have... I'm sorry.

LORNA

It's a bit late for that now. I mean... How did you think we'd react?

RACHEL SITS ON A CHAIR. LORNA TURNS AWAY FROM HER.

MAGGIE

The skilful warrior outwits the enemy with a superior plan; but the least skilful, sets out to besiege the enemy in their own citadel.

SCENE 1.1

MAGGIE

How was it?

MAGGIE CROSSES TO RACHEL.

RACHEL

Awful.

MAGGIE

It was always going to be difficult.

RACHEL

I thought she might understand.

Sisterhood's dead. **MAGGIE**

Thanks for that, Maggie. **RACHEL**

Was your mother happy? **MAGGIE**

I don't know. I never asked her. **RACHEL**

Then maybe you should have. **MAGGIE**

Point taken.... But I don't like to think of her being unhappy. **RACHEL**

Happiness isn't a birth right. **MAGGIE**

I know that, but... is it too much to expect? **RACHEL**

And Lorna? **MAGGIE**

I don't know. **RACHEL**

Have you asked her? **MAGGIE**

**MAGGIE WATCHES RACHEL MOVE
BACK TOWARDS LORNA. AS SHE MOVES
MAGGIE SPEAKS ONCE MORE.**

MAGGIE
'It's always better to win the battle without having to go to war'.

SCENE 1.2

**MAGGIE EXITS AS RACHEL MOVES
BACK TO LORNA.**

Are you happy? **RACHEL**

Me?

LORNA

Yes. With Dan. With the way life's treated you?

RACHEL

This is not about me.

LORNA

No. But...

RACHEL

I'd be happier if I thought you wanted to talk.

LORNA

I do.

RACHEL

Do you? Really? Then why didn't you tell me.

LORNA

I couldn't. You and your Dad are close and I thought...

RACHEL

I'd tell him.

LORNA

I didn't want you to have to choose.

RACHEL

So you made the choice for me.

LORNA

Somethings just have to be done alone, Lorna.

RACHEL

Well, congratulations. You managed that bit.

LORNA SEEMS DEFEATED

LORNA

I'm going. Dan said it was a mistake to come.

MAGGIE RE-ENTERS AND WATCHES SILENTLY

RACHEL

If you really want to know why... Look at us now.

Are you blaming me?

LORNA

No.

RACHEL

Yes, I'm angry. And with good reason. Everything you do screams chaos!

LORNA

That's not true.

RACHEL

To be honest, I'm surprised Dad put up with you for as long as he did.

LORNA

LORNA EXITS AS STAN ENTERS WITH A MIC. HE IS THE COMPERE AND STAND-UP COMIC. HE SPEAKS INTO THE MIC AS HE STRIDES ABOUT THE STAGE AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

SCENE 1.3

STAN

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Let me introduce myself... My name's Stan and I'm your comperere for this evening. We often hear people say that marriage is a battleground - well, let me tell you, it's nothing compared to the 'full on' warfare of divorce. Now that really is a war, complete with associated collateral damage. When that bomb goes off, believe me, everyone in your life knows about it. Trust me. There's 'fall-out'. And I should know. I've been there. Done it. Got the Tee shirt.

STAN ALLOWS THE ACTION TO CONTINUE AS MAGGIE ONCE AGAIN APPROACHES RACHEL.

SCENE 1.4

It didn't go well?

MAGGIE

No.

RACHEL

It's been a shock for her.

MAGGIE

RACHEL

I just hoped...

MAGGIE

I know. And she may still come round. But, right now, she's angry and you're just going to have to give her time. Come on, let's get you that drink.

RACHEL AND MAGGIE EXIT AS STAN
ONCE AGAIN ADDRESSES THE
AUDIENCE.

INTERVENTION 1**STAN**

Relationships can be tricky. And romantic relationships are a nightmare. How do I know? Listen. I'm a man. We're the worst. Apparently. Or so my girlfriend tells me. And it's not like I don't try. I do. She said to me the other day, 'Stan' she says, 'You're really fuckin' tryin'!' So, you see, I do my best. Even my girlfriend says so.

I was talking about this to a mate the other day, and he agreed. What most women don't understand is that men are a complete bag of nerves when it comes to relationships. It's all that talking. As a kid, when you learn to talk, nobody tells you that when you grow up, every word that comes out of your mouth is going to get twisted, misunderstood, misread and generally misrepresented when you try to explain anything to a woman.

He reckons that what we need is an app for our phones that translates what we're trying to say into a language women understand. Or, better still an app that can tell you what she's feeling. That way you can decide whether your girlfriend's 'a keeper' or not. That'd be great. Wouldn't it? Now that really would make a difference. Get everything about your relationship with women sorted out with one click - now that's what I really call a 'smart-phone'!

MAGGIE ENTERS AND STANDS
WATCHING STAN PERFORM

STAN

Anyway, my mate's advice is... 'Always check the mother out first before you enter into any long term relationship'. The reason being - all girls turn into their mothers eventually. According to him you need to ask yourself, 'Would I be happy waking up next to her in twenty years time?' 'So what about your girlfriend? I said. Is she a keeper?' 'Oh yeah. Definitely, he says. 'Mind you, I had to fuck her mother first, just to make sure!'