

THE GAME

A One-Act Play
For Women

by

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THE GAME

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Synopsis. Six young couples meet at one of the group's homes to watch an important football match. Whilst the men are congregated in the sitting room around the box, the wives are content to keep each other company for the duration and confine themselves to the kitchen where they soon "get into the spirit" with a few glasses of wine and female chat. They predict that the men might inevitably come to blows over the game, there being diverse loyalties over the two teams and one or two hotheads amongst the group of pals. Strangely enough, other than the odd shout of support and cheer and requests for more refreshments they manage to get through the evening in an amicable manner. Sadly this is not the case with their wives who get more than a few things off their chests over the course of the evening

The Couples.

Paul & **TRACEY**, Dave & **CINDY**, Andy & **AUDREY**, Micky & **CAROLINE**,
Ian & **SHIRLEY**, Craig & **LAURA**

Characterisation.

Paul & **TRACEY** are the hosts. He works with insurance and she with a building society. She is used to being hostess and likes to think that she has everything under control, She is a busy person, a little smug who likes a tidy life and courts respectability.

Dave & **CINDY** are their next door neighbours. Dave works as a mechanic and Cindy is a hairdresser. Dave plays football for the local team and is outspoken especially where THE GAME is concerned. Cindy is basically a kind person but is loud about everything and louder after a few drinks, They are a rough and ready pair who have a bit of a chip on their shoulder. They never miss an opportunity to have a drink or two or more.

Andy & **AUDREY** Andy is a sales rep. Audrey went to school with Tracey and has worked in the bank since leaving school. They have matching everything and go most places together. Audrey is something of a snob, has a sharp tongue when provoked and dislikes Cindy. She has a jealous streak where her husband is concerned.

Micky & **CAROLINE** Micky is an unknown quantity who changes his job so regularly that nobody knows what he is doing at any particular time. Caroline is a freelance journalist and Tracey's cousin. Micky and Caroline have an on/off relationship and nobody knows why they are still together. Tracey tends to include Caroline in her get-togethers as she is enough of a snob to believe that Caroline is worth cultivating because of her writing successes.

Ian & **SHIRLEY** Ian works with the same firm as Paul. Shirley is a bouncy, outgoing P.E. teacher who along with her husband is fanatical about sports and interested in alternative life-styles. Their private life has some *grey* areas and there has been some talk!

Craig & **LAURA**. He works at B & Q and she is a dinner lady. She is a rounded, kind person who is desperate to start a family. They have been friends with Paul and Tracey since Craig helped Paul with some flat pack furniture he bought at B & Q. Tracey is a little condescending to Laura who fails to notice.

Setting TRACEY'S KITCHEN WITH ACCESS TO THE SITTING ROOM.

TRACEY IS CARRYING VARIOUS ITEMS OF FOOD AND DRINK THROUGH TO THE SITTING ROOM IN READINESS FOR THE BIG MATCH WHILST SHOUTING THROUGH TO PAUL WHO IS SETTING THINGS UP IN THE SITTING ROOM. SHE STARTS TO PREPARE THINGS IN THE KITCHEN FOR THE GIRLS, PERIODICALLY WIPING IMAGINARY MARKS AWAY FROM THE SURFACES OF HER PRISTINE KITCHEN. SOUNDS OFF AS DAVE AND CINDY FROM NEXT DOOR ARRIVE. CINDY APPEARS AT KITCHEN DOOR....

CINDY: Oh, Hiya Trace – how's it going (SCANNING KITCHEN). I didn't know whether to bring a bottle or not ... Dave's brought some beer ... but then you always seem to have everything (SARCASTICALLY). so organised.

TRACEY: Oh Cindy – any sign of the others? The match must be about to start. You know Paul's going to start getting stropopy if he has to keep getting up and down to the door after kick-off.

CINDY: Well, I saw your cousin Caroline in Tesco's in my lunch break and she said they might be a bit late. She's got a deadline to meet – some article she had to finish today but she thought Micky would come without her and she would come along later when she finished; and Audrey was in getting her hair done just before ... but she's such a snotty cow she never speaks to me - probably didn't think **we'd** be coming tonight (EYEING BOTTLES). Look can I get myself a drink Trace? I'm bloody desperate. never got time for any tea either – it was late when I left the shop ... late finish tonight you see....

TRACEY: Yes -I'll get it Cindy. Look Cindy I hope you don't mind me saying but better to mention it before the others get here, but could you please not call me Trace – I think I have mentioned it before. I don't like it.

CINDY: Oh sure Trace-ee – whatever. I wouldn't mind if you called me Cind tho – everyone else does. Cind – you know sinned – like sinner. that's me. (LAUGHS LOUDLY AND DOWNS THE DRINK IN ONE)

(SOUND OF THE MATCH FROM THE SITTING ROOM AND PAUL AND DAVE LAUGHING)

Well, sounds like those two have got things started alright.

(PASSING GLASS TO TRACEY FOR A REFILL) (SOUNDS OFF)

TRACEY: I think that's the others here. Excuse me Cindy.

(CINDY USES HER ABSENCE TO PICK AT THE FOOD AND READ THE BOTTLES)
(SOUNDS OFF)

TRACEY: Come in Audrey; thought the girls might enjoy it through here; we can have a chat away from the football.

AUDREY: (SPEAKING ON ENTRANCE) Yes, fine. we're near enough if they want anything and we can keep an eye on them too. (PUTTING DOWN NIBBLES AND BOTTLE AND REGARDING CINDY WITH OBVIOUS DISTASTE).

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_Oh hello Cindy, didn't know you were coming. Got a head start on everyone I see. I thought Dave would be at the match – being such a fan. Could he not get time off?

CINDY: (STILL PICKING) Nah! Jim Love was supposed to get tickets but it fell through. Dave's really pissed off about it. He was going to watch the match down at the boozer with his mates, then Paul and Trace asked us over; bit more fun for all the girls this way, no? hope I've not spoiled your night Aud... who else is coming Trace?

(TRACEY HAS BEEN SORTING OUT DRINKS FOR HERSELF AND AUDREY WHEN CINDY PASSES HER GLASS FOR ANOTHER REFILL)

TRACEY; Well, apart from Dave and yourself, Andy and Audrey here, Micky and Caroline, Ian and Shirley; you know Ian? He works with the same company as Paul; and Craig and Laura – tho' Craig wasn't sure what time he would be finished.

CINDY: Don't think I know Laura, but I've seen Craig at B & Q and wasn't he helping Paul with some furniture for your house Trace?

TRACEY: (QUICKLY AND EMBARRASSED) Oh yes; just some DIY stuff.

AUDREY: I'm surprised Micky and Caroline are coming; thought they were definitely splitting up this time; they have major problems don't they? Always thought she was too good for him, your cousin. He's very rough and ready and can't seem to settle to any decent job for very long. Not my type of person.

CINDY: Well, isn't he a lucky sod? Doesn't know what a lucky escape he's had!

AUDREY: (IGNORING CINDY) Hope they're all going to get on through there. Dave and Micky are both hotheads when it comes to football and we don't want any unpleasantness. Can't say I know Craig and Laura though. Have they been to any of your dinner parties before? I think I might have remembered if they had.

TRACEY: Er.. no.

CINDY; (PICKING AGAIN). Can't imagine they are your sort of people either then Aud!

TRACEY: No, they haven't been before.. Craig has been so good helping Paul with some bits and pieces of DIY – and they got talking about football and the match and Paul thought it would show him how much we appreciated his help– you know how it is. I've only met Laura his wife the once. She was sitting in the car the last time Craig was round and I thought it only polite to invite her in while the men were working – for a coffee – that sort of thing. She seems a very nice person – eager to please you know – that sort. (AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT) She's a dinner lady.

CINDY: (TO HERSELF) Definitely not one for your Christmas card list then!

AUDREY; (IGNORING CINDY) I don't think I know her – and I usually get to know most people in the area with working at the bank; can't say I've come across her tho...

CINDY; Well perhaps you wouldn't remember her Aud; She's a dinner lady – not quite the requirements for your circle of friends! (QUITE PLEASANTLY) Maybe she's no money to put in your poxy bank

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TRACEY: (COMING IN QUICKLY) No, I think she keeps much to herself – quite a shy person I believe; actually I put my foot in it when I spoke to her. She’s a bit on the tubby side and I asked when she was due. Well, it turned out she wasn’t pregnant but they are trying and she’s desperate for a baby.

AUDREY: Wow! It’s funny tho’ isn’t it, how many dinner ladies are a bit on the heavy side. Probably being amongst food all the time; well, you’d be tempted to be nibbling wouldn’t you? I don’t suppose it would be very healthy eating either. It must be awful to have a weight problem tho’. I’m glad I don’t. Couldn’t blame your husband for looking at other women could you? (SMOOTHING DOWN HER FIGURE A LITTLE SMUGLY). Course, with a lot of them it’s just a lack of discipline and will power.

CINDY: (EATING) Nothing wrong with a bit of weight. (LOOKING POINTEDLY AT AUDREY) We don't all want to look like bloody greyhounds.

(PAUL SHOUTS THROUGH THAT MICKY HAS ARRIVED AND CAROLINE WILL BE ALONG LATER).

TRACEY: OK love. Have you got everything you need through there?

(SHOUTS OF YES ETC)

CINDY: Speaking of which ... (TOPS UP HER GLASS AND OFFERS THE OTHERS)

AUDREY: (TRYING TO SPEAK QUIETLY) What’s Micky doing just now Tracey? I thought he had that fantastic opportunity abroad somewhere; did it all fall through? He’s been a postman and a butcher and God knows what ...

CINDY: Variety is the spice of life!

TRACEY: (WHISPERING) I know. It can’t be easy for poor Caroline. She works so hard at her freelancing – she’s really successful too but Mick’s a bit of a puzzle. They’ve probably had a fight tonight – don’t know if Caro will appear.... (SOUND OF FRONT DOOR).. Ooh that might be her now.... Oh! Hello .. Shirley ...

SHIRLEY: (BREEZING IN – VERY SPORTY AND JOKEY AND PUTTING HER CONTRIBUTIONS DOWN ON THE TABLE) Evening ladies. Ian’s not going to make it – had a business associate arrive to see him just half an hour ago; some emergency at work; he’s spitting mad; thought I’d pop in and visit anyway! Hello Audrey (NODS) Hello Cindy. How’s the hairdressing world? Are you busy? Like your hair like that. It really suits you. (ACCEPTS GLASS FROM TRACEY WHO HAS Poured HER A DRINK)

CINDY: (WHO LIKES SHIRLEY) Thanks Shirley. Yes, very busy just now; been on my feet all day but I get a day off tomorrow thank goodness.

AUDREY: I’m not too happy with the girl who did my hair today. Jenny I think her name was. I’m convinced she’s a junior; she cut my hair last time and I complained to Diane about her. They shouldn’t let the juniors loose on their best customers. It’s just not a professional attitude.

CINDY: Is that what you are then Aud? A best customer? The youngster’s doing really well actually, and we’ve all got to get started somewhere. It would be the same when you started at the bank if you

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can remember back that far. She just needs a bit time and confidence. Not likely to get it with customers like you whingeing about nothing. (ASIDE TO SHIRLEY) Truth be known everyone's busy when **she** rings for an appointment!

AUDREY: I'd rather you didn't call me Aud Cindy. My name's Audrey; not too difficult to remember is it?

TRACEY: (COMING IN QUICKLY AS CINDY AND AUDREY GLARE AT EACH OTHER) Any nibbles ladies?

SHIRLEY: Thanks Tracey. Are these the low fat ones? I've been so good this week, lost the holiday pounds. It's a constant battle but what the hell; a little naughtiness once in a while

CINDY: a whole bucketful of naughtiness is even better. (BOTH LAUGH) (NOISES OFF) Oh, I think that's your door again Trace.

(LAURA ENTERS BEFORE TRACEY HAS A CHANCE TO GO TO THE DOOR)

LAURA: (ALL FLUSTERED AND SPEAKING QUICKLY) Oh, sorry Tracey. Paul just said to go in .. hope you don't think I'm being forward. (LOOKING ROUND AT THE FULL KITCHEN) We tried to get here a bit earlier but Craig had to stay at work till they closed ... something about a late order ..and I didn't want to come on my own .. I hope we haven't inconvenienced you ... I always seem to do the wrong thing and ... I've brought a gateau ... sorry it's not home-made; by the time I left school and had to go shopping ... and then the housework .. there just wasn't enough time ..

TRACY: (KINDLY, BRINGING HER IN) Don't worry about it Laura. It really doesn't matter. The others haven't been here that long. Come and meet everyone

(INTRODUCTIONS ALL ROUND WITH APPROPRIATE RESPONSES)

Laura works with the local education authority too Shirley.

SHIRLEY: Which school do you work at Laura? I just thought I knew all the teaching staff in the area ...

LAURA: Oh heavens no .. I'm not a teacher. I wouldn't have the brains for that. I'm a dinner lady at St. Cuthberts Well, a kitchen assistant they call us now.

SHIRLEY: That's quite a challenge now tho' isn't it; school meals have become very healthy and tasty compared to when we were at school. You deserve a medal for the variety of school dinners you produce now. I'm sometimes in the canteen doing dinner duty and I feel very tempted to pick when I see the menus and smell the cooking smells.

LAURA: (FLUSHING) Oh that's very kind of you to say Shirley. I suppose I've always liked cooking .. and food Well you can tell can't you? Always mean to start dieting when I see all you slim ladies but well .. I never

TRACEY: A bit of weight suits some people Laura and it must be very tempting when you work with food, to nibble etc.

CINDY: (EYEING AUDREY) I've never come across a person with a bit of weight who wasn't good fun. not like these anorexic birds who pass out at the sight of a chip and can't think of anything to speak about other than their diets .. sorry Shirley, nothing personal.

SHIRLEY: No, you're quite right. It can get obsessional. It's good to forget about it sometimes.

(DRINKS AGAIN? CINDY NEVER STRAYS FAR FROM THE BOTTLES AND HELPS HERSELF WHEN TRACEY FAILS TO DO THE HONOURS)

AUDREY: Surely it's all about discipline. I've never put on a pound since I got married, and I don't diet. I just eat sensibly. I think you owe it to your husband to look smart and attractive.

SHIRLEY: I would say you owe it to yourself if that's what makes you feel good!

AUDREY: I would expect Andy to tell me if he thought I was overweight and unattractive.

LAURA: (LOOKING VERY UNCOMFORTABLE) Oh dear .. maybe Craig is sick of the way I look and just hasn't said then ...

CINDY: (GLARING AT AUDREY) If that's the case then how come your Andy's always eyeing up other women then Audrey ..can't be your rivetting personality that keeps him on a short leash!

AUDREY: Women like you Cindy, go out of their way to draw attention to themselves – by wearing tasteless clothes and too much make-up. Don't confuse that with men finding you attractive. It's just cheap!

CINDY: If you call the way you look tasteful and expensive Aud, you should ask for your money back!

TRACEY: (HURRIEDLY) Let's not get personal ladies

(Shout from the sitting room .. GOAL!)

SHIRLEY: Well, that says everything girls! Come on, let's call a truce ..

AUDREY: I would normally leave under circumstances like this but I'm not going to give that little tart the satisfaction of chasing me from my friend's house. She shouldn't even be here.

TRACEY: Come on Audrey – you're all friends of ours. Cindy's a neighbour and I was just hoping we could have a nice, pleasant evening. We can surely stay off controversial subjects.

CINDY: Men are always a good topic tho' eh? Come on Aud .. let's forget our barny; just climb down off your high horse; you might even start to enjoy yourself.

AUDREY: Hmph! Out of good manners I shall stay.

CINDY; Not because you want to keep an eye on Andy then?

TRACEY: Cindy!! Oh well at least the boys have managed to get this far without falling out about the game anyway. Craig doesn't get worked up about his team then Laura?

LAURA: No, not really. He's quite a calm person really..I'm just glad to see him enjoying himself with the other men. We tend to sit about the house in the evenings. We're both quite tired after work and we have been trying for a baby, as I told you.

CINDY: What every night? You must be knackered!

AUDREY: Charming expression!

TRACEY:Can't you just let it take its course?

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LAURA: (EMBARASSED) Oh, I didn't mean .. you know It's just that he has to make sure he's you know ... available, when my temperature is right .. and it's the right time of the month ..

SHIRLEY: Very technical!

AUDREY: (IN QUICKLY) Thank goodness I never had to go through that! It all sounds rather messy to me. I think if you want children then you should plan accordingly and intelligently and if it's not meant to happen then you should just accept the fact and not play about with nature.

CINDY: Yes .. well ... mother nature definitely got it right with you; can't imagine you with a brood! Even the one you have I can't imagine you changing messy nappies Aud! Or scraping puke off the shagpile ..

AUDREY: Whereas you give the impression of never quite having left either behind!

(CINDY AND AUDREY CONTINUE TO GLOWER AT EACH OTHER IN BETWEEN ACCEPTING MORE DRINKS ETC)

SHIRLEY: (WHO FEELS THAT LAURA HAS BEEN EMBARASSED ENOUGH ON TWO COUNTS NOW)

I'm sure it will be all worth it in the end Laura. Most women find motherhood totally fulfilling.

TRACEY: Not you tho' Shirley?

SHIRLEY: Oh God no! don't know one end of a baby from another. Never had what people describe as a maternal instinct; don't even have a biological clock ticking away to remind me. I like children from 12 or 13 upwards; when they are a bit independent I suppose. Mind you I have the greatest admiration for the earth mother figure.

CINDY: I never thought about it really. Just got on with it when they came along. Can't be bothered with all the bloody palava that goes with having kids nowadays, especially when you're pregnant; don't do this – do that – don't eat this – don't drink booze – take folic acid and kids are no better for it. My mam says she don't know how folk had kids in her time without all those rules and they were better off for it.

AUDREY: Well, I think you must be responsible in these matters. Andy and I planned Malcolm's birth and he was born right on schedule.

CINDY: Now there's a surprise! Bet you didn't even grunt Aud. It wasn't an immaculate conception was it?

(TITTERS ALL ROUND AND A GLARE FROM AUDREY)

(NOISES OFF AS CAROLINE POKES HER HEAD ROUND THE DOOR).

CAROLINE: Hi everyone Thought I'd follow the sounds of fun through here. Not missed too much have I? Sorry to be so late Tracey I had this rotten deadline to meet and thought I'd get finished long before I did. Well the men seem to be having a very civilised evening considering the usual arguments over football teams! (LOOKING ROUND EVERYONE). Hope you're all going to have a drink with me. I've got a bit of catching up to do.

TRACEY: Of course Caroline Come on in ... You haven't missed anything. We were all just having a pleasant chat .. you know. Now you know Audrey and Cindy don't you? Er .. this is

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Shirley, Ian's wife, and this is Laura. (ALL DO THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSES AS TRACEY STARTS TO GET DRINKS FOR EVERYONE).

CAROLINE: I've met Ian before at Paul's office, but I don't think I've met you Shirley, have I?

SHIRLEY: (IMMEDIATELY STRETCHING OUR HAND TO CAROLINE). Nice to meet you Caroline. I gather you're quite a success with your writing.

CAROLINE: Only after a deal of perseverance I'm afraid. What started out as a leisure activity has taken over my life but I suppose deadlines are the price I pay for doing the job I love. (TURNING TO LAURA) When's the happy event Laura?

(CONSTERNATION ALL ROUND)

LAURA: Oh ... not yet .. er I mean ... we're trying

CAROLINE: Oh, I'm so sorry ...I didn't mean to offend; perhaps I'm confusing you with someone else

LAURA: I'm just fat ... and happy ...

CINDY: I can understand why now.

AUDREY: Cindy always manages to lower the tone of any conversation.

CINDY: Easy to do when some of us are trying to speak over the top of our heads the time.

TRACEY: So the men are alright through there then Caro? I must say they've been unusually quiet considering it's such an important match.

CAROLINE: Perhaps they have all grown up at last! I must admit I would have watched it myself given half a chance.

SHIRLEY: Me too. Are you interested in sports Caroline? I get a real kick out of coaching the youngsters at school and Ian referees for the school teams. On a personal level I go for all the eastern philosophies and doctrines. There are yoga classes starting again if anyone's interested.

CAROLINE: (LAUGHING) Not me Shirley. Strictly a watcher I'm afraid. The only hobby I try to make time for is a spot of foreign cuisine.

TRACEY: You're really good too. It must be great when you have dinner parties. I must admit to being a novice in that direction although my guests are very complimentary about my experiments with alternative cuisine.