



GUIDE ME
By Paul Smith

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CHARACTERS

RICH – casual, smart. 30

CLARA – businesslike, efficient. 32

JACK – trendy, casual. 27

1.30pm – October – overcast

RICH is lying on a sofa in an apartment overlooking the River Thames in London. Docklands. The accommodation has doors leading to the kitchen, bathroom and the front door. It is smart, modern, clean and tidy. Cranes in the distance. Large windows. Curtains open.

A mobile phone is on the floor beside him.

Some music is playing – maybe in another room.

Every so often RICH leans down to the phone to check if there has been a message.

Nothing.

As he puts it down again, it rings. RICH answers it.

RICH You said you'd call an hour ago

 I'm just waiting.

 Shopping. Or something.

 No, not shopping. Well maybe some. Doctors. Hospital. She's had some pains. Period I think. I don't know.

 I told you.

Please don't pressure me Jack.

I will. It's just not easy. Not as easy as **you** think anyway.

I know.

It's what I want too.

I have to be fair.

Because I do.

Well, you would say that wouldn't you?

Because you would. You have. You do.

I'd rather be swilling gin with your brigade right now, than doing what I'm doing.

Lying on the sofa.

Feel sick.

Yes, actual physical sick.

Went out at midday.

How on Earth do I know?

Slipped into Liberty's probably.

Almost lives there.

Don't I know it.

Miss you.

Want you.

Love you so much.

Want you. Just want so badly.

I hate it.

Can we go away? Couple of weeks?

Don't care.

Just need to unload. Get rid of. You know.

I won't. I promise.

No, don't come round.

No. I don't need you here for this.

She won't.

No, please. Don't.

Sound of front door opening

Hold on. She's back.

I'll Call back.

Love you.

RICH ends the call and gets up. CLARA enters.

RICH You were a time.

CLARA Yes.

RICH Alright?

CLARA Not really.

RICH Oh.

CLARA Coffee.

RICH Want me to...

CLARA I'll get it.

CLARA exits to kitchen.

CLARA Who were you on the phone to?

RICH No one.

CLARA Well it must have been someone.

RICH I wasn't.

CLARA Don't lie Rich. I heard you. As I came through the door.

RICH It was no one.

CLARA Ok, well I hope 'No one' enjoys talking to you when you call back.

RICH How did you get on at the doctors?

CLARA I don't want to talk about it.

RICH Ok.

CLARA Maybe I will when you decide that lying isn't worth the breath it takes.

RICH I'm sorry?

CLARA You play musical chairs with the truth on a daily basis, Rich. Not interested in your inventions.

RICH I was concerned for your health.

CLARA Not enough to stop you wanking yourself off to someone you met on an app I guess.

RICH What the hell is that supposed to mean?

CLARA It means what it says.

There is a silence – CLARA re-enters the room with coffee.

RICH Do you want a coffee Rich?

CLARA You only needed to ask.

RICH A regular occurrence.

CLARA Now it's my time to ask what the hell is that supposed to mean?

RICH Oh..... Jeez.

CLARA Sometimes you can be a real cunt. Did you know that?

CLARA and in the last two years I felt like I was living with some kind of avatar.....

RICH And I felt I was living with your CV

CLARA one-dimensional – a pop-up character who's here today and gone tomorrow.....

RICH your own personal ambition taking the driving seat and taking out anything and anyone else that gets in your.....

CLARA my Mum was entirely right when she said you were a feeble clown.....

RICHwell thank Christ she died when she did then....

SILENCE

RICH No. Sorry. Clara. I didn't... sorry.

CLARA K

RICH Stupid. I. I got on well with....

CLARA Just don't.

RICH I.....

CLARA Please..

RICH What can....

CLARA Doesn't....

RICH Fuck.

CLARA I'm.....

RICH Sorry.....

SILENCE

CLARA I can't have children.

SILENCE

RICH Clara?

RICH approaches CLARA

RICH What did he say?

SILENCE

RICH Please.

SILENCE

RICH Look I really am sorry.

Things get said.

What's the matter?

I want to help.

CLARA returns to the kitchen

RICH Don't walk away.

CLARA Where's the Ibuprofen?

RICH What?

CLARA He just said take pain killers. For now.

RICH I.... I thought there were some in there.

CLARA Well I need some. I thought there was some in here.

RICH I'll look in the bathroom.

CLARA There aren't any in there. I never have any in there. We don't put them there.

RICH Ok.

CLARA There aren't any here.

RICH Do you want me to go and get some?

CLARA Well I need some.

RICH Ok. Well... can you hang on for a.....

CLARA No, I can't. I'll go.

RICH Clara

CLARA emerges from the kitchen, grabs her bag and goes. RICH stands and watches. He stares out of the window. Picks his phone up and dials.

RICH She's gone out again.

It's crap.

She's not well..... not sure.

Just said she couldn't have children.

I don't know.

I can't say anything to her.

I don't want to be near her.

She doesn't want me near her.

I don't think.

No, don't. She's only gone to the shop down the road. Probably.

Painkillers.

No, don't. I can't have you here.

I don't know if I....

I'll let you know.

Love you.....

LIGHTS FADE

LATER

JACK is drinking coffee looking out of the window. He is in running gear. RICH enters from the kitchen with a mug. When RICH is with JACK they are very tactile – the exact opposite of him and CLARA.

JACK Do those cranes ever move?

RICH What?

JACK The cranes by the River. Not sure I've ever seen them move.

RICH No idea. Not seen them move. I don't think. Why would you ask that?

JACK No reason. Just wondered. That's all.

RICH Drink your coffee.

JACK Why don't you give her a call?

RICH She only went out to get some tablets.

JACK She loves shopping you know.

RICH Just a hop, skip and a jump to the West End.

JACK Expensive painkillers.

RICH Her money.

JACK Think it's a hysterectomy?

RICH All I can think of. Problems with her periods for some time. Heavy flow.

JACK Nasty.

RICH Yeah well I have to be understanding. I am. Don't want her not to have kids.

JACK Just not with you.

RICH Yeah.

JACK You're going to have to tell her.

RICH Don't keep on.

JACK Just saying.

RICH I know.
Drink your coffee.

JACK Wanna come for a run?

RICH No. Well.....yes, but.....no, not now. Better wait.

JACK Call her.

RICH I don't want.... I don't... I don't know what to do.

JACK Show some concern. It won't hurt.

RICH Show concern and then tell her I'm off?

JACK Something like that.

RICH Yes, well. Show some concern yourself. You haven't got to do the deed.

JACK So you are going to do it?

RICH Of course.

JACK Sure?

RICH Very.
Love you.

JACK I know.
Let's do that get away from it all trip. Soon as.....

RICH Yeah.
SILENCE – they hold each other.

JACK Phone her.

RICH I can't.

JACK Find out where she is. See if we have enough time.

RICH Too risky.

JACK That's what I love.

RICH At this particular moment that'd make things far more messy than they need to be.

JACK Please?

RICH No.

JACK You spoil all my fun.

RICH I know.

JACK Do you think *she* knows?

RICH Maybe.

JACK You think she might be expecting this?

RICH I don't know.

JACK She's always really nice to me.

RICH I know.

JACK Which makes it worse. I think.

RICH Does it?

JACK Well, it will make it worse. When she finds out. I think she knows. I can't believe she hasn't picked up the signals. You two aren't getting along. Haven't for a long time. She knows. I know she knows.

RICH If she's really not well, then it won't make this easy.

JACK You weren't to know that.

RICH No.

The sound of the front door opening makes them split suddenly. JACK jumps on the sofa and RICH goes to the kitchen. CLARA appears – she has bags.

CLARA Oh, hello Jack.

JACK Clara lovely. You ok?

CLARA Fine. Didn't expect you to be here.

JACK Day off. Popped round to see if the big man wanted to go for a run.

RICH re-enters

RICH Which I didn't. Don't. You bought a lot of Ibuprofen!

CLARA Do you want to stay for some food?

JACK No, you're ok. Already booked.

RICH How are you feeling?

CLARA Me? Was that directed at me?

RICH It was.

CLARA Well I am fine thank you for asking. So kind of you.

RICH Right.

JACK You off colour?

CLARA I've been better Jack. I am going to have a hysterectomy. Not fun. Ends my dreams of Motherhood, but there you are. Shit happens. Quite a lot of it happens round here actually.

JACK Shit. I mean that's not good. Really sorry to hear that. Hey Rich, you should have told me. Come on give me a hug.

JACK gives CLARA a quick hug

RICH I...err...

CLARA He didn't know. Not officially. I didn't tell him. Told you though. You listen to me and show some feeling. Some affection. Thin on the ground.

JACK Not a big cuddler are you Richie boy?

RICH Do you want a cup of tea?

CLARA No. A glass of wine. Large and white.

RICH goes into the kitchen and returns presently with a glass of wine

JACK So, you got to have an op then.

CLARA Seems like it. In I go and have my inners ripped out. Not exactly what I'd suggest as a good day out, but probably preferable to being here with Mr Uptight.

RICH Clara. Come on. Give it a rest.

CLARA Give it a rest? I've hardly started. Jack, maybe you'd better go, this is going to get bloody, dangerous and deeply unpleasant. Not for your sensitive eyes and ears I don't think.

JACK Look, you two. I hate seeing this.

RICH Maybe you had better go.

JACK Really?

RICH Yes, really.

JACK Look, I'm quite happy to act as some kind of mediator. Offer my services...

RICH Jack just go!

CLARA Oi. No need for that.

JACK It's ok. I'll leave you to it. You need time. This is really tough for you lovely.

JACK kisses CLARA and hugs her again as he leaves.

JACK Call me if you need me. I'll be straight round.

CLARA Thanks Jack. Love you.

JACK Love you too, Scrumpet!

JACK looks at RICH who has turned to look out of the window. JACK leaves.

SILENCE

CLARA You shouldn't speak to him like that.

RICH I know. I'm sorry.

CLARA Pointless telling me.

RICH I know. I'll make it up to him.

CLARA I'm sure you will.

RICH What's..... yes, ok.... Clara. I'm really sorry about the diagnosis.

CLARA Yep.

RICH No, please. I mean it really.

CLARA Ok.

RICH Is it definite?

CLARA Definite I am being ripped asunder?

RICH Definite that you need the hysterectomy.

CLARA I listen to the experts for their guidance on my health. What else can I do? Isn't that what we learn to do? Trust me I'm a doctor! Maybe I should go for a second opinion you think? Well I've been poked and prodded a few times so far – this isn't some lone wolf quack – it's a GP and a couple of consultants. So if they say I'm barren then so be it.

CLARA is fighting back the tears

RICH Clara.

CLARA No, I'll be fine. Other people have far worse to deal with. I'll be fine. I know that you were never keen on the kiddie thing and I've got used to.....

RICH I never said never.

CLARA Probably not, but, well, it doesn't take..... but you never said you wanted to be a Daddy. You know you would be such a good one. Do you know that?

RICH I don't. I'm not sure I would.

CLARA You would. Believe me.

RICH Well.....

CLARA I've been offered counselling. I think I'll take them up on it.

RICH You should.

CLARA Not sure it'll do much good. Won't make me a Mummy will it? Nothing can do that.

RICH That's not true.

CLARA I'm not adopting.

RICH Never?

CLARA It's not like being a proper Mother is it?

RICH I think it is. But, well we have time to decide.

CLARA Maybe.

SILENCE

CLARA I'm a cow sometimes.

RICH And I am not very nice either.

CLARA I need more wine. Call Jack. Tell him to come back. Do it now before he gets home.

CLARA goes into the kitchen

RICH He has things to do. He said he was eating out somewhere.

CLARA Tell him to pop in quickly before he goes out.

RICH Nah.

CLARA Do it, or I will. I need him to lighten our moods.

RICH Ok.

RICH makes a call. During which CLARA re-enters with a filled glass of wine.

RICH Me. I know.

Clara asks if you can come round again.

I know.

Before.

Oh. You're not?

CLARA He coming?

RICH Yes. He isn't going out.

CLARA No excuse then. We'll get a takeaway. Vodka is in the fridge!

RICH Yes, ok. Thanks.

See you then.

CLARA See you then!!

RICH ends the call.

CLARA We need to perk ourselves up. Get yourself a drink.

RICH moves towards the kitchen and goes into it.

I get angry so much. It won't last. I will get over it. I think. I hope.

LIGHTS FADE

LATER

RICH has changed his clothes and now has a glass of wine. He is looking out of the window. Music is playing; soft jazz or gentle classical. Maybe in the distance we hear the sound of a shower running. The doorbell rings after a while. RICH moves to door and opens it to JACK.

JACK Well, this is a turn up for the books. I didn't run. I changed.

RICH So I see. Voddie?

JACK I might need it. Where's Clara?

RICH Shower.

RICH walks into the kitchen – JACK follows. We don't see them, but hear them kiss.

JACK You haven't told her I guess?

RICH Not the right time.

JACK She calmed down?

RICH Yes. Seems to have. Emotions all over the place.

JACK I could see.

They both emerge from the kitchen with drinks.

JACK Completely understandable. Who would be a woman?

RICH Don't. I've no idea where this evening's going, but I wasn't going to fight her on anything.

JACK Well have lots of wine and we'll all laugh about it one day.

RICH Not sure how you manage to make the worst moments suddenly seem trivial and comic.

JACK You've always taken life far too seriously.

RICH She was telling me I would be a good Father.

JACK You will be; when we adopt you will be an amazing Daddy.

RICH And you will be a brilliant Mummy.

JACK Thank you kindly.

JACK leans into RICH and kisses him

RICH Just stick with me and I'll do my best.

JACK Oh, I ain't goin nowhere Mister. Cos you is my man!

RICH Sweet.

As they start to move in together again we hear CLARA call. Once again, they break apart dramatically.

CLARA ***(off)*** Is Jack here yet?

JACK He sure is.

CLARA Got a drink?

JACK Of course.

CLARA Be there in a mo.

JACK Super.

SILENCE

JACK This isn't going to be the night is it?

RICH I don't see how it can be. I don't know if I can bring myself to and please don't put pressure on. I can't do this to order.

JACK I know. Don't forget I love you.

RICH Love you too.

CLARA emerges still dressing. She stands and looks at JACK and RICH who haven't noticed her. The two men are staring at each other.

CLARA Why so glum?

JACK Ah, there you are lovely. Freshly laundered?

RICH Let me top up your glass.

RICH goes into the kitchen and soon emerges with a large glass of wine.

CLARA Thank you.

JACK How are you now?

CLARA The same, but maybe dealing with things a little better. Initial shock. Not nice.

JACK Of course not.

CLARA Thank you Rich. So what happened to your dinner date Jack?

JACK Cancelled on me. Stood up in favour of a night in Heaven. But I think I would be far happier here than hunting around in the dark corners for a quick thrill.

CLARA Sounds delightful.

RICH What time did you order the food for?

CLARA Eight.

JACK We'll be completely trolled by then.

CLARA Oh I do hope so. Glad you could come back. Rich and I have been talking.

JACK You have?

During the following, CLARA becomes increasingly emotional.

CLARA Bearing in mind that once I have had my operation I won't be able to have children, we've decided to look at the programme for adoption. It's a real possibility and I think it's our best way to make sure we can become parents. You've got to admit Rich would make the best Daddy wouldn't he? I think I would be able to take a good stab at being a Mummy. Together we could really offer a brilliant home to a little boy or a little girl, or maybe one of each or two of each or whatever. I just know this is what we need to do. Things are so bleak at the moment for me and I don't mind telling you that I'm fairly shitting myself about what I need to have done. Not from the physical side of things, though that's not going to be much fun, but from the mental psychological side. Losing your womb is like losing your reason to be, your femininity – for you it's like having your dick cut off. Well, to some extent anyway. But we wanted you to be the first to know the good news. We know that you'll be an awesome uncle to...

RICH Clara...

CLARA don't you think so Rich?? You can babysit for us. Think of that. Take them out for days to give us a break. Come on holiday with us. Maybe you can be their godfather. Yes, what about that as an idea. Sure we can sort that out. Cos it will be fun won't it? Won't it Jack.

JACK Yes.

CLARA Cos whatever happens, I just want to make Rich happy and have a family with him. It's all I've ever wanted you see. A family. Be Mummy with a wonderful Daddy.

CLARA is crying her eyes out. RICH reaches out and holds her briefly as he too becomes overwrought and emotional. Tears too.

Rich, you will help me do that won't you? Won't you? You remember what you said on our wedding day; one of your vows. 'I promise I will bring you your most precious wish.' Do you remember?

RICH Yes.

CLARA We can do it can't we? We can. Rich?

RICHyes...

CLARA

.....yes, yes, yes.....I want to turn this negative into the biggest positive going and want us to make sure that the two of us excel as parents and create our own wonderful family together. The family we promised ourselves and everyone else that we would have. Our family. Clara and Rich's family. You and me. Just you and me together. As we should be. Forever. The perfect couple. Inseparable. I love you so much. You know that don't you? Yes we have our ups and downs, but what couple doesn't, but through it all is our love. The most precious love and the love which we will share with our children. Our love. Just you and me together. Hold me my darling.

RICH holds on to CLARA. JACK moves towards them as if to join the embrace – does he? Doesn't he? JACK turns back to the windows as CLARA and RICH continue to hold each other. They are ignoring him.

JACK

Oh look. The cranes are in motion.

JACK stares out of the window. RICH and CLARA are wrapped up in themselves.

FADE TO BLACK