

# **A CUP OF SUGAR**

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## **Characters:**

Lizzie

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*At various times throughout the piece Lizzie and Ben address each other but other times they are simply “telling the story”.*

**LIZZIE:** If I think about it....I think we were always completely in love. He was my best friend. There was nothing I couldn't tell him. It was just ....I didn't realise we were completely in love. I just knew I could tell him anything. I'd even tell him when I went out with other men.

**(PAUSE)**

That's not normal is it?

**BEN:** No. Yuck. Jesus, Lizzie. Ask yourself if I needed to hear that.

**LIZZIE:** You've never done it then?

**BEN:** Of course not. What normal person licks another person on the cheek over dinner?

**LIZZIE:** It was after. I turned my cheek so he could give me a quick kiss goodnight and I felt his tongue slide straight across my face.

**BEN:** Jesus.

**LIZZIE:** I won't be seeing him again. I refuse to have my cheek licked after one dinner. Totally unacceptable.

**BEN:** She had the worst hit rate with losers and dickheads I've ever known... When she'd dump them....I was always relieved. It was like I'd skated out of trouble once again. Another close shave. She'd never see that. She was-

**LIZZIE:** Oblivious. But not really. I think I suspected how he felt. I just took time to adjust. To come around to it. But then I did come around to it. In a big way.

**BEN:** Since when? You've never said anything.

**LIZZIE:** I'm saying it now. I've just realized it.

**BEN:** Well...Good for you.

**LIZZIE:** Good for you?

**BEN:** You've never said anything. How do I know you're serious? I think you could really hurt me if it's just a passing thing.

**LIZZIE:** It's not a passing thing. It won't pass no matter how much I wish it would. And I don't mean that the way it sounds....  
*(PAUSE)*  
Could I really hurt you? I find that very moving.

**BEN:** Its fantastic isn't it? I'm over the moon about it myself.

**LIZZIE:** It's very romantic. And obviously I would never do anything to hurt you. ...Intentionally.  
So now it's all out in the open...Where to now? How should we progress things?

**BEN:** How about.... I don't want you to see anyone else. I want us to only see each other. From now on. How's that?

**LIZZIE:** Excellent. We're absolutely on the same page.  
*(PAUSE)*  
And don't think I have a one track mind or anything ....But....  
Can we have sex? Is that part of us "seeing only each other"...Or have I misunderstood what you were getting at?

**BEN:** Lizzie, I want us to have children together.

**LIZZIE:** That's not a prerequisite for sex with you is it?

**BEN:** I wanted to have a life with her. It's sentimental and probably pathetic.... but.... I wanted to have children with her.

**LIZZIE:** That freaked me out almost completely. I'm not that young. As soon as he said that, I felt an incredible sense of pressure. A tick, tick..... Like a time bomb. And the one thing I'd never told him was that when I was nineteen I had been pregnant ....Which I don't judge myself for...But in a way I also do.

**BEN:** Life just motors along when you're happy.... I thought...This is it. If I can be this happy with her, I won't ask for anything else. I don't need anything else. It's perfect. She's perfect.

**LIZZIE:** I don't think I've ever felt as adored. That never happens. That's a huge thing. A gift. He gave me that. And then I couldn't imagine not having it.

We were so settled so quickly. I'd never been settled before. Not ever. And so I decided to work from home because it was all so perfect and we were really happy. Together

And ....Subconsciously we were feathering the nest for the next big decision...The next big event.

*(PAUSE)*

Tick tick. Boom.  
A baby.

**BEN:** It's the perfect time for us. We don't want to leave it any longer. Age wise I mean. And we love each other. Don't we?

**LIZZIE:** Okay. Yes. We absolutdy do.

**BEN:** You don't sound keen.

**LIZZIE:** It's not that. No. Not at all.

**BEN:** I really want this Lizzie. I really want us to have a baby.

**LIZZIE:** I do too.  
*(PAUSE)*

And I think I meant it. It was just that his enthusiasm seemed enough for both of us. Someone had to stay anchored to the floor. Didn't they? Someone had to be the realist. The cold water. It wasn't going to be Ben. Ben wanted it and I wanted it for him. For us.

*(PAUSE)*

But there were times when I wondered if we should just get a dog. A maltese shitzu cross called Fritz moved in across the road with his owner. We chatted through the fence every afternoon after their walk. A divorced architect ....Working from home. Completely coincidental.... But also very convenient.... ....For when you need to borrow a cup of sugar.

**STEPHEN:** I hated working from home. From the very beginning, I regretted it. It was like a license to be lazy. I started actively doing things to avoid having to do any work. Walking the dog. Weeding the garden. Painting the letterbox. Coffee with Lizzie. Scrabble with Lizzie. Walks with Lizzie. It was like wagging school. With Lizzie.

**LIZZIE:** So we had sex constantly but no baby.  
I had no idea working from home would be so much work.

**BEN:** It's only eight months.

**LIZZIE:** We're doing it all the time.

**BEN:** That's an exaggeration.

**LIZZIE:** Ben, we need to see someone.

**BEN:** We're fine. We need to be patient

**LIZZIE:** I think we should see someone. Have tests or something.

**BEN:** What if you go first? I'll come with you. It could be me but I'm sure there's nothing wrong.

**LIZZIE:** I wanted to say...I'm quite sure it's you because I had no trouble conceiving after 10 rapid fire minutes with Shane Hicks in his parents' holiday house at Torquay.

**BEN:** Eight months is only eight months. And we're not doing it constantly. We're probably not doing it enough.

**LIZZIE:** We did it nine times last week.

**BEN:** Why are you keeping count? That's not very loving...Jesus, Lizzie.... You make it sound like such a chore.

**LIZZIE:** It's not that. It's just..... There's no spontaneity.

**BEN:** There was also no success. I had to give in. Admit defeat. Go to the doctor. I didn't want her to feel any more pressure when my tests came back negative. I was sure it wasn't me. And if I went by myself without telling her, I'd have the tests and choose the right time to tell her. That it wasn't me.

At the same time, I was ready to kill the furry little shitting machine across the road. I had to clean the driveway twice a day. Fucking Fritz.

***(STEPHEN WHISTLES FOR FRITZ)***

**STEPHEN:** Good boy, Fritz.

**LIZZIE:** We weren't the same anymore. We were dissatisfied. Tired. Frustrated. Frightened. It's not the same as being adored.

I wanted to say ....It can't be me. It isn't me and I don't care if it's you because I love you and you're enough. But he wouldn't feel that way. It would never be enough. It would hang over us like a wounded shadow.

Ruthlessness is like odour for a skunk or a sting for a bee. It's a concealed weapon. But you don't need it so you don't use it. You don't even know its there. But when you realize you need it. You use it. No hesitation.

**STEPHEN:** It was all neighborly. The odd cup of sugar. Treats for Fritz. Then we'd chat.. Over coffee and Scrabble. She liked to look at the projects. I was working on.

But I showed her my best work too soon. I peaked too early. There was no time for afterglow. She wasn't looking for that. She had afterglow already.

I saw her this morning. She had great news. So unexpected. Such a surprise. She'd tell him and they'd be so happy because this was their dream come true. He'd waited so long.

I didn't know what to say. Like an absolute idiot, I said "Congratulations". She hugged me and I could feel her breath on my neck. I know I probably imagined this but I thought she said "Thank you".

And if nothing else...Their child will have excellent manners.

**LIZZIE:** I don't think Stephen and I can play Scrabble anymore. It's hard to work out your triple word score with the same easy camaraderie once you've fucked awkwardly but effectively leaning up against the drafting table in his spare room.

And I don't judge myself....But in a way...I also do.

**BEN:** If the job's done....There's nothing more to say. Nothing to give the game away. The baby will be a bundle of perfect joy and no-one will look for anything else.. No-one will wonder. They'll think it's a miracle ...And in a way it is a miracle. Isn't it?

It's always the "ifs". *If* I'd told her about the doctor and the tests. *If* she'd told me she was pregnant a couple of days earlier.

Apparently my sperm volume is the lowest seen by the doctor in over a year. Rare privilege that one. Not something you'd put on your CV.

I really wanted this. Sometimes even more than I wanted her. Which makes me feel pretty fucking guilty.

And I didn't tell her but I'd already bought a baby seat for the car. It was on sale. An absolute bargain. It's hidden in my mother's garage.

So after all the trying ....Maybe it's still a miracle. A modern miracle. Not a fairytale miracle. A miracle that you make happen. And by November we might not even remember how she made it happen.

I won't let on that I know and I hope he doesn't. Because they were never that intimate. They were just screwing occasionally. I couldn't take it if I thought she'd told him anything. About us. It'd be better if he thought I was a bastard who beat her up. Maybe I should have slapped her around a bit.

I'll never thank him but maybe I won't complain next time his dog shits on my driveway. I owe him that much.

**STEPHEN:** Come on Fritz....Here boy.

**LIZZIE:** Ben, you're happy, aren't you? And relieved?

**BEN:** No question, Lizzie. It's a miracle.

***LIGHTS DOWN***