

**STOP MAKING SENSE**

by Mark Andrew

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CHARACTERS

JACKIE 20-30s, preparing to go out on a date.

NEIL 20-30s, flat mate.

SUSAN 20-30s, flat mate.

TIME

The present.

PLACE

Jackie's bedroom.

AT RISE

*JACKIE is getting ready for a date. NEIL 'appears'.*

JACKIE Christ Neil, can't you knock? I might have been in the nudie or something.

NEIL Listen. I've got a plan.

JACKIE Can I please just get ready for my date first? He'll be here soon.

NEIL I'm going to help you.

JACKIE *maybe putting lippy on, distracted.* Ah ha.

NEIL I've decided to rebuild your self-esteem.

JACKIE Oh...kay. How are you going to do that?

NEIL Dismantle it. Strip it bare. Show you that you're a complete idiot.

JACKIE Oh, lovely. Did you have take classes to learn this?

NEIL I mean, take your love life. It's tragic. Or a farce, rather. An orgy.

JACKIE Oh, sweetie. Thank you.

NEIL You must stop introducing yourself on dates by whacking them in the face with all your emotional baggage.

JACKIE I don't have baggage!

NEIL I mean all your hopes and dreams and... desires. It's intimidating.

JACKIE That's not baggage. It's more like a... plane ticket. Anyway, what if they ask? Men are trained to ask questions now a days.

NEIL They're men. They'll ask what you do, not what you want.

JACKIE *stops and thinks.* I never noticed that before. Why do they do that?

NEIL God, this is like explaining the rules of baseball to a Limey.

JACKIE *thinks.* But English people don't play baseball.

NEIL Exactly.

JACKIE Exactly my arse. It's not a good simile. Why would you want to explain baseball to someone who doesn't play it? I date, and I date men, so your example stinks.

NEIL Lots of men.

JACKIE Right. Tonnes of men. So you need to say, this is like, ah, getting an alcoholic out of a bar in one piece. Got it?

NEIL *miffed.* Anyway. *pause.* I could go on. In fact I think I will.

JACKIE Have you prepared this?

NEIL Example, right?

JACKIE You have prepared this.

NEIL Take your arse.

JACKIE What's wrong with my arse?

NEIL It's a lovely arse. Nothing wrong with it. Like two kittens in a sack. Lovely. And I should know.

JACKIE That was years ago. Is it this skirt? Does my bum look big in this?

NEIL Jesus. That's exactly what I mean. Does my head look bald in this shirt?

JACKIE Your head looks bald in a hat, sweetie. I thought that's why you always liked the lights off when we used to do it.

NEIL Funny. I'm talking about your arse because you're obsessed by it.

JACKIE I'm obsessed by it!

NEIL Right.

JACKIE Look. I like my arse. It's a genetic dice throw, I know that. I mean, look at my poor sister. But I like my arse. It's got me lots of nooky.

NEIL But do you have to stick your rump in the air on the first date?

JACKIE I do not!

NEIL Barry from accounts said he could practically see your crack.

JACKIE I was showing him my tattoo! *wounded*. He said that?

NEIL In a restaurant?

JACKIE Well, it was pretty quiet.

NEIL It was the Rockpool! It's supposed to be quiet. People don't want a flash of your goodies when they're contemplating the oysters.

JACKIE *slows and smiles*. You used to say my sex was like an oyster.

NEIL *grins*. Well, you know.

JACKIE Hmm?

NEIL Tip of the tongue. Many a slip. Been lifted.

JACKIE *warm*. I remember that. You lovely man.

NEIL *snaps out of it*. Right. Tonight. Who's tonight?

JACKIE Kevin.

NEIL Who?

JACKIE From legal. With the Italian shoes and the hundred-dollar haircut.

NEIL Ah. Yes. Kevin. *pause*. Legal. *makes a face*.

JACKIE What?

NEIL Nothing. So what have you said, so far?

JACKIE What do you mean?

NEIL Telephonic. Warm up. Emails. Pre-date simmering.

JACKIE Ah...

NEIL Come on. I know you.

JACKIE I told him I'd like to... *turns her head, sotto voce, murmurs*.

NEIL Pardon?

JACKIE I said I'd like to marinate his loins after we've had the rack of lamb.

NEIL What you want. See. I rest my case. You should be more subtle.  
Men don't like obvious.

JACKIE They don't?

NEIL Not on first dates. They like to think they're unique. They like to think their charm has thawed you. If you spontaneously orgasm over the hors d'oeuvres they're liable to think you're a tad easy.

JACKIE But I am easy.

NEIL But you mustn't tell them that.

JACKIE I mustn't?

NEIL No. Or they'll just want to fuck you.

JACKIE But that's what I want.

NEIL And afterwards?

JACKIE *genuinely puzzled.* I don't know what that means.

NEIL Don't you want them to hang around? Be besotted by you? Follow you around Bloomingdale's on a Saturday while you choose frilly knickers?

JACKIE God, no. I do that with my girlfriends.

NEIL Don't you want to fall in love?

JACKIE Oh God - no! Men don't work properly if there's lots of love. It's like putting petrol in a diesel engine. I need lust. And a jolly good rodgering. Once a week is fine, it just has to be nice and lusty.  
*pause.* Love? Look, I just need a posh feed somewhere delightful on a Saturday night, somewhere warming and hopeful, followed by the holy trinity.

NEIL *resigned.* Trinity. Christ. Come on. Let's be having them then.

JACKIE *snuggling into her riff.* Loads of snogging; that's number one, is foreplay. You can't skip that one. Then, consummation. Frantic, basic. *shrugs.* Actually, any which way usually works for me.

NEIL *head in his hands.* Oh God. And number three?

JACKIE Afterglow. That's the best bit. When they lose the power of speech.

NEIL That's it?

JACKIE Well - once more with feeling before sun-up. Slower. Then a nice sleepy spoony one before I get a whiff of their morning breath.

NEIL That's your recipe is it?

JACKIE Yep. Do not repeat with the same ingredients. It's like a putting a soufflé back in the oven. It's pointless. No good to anyone.

NEIL *starts a prolonged silence.* Is that why you dumped me?

JACKIE *practical, deliberate, but thoughtful.* Pretty much.

NEIL You mean you didn't fancy me anymore, after we'd...

JACKIE *amused.* After we'd...?

NEIL After we, er... you know –

JACKIE *laughs.* Oh my goodness. You practically dislocated my pelvis, and now you're shy about saying 'fuck'. You see, that's exactly what I was trying to explain, sweetie.

NEIL After we'd made love.

JACKIE *pause; serious.* We did not, by any stretch of the English language 'make love'. No poets were present. Romance sat whimpering outside the door in the cold, like an abandoned puppy in the rain.

NEIL I thought it was really special.

JACKIE Neil. I sat on your face. After you couldn't come any more?

NEIL *pathetic*. But you did it really... beautifully.

JACKIE You might as well have been a saddle. I was using your nose like a pommel, darl. Remember? You nearly drowned. I had to give you mouth to mouth.

NEIL I love you.

JACKIE Oh, please, don't do this again.

NEIL I'm sorry. I do. I can't help it. I can't stop it.

JACKIE You sound like a bed-wetter. You can stop it. It's just a crush.

NEIL Well, then I love having a crush on you.

JACKIE For three years?

NEIL Forever.

JACKIE Christ.

NEIL Will you marry me?

JACKIE No! I mean, er, what a nice offer, but no. Thank you. Very much.

NEIL Let's just have a baby then.

JACKIE Not if you were the last man on earth.

NEIL *hurt*. You don't mean that.

JACKIE Well, no. Not actually if you were the last man.

NEIL So there's hope then?

JACKIE *pause*. Look, Neil. I'm not going to love you. I'm not going to have sex with you again. We never made love. We had a high speed drunken sex crash, just like I planned it, which was lovely. But I will never, ever, marry you, let alone bear your sappy progeny.

NEIL *pause*. Could we get a dog then?

JACKIE No. We're just friends.

NEIL Friends don't give intimate, personal advice on dating.

JACKIE Yes, they do! That's exactly what friends do. I want to tell you how it goes, and, you know... laugh about it afterwards.

NEIL *frosty*. How it goes with Kevin. From legal.

JACKIE Well yes, this week. Kevin.

NEIL *silence*. Kevin's a twat.

JACKIE Neil. I want your advice. Really. It's sweet. It's like getting directions to an orgy from a priest. Come on. Deconstruct me. Please. Take me apart. Tell me what I need. I like it.

NEIL *belligerent*. No.

JACKIE Please. Tell me. What should I say tonight?

NEIL Say you love me.

JACKIE Not that. *she hunts around, then holds up two different types of high heel shoes*. What do you think?

NEIL Nice. But they don't match.

JACKIE You pillock. Which ones?

NEIL Oh, god, I don't know. The most comfortable?

JACKIE Give it a rest. Which give you the most wood?

NEIL *pause; sullen, then interested; he points at one of them*.

JACKIE Thank you. *she puts the chosen high heels on and poses for him*. Christ, these spikes make me hot. What do you think?

NEIL What do I think?

JACKIE Yeah. Come on. *saucy*. What do you think?

NEIL I think you should tell Kevin you've got herpes.

JACKIE *laughs.* I already did. He's got it too. It's what you do, if you're a shag-artiste. You're up-front. It's fun. It's open.

NEIL I hate thinking of you... fucking someone on the first date.

JACKIE What, I should wait until the third date? Jesus. There isn't going to be a third date. I'd have to sit though him droning on about his ex, or his bloody car. First dates are all fruity and flirty, there's no actual reality, it's just pure nerves. Third date? Give me a break. He'd start lying about his salary.

NEIL *resigned.* Okay.

JACKIE *stunned.* What?

NEIL Okay. I get it.

JACKIE You do?

NEIL Sure. You only want first dates. Otherwise they get too close.

JACKIE Good. Well done, sweetie.

NEIL *silence.* That way no one will ever do what I did to myself.

JACKIE *profound silence; she turns away from him and he 'disappears'.*  
 Why do you always have to bring that up? Right before I go out?  
*There is a knock at her bedroom door.*  
 Hello? Come in.

SUSAN *enters.* Jackie? Your date's here. Downstairs. Are you okay?

JACKIE *recovering.* Yes. I'm fine.

SUSAN I thought I heard voices in here.

JACKIE Yeah. I get that sometimes too. *she's holding something.*

SUSAN He looks dishy. I bet he's a lawyer. *SUSAN walks towards JACKIE and takes a photo JACKIE is holding; it's of Neil; SUSAN hugs*

*JACKIE*. It wasn't your fault you know. Jackie? You know that.

Come on, shake a leg. *exits*.

JACKIE *wonders around a bit lost; changes her shoes; exits.*

CURTAIN