

# The People Upstairs

a short play

By

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## **The People Upstairs**

### **Characters**

ALISTAIR

KEN

SWEE-CHIN

LINDA

VOICES OFF – MALE AND FEMALE

### **Time**

The present.

### **Setting**

An apartment block.

**The People Upstairs**

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah.

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) I work as a freelance draftsman.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah.

ALISTAIR: I work from an office at home.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah baby.

ALISTAIR: It's very interesting what you hear when you're working at home during the day.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me baby. Fuck me.

ALISTAIR: When the people upstairs think no one's home.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh baby I love it.

ALISTAIR: It can be a little distracting.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me fuck me fuck me.

ALISTAIR: And I guess I could close the window.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah fuck.

ALISTAIR: But that didn't seem to make much difference.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh fuck yeah.

ALISTAIR: At first I thought they were watching a porn movie.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me baby !

ALISTAIR: Or maybe shooting a porn movie.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me with your big hard cock.

ALISTAIR: But I couldn't hear a director's voice.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah – I'm coming !

ALISTAIR: And it was so loud.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah !!!

ALISTAIR: I thought – this is really happening.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): That's it baby. Hard hard

ALISTAIR: It's

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh fuck me baby. Fuck me.

ALISTAIR: the people

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): I love it when you fuck me hard.

ALISTAIR: upstairs.  
Now if this happens just once well you put it down to experience. A bit of a laugh. Something to tell your mates.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh fuck yeah.

ALISTAIR: But when it happens every morning

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh oh oh..

ALISTAIR: Between 10am and 11am

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): fuck fuck fuck

ALISTAIR: Like clockwork.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): yeah yeah yeah

ALISTAIR: It gets a little –

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh fuck yeah !!!

ALISTAIR: Embarrassing. Not to mention -

LIGHTS CHANGE.

ALISTAIR: If I'd found myself in a different situation I wouldn't have minded so much. If I had a beautiful girlfriend

**LINDA ENTERS. SHE STANDS SMILING AT ALISTAIR.**

ALISTAIR: who I'd love to ... with ... the events upstairs would've probably just got me nicely ready for when she came home. And we could put on our own sound FX show to rival our neighbours.  
But – for reasons we shalln't go in to - my beautiful girlfriend had –

**LINDA GIVES ALISTAIR THE FINGER AND EXITS.**

ALISTAIR: Decided our relationship wasn't working and departed.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah !

ALISTAIR: So the constant reminders

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck yeah fuck yeah

ALISTAIR: Of the delights of companionship

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me baby fuck me.

ALISTAIR: Coming from upstairs.

MALE VOICE (OFF): I'm coming.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah baby, come baby.

ALISTAIR: While I sat downstairs

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): I love it when you come.

ALISTAIR: Alone.

MALE VOICE (OFF): I'm coming.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Come baby, come inside me.

ALISTAIRS: Were just a little too much –

MALE VOICE (OFF): (COMING) Ooohhhhhhhh – ohhhh – ohhh. )

) - Together

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah baby that's it. Come baby come. )

ALISTAIR: To put up with.

So after one particularly graphic exchange one morning - I went upstairs.

LIGHTS CHANGE. **ALISTAIR** KNOCKS ON A DOOR.

**KEN** OPENS IT.

KEN: Hello.

ALISTAIR: G'day. My name is Alistair. I live in the apartment downstairs.

KEN: Hello Alistair. I am Ken.

**SWEE-CHIN** ENTERS.

KEN: And this is my girlfriend Swee-Chin. We live in the apartment upstairs. Do you want a cup of sugar ?

ALISTAIR: Sorry ?

KEN: That's what they ask for. In the movies. The person in the other apartment comes and asks for a cup of sugar. But I think that is just when the pretty lady wants to meet the handsome stranger who has moved in next door.

ALISTAIR: Right. No I'm not after a cup of sugar.

SWEE-CHIN: We have to go out now.

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) It's interesting. They're Asian.

KEN: (*IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*) *Don't be rude.*

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) But when they have sex – they do it in English.

SWEE-CHIN: (*IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*) *We'll be late.*

ALISTAIR: Sorry. Don't mean to keep you.

KEN: It is okay – *Alistair* from *downstairs*. Get it ? *Alistair* – *downstairs*.

ALISTAIR: Very clever.

KEN: My English is excellent.

SWEE-CHIN: (*IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*) *I will be in trouble.*

KEN: I am sorry but Swee-Chin says we must go. So what is the reason ?

ALISTAIR: Sorry ?

KEN: The reason you come to our door ? It wasn't a cup of sugar.

ALISTAIR: Oh, right. Yeah.

KEN: Well.

SWEE-CHIN: (*IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*) *We must go.*

KEN: (*IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*) *Just a minute.* (TO ALISTAIR) Yes ?

ALISTAIR: Could we maybe ... talk alone ?

KEN: (LAUGHS) Swee-Chin and I have no secrets. You may speak freely.

ALISTAIR: Right. Well ...

KEN: Yes ?

ALISTAIR: It's just about the ... noise.

KEN: Noise ?

ALISTAIR: Yes. When you ...

KEN: When we what ?

ALISTAIR: When you ...

KEN: Play music ?

ALISTAIR: No.

KEN: Watch TV ?

ALISTAIR: No.

KEN: Wash the dishes ?

ALISTAIR: Have sex !

**SWEE-CHIN AND KEN ARE STUNNED. SILENCE.**

ALISTAIR: It's about the noise you make when you have sex.

**BEAT.**

KEN: You hear it ?

ALISTAIR: It's impossible not to hear it. It's very ... loud.

KEN: Is it ?

ALISTAIR: Very. So if you could just keep it down or close a window or a door or both that would be great. Thanks.

**BEAT. ANOTHER AWKWARD PAUSE.**

ALISTAIR: Okay. So nice to meet you. Goodbye.

**ALISTAIR EXITS.**

KEN: How funny. I didn't think we were that loud.

SWEE-CHIN: Stop laughing. It's very embarrassing.

KEN: Don't blame me. You are the one who makes all the noise.

**THEY EXIT. LIGHTS ON ALISTAIR.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) After surviving the single most embarrassing moment of my life, I was hoping that would be the end of it. But fate was having too much fun.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) The next day I was arriving back from a meeting to discuss my next plans when who should I run into in the carpark ?

KEN: (ENTERING) Alistair. From downstairs. Who didn't need a cup of sugar.

ALISTAIR: Ken. From Upstairs. Who I didn't ask for a cup of sugar.

KEN: You are coming in ?

ALISTAIR: And you are going out ?

BEAT. AWKWARD PAUSE.

ALISTAIR: Look, about yesterday.

KEN: Yes ?

ALISTAIR: I'm sorry.

KEN: Why ?

ALISTAIR: I didn't want to say anything it but it's just you guys are –

KEN: What ?

ALISTAIR: Phenomenal.

**KEN LAUGHS.**

ALISTAIR: I've never heard anything like it. In real life, I mean. I've heard it on videos. Not that I watch videos like that. Of course.

KEN: Alistair – I don't think you need me to give you a shovel.

ALISTAIR: Sorry ?

KEN: You are digging yourself quite a big enough hole.

ALISTAIR: (SMILES) True.

KEN: No need to apologise. It is we who are sorry. And embarrassed. Well Sweet-Chin is – actually I am quite proud. But we will try to keep it down. In future.

ALISTAIR: Appreciate it.

KEN: Have a good day.

ALISTAIR: You too.

**KEN EXITS.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) Second most embarrassing moment of my life. But now it's over. Finally. Except half an hour later, I hear a familiar phrase coming from upstairs.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah, fuck me baby.

ALISTAIR: It seems Swee-Chin is not so sweet after all.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me with your big hard cock.

ALISTAIR: Not so sweet at all.  
(TO AUDIENCE) So no wonder Ken was surprised. Because it wasn't him that Swee-Chin was making all that noise with. No Ken, you don't need to give me your shovel. My hole has just become very very big – and I can't see a way out. What do I do ? Tell him, confront her. Wait till she's having another morning session and knock on the door with a video camera. Fate again decides to have some fun.

**KEN ENTERS, HOLDING A CUP OF SUGAR, AND KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.**

**ALISTAIR OPENS IT.**

ALISTAIR: Evening.

KEN: Good evening. Alistair from downstairs.

ALISTAIR: Ken. What can I do for you ?

KEN: Nothing. I just bring you a present. To show there is no tough feelings between us.

ALISTAIR: Hard.

KEN: Excuse me.

ALISTAIR: It's hard feelings. Not tough.

KEN: Oh. I bring you a cup of sugar.

ALISTAIR: But I didn't need one.

KEN: Everybody in apartments needs a cup of sugar. And just to check everything is okay now ?

ALISTAIR: In what way ?

KEN: No more noise ?

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) How often in life are you placed in this moment ?  
Once, twice, one thousand. Do you keep quiet ? Or speak out ? You  
have a couple of seconds to decide.  
(TO KEN) No. All quiet.

KEN: That is good to hear. Or not hear. Good night Alistair.

ALISTAIR: Good night Ken.

**KEN STARTS TO LEAVE.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) Then I change my mind.  
(TO **KEN**) Ken.

KEN: Yes Alistair ?

ALISTAIR: I have heard noises.

KEN: I am so sorry. We did try very hard. I even cover Swee-Chins mouth with my-

ALISTAIR: In the morning.

BEAT.

KEN: The morning ?

ALISTAIR: Most mornings. Every morning.

KEN: But I go to work in the morning. I am not there.

ALISTAIR: And that's when I hear them.

PAUSE. **KEN IS VERY STILL.**

ALISTAIR: I'm sorry Ken.

KEN: Thank you Alistair.

**KEN EXITS SLOWLY.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) The next half a hour I heard some new noises  
coming from upstairs. Very loud noises.

**SWEE-CHIN AND KEN ARGUE LOUDLY IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE.  
WE HEAR OBJECTS BEING THROWN, PLATES SMASHED, SCREAMS.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) Jesus ! I caused this. What do I do ? Call the cops.  
What's he doing to her ?

SUDDENLY THERE IS SILENCE.

ALISTAIR: Then silence. Half an hour later – a very soft tap on the door. I expect  
to see a blood covered Ken.

**ALISTAIR OPENS THE DOOR TO REVEAL SWEE-CHIN, HOLDING  
SUITCASES.**

ALISTAIR: Swee-Chin.

SWEE-CHIN: Why did you say those things ?

ALISTAIR: I'm sorry Swee-Chin.

SWEE-CHIN: Why ?

ALISTAIR: I know what I heard.

SWEE-CHIN: I'm leaving now. Are you happy ?

ALISTAIR: I'm sorry. I just had to tell him.

SWEE-CHIN: You are a fucking bastard/arsehole/jerk. (*as the mood takes Swee Chin*)

**SWEE-CHIN SLAPS ALISTAIR ACROSS THE FACE.**

ALISTAIR: I'm sorry.

**SWEE-CHIN EXITS.**

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) And then there is silence. Too much silence. Total,  
all encompassing, almost deafening it's so quiet. And then I do hear a  
noise.

WE HEAR **KEN** CRYING, SOFTLY.

**ALISTAIR GOES AND KNOCKS ON KEN'S DOOR.**

ALISTAIR: Ken. (BEAT) Ken, are you okay ?

KEN: Go away. Alistair from downstairs.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

ALISTAIR: (TO AUDIENCE) And now everything is quiet. I sit at my desk and  
almost hope to hear something. But all I hear is silence from upstairs.  
All morning and all night. Unhappy men are very quiet beings.

ALISTAIR: (CONT) Then a week later I'm out the back putting out the garbage and I hear a familiar sound.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah.

ALISTAIR: She's back ! Swee-Chin is back !

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Fuck me baby fuck me,

ALISTAIR: You go Ken. But is it Ken she's with ? The window to their bedroom is just above me. If I step back I can ... I can't do that.

**ALISTAIR HESITATES. BEAT.**

ALISTAIR: No, I have to know. Is it Ken or ...

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): (SCREAMS) Costa !!!!!.

ALISTAIR: It's definitely not Ken.

MALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah Silvana. I love fucking you.

ALISTAIR: Silvana ? Who's Silvana ?

MALE VOICE (OFF): I love sucking your big tits while I fuck you.

ALISTAIR: I step back and look up. The window is wide open

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah Costa.

ALISTAIR: but the sound isn't coming from there.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah Costa. Fuck me hard.

ALISTAIR: Then I look further down. There's another open window.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Harder Costa harder.

ALISTAIR: It's coming from the apartment next to Ken's. Oh shit !

MALE VOICE (OFF): Oh Silvana, I'm coming.

FEMALE VOICE (OFF): Oh yeah fuck me fuck me fuck –

ALISTAIR: Me.

**BLACKOUT.**