

THE TEA BREAK

Jane Miller

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Characters:

KEN
DAN
LUCY

Setting:

The tea room of a medium size company

THE TEAROOM.

KEN IS SITTING EATING A SANDWICH, DRINKING COFFEE AND READING THE PAPER.

DAN ENTERS WITH COFFEE, TEABAGS AND SUGAR. HE IS WEARING AN APRON

KEN: What are you now? The tea lady?

DAN: Very funny....I'm on frigging tea duty...I had to get coffee, milk, teabags and serviettes. Serviettes. I ask you....Last week we're told to tighten our beltsLimit the number of interstate phone calls...This week it's go and waste money on serviettes. Why can't people use a tissue? Or a teatowel? That's my question.

KEN: And a good question it is....Pass me a serviette...I spilt coffee on my shirt.

DAN: Don't you look at this whole serviette-phone call issue and wonder "why do I bother coming to work?"

KEN: I wonder that without the whole serviette-phone call issue. I wonder every morning. I wake up. I say to Ruth "What time is it?" She says "7am. The alarm has gone off at 7am every morning for the last 10 years".

There's something sad about that. The lack of mystery.

DAN: This is a bloody scandal. The serviettes. The waste.

KEN: Whatever you reckon. Anyway how was the weekend? Mine was crap if you were wondering.

DAN: Mine was no picnic. Melanie's sister is staying with us while she has her floors sanded. It's not a barrel of laughs.. She's split up with her boyfriend and he kept phoning threatening to break-in and walk on the floors before they dry.

KEN: Our dishwasher's knackered. That's what I did the whole weekend....Lie under the sink fiddling with the internal organs of the dishwasher while Ruth turned the power on and off. A couple of times I was sure she turned it on before I was ready.

DAN: That could be the perfect crime.

KEN: Could it?

DAN: It's like when you change a light globe. Sometimes when a globe blows...I get up the ladder and I say to Melanie "turn the switch off and I'll change it". I see her hesitate. I think..... for a few seconds she toys with the idea of leaving the switch on so when I unscrew that globe – finito.... I know it crosses her mind.

"One flick of this switch and I'm back out on the town, single, free. No mortgage". Its unsaid but its there.

KEN: Yeah well I'm sure Ruth played a bit of Russian roulette with me while I was farting about with that dishwasher. It's stuffed if you were wondering. Completely stuffed.

You would not believe the carry on when I made my final diagnosis.....Major tragedy if we actually have to wash dishes again.....

DAN: Not happy?

KEN: She jumped straight in the car and went down to the party supplies joint and bought 500 plastic plates. She wouldn't have moved as quick if I'd said I was stuffed.

DAN: It's a sad indictment on the state of our society...Disposable...Wasteful.....Not unlike these serviettes....

KEN: Back to the serviettes....

DAN: It's what they represent.

KEN: Something to wipe the crumbs off the corners of our mouths with. Something to tuck into my shirt so I don't dribble my tomato sandwich down the front.....Speaking of which I have told Ruth not to buy the bloody Roma's for the sandwiches....Fine for your sauces just not for the sandwiches....She probably bought them thinking she was going to electrocute me with the dishwasher so I'd never know. That's what she's after..... The freedom to buy whatever tomatoes she wants.

DAN: I'm serious.

KEN: So am I...I won't let her buy Desiree potatoes either... That pink skin and powdery texture give me the creeps. Unless she mashes them....

(DAN PICKS UP A TIN OF MILO)