

Never Saw It Coming

A drama in one act

by Les Clarke

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CAST (in order of appearance)

Susie. Female, late twenties. Tall, slim and attractive. Tries to please.

Brian. Male, late thirties, early forties. Tall, arrogant and full of himself.

Steph. Female, early to late thirties. Medium height, attractive. Confident.

Time - the present

Place - the lounge of Susie's flat

The scene is the lounge of Susie's flat. There is a table set for two centre stage, with cutlery, napkins, a candle, wine glasses and a bottle of opened wine. There is a sofa down stage left and a small sideboard with a CD player and a pile of CDs together with a remote control

The doorbell rings and Susie enters from the kitchen, checks her watch and hurries over to the door

Susie Who is it?

Brian It's me! I've forgotten my key. I'm sorry.

Susie (*opens the door. Playfully*) You! What you like you frightened the life out of me then, I was wondering who the hell it was! Well come on in then I don't want you frightening the neighbours!

Brian enters, he appears nervous

So what happened to your key then?

Brian Oh it's in the car, I just forgot to bring it up and I couldn't be bothered to go back down for it.

Susie You'd forget your head if it wasn't screwed on! Well come on then, get your coat off. I need to check on the dinner. (*Moves away towards the kitchen*) You can pour the wine if you like dinner's not far away.

Brian Susie, hang on a minute, I need to talk to you.

Susie Well you can talk to me over dinner, it won't be long.

She exits

Brian No I can't, I need to talk to you now!

A few moments pass and Susie enters holding a tea-towel. Her demeanour has changed

Susie I'm not going to like this, am I?

She sits on the arm of the sofa

Well come on then, get it over with. (*She crosses her arms*)

Brian Oh don't be like that, Suse! Look, this isn't easy for me, alright. You know I run all kinds of risks just by coming here.

Susie (*flatly*) Really. Then do the right thing and make an honest woman of me, why don't you!

Brian Oh don't start. I haven't got time for this!

Susie (*stands abruptly*) No, you never have! Well what's happened this time, then? I assume you're not staying that's what this is all about?

Brian moves forward to hold her and she holds her hand out

No don't! If you're not staying then don't bother trying to get round me because it just won't work! I'm getting really fed up with this! (*She slumps back down on the sofa*) What about the meal then?

Brian I'm sorry.

Susie: Well that makes two of us. I just wish you'd told me earlier that's all, I hate waste. I thought that's why you bought your other mobile so that we could always stay in touch. Something else that's not working, *apparently*. Well come on, then, what's happened? Why are you *dumping* me tonight?

Brian Oh come on, Sue, that's a bit melodramatic, isn't it? No-one's *dumping* anyone. It doesn't happen very often, things crop up now and then. I can't help it. The "well laid plans" and all that.

He comes over and sits beside her

I forgot I'm supposed to be at a book launch tonight, it went clean out of my head. There's no way I can't go, I've *got* to go! I'll make it up to you though I *promise*.

Susie (*stands*) Oh not that old line again! You're good at making promises, you are. But a promise to you's nothing. You can give a promise and break a promise in the same breath, you can. And I'm

getting sick to death of it I can tell you!

She throws the tea-towel at him and walks away

Brian Look, you're not making this very easy for me, you know ...

Susie (*cutting in*) Good! Why the hell should I? In case you've forgotten you're the one cancelling this evening, not me! I'm the one who's been slaving away cooking you your favourite meal and counting off the hours till I saw you. And for what? So you can creep in here, cap in hand and say, "Something's come up, I can't make it!" Well thanks a bloody lot!

She turns away from him folding her arms

He stands and comes up behind her putting his hands around her waist

Brian I'm sorry, Suse, I really am. I was looking forward to it as well you know. (*He nuzzles her neck*)

Susie So you say. (*She breaks away*) Have you been drinking?

Brian Not really.

Susie Don't lie to me. I can smell it on your breath!

Brian Just one! I had one! God. It was a bit of *Dutch courage* I knew you'd be angry.

Susie Well at least you got something right tonight! (*She turns and folds her arms*)

Brian Look, it's not a complete wash out. I could get back later; I shouldn't be too long.

Susie How much later? Are we talking about eating together or what?

He is standing alongside the table and nervously starts playing with a fork

Brian Well it's hard to say off hand but I think the eating together might be pushing things a bit. I've just got to put in an appearance. You know, just put my face about a bit, bit of mingling, you know the kind of thing. Then I could come straight back. Couple of hours tops, I reckon.

Susie (*sarcastically*) Oh great. Well at least one of us will be having fun, then. (*Angry*) The other one can blow out the candle, throw the food in the bin and do the washing-up! Sound familiar to you, does it?

Brian Oh Christ, I don't know why I bother sometimes! (*He throws the fork*)

Susie Neither do I! A relationship takes two, Brian, I think that's the bit you keep forgetting! I think men generally refer to it as "having their cake and eating it!"

Brian Oh come on, that's not fair! Okay, I know you're angry because I've ruined the evening but it's not like that at all. You know how I feel about you.

Susie Do I? Well why don't you refresh my memory and tell me then.

Brian Oh I can't cope with you when you're like this.

Susie When I'm like what? When I'm fed up of being let down? When I'm fed up with being *used*!

Brian I'm not *using* you! How can you say that!

Susie Well what would you call it, then? D'you know how many times you've let me down in the last couple of months?

Brian No I haven't the faintest idea, I don't keep count but it looks like you do! I don't believe this. (*He sits on the sofa*) Anyone would think I did it on purpose. It's part of my job, hello, *reality*! (*He waves at her*)

Susie (*angrily*) Don't you *dare* talk to me about bloody reality! I've put my life on hold for you! I'm scared to go out in case you just *drop round* on the off chance. Every time the phone rings my heart *pounds*, hoping it's you and then I sink into morbid depression when it's not! I can't get involved with the social side of things at work because everyone I know takes their husbands or partners with them. So what happens? I have to stay away because no one I'm aware of takes their married lover with them! (*Sarcastically*) So no, you go out and enjoy yourself, don't mind me. I've got these four walls for company. I'm used to being on my own. I've had to be since I became involved with you!

Brian (*sadly*) Oh God. I never really thought about it like that. I had no idea. (*Weakly*) "Typical man", I suppose. I'm really sorry, I never realised. I don't know what to say.

Susie Well it's probably best to say nothing at all, then. I've probably said too much already for both of us but sometimes it just gets me down and I was really looking forward to having a lovely evening together

... and now this.

Brian (*comes to her and holds her at arms length*) So was I! Really! I've been thinking about you all day! Look, the sooner I'm gone the sooner I can be back, eh? What d'you say?

He pulls her in close and starts to run his hands up and down her body

Susie (*breaks away*) I'm not sure, Brian. I'm not really in the mood now and I know I'll only get depressed the minute you walk out that door. I think it might be best if we just forget about this evening. Let's just put it behind us and pretend it didn't happen.

Brian No! No that's not right! We can't leave things up in the air like this. (*He holds her again*) Come here. (*Seductively*) We need to kiss and make up, come on.

Never Saw It Coming

A powerful exploration by Les Clarke of relationships in the 'eternal triangle' situation. A fast-moving drama for one man and two women.

Plot Summary

Susie is having an affair with Brian and is cooking him his favourite meal. Brian arrives at her flat but explains that he can't stay. This leads to a heated argument and Brian walks out. Later on, the doorbell rings and she rushes to the door thinking it's Brian. It turns out to be Brian's wife Steph, looking for her husband, and she barges in! The two women, initially hostile, come to relate to each other's position. Realising the truth, they plan a little surprise for Brian!