

THE MAKEOVER

by

Clive Duncan

 schooltoursgroup_orange

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Neudeggasse 14/17
A-1080 Wien

Author's Note

A leopard cannot change its spots – so the saying goes. I don't suppose it ever tries. Not so, humans. We spend huge amounts of money and time on our appearance; at the hairstylist, clothes shops, tanning shops or the beach; we try this or that diet; we try our best to look cool, even when we might not feel it, we study books to make us smarter, undertake courses to make us more assertive or relaxed or healthier. Apart from appearing fashionable, bronzed, slightly thinner but with more muscles, assertively cool and our hair going in a new direction have we done ourselves any good? Probably not – for we soon start the process all over again.

Of course, the “leopard and its spots” saying is really talking about the inner leopard – the wild cat will always be a wild cat. So is it possible to change your inner self? We're often told we need to by our parents and our teachers; if we have not done our homework we need to “wake up and smell the coffee” or “change our attitude” or, and this is my favourite, “pull our socks up!”. Easier said than done! The humiliation of a poor mark, or worse, may make us promise ourselves that we will not leave our homework until the very last minute ever again. But come the night before the next hand-in, we'll be staring at a blank page wishing we'd started the assignment a week ago! Every January, where I live, the pavements are full of joggers. They've eaten too much at Christmas and have decided that... “this New Year I *will* get fit and healthy”. But by February, the pavements are usually jogger-free – their inner leopards preferring to sleep instead of pounding the pavements.

In *The Makeover* we are exploring, in a light-hearted way, not only if it is possible to change how we are, but if it is possible to change others. Can we re-design someone? The theme is not new. The play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw (1912) sees a gentleman attempt to transform a working-class girl so that she is acceptable in upper class society. In *The Makeover* a design student helps her friend to change so he can date a girl who is way out of his league. This is really a reverse of what actually happens. You might have experienced it for yourself; you have a new boyfriend/girlfriend; at first it is very exciting because you are so different. And then for a birthday present they give you a bright new top and ask you to throw out that worn old sweatshirt with the dumb slogan that you love so much. Or perhaps you are the one who gives the present. They correct the way you speak; give you music you would never listen to. Introduce you to a gym! Challenge them and they'll say they want you to look and sound good, have taste, be healthy, but really, they don't want to hang around with an overweight slob. Wait! That overweight slob is fundamentally ... me! That's my inner leopard my partner is trying to stuff into a stripy shirt! Whether you are the changer or the changed it is probably time to get a new boyfriend/girlfriend.

It is a scientific fact our bodies regenerate all of its cells every seven years. Look in the mirror in 2032 and you will see a totally new you. And yet the “me” part which inhabits that living, breathing machine will still feel like... well, me. The spirit, self, soul, however you wish to describe it, will not be affected by this transformation. So, am I saying that my plump, shoddily dressed inner leopard who can't keep up the jogging is streaming a questionable music playlist is destined to stay the same? Yes! And no. Yes; because the self is formed in our early years by our surroundings, upbringing etc and those characteristics that make us who we are stay with us for life. No; because the “self” grows and continues to grow if we feed it through education, experience, watching and listening. Life and learning.

So, what have I learnt? I am happier in clothes that are comfortable. There is no right or wrong way to look. I like my music collection. It is ok to be individual. And if you buy the right type of socks, there's no need to pull them up.

Clive Duncan

Worksheet available online
www.schooltours.at

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY:

Ali

Student

Tom

Harry

Shop Assistant

Mr Bennett

Mrs Bennett

The play will be performed by four actors.

The story takes place in different locations – a student flat, a lecture hall, cinema, fun fair, car, café, restaurant, a box at the opera. The main thing that links nearly all of these locations is a dilapidated sofa.

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Scene 1 - Graduation Day²

Ali, with others, appears in graduation cap and gown³ at the side of the acting space, she is holding a scroll⁴.

VOICE: Bachelor degree in Fashion Design. Awarded⁵ first class honours:

Alison Jane Harvey.

There is applause as Ali steps forward into the centre of the space. She doffs⁶ her cap to an imaginary Dean⁷ of the university, smiles at the audience and holds up her scroll. As she moves off, a student snaps⁸ her photograph.

STUDENT: Smile! That's great!

ALI: Oh! Are you photographing everyone?

STUDENT: No, just you. It's for the university magazine. I'm writing an article about you.

ALI: Are you?

STUDENT: Didn't the editor...? He said he'd contacted you. I'm so sorry. It's just that as one of our high-flyers...

ALI: I wouldn't say that...

STUDENT: Could we do a quick interview?

ALI: It's graduation day – I have family waiting.

STUDENT: Of course... but they're still handing out those scrolls, it'll be half an hour before they're finished.

ALI: Go on, then. But make it quick.

The student puts out a chair for Ali. She gets another for herself.

STUDENT: Thanks. (*She gets out a small voice recorder.*) You don't mind if I record it, do you?

ALI: Go ahead.

STUDENT: Ok. Interview with Ali Harvey. Graduation Day. So, Ali – describe that moment when you step on the stage to receive your degree.

ALI: I feel... proud. It feels a bit silly dressing up like this to be awarded a rolled-up piece of paper, but when your name is called, and you know your

¹ refashioning: making certain changes in order to improve the appearance of so./sth.

² when a degree or academic qualification is awarded after finishing a course of study at a college or university

³ a special piece of clothing, usually long and loose, worn on formal occasions, such as a graduation

⁴ a long roll of paper (a document) with official writing on it

⁵ officially given for achievement

⁶ removes her hat to show respect

⁷ the head of a faculty at university

⁸ takes quickly

mum and dad are watching, and your friends are clapping and cheering¹, then... then you feel the sense of achievement.

STUDENT: Fantastic. You got a first, which is amazing; did that help you get the job at Stella McCartney²? I mean – that is one big fashion designer...

ALI: Oh, it's not a job – it's an internship³... There's a big difference. But yes – my degree helped. And I have to thank the programme for that. The university has some wonderful tutors and great facilities⁴...

STUDENT: So you'd recommend the programme?

ALI: I'd recommend university, no matter what subject. In these three years I've learnt so much about... life, people... and me, who I am.

STUDENT: Really? Do you believe in all that "finding yourself" business?

ALI: It's more about finding your place in the world.

STUDENT: That's... big stuff.

ALI: If you want to be a journalist – you need to understand how the world works...

STUDENT: Oh, no, I'm studying Marketing. This is just so I have stuff on my CV⁵ when I graduate. I'm aiming for the top...

Ali takes her cap and gown off.

ALI: You need to find out what's at the bottom before you get there...

STUDENT: What would you say was your main achievement at university? The degree or the internship?

ALI: Neither. I would say – Harry Higgins.

STUDENT: What is Harry Higgins?

ALI: You mean, *who* is Harry Higgins?

STUDENT: Sorry. I thought it was some sort of project. How can a person be an achievement?

ALI: Harry was a project in a way. I redesigned⁶ him.

STUDENT: You gave him a makeover?

ALI: More than that. I thought I could change him – turn him into someone else.

STUDENT: Did you?

ALI: I don't think I want this in the article.

STUDENT: You said university was more than just the course you take...

ALI: I did but...

STUDENT: Isn't it important to get that across⁷ to the other students, or the new students next year?

ALI: I suppose so...

¹ shouting with happiness or for encouragement

² famous British fashion designer

³ a training period to become qualified for a job

⁴ services provided

⁵ Curriculum Vitae, a document giving details of your qualifications and jobs to date

⁶ refashioned

⁷ communicate

STUDENT: I promise not to print anything you don't want me to – I'll show you the article before it's published...

ALI: (*Hesitant*¹) Ok...

Scene 2 - First impressions

*Tom wheels*² *a beaten-up*³ *old sofa into the middle of the acting area.*

ALI: I was at Tom Clancy's flat when I first met Harry.

STUDENT: Tom?

ALI: Yes – he was my boyfriend. At the time.

TOM: Welcome to my world. What can I get you? We have tea, coffee – sorry, no milk, well we have, but it's gone off⁴ – and a fridge full of Energy Drinks.

ALI: A glass of water will do.

Tom goes to get it.

ALI: I can't remember why, but when I first came to university I thought it very important to have a boyfriend. So, by the end of fresher's week⁵, I was hitched to⁶ Tom.

STUDENT: Fast work!

Tom returns with a glass of water.

ALI: It's not what you're thinking. He was no Timothee Chalomet, but he was ok. It was the first time I'd been to Tom's flat – he was trying to impress me...

TOM: Let me hang your coat up.

He takes the gown away from Ali.

ALI: Nice place.

TOM: It's a bit run-down⁷. Or funky⁸ – depending on how you look at it.

ALI: Do you share it?

TOM: I'm afraid so. A dude⁹ called Harry. He's ok, but a real slob¹⁰. Never washes up, never tidies up, (*he finds a pair of boxers on the sofa*) leaves his underwear all over the place...

ALI: Is he out?

TOM: Out? He's only just got up!

¹ doubtful or worried

² pushes (something on wheels)

³ old and damaged, in a rather bad condition

⁴ gone bad, no longer fit to be consumed

⁵ the opening week of the first term at college or university

⁶ together with

⁷ old, in a bad condition

⁸ fashionable in an unusual way

⁹ (slang) a guy or man

¹⁰ a lazy, untidy and often rude person

ALI: It's evening!

TOM: I know! Please – sit down...

Ali sits at one end of the sofa – Tom at the other.

TOM: You could say Harry is nocturnal¹. I'm worried he might be a vampire!
Harry appears upstage. He is dressed in a baggy² sweatshirt, calf-length shorts, crocs and a beanie hat³. He is scratching and yawning⁴...

ALI: So... which romantic place are you taking me tonight?

Tom moves a little closer to Ali...

TOM: I thought we could have a cosy⁵ night in. Stream a film, bottle of wine...
maybe order a pizza...

Harry's eyes light up when he realises there is a stranger in the room. His radar locks on to⁶ the sofa...

ALI: That sounds like it could be cosy...

Ali and Tom are about to kiss when Harry launches himself⁷ over the back of the sofa and in between Ali and Tom.

HARRY: Hello, lovebirds!

Both Tom and Ali are startled⁸; Ali spilling her water over herself...

TOM: Jeez!

Ali splutters⁹ and wipes her face with her handkerchief.

HARRY: Whoops! Didn't see the drink. Allow me...

TOM: You stupid idiot!

Harry takes her handkerchief and dabs at¹⁰ her bosom¹¹. He realises what he is doing and stops. Ali grabs the handkerchief back.

HARRY: Ah! Sorry! What must you think of me? I was only...

TOM: ...trying to make things worse? Attack my girlfriend?

ALI: You must be Harry.

HARRY: Tom gave you a description, eh? From your description I'd guess you are Annie.

TOM: Ali!

HARRY: Ali! Sorry. Tom told me you were called Annie.

TOM: Why would I do that?

HARRY: I say "guess" as the description wasn't very good. You are ten times more beautiful than Tom's description.

¹ mainly active at night

² loose (opp. tight)

³ a cap that fits closely to the head

⁴ breathing in and out deeply, often out of tiredness

⁵ nice and comfortable

⁶ his eyes stop and he stares at

⁷ jumps dramatically

⁸ surprised

⁹ spits out the water

¹⁰ touches lightly

¹¹ breasts

ALI: You are such a charmer...

Harry flops¹ onto the sofa.

HARRY: He said you had cross eyes and a bent nose...

Harry demonstrates, Ali laughs.

TOM: (annoyed) Actually, Harry, we were sitting on the sofa before you crashed the party.

Harry jumps to his feet.

HARRY: Sorry. Don't let me get in your way....

ALI: That's your third apology in as many seconds.

HARRY: I'm a professional slob – apologising is part of the job.

Ali and Tom sit on the sofa as before – and as they do, Harry sits down in between them. An embarrassed² silence.

HARRY: Well, this is very friendly.

ALI: It was pretty friendly before you arrived...

Tom elbows Harry.

HARRY: Ow!

TOM: Sorry!

ALI: What are you studying at the university?

HARRY: Same as Tom – English literature.

TOM: Except studying requires going to lectures.

HARRY: I know. But why are lectures in the morning? How can anyone think straight³ at that time of day?

ALI: You aren't going to lectures?

HARRY: Not yet.

TOM: How are you going to write your assignments? How do you expect to pass your exams?

HARRY: You sound like my mum. Listen, university is not just about studying. It's about discovering the world.

TOM: You've only just got up! The world has been and gone today.

HARRY: Not true. I have just discovered Ali, who is studying...?

ALI: Fashion design.

HARRY: Really? That's fantastic. Do you get to look at Gautier, Quant, Gucci, Choo, Westwood, Macqueen⁴? You see – I am now in touch with someone who is in touch with all those amazing people. If I had gone to the lecture today I would have been in a room full of English literature students who were all talking about Graham Greene⁵.

¹ falls

² nervous and self-conscious

³ (adv.) clearly, logically

⁴ all famous fashion designers

⁵ English writer (1904-1991), who is best known for novels such as *The Third Man* or *The End of the Affair*

TOM: Greene was last week. It was Charles Dickens¹ today. Keep up!

HARRY: I am going to be a writer. Now there's no point in writing like Greene or Dickens – they've already written it. But what if I could write in the way that Jimmy Choo designs shoes, or in the way that Picasso² painted...?

TOM: Don't you have to put words on a screen to be a writer – like, get up in the morning and actually do some work?

HARRY: There's a downside³ to everything. But my point is, I am having more of an education meeting Ali than listening to some professor drone on⁴ and on....

ALI: (*laughing*) That is the worst chat-up line⁵ ever...

HARRY: Oh, I mean it. I never chat anyone up. That would be hard work.

TOM: Which is why you don't have a girlfriend.

HARRY: I am still waiting for the right person to come along.

ALI: How will you know when they have?

HARRY: I believe in love at first sight.

Harry is now leaning against Ali with his feet up on Tom. Tom pushes Harry's legs off and nods his head repeatedly towards the door, suggesting Harry should leave them alone.

HARRY: Is there something wrong with your neck?

Tom stops and hangs his head in his hands.

ALI: I think he wants you to go.

Harry jumps up.

HARRY: You should have said, Bro'⁶. I suppose you two want to get all kissy kissy...

TOM: No! I mean... I mean... we would like to spend some time together.

HARRY: However, you want to say it....

Harry goes.

TOM: Sorry about that.

ALI: It's ok – I like him. He's fun.

TOM: He's infuriating⁷! So – what about an evening on the sofa?

A doorbell rings.

ALI: What did you have in mind?

TOM: Do you like *La La Land*⁸?

ALI: It's ok...

¹ English writer and social critic (1812-1870) of the Victorian period, who wrote some of the most famous novels of his time, among others: *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield* or *A Christmas Carol*

² Spanish painter (1881-1973) of international fame, e.g. his 1937 *Guernica*

³ negative side, disadvantage

⁴ talk for a long time in a boring way

⁵ a remark or comment to start a conversation, usually to indicate that one is attracted to the other person, with a view to a romantic or sexual relationship

⁶ (slang) 'brother', meaning friend or mate

⁷ extremely annoying

⁸ a romantic US movie from 2016

Tom is moving in on Ali again. They are about to kiss when Harry appears upstage with a large pizza in a box. He leaps over the back of the sofa to sit in between them once again.

HARRY: Look what I have! Pizza! Hit the Netflix button, Tom. *Dune 2!* Do you like Timothee Chalomet, Ali?

ALI: How did you know?

Scene 3 - And Harry makes three...

Ali gets up and goes to the student. Tom and Harry turn the sofa around. Tom gets a long pole¹.

ALI: Harry was around most of the time. When Tom and I went out together Harry often tagged along².

STUDENT: That must have cramped your style³.

ALI: No, it was cool. We were all living away from home for the first time; it was easy to be homesick. We became a family. Tom and I were the parents. We went on lots of adventures...

HARRY: Get in!

Ambient⁴ classical music. The student goes. Tom and Harry have made a punt⁵ out of the sofa. Tom stands at the back with the pole. Harry is reaching out his hand to Ali. Ali steps into the punt – it “rocks” precariously⁶. Harry and Ali sit as Tom propels⁷ the punt with the pole. After a moment Harry stands... the punt rocks⁸...

HARRY: I can see land!

TOM: Sit down! I can't see where we are going...

ALI: You're making it rock!

HARRY: I'm going to be sick...

TOM: Get out of the way, idiot!

Tom pokes⁹ Harry with the pole. Harry falls into the river and disappears behind the “boat”.

ALI: Tom!

TOM: Alone at last...

¹ long stick for pushing a punt along

² came along, often unasked to do so

³ prevented you from enjoying yourselves as much as you would have liked to

⁴ background, atmospheric

⁵ long narrow boat with a flat bottom, popular at Cambridge on the River Cam

⁶ dangerously

⁷ pushes forward

⁸ shakes from side to side

⁹ pushes quickly

Tom and Ali disappear from view, but Harry ruins their moment as he surfaces and hauls himself¹ into the boat with a roar... Ali screams.

Tom and Harry spin the sofa round and using two chairs turn it into a car...

ALI: Harry would keep us entertained. I remember one night, we'd been to a gig² and we were in Tom's car. It was a long, late journey home...

Tom and Ali sit in the "front" with Tom driving. Harry is in the back, his head between the other two. Ali and Tom yawn. Harry produces a CD...

HARRY: Track 2...

Ali puts the CD in the CD player... We hear Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen.

Harry begins to re-enact the scene from "Wayne's World"³. The other two look at him in surprise and then join in... at the end of which Tom and Harry spin the sofa again...

ALI: Harry even came to the cinema with us. We got used to having him there.

He was a lot of fun to be with...

We hear a film soundtrack. Tom, Ali and Harry edge along⁴ the front of the sofa, with popcorn buckets, except for Ali. They stare up at the film. They find their seats and become enthralled⁵. Tom puts his arm around Ali. Ali tries to get some of Tom's popcorn but he moves the bucket. She tries Harry's – the same thing happens. Ali stands up...

ALI: (annoyed - whispering) I'll get my own, then. Excuse me...

Harry stands to let her pass and sits down again. A moment later Ali returns with her own popcorn.

ALI: (whispering) Excuse me...

Harry shuffles along to Ali's seat, Ali sits in his seat. Thinking it is Ali, Tom puts his hand on Harry's knee. Harry is alarmed at first but then realising the mistake nudges⁶ Ali. They both giggle as they watch Tom's hand travel up Harry's thigh. Tom turns to kiss Ali – sees it is Harry and screams...

HARRY: Shhh!

ALI: Shhh!

Tom storms out of the cinema. Harry and Ali move the sofa.

Scene 4 - When Harry met Gina

ALI: All of our friendships changed though, the day that Harry met Gina... "The right person" had just walked into his life...

¹ pulls himself heavily and with difficulty

² music performance

³ a 1992 US comedy film, starring Mike Myers

⁴ move up

⁵ completely engaged, fascinated

⁶ pushes gently to attract her attention

Gina brings on a lectern¹ which she places in the middle of the acting space. She sticks a poster of Zadie Smith² on the front of it. Harry shuffles³ into the space uncertainly.

HARRY: Is this where the Zadie Smith lecture is?

Gina looks at Harry and their eyes meet. Harry double takes on⁴ Gina... he is instantly in love with her.

HARRY: Wow! You – are – the – most – gorgeous⁵ woman I have ever seen!
You are an angel! Looking at me, I know what you're thinking... you are thinking...

GINA: I am thinking you should have been here a long time ago. Thanks for the compliments but can you tidy this place up a bit? We have enough chairs out there, but we need some behind the guest speaker. This is an important event and the hall isn't ready...

HARRY: I think you're mixing me up with someone else?

GINA: Aren't you the caretaker?

HARRY: No! I'm a student, same as you. I've come to see Zadie Smith – she's one of my favourite writers.

GINA: Mine, too. That's why I invited her.

HARRY: How about that!?! We have something in common already! We really should go out together. Seriously – I'd like to go on a date with you. Lots of dates! Every date that's in the calendar!

Gina laughs. Tom enters.

TOM: Hi Gina! Ah - you've met Harry then...

GINA: Harry? I'm terribly sorry. I thought he was the caretaker...

TOM: Really? Caretakers wear overalls and talk sense and...and...work!

HARRY: Don't be fooled by the way I dress, Gina. Once you get to know me...

GINA: I'm sure, but I really must get on...

HARRY: I meant it about the date!

GINA: That's very sweet of you, Harry, but I'll be honest, I haven't the time for romance. I've been here six months and I'm already the president of the literature society, the secretary of the poetry society and events organiser for the student union.

HARRY: Impressive.

GINA: Exactly. That's why I do it. When I graduate I want to work in publishing – that's where the money is. The CV I put together here will guarantee me an internship. From there I shall progress to literary manager. Publishing

¹ tall stand for holding a book or script

² famous British novelist and short story writer (1975 -) of a Jamaican mother and a British father; among her most famous works are *White Teeth*, *On Beauty*, and - most recently - *NW*

³ moves along slowly and lazily

⁴ looks at again, in surprise and disbelief

⁵ sensuous and beautiful

executive by the time I'm twenty-five, company executive at thirty. I aim to have my own publishing house by the time I'm forty.

HARRY: And fifty – any plans?

GINA: Oh, I think I shall have sold the company by then and will have retired on the profits. It's called a life plan, Harry. Do you have one?

HARRY: Of course!

TOM: No, you don't... he doesn't!

HARRY: I do. I wake up.... and see what I feel like doing with the rest of my life.

GINA: Harry, it's lovely meeting you and I'm sorry I mistook you for the caretaker, but if you really want to help me you'll find six chairs and put them on the stage here. I've got to meet Zadie at reception. Tom might help you, if you ask him nicely.

TOM: No problem!

She goes.

HARRY: She is really something.

TOM: Yes – a real tiger. Harry – you're not thinking that you and her...?

HARRY: Now I know what love is!

TOM: She is out of your league¹, dude. Sorry, but she's never going to even look at you.

HARRY: Would it help if I got myself a life plan?

TOM: It would help if you got yourself a life first, Harry.

HARRY: I'll start with the chairs.

Ali pushes the sofa in behind Harry. He sits on it with a sigh and takes out his phone...

Scene 5 – Lovesick

ALI: Harry was lovesick. He sat on the sofa all day swiping through pictures on Gina's Instagram page and saying every now and again...

HARRY: ...Gina...!

ALI: Tom and I tried to cheer him up. We binge-watched *Dune 1 & 2* on the telly...

Film soundtrack. Tom brings a pizza box. Harry remains impassive² throughout, staring into the distance...

TOM: What is it about Timothee Chalomét that people like?

ALI: We threw a party at Tom and Harry's...

Loud party music. Tom and Ali get up and dance. Harry suddenly stands up. The music stops. They look at him.

¹ above you in level and class

² showing no emotion

HARRY: Is Gina coming to the party?

TOM: Er... She is invited, but you know how busy she is...

Harry sits down again and the music continues.

ALI: We took him to the fun fair...

The sofa becomes a roller coaster ride. Tom and Ali put their arms in the air. We hear screams from the ride. Harry does not move. They stop. Harry curls up¹ on the sofa.

TOM: This has got to stop. He does nothing all day except lie around cluttering up² the flat.

ALI: He's in pain. You know what it's like being in love?

TOM: No.

ALI: Thanks! That really hurts!

TOM: No, I didn't mean... I mean: this isn't love, with Harry – it's infatuation³. He just thinks he's in love with Gina.

ALI: It's real enough to Harry.

TOM: Can't you talk to him?

ALI: He's your friend.

TOM: You're a woman. Explain to him, from a female point of view, why Gina is not the slightest bit interested in him. Put him out of his misery.

Ali sits on the sofa with Harry.

ALI: Harry. I know it's difficult, but sometimes you have to understand that some things aren't meant to be. You can fall for⁴ somebody and they just aren't interested in you. I know she's very beautiful - well, quite good looking - but is she really the one you've been waiting for?

HARRY: Gina is... a dream.

ALI: Exactly! She's a dream. Your dream. You don't know her at all. She doesn't know you. How can anything happen between you?

TOM: Especially as you're not even prepared to make it happen.

HARRY: And how would I do that?

TOM: Gina has met you once. If she was here now, how would she describe you?

HARRY: She'd say...

Gina enters.

GINA: I thought he was the caretaker. How amazing to have the physique of a labourer and the intellect of a writer!

TOM: Would she?! Would she say that? Especially as you don't have a physique or much of an intellect. I think she'd say...

¹ sits in such a way that his arms and legs are close to his body

² leaving stuff around everywhere

³ strong feelings of love or attraction, but usually not long lasting

⁴ suddenly have strong romantic feelings for someone

GINA: I thought he was the caretaker! Life is just a joke to him, doesn't have a life-plan, I suspect he's a bit of a wastrel¹...

HARRY: Wastrel? That's Shakespearean...

Gina goes...

TOM: If you want to have any chance with Gina, you'll have to change your ways.

HARRY: You mean stop being a slob?

TOM: I mean get up early, go to lectures, write assignments, join all the societies Gina is in. Think about what you want from life.

HARRY: I could do that!

TOM: Could you, Harry? Really?

HARRY: If it's for the person I love.

TOM: There's also another problem – the way you look.

HARRY: How do I look?

TOM: Like a slob. You dress like one, you're out of shape – you just aren't attractive.

HARRY: That's not true. *(to Ali)* Is that true?

Ali nods.

HARRY: Then... there is no hope.

Harry sinks into a decline².

ALI: That's great, Tom. You've just made him worse!

TOM: I was trying to get him to see sense.

ALI: Hang on! I've got it! I know just the type of man Gina would go for.

TOM: And who's that?

She grabs Harry's phone and swipes through pictures...

ALI: Him, and him, him, possibly her.... Not him...

TOM: But that's me!

ALI: Yep!

TOM: And this helps how?

ALI: I'm a designer. I can design a new Harry. I can design a Harry that will sweep Gina off her feet³.

TOM: Ali, this is Harry you're talking about.

ALI: No, it's me and my design skills we're talking about. You don't believe I can do it? Harry – how would you like to be a new you?

HARRY: I do quite like the old me.

ALI: But Gina doesn't. What if I were to give you a makeover?

HARRY: You mean dress me up in fancy clothes? Style my hair? Change the way I look?

ALI: That's right!

HARRY: Oh, no! This hat doesn't come off for anyone!

¹ a layabout, a good-for-nothing, making no use of their abilities

² becomes suddenly depressed

³ make her suddenly fall in love with him

TOM: Then kiss goodbye to Gina. Forever...

HARRY: Ok. What do I have to do?

ALI: Everything I say...

Scene 6 - The Makeover

Aerobics music. Harry begins jogging on the spot. The others remove the sofa and the pizza boxes. Tom throws Harry an apple which he eats as he jogs. Ali is sketching designs in a large note pad. A clothes rail is pushed on. Gina crosses the acting space. The music pauses, everyone stops and watches with hope. Gina passes without noticing Harry. The music starts again and Harry redoubles his efforts – running faster, doing press-ups, stretches etc.

Ali shows Harry one of her sketches. Harry is unsure. She shows him another – same reaction. She shows him a third... He stops working out.

HARRY: Yes!

The music stops and Harry runs behind the clothes rail. The occasional item of clothing is thrown over the rail. Tom and Ali pace¹ in the acting space: they are all in a clothes shop.

ALI: He's been in there a long time.

TOM: He'll be having problems with the buttons. How is this going to change Harry?

ALI: "Clothes make the man". How you dress is an expression of how you feel inside. When you're feeling relaxed and comfortable, you'll wear comfortable clothes, jeans, tee shirt. If you want to be dynamic, you'll dress dynamically, suit, tie and so on.

TOM: But Harry's a slob – so he'll always dress like one.

ALI: It's a two-way process. When women wear those sexy little black dresses with high heels to parties, it isn't because they feel sexy at the time; but if the dress is well made, the shoes well designed, the hair is well cut... they certainly will feel sexy and desirable by the time they get to the party. What you see in the mirror changes the way you see yourself.

SHOP ASSISTANT (*off*): Stop that! You'll stretch the fabric!

TOM: Why can't Harry be normal? He is such an embarrassment².

ALI: Isn't that why we like him so much?

TOM: Is it? Do we? Do you...?

SHOP ASSISTANT (*off*): You rip³ that jacket and you'll have to pay for it!

TOM: I'd better rescue the shop assistant...

¹ walk up and down

² someone who makes you feel ashamed

³ tear, pull apart

A flustered¹ shop assistant enters.

SHOP ASSISTANT: He's just impossible. I've tried to be helpful, but he won't take anything seriously...

Harry enters dressed in ill-fitting clothes. He has the jacket on back to front and he walks like Frankenstein's monster...

SHOP ASSISTANT: See what I mean?

HARRY: It's tight under the arms...

ALI: Leave this to me, everyone.

Tom and the Shop Assistant go. Ali pulls some clothes from the rack for Harry to put on which he does through the following conversation.

ALI: Harry. Why are we doing all this?

HARRY: To get Gina to notice me.

ALI: So, I'm taking this seriously; Tom is taking this seriously; even the shop assistant is trying to help and all you can do is act like it's all a huge joke!

HARRY: Can't I take it seriously and have some fun at the same time?

ALI: Harry, welcome to the world of adulthood, of grown-ups. It's time to put away the toys and the childish things. If you don't take life seriously nobody is going to take you seriously – most of all, Gina.

HARRY: Ok, ok, I get it. Serious face from now on.

Harry shows Ali two "serious" faces.

HARRY: Which one is best? This? Or this?

ALI: Harry! Do you really love Gina?

HARRY: Till it hurts. I cannot tell you how much.

ALI: Really? Oh, Harry... If that's the case, is what we're doing too much to ask?

HARRY: Sorry. I'll be serious. No more jokes from now on...

Harry is now in a different suit. Ali smartens him up² a little, pulling at the jacket so it hangs correctly, correcting the buttons which Harry has done up incorrectly. She takes off his beanie hat and throws it away...

ALI: That's it! Nice suit. You are looking... quite hot.

HARRY: You think so?

ALI: I know so...

Gina crosses the acting area... Harry strikes a pose...

HARRY: Hi, Gina! How are you doing today?

Gina stops for a moment, she vaguely recognises him and nods before going on her way. Harry is disappointed.

HARRY: Obviously not that hot.

ALI: She noticed you, didn't she?

HARRY: Yes – but it didn't make any difference.

¹ nervous and upset

² makes him look tidier and more stylish

ALI: It's a start. You are no longer invisible to her. But maybe "Hi Gina, how are you doing today", isn't the best approach. The clothes won't do all the work for you, it's the way you wear them, how you present yourself to the world. Walk up and down.

Harry shuffles about the space.

ALI: Feel the clothes as you walk...

Harry walks like a cat-walk model.

ALI: That's too much. Walk as if you are going to a meeting... or to see a film... or, I've got it! – you're going to meet Gina...

Harry walks around the space with intention.

ALI: That's fantastic! Keep it up. Now try sitting down...

Harry sits and looks like a stuffed dummy¹...

ALI: Not so good. Stand up. You have to unbutton your jacket when you sit down. And when you sit down, you want the whole world to admire your clothes...

Harry tries again... this time he looks more relaxed.

ALI: Smooth! (*Ali takes pictures with her phone.*) Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down. Cool! This will look good on Instagram.

HARRY: No! You can't let people see me dressed like this...

ALI: Too late! It's already out there. You want to be noticed, don't you?

HARRY: Only by Gina...

ALI: Ok, pretend I'm Gina; come and say hello to me.

Harry stands up and walks purposefully² to Ali.

HARRY: Hello.

ALI: Is that it?

HARRY: Hello, Gina.

ALI: Try being friendly...

Harry playfully punches³ her on the shoulder.

ALI: Er... women prefer to be treated gently, Harry. Try taking her hand...

HARRY: Hold hands with her? You're joking! I can't even get her to look at me...

ALI: Offer her your hand as if you're going to shake hands, but then hang onto it for a few seconds longer than a usual handshake; look deep into her eyes and say something like – good morning, it's good to see you...

HARRY: Are you sure about this?

ALI: I know what I'm doing...

Harry holds out his hand to Ali, she takes it, he looks into her eyes and smiles.

HARRY: Good morning. It's really good to see you again...

ALI: Phew! That does it for me...

They realise they are still holding hands and pull away from each other.

¹ a large human model, used to show clothes in shops

² with a clear intention

³ hits her gently with his fist

ALI: Now let's try conversation. Remember to be interested in Gina and what she has to say. So (- *being Gina*) it's good to see you, too. I've just invited another big famous writer as a guest speaker.

HARRY: The lectures you organise are the best in the English department.

ALI: Thank you. I'm thinking about taking over the entire university.

HARRY: You should – it would look good on your CV.

ALI: That's what I thought. It's my aim to be president of the world...

HARRY: You have the most beautiful eyes...

ALI: Eyes?

HARRY: They are the deepest blue I have ever seen. That's what makes your face so beautiful...

Harry and Ali stare into each other's eyes... they can feel something between them...

ALI: Don't stop....

HARRY: And your mouth has the most kissable lips...

ALI: That's... that's a very good thing to say...

They are interrupted by Gina crossing the acting space. Harry sees her and strides towards her. He shoots out his hand...

HARRY: Gina! We got off to a bad start. I'd like to introduce myself properly. I'm Harry.

She is taken off guard¹ and takes his hand.

GINA: Oh! Yes, I made that dreadful² mistake...

HARRY: I just wanted to tell you how much I loved the Zadie Smith lecture. I do hope there'll be more.

GINA: Yes. I'm arranging another one for next term.

HARRY: The lectures you organise are the best in the English department.

They'll look so good on your CV!

Gina giggles girlishly and looks away. Harry turns to Ali with a thumbs-up sign. Ali reluctantly³ encourages him.

GINA: Who would be the top three writers you'd invite?

HARRY: (*caught out*) Top three? Writers? (*Getting an idea*) That is something we should discuss over dinner...

GINA: Dinner? I don't have time to...

HARRY: Everyone has to eat. I know a brilliant Italian restaurant.

GINA: (*checking her phone*) I have the Poetry Society till eight.

HARRY: Eight-thirty! I'll come and meet you!

GINA: Ok. But just this once.

Gina goes. Harry dances about. He catches up Ali in his arms and kisses her.

HARRY: We did it! You did it!

ALI: We're not finished yet, there still more work to do.

¹ surprised, when she was not expecting to be

² terrible, awful

³ hesitantly, almost unwillingly

HARRY: But I've got a date – job done!

ALI: And what are you going to do on that date? Where are you going to go?

What are you going to talk about? How are you going to be?

HARRY: Can't I just be me?

ALI: Not if you want the date to last longer than five minutes. Take me for a coffee!

HARRY: I thought you said we had work to do.

ALI: It'll be a pretend date¹...

Tom brings on a café table...

ALI: I'll pretend to be Gina, you can take me out...

HARRY: Gotcha²!

Harry sits at the table, Ali remains standing.

HARRY: Aren't you going to sit down?

ALI: Harry, you can't just plonk yourself down³. What if I don't want to sit here?

And you should let me sit down first... try it again.

Harry gets up.

HARRY: Er... this is the only table available, is this ok?

ALI: Yes, this is great.

HARRY: Please...

Harry indicates a chair. Harry sits in his chair but realises Ali is taking off her jacket and hasn't sat down. He leaps up⁴. Ali sits and then Harry sits...

ALI: Perfect!

Harry waves at the waiter.

HARRY: Two coffees please!

ALI: Now you've gone and spoiled⁵ it.

HARRY: What? You said you wanted a coffee.

ALI: I did not. That was Ali, I'm Gina. How do you know Gina even likes coffee?

HARRY: If she doesn't, why am I taking her to a café?

ALI: Because you are taking her on a date, the coffee is irrelevant.

HARRY: If the coffee is not important...

ALI: A person likes to be asked. Get it?

A waiter arrives...

HARRY: What would you like?

ALI: A skinny latte, please.

HARRY: (*bemused*) Two coffees, please.

Silence.

ALI: Aren't you going to talk to me?

¹ one that seems real, but isn't

² 'Got you', I understand you

³ sit down heavily

⁴ gets up quickly

⁵ ruined

HARRY: How's Tom?

ALI: Not me! Talk to Gina!

HARRY: How's... Zadie Smith?

ALI: Harry, if you are on a date with someone, the point is you want to be with them and get to know them better. It's not a job interview.

HARRY: All this talking business, it's dumb. What are you supposed to say?

ALI: You talk to me all the time.

HARRY: That's because I know you. I like you. I like being with you.

ALI: And Gina is different because...?

HARRY: Because I'm in love with Gina!

ALI: Ah. So, talk to her about the way you feel.

HARRY: I love you!

ALI: Ok, that might scare her off¹, if that's your opening line. What is it you like about her? Go back to her eyes... start with that.

HARRY: Eyes?

ALI: Yes, you were telling me how beautiful my eyes were... I mean Gina's eyes. I really liked that. I mean, I thought that was good.

HARRY: You have the most beautiful eyes. When you smile... yes, like that, they light up! When you look at me, I get a shiver up my spine²...

ALI: Good. Now, let's pretend you want to touch her... find a reason to hold my hand...

Ali puts her hand out on the table...

HARRY: Er... ah! I like your ring, can I see it?

Harry takes her hand and looks at the ring...

HARRY: That's really lovely...

ALI: You're doing well. Let's pretend you don't want to let go of Gina's hand... find a way to keep it...

Harry pulls Ali up from the table...

HARRY: Look! I wanted to show you this...

ALI: Clever. But what are we looking at?

HARRY: I... lied. I just wanted to keep hold of your hand.

ALI: So, let's pretend you want to put your arm around Gina...

Harry puts his arm around Ali, Ali slips her arm around Harry...

HARRY: Are you warm enough?

ALI: So, let's pretend you... want to kiss Gina...

Harry pulls Ali to him.

HARRY: I have wanted to kiss you, Ali, for such a long time now...

ALI: Do you mean that? You said Ali, not Gina...

HARRY: Er...

They are about to kiss as...

¹ frighten her away

² feel suddenly excited

Scene 7 - The Date

Tom appears and sets up another small table...

TOM: Harry is going on a date? With Gina? Where did he find the rizz¹,
to...to... rizz her up²?

Harry and Ali slowly pull away from each other. She watches Harry as he leaves.

ALI: Oh, he has lots...

TOM: His clothes. He's still the same old Harry underneath. Where is he taking her?

ALI: An Italian restaurant.

TOM: Ha! Harry wouldn't know an Italian restaurant if it sprinkled³ parmesan cheese over him. This is going to be a wonderful disaster!

ALI: Gina said yes. Nobody made her say yes – she looked at Harry and saw his potential.

TOM: He won't last⁴ half an hour.

ALI: You've never taken me to an Italian restaurant.

TOM: If that's your idea of fun. Ok! We'll go.

ALI: Really? When? Oh no! You don't mean... to spy on Harry and Gina.

TOM: I want to see this for myself. And if the evening doesn't work out – we'll be there to pick up the pieces⁵...

ALI: Isn't that sneaky⁶?

TOM: Very. But we'll see if your makeover really works...

Harry and Gina arrive at the restaurant. They go to one of the tables. Tom and Ali, as if they are waiters, seat them.

ALI: We can't, Tom, we're his friends. We can't go behind his back⁷ like that.

TOM: He won't even know we're there. He only has eyes for Gina...

Ali and Tom run off.

HARRY: You've a dynamic profile on Instagram. Some classy reels...

GINA: Thanks.

HARRY: With some impressive writers – Zadie Smith, Ian McEwan, Kazuo Ishiguro – wow!

GINA: Thanks. I couldn't find you on Instagram.

HARRY: No. I...er...find the format...limited.

GINA: (*puzzled*) Really? You were going to tell me your three favourite writers.

HARRY: Oh, I just have! Which Zadie Smith novel do you like the best?

¹ short for charisma.

² to charm her, to chat her up

³ threw, scattered a little

⁴ see it through

⁵ console him, make him feel better after a dramatic event

⁶ unfair because it's done secretly

⁷ do it without him knowing it

GINA: I haven't read them all.

HARRY: You said she was your favourite writer.

GINA: Do you know how many books she's sold? How many awards she's won? She is such a feminist role model. That's why I admire her so much.

Tom and Ali enter the restaurant, looking for a table. They sidle¹ past Harry and Gina, hiding their faces and sit at the other table. They open menus and hide behind them.

Harry reaches out for Gina's hand

HARRY: (*getting romantic*) I hope we're not going to talk about writers all night.

GINA: Don't go slushy² on me.

HARRY: Slushy?

GINA: Romantic. I said when we first met, I'm too busy to bother with all that... *Harry picks up her hand.*

HARRY: (*changing tack*³) No! I was just admiring your ring. Very beautiful. Very... expensive.

GINA: Fifteen hundred pounds. A present from my father. I like expensive things.

HARRY: Me too! Cartier watches.

GINA: Oh, yes...?

HARRY: Mercedes-Benz, Armani perfume...

GINA: Chanel⁴!

HARRY: Both!

Tom and Ali are watching over the top of their menus.

HARRY: Skiing in St Moritz, diving in the Seychelles.

GINA: Yes! A villa in Tuscany, a home in...

HARRY: Manhattan. An apartment ... in Manhattan.

GINA: You'd like to live in New York?

HARRY: Where else?

GINA: What would you do there?

HARRY: Advertising! It's where the real money is.

GINA: How do you get into advertising?

HARRY: I'll get a good degree. Do the usual intern thing with a London company and make myself invaluable⁵ to them. Move up through the ranks – keep watching for opportunities in the States. Learn how it's done there – then open my own company. HNY – Higgins New York!

Gina is impressed. Tom is laughing. Ali makes him put his menu over his face.

GINA: Wow! That is so cool. I like a man who knows where he's going.

¹ walk past without being noticed

² become too emotional and romantic

³ strategy or tactic

⁴ all classy, luxurious, up-market brands

⁵ extremely useful so that they cannot do without him

HARRY: It's important to have a life plan...

GINA: You've come a long way since you were a caretaker. Tom said...

HARRY: Tom? What did Tom tell you about me?

Tom and Ali's menus come down in alarm...

GINA: Nothing. He just didn't give me the real picture of you.

HARRY: Don't listen to Tom. He has OCD¹. He spends most of his time tidying the house.

Tom is affronted². He throws his menu down. Ali stops him from getting up...

GINA: And that weird girlfriend of his...

HARRY: Ali. A total fruit loop³!

Ali is hurt – she pulls out her handkerchief.

GINA: They're like an old married couple....

HARRY: They do like to spend their evenings in front of the television.

Tom stands up – he's about to say something...

GINA: Cosy couch potatoes⁴!

HARRY: Very retro!

Tom is deflated⁵ and sinks back into his seat.

GINA: Life is passing them by. *(Her phone goes.)* It's my mother. Excuse me, I'd better take this. *(Gina gets up and goes out.)* Hello! No... I'm in a restaurant...

Harry leans back in his chair, thinking about how well he is doing with Gina.

Tom and Ali stare hard at him. Harry sees them and double takes...

HARRY: What are you doing here?

TOM: If I tidy up all day it's because you are in constant goblin mode⁶!

ALI: Skiing in St Moritz? Diving in the Seychelles?

TOM: He's been reading *James Bond*!

HARRY: Is this a coincidence⁷ or are you here on purpose?

TOM: We didn't want to be cosy couch potatoes so we came out for a romantic dinner for two.

HARRY: I get it. You're here to watch me screw up⁸ with Gina. You don't know how to have fun by yourselves and you've come to watch the fireworks⁹.

ALI: We were worried, Harry, that's all. We just wanted to be here for you... Should something go wrong...

HARRY: You want something to go wrong.

¹ Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: a mental illness which causes a person to do something repeatedly to relieve anxiety

² insulted, offended

³ someone silly or strange

⁴ people who spend a lot of time sitting at home watching TV

⁵ feeling less confident than before

⁶ lazy, self-indulgent behaviour, not caring about looks, health or other people

⁷ by pure chance

⁸ fail

⁹ show, spectacle

ALI: How can you say that? I'm the one who got Gina to notice you.
HARRY: You dressed me up in a fancy suit. Gina can see past that, she's not stupid. Do you really believe you can design a new me?
TOM: No, dude. Ali has created a monster – Frankenstein's monster.
HARRY: You mean the type of person who spies on¹ his friends?
Harry moves his chair so his back is towards Ali and Tom's table. Gina returns.
GINA: I've just been telling my mother all about you. She'd like to meet you. My father might like you, too. You're his kind of person.
HARRY: (*loud, so Tom and Ali can hear*) Tell them I'd be delighted.
GINA: Shall we order?
HARRY: I think this place is a little dull². *Langan's Brasserie* is across the street – let's go there.
GINA: Classy!
Harry and Gina sweep out of³ the restaurant.

Scene 8 - Meeting the parents

ALI: Things changed after that. We didn't see much of Harry. He went to every lecture, seminar and tutorial there was; especially if he knew Gina was going to be there. He joined all the societies Gina was a member of and more besides. When he wasn't attending lectures he went to the university library – to work!
The sofa is wheeled into the centre of the space, which Ali and Tom sit on at opposite ends.
ALI: When he was home, he didn't want to speak to us.
Harry hurriedly crosses the space in front of the sofa. He does not acknowledge⁴ Ali and Tom's greeting.
TOM: How are you doing!?
ALI: Our friendship was over and it really hurt. I thought he'd eventually be his old self, but then one week went by...
Harry passes back across the space in a white shirt but no trousers...
TOM: Haven't you forgotten something, Bro'?'
ALI: The old Harry would have seen the joke. He would have laughed it off. He would have said – *whatever!* This new Harry had no sense of humour. And then another week went by...

¹ watches people secretly

² boring

³ leave with great self-confidence

⁴ indicate that he has seen

Harry hurries back the other way, now dressed in a tuxedo¹, but without the bow tie².

TOM: Wow! Are you going to a wedding?

ALI: And he still wasn't talking to us. We'd lost him. I wanted the old Harry back...

Harry appears struggling to tie his bow tie. He grunts³ in anger in his attempts. Failing to tie it, he pulls it off angrily, throws it on the floor, stamps on it and then kicks at it.

TOM: Do you need a hand with that?

HARRY: No! I can manage perfectly well!

Ali picks up the bow tie, gently sits Harry on the arm of the sofa and begins to tie it for him.

TOM: I take it you're not going to a football match...

HARRY: The opera.

TOM: Opera? Interesting. Which one?

HARRY: *Rigoletto*⁴.

TOM: Isn't that the one about the jester⁵ who has a curse⁶ put on him?

HARRY: Yes.

ALI: Have you and Gina joined an operatic society⁷?

HARRY: Gina's parents.... Her father has a box⁸...

TOM: Meeting the parents! That's serious. I've yet to meet Ali's parents and we've been together months. Can't say I'm looking forward to it – best of luck with that one.

The bow tie is tied. Ali takes a step away and looks at Harry.

ALI: You look wonderful.

She kisses him on the cheek. Although Harry is touched by this gesture he decides to ignore it and strides off⁹.

ALI: Have a good evening...

He stops and turns...

HARRY: Will you be spying on us, tonight?

Harry goes.

TOM: Ouch!

¹ a classy suit

² special type of tie, in the shape of a bow

³ makes noises because he feels annoyed

⁴ a 1851 opera by Giuseppe Verdi

⁵ medieval court joker, one who told jokes to make a king or duke laugh

⁶ a spell that brings bad luck

⁷ a group that attends operas

⁸ dt: Loge

⁹ walks away quickly with long steps

ALI: What have we done? When I said I could design a new Harry, I didn't realise he would change so much. I thought he'd be the same Harry underneath, just more sophisticated¹ on top.

TOM: When this Gina thing has all blown over², Harry will become his old self again. He'll slob around in his baggy sweatshirt and stupid trousers and sleep the day away.

ALI: Blown over? He's meeting Gina's parents. Tom – they are both getting serious.

TOM: Ye-es...

ALI: What?

TOM: Oh, I don't think Gina is that serious about Harry.

ALI: Why? What has she told you?

TOM: Nothing.

ALI: So how do you know?

TOM: You're upset about Harry. All I'm saying is don't worry, things will be ok.

ALI: You know something....

TOM: No. It's just not as serious as you think, that's all.

ALI: Gina must have said something....

TOM: Ok. She's going out with Harry for fun.

ALI: For fun? He's head over heels in love³ with her!

TOM: This is the best way. He goes out with her, she dumps⁴ him. He'll get over⁵ it.

ALI: What? It's all planned then?

TOM: No. Look. I told Gina about the makeover. She thought it was... fun. A good idea.

ALI: And whose idea was it to set-up⁶ Harry like this?

TOM: It's not a set-up. I was just helping things along.

ALI: How can you be so cruel? You're letting Harry think Gina is serious about him when she isn't. You're both just playing with him.

TOM: And your makeover isn't playing with him?

ALI: You let me think that my design was working.

TOM: I was helping you. It did work! Gina went out with him.

ALI: You cheated⁷. You got Gina to go out with Harry for fun – for a laugh. You were laughing at Harry. You were laughing at me. You and Gina were laughing at me and Harry!

¹ refined, cultivated

² is over, has become forgotten

³ (idiom); completely in love

⁴ suddenly ends the relationship with him, drops him

⁵ will survive it

⁶ to put him knowingly in a difficult or compromising position

⁷ played unfairly

TOM: Calm down. It really isn't that important...

ALI: What isn't? Harry? Me? My design work? I'll tell you what isn't important – you!

Ali storms off¹.

TOM: Ali. Ali! Please stay! We can watch a film... Or we can go out. It'll be fine – you'll see...

Ali returns carrying a coat and hat, which she puts on through the next speech.

ALI: But it wasn't fine. It could never be ok.

Tom goes. The sounds of an orchestra tuning up.

ALI: I felt humiliated². Tom was patronising³ and controlling; he'd set me up as much as he had poor Harry. I didn't see Tom again. Most of all I felt stupid because I had really thought that I could change someone by re-designing them. Who did I think I was? I was as bad as Tom, just in a different way. It made me understand what design is all about. It isn't about changing anything or anyone, nobody has that power, it's about enhancing⁴ what there is – making the good things even better. When I thought about it – I had never wanted Harry to change at all. I liked him just the way he was...

Harry and Gina enter, he in a tuxedo, she in an evening dress. Gina has a phone pressed to her ear.

Ali, now dressed as Mrs Bennett, goes.

GINA: Mummy and Daddy are stuck in traffic, they should be here soon. You look very smart. Few men can get the tie straight.

HARRY: I had help.

GINA: I could almost fall for⁵ you.

HARRY: You mean you haven't?

GINA: I've told you – I don't do romantic. But it's a possibility.

HARRY: Why don't you do romantic?

GINA: It's such a waste of time and energy. Messy⁶, uncertain feelings, then happy feelings followed by hurt feelings. And for what? It is much better to focus your energy on what you really want out of life – success!

HARRY: You have a heart of solid ice.

GINA: Thank you.

HARRY: Will I like your parents?

GINA: I do.

HARRY: Will they like me?

¹ runs off angrily

² ashamed and embarrassed

³ behaving in a superior way

⁴ improving

⁵ fall in love with

⁶ confused, mixed-up

GINA: Probably not. Daddy will see you as a distraction¹ from my main objectives in life. Mummy won't be interested – she's far too wrapped up in² herself. My father works in banking. His main interest in life is to make more money than anyone else.

Gina's parents arrive.

MRS BENNETT: Darling!

MR BENNETT: The traffic is awful.

They greet their daughter and ignore Harry.

GINA: It hasn't started yet.

MRS BENNETT: You must be Gary.

HARRY: Harry. Pleased to meet you, Mrs Bennett.

MR BENNETT: You're the one interested in advertising?

HARRY: That's me!

MRS BENNETT: (*looking into the audience*) Isn't that David and Marianne Stockton?

Gina and her parents pull out opera glasses and look in the direction she is pointing.

MR BENNETT: I rather think it is. And look – six rows back, left side of the stalls – that's Frank Barrett and his wife. He's the new man at Lloyds Bank. Must talk to him later, he could be of some use.

MRS BENNETT: Dress Circle, front row to the right – the Stapletons. He's tipped for³ the Tesco's job.

MR BENNETT: How do you intend to do it? Advertising?

HARRY: Internship upon graduation with a London company, becoming copywriter whilst studying for an MBA⁴...

MR BENNETT: MBA is good...

HARRY: Accounts executive by 25 and then target a New York Company.

MR BENNETT: (*approvingly*⁵) New York!

HARRY: Accounts Director by the age of 30, accept a partnership by 35, buy the company five years later.

MR BENNETT: You don't intend to set up your own company?

HARRY: In advertising it's all about the brand.

MR BENNETT: Good point. A good plan. Did you hear, darling? Harry has a life plan.

MRS BENNETT: It's Gary, darling.

MR BENNETT: It's so important to know where you are going in life. So many young people today spend all their time doing what they want to instead of

¹ taking my attention away

² involved with

³ generally expected to get

⁴ Master of Business Administration: a post-graduate degree in business management

⁵ showing agreement and support

doing what they should. Too busy being woke¹! Work hard and plan for the future, that's what I say, isn't it darling?

MRS BENNETT: I'm sure Terry doesn't want to hear your philosophy on life...

HARRY: It's very interesting.

MR BENNETT: I could get to like you, young man. The time to enjoy yourself is when you've got a couple of million in the bank... Know anyone in advertising? You know, to give you a leg up²?

HARRY: Stalls, right side, three rows back, six seats in – that's Andrew Harcourt of the advertising company Harcourt, Harcourt and... Er... Harcourt.

MR BENNETT: Ah! Do introduce me later.

HARRY: I will. (*Changing the subject*) Have you seen *Rigoletto* before, sir?

MR BENNETT: Darling, have we seen this opera before?

MRS BENNETT: I expect so, darling.

MR BENNETT: Probably.

HARRY: I researched the story of it this afternoon, it's very interesting...

MR BENNETT: I'm not interested in the bloody opera. He thinks we're interested in the music, darling!

MRS BENNETT: Good heavens!

HARRY: Then why do you come?

MR BENNETT: Nobody in their right minds wants to listen to a tenor squawking³. The auditorium is full of influential people. I do some of my best business here. You might have a plan, young man, but you have a lot to learn.

GINA: Look – there's the conductor. It's about to start...

Gina and the Bennetts put away their opera glasses. Mr Bennett gesticulates⁴ to someone in the audience to meet them in the bar for a drink....

MR BENNETT: Just going to meet up with Harper from Barclays Bank. Won't be long...

Mr Bennett goes. Mrs Bennett is waving at someone in the audience.

MRS BENNETT: I'm going to catch up⁵ with Mary Antrobus. I'll see you later, darling. Lovely to meet you, Barry.

Mrs Bennett goes.

Music, the beginning of Rigoletto.

GINA: You impressed them. Well done. I didn't think you would.

HARRY: Are your parents like that all the time?

GINA: More or less. Lovely, aren't they?

HARRY: What do they do for fun?

¹ alert to racial prejudice and discrimination

² help you in getting on (with your career)

³ screeching (like a bird); negative comment about style of singing

⁴ makes a gesture

⁵ meet and discuss the latest news

GINA: Make money.

HARRY: Have they got a couple of million in the bank, yet?

GINA: You bet!

HARRY: So why don't they take the night off and enjoy the opera?

GINA: Because you can never have enough.

HARRY: Is that how you want to be?

GINA: Don't you?

HARRY: The way I see it, is that there are two ways to go on a journey.

GINA: And they are?

HARRY: You can race as fast as you can and get to the destination first, or you can look out of the window, watch the world around you and enjoy the journey. Which are you, Gina?

GINA: Foot to the floor, step on the gas, be there first. I'd even take a shortcut if I could find one.

Harry undoes his bow tie.

HARRY: Gina, this isn't going to work out, is it?

GINA: Of course it isn't. It never could. But you knew that all the time.

HARRY: Did I? I hoped that... I really tried hard to ...

GINA: You mean with your makeover?

HARRY: What!? You knew!?

GINA: Shhh! I think the entire university knew.

HARRY: Who told you?

GINA: Who do you think?

HARRY: And you went out with me? Why?

GINA: As a favour to a friend.

HARRY: As a joke, you mean. I know we're worlds apart, but can you imagine how much I've thought about you, dreamt about you, wanted to be with you?

GINA: Can I help that?

HARRY: You could have been honest. It would never have got this far.

GINA: Honest as in blagging¹ my father that you're going to crack² New York when you know that's not your style? Hey, you got this far – I hope you enjoyed the ride.

HARRY: Give my regards to your parents. (*Harry starts to go.*) Did this... the makeover have any effect at all?

GINA: Oh, yes. (*She kisses him on the cheek.*) But not on me. You've got the wrong girl, Harry. See you at the next guest lecture.

Gina goes as the tenor hits the high note; Tom wheels the sofa into the middle and stands on it. The music stops.

TOM: Now, before you hit me...

¹ (colloq.) telling lies to

² succeed in

HARRY: You two-faced, back-stabbing¹ bastard!
TOM: You wanted to go out with Gina, didn't you?
HARRY: I wanted her to love me, not pity me.
TOM: Is that what she did?
HARRY: Her heart is too cold for even that. Same as yours and Ali's!
TOM: Did you pass the parents' test?
HARRY: With flying colours².
TOM: Well then, the makeover worked.
HARRY: No, no, it didn't. I wasn't trying to pass the parents' test – it was Gina I wanted.
TOM: And you went out with her – for a while.
HARRY: But not for real! Because you and Ali and Gina set me up. Where is Ali?
TOM: She's... gone.
HARRY: Gone?
TOM: As in: dumped me. Now we're quits³, ok?
HARRY: Dumped you? Why?
TOM: She also found out that Gina knew about the makeover.
HARRY: You mean Ali wasn't in on it? So, you've done to her what you did to me. Poor Ali, I've been angry with her for weeks and all the time she was only trying to help me. I'm glad she's left you, you two-faced, back-stabbing bastard!
TOM: Now, before you hit me...
HARRY: Forget it! I'm going to find Ali...
Harry goes.

Ali and the student enter. Ali is carrying her graduation gown.

Scene 9 - Happily Ever After

STUDENT: So, Harry didn't end up with Gina, you and Tom split, Harry and Tom can't have stayed friends after that...
ALI: Harry moved out of the flat soon after.
STUDENT: You said Harry was your major achievement. But it all went wrong, it didn't work.
ALI: I didn't help Harry get Gina, that's true, but I helped him discover the world – his world.
STUDENT: Which is?

¹ cheating and betraying

² gloriously, successfully

³ equal, we don't owe each other anything

ALI: Gina is the type of person who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing¹. Harry is the opposite. He knows exactly what he wants and what he doesn't want. He's happy. He's the happiest person I know. I didn't change Harry one bit, but I helped to wake him up. That's why he is my main achievement.

STUDENT: Is he here today?

ALI: Somewhere. He's graduated with a first in English literature.

STUDENT: How did he manage that?

ALI: He enjoyed the ride². He didn't sleep it away and he didn't plan a big career – he read the books and went to the lectures because that was what he wanted to do. He's had a great time here. You should really be writing your article about Harry.

STUDENT: And what did you get out of it all?

Harry enters. He is in his slob clothes but with his graduation gown over the top of them. He holds his scroll proudly.

HARRY: Hey! Look what I've got...

Ali and Harry hug and kiss.

HARRY: Come on, your parents are waiting. My parents are waiting!

STUDENT: You're meeting the parents!?

HARRY: Oh no! You haven't been telling her about the makeover?

ALI: Sorry. She's writing an article for the university magazine.

STUDENT: It's ok – I'll send you the article for you to approve. Could I get a picture of you two?

Ali puts her cap and gown on, whilst the student switches on her camera and frames the picture.

STUDENT: I won't publish anything you don't want me to...

Ali and Harry stand together, arms around each other.

ALI: What do you think, Harry?

HARRY: (*smiling*) Publish... and be damned³!

The camera flashes...

Music

The End

¹ a quotation from Oscar Wilde's play *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892)

² experience

³ a quotation attributed to the Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), a famous military leader