

# Abigail's Party: Publicity Prologue

*Scene: The sitting room of Laurence and Beverly's North London home. Laurence is reading the newspaper, and Beverly is flicking through Vogue.*

**Laurence** I hear there's a very good show on in town, Beverly.

**Beverly** (*reading*) Oh yes, Laurence?

**Laurence** Yes. It says it's about two 'hideous suburbanites' who hold a dinner party for their new neighbours.

**Beverly** Oh Christ, Laurence! Not another of your awful 'modern plays' where people just spend all evening talking! (*Starts smoking*)

**Laurence** Quite the contrary, I think you'll find, Beverly. The play is by an up-and-coming new writer called Mike Leigh, whose father, I believe, was actually an estate agent.

**Beverly** Give it a rest, Laurence. You know I've spent a hard day making prawn and mushroom vol-au-vents for that staff do of yours. I just want to sit here, watch my new fibre-optic and listen to Feliciano.

**Laurence** Yes, well, Mr Webb's wife does like her vol-au-vents, Beverly. We must entertain our guests.

**Beverly** He's not 'our' guests, Laurence. He's *your* boss. And we're always entertaining him!

**Laurence** Which is why I suggest we go out tonight. Darling. Look - (*shows her the newspaper*) - it says it's a 'black comedy'.

**Beverly** Like *Love Thy Neighbour*?

**Laurence** No, Beverly, I don't think so. The trouble with you is that you're ignorant.

**Beverly** Me? Ignorant? I was the one who hung a Moroccan kilim in the bathroom!

**Laurence** Yes, anyway...look it's got a good cast. Sarah Hills, you like her, don't you?

**Beverly** She's all right. But we've got nothing in common.

**Laurence** And Linda Gay. You remember her from that farce thing we saw?

**Beverly** *Whoops Missus, There Go My Trousers*, yes. I thought that punk was dead dishy.

**Laurence** You think everyone's dishy, Beverly. And look, Matt Clowry is in it - he's always good value for money. Although he's rather...cosmopolitan.

**Beverly** Hmm yes, perhaps I may see it after all...

**Laurence** I don't know Samantha Griggs though. 'Young and blonde' it says here.

**Beverly** Oh well, you'd like her then, wouldn't you? (*To herself*) That's if you remember what it's still for.

**Laurence** What did you say, Beverly?

**Beverly** Nothing, dear.

**Laurence** (*reading*) That's funny...

**Beverly** Oh yes?

**Laurence** Well it's got this chappie called Ian Long - don't know *him* - playing someone called Laurence!

**Beverly** (*sarcastically*) Oh, and is he an estate agent?

**Laurence** It doesn't say. But you'll never guess - his wife's name is Beverly!

**Beverly** 'Laurence and Beverly'. Oh. This Mike Leigh, do we know him?

**Laurence** I don't think so, Beverly. He was certainly never a Wibbly-Webb client.

**Beverly** And what's it called, this play of yours?

**Laurence** *Abigail's Party*. Which is a bit odd, as it doesn't seem to feature Abigail at all.

**Beverly** Well, that's modern plays for you. Like that *Waiting for Rosencrantz* you made me sit through on our honeymoon.

**Laurence** You told me you enjoyed it.

**Beverly** I said I enjoyed it when it *finished*, Laurence, which is not the same thing at all.

**Laurence** Well, let's go and see it then, shall we?

**Beverly** (*giving in*) Oh all right, Laurence, if we must. Where's it playing? The Hampstead Playhouse?

**Laurence** It appears to be somewhere called the Edward Alderton Theatre. In Bexley.

**Beverly** Bexley?

**Laurence** Yes.

**Beverly** Well, where's that, of all places?

**Laurence** I don't rightly know, Beverly. I think it must be over the river somewhere.

**Beverly** Oh...In *south* London?

*Pause*

**Laurence** Perhaps we won't go then. I hear the director's got a terrible track record anyway.

**Beverly** Good idea.

**Laurence** And it doesn't sound at all like real life.

**Beverly** It certainly doesn't, Laurence. People sitting around talking. Ooh no. For once, I think you may be right.

**Laurence** Very generous of you darling. Now, how about an olive before we listen to James Galway?

*The end.*

(c) Mark Campbell, with apologies to Mike Leigh