

EXCERPT FROM "The Arrangement"

SETTING: Alternates between a public lounge and a bedroom in the same hotel.

TIME PERIOD: Contemporary

CHARACTERS, in order of appearance

ISAAC A black man of Caribbean ancestry, age 35'ish. Is employed as a legal assistant to a nationally well-known lawyer. Speaks with a local accent.

JOANNA Isaac's wife. A black woman, age 35'ish. Speaks with a local accent, but with a distinct Caribbean influence.

GRACE A white lady, age a young 55'ish. Has an excellent figure for her age. Her face is appealing in appearance. She always dresses to make the best of herself, in very feminine, expensive boutique clothes. Her voice is educated, but pleasant and unpretentious.

SKERRATT An investigative journalist for a national tabloid. Any ethnicity. Male or female.

BARCLAY A black man, age mid 40's to mid 50's. Has a strong Caribbean accent.

(Excerpt from Act I, Scene 1)

The action till now: Grace and Isaac have met through an agency. They are both trapped in sexless marriages. It's become clear at this point that Grace very much likes Isaac but doesn't feel she can go through with "the arrangement" because he's twenty years younger than herself.

GRACE The testimonials seem very good. Do you think they're real?

ISAAC Yeah. Don't you?

GRACE I suppose they couldn't make them up. They'd be sued, or something, or had up for fraud. But it's such a bizarre concept!

ISAAC I think it's simple. A man and a woman agree to meet in secret for the sole purpose of giving each other the regular sex they're missing out on.

GRACE When you describe the arrangement like that, coldly and logically, it sounds perfectly feasible. In practise, I'm not so sure I believe it.

ISAAC I think you do believe it, or at least you want to believe it, or else why did you come here tonight?

GRACE I might not have been serious. I might have been doing it as an amusement.

ISAAC You were totally serious, Grace. Why did you choose the photograph of a man you thought was ten years younger than yourself? Because you don't want a repeat of your husband's impotency. Correct? Or not?

(GRACE suddenly gets up and stands looking into the hotel lobby, with her back to Isaac)

ISAAC I sound like I'm grilling you in a court of law. That was impertinent. I apologise.

GRACE (*Looking through to the lobby as she talks*) No, you're right. You understand me because you did the opposite to me. Do I mean that, or do I mean you did the same? What I mean is, you deliberately chose an older woman, because you don't want a direct rival to your wife. You think the arrangement can be made to work, given the right conditions.

(*Slight pause. ISAAC is observing Grace sympathetically*)

ISAAC Are you worried the journalist will come back?

GRACE Just a little.

ISAAC You're worried he'll find us together.

GRACE Just a little.

ISAAC We'll say we're old friends. Having a drink together. I haven't seen you for years. That's why I brought flowers. The age gap, remember. He'd have no reason to suspect.

GRACE (*Reflectively*) Would he not?

(*Slight pause*)

ISAAC Grace? Supposing, when you arrived here tonight, it wasn't me you'd met, but the forty-five-year old man you thought you were going to meet?

GRACE Without knowing the man, too difficult to answer. First, I'd have to like him. I like you. If I didn't like him /

ISAAC / O.K. Let's say, it was me, but forty-five, not thirty-five. What would you have done?

GRACE You're really curious to know, aren't you?

ISAAC Yes, because honestly, when I got here, I suddenly realised I'd no idea what I was going to say to the lady or do with her.

GRACE (*Sitting down again*) I helped my husband at his workplace all morning. After lunch, I went back home. While I was bathing, and dressing, and putting my makeup on, I rehearsed over and over in my mind what I was going to say to you. I had an answer ready for every proposition I thought you might make. (*Laughing*) Now I can't remember a word of what I'd planned to say!

ISAAC Brilliant! So we've both got no idea!

GRACE We'll have to try and create the situation together.

ISAAC What would have happened first, do you think?

What happens next: Grace and Isaac agree to have sex (Note: there are no sex scenes or nudity in the play) but their arrangement comes under threat from a tabloid journalist, then from a murderous religious fanatic, culminating in a moral dilemma of whether to murder the fanatic.