**Building on Sand**

(a Two Act comedy)

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**CHARACTERS**

Richard Jenkins An accountant in his mid 30s to 40s.

Juliette His wife. A social worker.

Dan Crisp Richard's old school friend.

Aunt Dot Juliette’s eccentric aunt, aged late 60s.

Berenice Dupont An attractive young French girl.

**SET**

The action takes place on the beach at Littlehampton. It requires a simple set to represent an open beach. Within the set is a raised area representing sand dunes.

**PROPS**

An inflatable dinghy is needed in the first scene. A sandcastle appears in a number of later scenes and should be robust enough to move safely. Beach paraphernalia includes two deckchairs, towels and a picnic hamper. A laptop, mobile phone and pair of binoculars are required, but don’t need to be functional.

EXCERPT

Rich Here’s the plan. We both know women can’t resist you.

Dan Guilty as charged.

Rich You probably winked at the midwife when she cut your umbilical cord.

Dan Winked? I got her number.

Rich To my knowledge you’ve only had two failures in your entire career.

Dan And they were both lesbians.

Rich Allegedly. (Dan prepares to dispute) Let’s not quibble. If anyone can break Juliette, it’s going to be you.

Dan Look Dick, I know Katrin gave you a rough ride . . .

Rich I can never let myself be humiliated like that again.

Dan You’ve got to let it go. They’re just not worth it.

Rich I have to know I'm safe.

Dan There's no such thing as safe.

Rich There is. And you’re going to get it for me. With you I can have proof. Try every trick in the book. Unleash every method of seduction you know. Stretch her to the limit. Then if she’s still faithful, I know I’m home and dry. You’ve got to help me, Dan. It’s making me sick.

Dan (long pause) I can't go at her cold like that. It's not my style.

Rich Ah! So you think you’ll fail?

Dan I don’t do the ‘f’ word, Dick.

Rich Worried the old magic might be wearing thin?

Dan Berenice is half my age, mate.

Rich Little foreign girls are easy pickings.

Dan Little foreign girls are bloody hard work.

Rich Maybe the stamina’s not there anymore.

Dan I usually wait for a flicker of interest before I drop anchor.

Rich (gleefully) You know you’re going to fail. That’s why you won’t do it.

Dan I’m not saying I won’t do it.

Rich You’re chickening out.

Dan I'm warning you. I'll give it all I've got.

Rich I don’t want any half cock attempts.

Dan There's nothing half cock about me, Dick.

Rich (pause) Well?

Dan (spits on his hand and offers it to Richard) Put it there.

Rich (they shake hands) I want it thorough. Try her from all angles. Don’t leave any room for doubt.

Dan I’m world class.

Rich (conspiratorial) Now, here’s a little hint. She’s into Somalian politics at the moment, so that’s worth a stab. Anything about the developing world is bang on the money.

Dan Leave the details to me, Dick.

Rich Just a bit of insider information. Always helpful.

Dan Rule number one, Dickie. Never use familiar routes. It’s those sneaky little back paths the husband doesn’t know about that get you into the magic garden.

Rich (uneasy) Right.

Dan (cracks his knuckles) Trust me. I’m good.

(Black Out)

**Scene Three**

Juliette sits among picnic things working on her laptop. Dan enters and watches her for a while. She ignores him. Eventually, he spreads himself out a little distance from her, stretches and sighs contentedly. She still ignores him. He sits up.

Dan Do you know what I most admire in a woman? (no response) Dedication.

Juli That's a new word for breasts, is it?

Dan I’m being serious.

Juli Which is why you read The Sun.

Dan Someone's got to speak for the working man.

Juli It’s people like you who keep the gutter press in business.

Dan It’s a big industry. It creates jobs.

Juli Look, let’s not get onto politics. I might lose my temper.

Dan (moving a little closer to her) I admire women who take politics seriously. I admire their . . .

Juli Dedication?

Dan Got it in one.

Juli Dan, let's get one thing straight. As far as I’m concerned, love your husband, love his dog.

Dan Woof, woof.

Juli Even if it does have a mental age of three.

Dan I’m very fond of Dickie. I’ve seen him get hurt in the past.

Juli (softening a little) Yes. I know you helped him a lot over Katrin, and I know you go back a long way. So let’s agree a truce, shall we? I keep a civil tongue in my head, and you stop expecting me to massage your absurd male ego.

Dan That’s going to be hard.

Juli Don’t worry. I'm sure Berenice is dying to hear another of your deep sea sagas. (returns to the lap-top) Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got case notes to write up and I need to concentrate.

Dan (long pause as Juliette continues on her laptop) Is there anything I can do that won’t annoy you?

Juli Silence would be helpful.

Dan Message received. (pause) Loud and clear. (pause) Not another word. (Juliette sighs with annoyance) My lips are sealed. (pause) Stum.

Juli Oh for God’s sake. Why don’t you go and join the others?

Dan I can't help it. Watching you tapping away, knowing each stroke of your fingers could make the difference between life and death for some poor deprived kid. It gets me right here.

Juli It's an incontinent old lady, actually. No doubt, that gets you right here, too.

Dan Bladder control is no laughing matter.

Juli Oh, I give up. (she puts down the laptop and rises) It’s no good. You’re blocking my chi. (she moves away from him)

Dan There's some left in the thermos. (she throws him a look, and he holds his hands up in surrender) Cheap joke. Guilty as charged.

Juli (expels air loudly and starts a Tai Chi movement ) Ssh . . . shuff . . . (continues doing Tai Chi)

Rich (Richard, trying not to be seen by Juliette, beckons Dan over) How’s it going?

Dan Was she as tough with you on your first date?

Rich Sharp as a blade. (fond reminiscence) Told me I was ineffectual, immature and borderline autistic spectrum. (lovingly) She’s gorgeous, isn’t she?

Dan Ssshh. Keep your voice down.

Rich Any flicker yet?

Dan Zilch.

Rich Good.

Dan Early days though.

Rich But she’s definitely refused to have sex with you.

Dan Jesus! Where’ve you been all your life? You don't spring that on them straight away. You have to prepare the ground before you sow your seed.

Rich There's to be no seed-sowing. You promised.

Dan Hey, lighten up.

Rich Sorry. A bit jumpy, that’s all.

Dan First round over and no points scored.

Rich (observes the oblivious Juliette) She is beautiful, though.

Dan Now bugger off and let me get on with it.

Rich My little darling. (He runs over and kisses Juliette on the back of the neck)

Juli (she hits him) Don’t you . . . ! (surprised) Oh, Richard.

Rich You hit my nose.

Juli (annoyed) I was connecting with my solar plexus.

Rich (presents nose) Kiss it better, Pumpkin.

Juli Do I have to do everything for you?

Rich I can’t kiss my own nose.

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