

JESSICA

JEFFERSON enters.

JEFFERSON That's me. Full of surprises.

JESSICA The surprise will be if you don't screw up.

DOROTHY starts dishing out food.

DOROTHY So how's your back?

JEFFERSON Lauren has hidden talents. She has amazing hands

DOROTHY (bridling a bit) I'm sure she has. Now, I hope everyone's hungry.

JEFFERSON So Jessica can you eat this or are you gonna explode or something

JESSICA If you had bothered to take an interest you would know I'm not allergic to everything, I can eat most things. Apart from wheat and dairy products. And gluten and shellfish. And nuts, obviously...

JEFFERSON laughs.

JEFFERSON Obviously...

JESSICA You are supposed to feel sorry for me.

JEFFERSON Ah I was wondering what I'm supposed to be emoting in this scene.

DOROTHY (smoothing over rote) I checked - everything is fine - it's the vegan option...

JESSICA You see Dad she's really nice. I don't understand why she's working with you?

JEFFERSON Ow!

JESSICA (to DOROTHY) So what is in it for you

DOROTHY I used to work in the theatre.

JESSICA You are so lucky...

DOROTHY I was much younger. In another life.

JESSICA So why did you quit?

DOROTHY I got married to an actor but it didn't work out.

JEFFERSON Surprise

DOROTHY He couldn't handle the commitment.

JEFFERSON My kind of guy

DOROTHY But I never quite managed to lose the theatre bug and so here I am trying to direct an impossible play with an improbable cast in a delapidated barn in the middle of what you charmingly call Pigsville...

JEFFERSON Yeah, yeah, enough of the backstory. Tell me about Nigel.

DOROTHY Nigel? There's nothing to tell

JEFFERSON (to JESSICA) Looks like Nigel's got the hots for Dorothy...

JESSICA Dad...

DOROTHY No he hasn't.

JEFFERSON I've seen him looking at you...

DOROTHY No you haven't. Besides, you're forgetting he's married.

JEFFERSON Where I come from that don't count for diddly-squat. In Hollywood the only thing that stops you fooling around is a prenup.

JESSICA Didn't stop you though, did it Dad?

JEFFERSON Only the last couple of marriages. Anyway if you want my professional opinion as a recovering serial philanderer...

DOROTHY Do tell...

JEFFERSON The truth is you're way too good for Nigel.

DOROTHY is slightly embarrassed.

DOROTHY If we are being embarrassing, let's talk about your love life.

JESSICA Urgh! Do we have to? It's all in the National Enquirer if you're interested.

JEFFERSON I'm taking a time out from women at the moment.

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DOROTHY Oh really?

JEFFERSON The only woman in my life is...my daughter.

JESSICA Yeah, right.

JEFFERSON And she doesn't even like me.

JESSICA Is this where we're supposed to feel sorry for you?

JEFFERSON Touche'...

DOROTHY and JESSICA laugh. JEFFERSON takes a sip of wine.

(To JESSICA) There was a time when you used to think I was great.

DOROTHY What happened?

JEFFERSON looks at JESSICA fondly.

JESSICA I grew up.

JEFFERSON Awkward pause. During which all the characters wonder if they have just heard something heartfelt and significant.

JESSICA And cut! I am going to leave you guys to it. I better call Mom - find out how the honeymoon's going - if she's still married. Thanks for supper Dorothy.

DOROTHY Pleasure.

JESSICA Night Dad.

JESSICA leaves.