

# **Dividing the Furniture**

**a black comedy**

**by**

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**Scene**

**A solicitor's office**

**Cast**

**JOANNE DALRYMPLE**      (“Joanne”)      **late 20's / early 30's**  
**solicitor for the wife**

**JOHN SILLAR**      (“John”)      **mid 30's**  
**solicitor for the husband**

**Time**

**Now**

**DIVIDING THE FURNITURE**

*John Sillar is sitting at a desk when Joanne Dalrymple enters. He stands up to greet her.*

Joanne: I am Joanne Dalrymple. Ted Priddle's associate.

John: I was expecting Ted.

*They sit at the table. John has a thick file of papers in front of him which he opens and takes notes. She has brought a large file with her which she puts on the table and opens and also makes notes on.*

Joanne: He got tied up. Anyway, I have been through the list of furniture and other items with our client and have all her instructions. It was probably better for me to come anyway.

John: I understand that the divorce has gone through and the property settlement has been completely agreed now, except for the furniture.

Joanne: The settlement of everything else depends upon agreement about the furniture and other items. If we can't agree on those, there is no deal.

John: Well, let's work through the list of items the husband wants. The first thing he wants is that set of eight antique dining chairs.

Joanne: She says he can't have them. They were a gift from her grandmother.

John: He says they were a gift from his aunt.

Joanne: I told her that. She says that she knows the difference between her grandmother and his aunt and she doesn't think he does.

John: Not a promising start. What about the large decorative copper urn?

Joanne: She says that there are two. One they bought in Bowral from a second hand shop which sits alongside the fireplace. I gather it is purely decorative since the fireplace is never lit. The other is in the conservatory and has a big pot plant sitting in it.

John: Can he have one of them?

Joanne: I understand so. Hint. Whichever one he wants ask for the other because then she will refuse that one and offer him the one he wants.

*They laugh in mutual recognition of a common experience.*

John: Thanks. What about the silver candle sticks?

Joanne: She says he took them with him in the boxes he packed up. They are probably still in the boxes. Get him to check. If they aren't in his boxes, she hasn't got them.

John: What about the big Dickerson painting?

Joanne: She says that it is out of the question. It has been in that position in the home for so long that the wall behind the painting is now a different colour and the painting just can't be removed without the whole room being redecorated.

John: Well I suggested an alternative. My client could get a print made from the original in full colour, have it framed in the same frame so its exactly the same size and will occupy exactly the same spot.

Joanne: I wondered where that idea came from. She says to tell her husband that if he thinks she is the sort of person who would have a fake copy hanging on her wall where it could be seen by all her friends and visitors, he has such a low opinion of her that the whole deal is off.

John: What about the BBQ and outdoor furniture?

Joanne: Yes. Yes! Your client can have that.

John: At last some reason.

Joanne: Not really. She says she wants your client's new lady friend to have to endure the awful BBQs her husband made that she had to put up with for years.

*They laugh.*

John: The chest of drawers from the spare bedroom?

Joanne: No.

John: The TV set from upstairs ?

Joanne: No.

John: The shoe cleaning box ?

Joanne: No.

John: She is being totally unreasonable.

Joanne: After 21 years, and three children and being dropped for a younger woman she is entitled to be reasonably unreasonable.

John: Is there any point in us going through the rest? Are there any other items she is going to let him have?

Joanne: Yes, he can have the sheets, pillow slips, etc that fit the bed he took with him. They don't fit any other bed in the house. He can have the big Chinese vase that has been on the mantle piece in the living room for years. She thinks he must have forgotten that it has a crack and a piece missing from the lip at the back which they have always kept to the wall so it can't be seen.

John: Isn't it amazing the way people get so emotional about the furniture and their personal possessions.

Joanne: Not really. They are part of their lives. They understand them and feel attached to them in a way that they don't feel about money.

John: Well what are we to do?

Joanne: If he wants the settlement on everything else, which looks a fairly good deal to me, he'll just have to take the items she will give him. He has after all already taken quite a lot from the house.

John: I don't know how I am going to present this to him.

Joanne: I was reading a piece about the first World War recently where there was a wonderful phrase of advice to give up a hopeless position and to move on. It was, "Pull out digger, the dogs are pissing on your kit bag."

*They both laugh again.*

John: Well thanks for coming. Looks like he'll have to give up on most of these items. Do you think it is worth coming back on any of them?

Joanne: Well pick one of the copper urns, but apart from that the only one I would suggest you try again is the washing machine and dryer since she tells me that they are not in good shape and one of the first things she is going to do from her settlement money is to buy new ones. However, that doesn't mean that she has agreed to give them to her husband now.

John: Well I suppose that is all we can do.

*They both begin to fold up their files.*

John: Thanks for coming. You are a very attractive and exciting woman.

*She looks at him carefully.*

Joanne: Exciting?

John: Just being with you for this short period has been ... *[Pause for the word.]* ... very interesting.

*She looks at him even more carefully and stops folding up her file.*

John: Do you have a boyfriend?

Joanne: Not at the moment. It is very hard to keep a boyfriend when working in this profession.

John: How about having dinner with me tonight?

Joanne: *[After a brief pause.]* OK. Come to my place. Here is the address.

*She begins writing the address.*

John: *[While she is still writing.]* Should I bring anything?

Joanne: *[As she finishes writing and hands him the address.]* Yes, if you wouldn't mind, pick up some lamb cutlets, a couple of takeaway salads, and a bottle of wine.

*The both stand.*

John: What time should I come?

Joanne: *[Looking at her small diary.]* I've got a late conference to night so make it 8.30, 8.45 better. Oh damn, I'm late for my next appointment. Must rush.

*She moves rapidly towards the door.*

John: See you tonight.

Joanne: Oh, and get a loaf of bread, thick sliced for toast.

**CURTAIN**