

## Do Cavemen kiss?

This play was from one of my short stories. The idea came when I was watching a documentary on primitive man. At one point, a couple shared a tender moment. The question popped into my head. The rest, as they say, is history.



## Characters

**Alice** - is in her early forties. Essentially a wife and mother who had to turn her hand to business management to support her husband. In addition, she works in a local supermarket, a job secured for her by...

**Maggie** - her next door neighbour and confidante.

**Tony** - is the husband of Alice. At one time a very successful financial adviser he came to grief after the banking crisis.

**Sara** - teenage daughter, a VI former, bright but with low expectations, who also works in the supermarket.

**Richard** - teenage son who exhibits many of the traits of such an animal. He has a Saturday job organising trolleys in the same supermarket.

**Narrator** – *in italics. Please read room descriptions etc but not the instructions to the characters.*

Scene One: Suburban Kitchen

*Two women are seated at the kitchen table, amidst breakfast remains, crusts of marmite, margarine smears, and general detritus after a family breakfast.*

Alice: Good of you to come round. Sorry about the mess. Those two of mine would drive a saint to drink. Coffee...two sugars, yes.

Maggie: You should know by now. Don't be silly about the mess...looks all right to me. At least your kids are off on time. My lass was late to school more often than not. These days I even have to take her myself to sign on. What is it about teenagers?

Alice: More trouble now than when they were toddlers (*sighs*). You know, Maggie, it doesn't seem two minutes since I was bringing Sara home from the maternity ward. I enjoyed taking Sara and Rich to the park and the library. Now they think such activities are for 'sad cases'.

Maggie: I never got Cass interested in books and she always hated sport. Too fat I suppose.

Alice: No, she is not really. She always has a sweet smile.

Maggie: So, why did you want me to come round so early? I'm not complaining mind you – like a bit of a chinwag. I'm not due at work 'til two.

Alice: You've been a good neighbour, what is it ten years?

Maggie: Nearer thirteen, I remember Richard was just out of nappies, what a handful he was.

Alice: Well... you know Tony and I have had our ups and downs.

Maggie: Really, I'd no idea...

Alice: Not personal stuff, Maggie. We've never had any trouble in that department. No, the problem was money. It all happened after the banks collapsed and independent financial advisors were suddenly the scum of the earth.

Maggie: (*sips her tea*) I remember when things were a bit tight for you. I was in a similar boat. Good job our mortgage was paid off when Rob died...although I feel guilty thinking that way.

I'd rather have him than save a bit of brass. *(both women nod in unison)* Yes, that's when I got you the job at Tesco's. You settled in like you were born to it.

Alice: I did Maggie. I'm ever so grateful and for getting the kids a Saturday job. At one time, my money was the only thing that put food on the table. Tony was in a state *(long pause)*. Can you promise, really promise to keep what I'm going to tell you under your hat?

Maggie: You don't even need to ask...

Alice: A couple of years ago things started to pick up. Tony managed to get some new clients, the down side was he had to work away a couple of nights a week.

Maggie: Yes...

Alice: Yesterday I had decided to tackle Richard's room. It smells like over ripe cheese and he will not bring back mugs and plates...

Maggie: Boys.

Alice: When I went in to his room the cheeky devil had gone back to bed...I thought he had left for school at the same time as Sara...not that they usually speak to each other out of the house. I think her mates find Richard a bit creepy. I opened my mouth but before I could say anything he got in first.

Richard: *emerging from sleep* What...what the h... Mum...what do you think you're playing at barging in like that?

Alice: *(fuming with anger)* Why aren't at school?

Richard: Study morning *(burrows deeper under the duvet)* going in for lunch.

Alice: You don't seem to be doing much studying. Come on love, make an effort.  
Judging by your mock exams

Richard and Alice: *in unison* There is no time to waste.

Richard: Leave it out mum. I was up most of the night.

Alice: Games or texting I suppose. When are you going to tidy your room. Like a pigsty. Plates and mugs should...

Richard: Go in the dishwasher. Yes, I know... Soz.

Alice: At least you've saved me a job, I can't Hoover while a useless lump like you is in the room.

Richard: See mum, I've saved you a job. Oh, forgot, couldn't find my rugby kit. I've a match this avo.

Alice: You didn't leave it out. You know I refuse to open your sports bag.

Richard: Oh mum...what am I supposed to do?

Alice: I treated this as a rhetorical question. I heard the letterbox go. Great, I thought, I won't tackle Sara's room until after my elevenses.

Nothing special in the post or so I thought. Pizza delivery offers, world cruises and a couple of bills.

Maggie: I'm sick of looking at cruise ship brochures. I've as much chance of going on one as I have of flying round the moon.

Alice: *(continues her monologue)* Now I don't really know what I was thinking of. Saw the bank statement and opened it – on automatic. Here it is – look at this.

Maggie: Are you sure?

Alice: *(impatiently)* Look! A bank statement belonging to Tony but it isn't our usual one.

*(reads)* Antony Cave, Private and Confidential, Statement to be collected. You read on.

Maggie: BACS from 'Man Alive' Escort Agency based in Manchester. Two payments a week – eh Alice, there's a lot of money there. How can he afford it?

Alice: That's just what I thought. Had he been going with women of easy virtue? Then I realised it was not payments out it was income.

Maggie: *(laughing)* how does that work? You mean Tony is a gigolo?

Alice: When he comes home tonight, I'm going to get to the bottom of it.

*Both women giggle at the inappropriate phrase.*

### Scene Two: Suburban Kitchen

*It is early evening. Alice is about to dish up the evening meal. Tony is struggling to open a bottle of red wine. There are four place settings.*

Alice: I'll swing for those two. Why can't they appear on time. Richard didn't even go to school until lunchtime.

Tony: Why not, lazy devil?

Alice: Reckoned he had some free periods, or study half day they call it now. Makes it sound like a private school.

Tony: (*grimaces*) As if we could afford that. Couldn't get in the bathroom earlier. Sara makes it her encampment. I think you girls should have a separate room. All that clutter.

*Alice goes into the hall.*

Alice: (*shouts*) Sara, Richard.....tea.

Tony: Are you OK love you seem a bit out of sorts.

Alice: (*comes back to the kitchen and turns back towards the cooker*) Fine, I'm fine. I just hate it when you are away and I have to cope with the kids on my own.

Tony: I know you did love. But my dad used to say 'Needs must when the devil drives'.

Alice: Whatever that means...(she goes back towards the door and bumps into Sara.)

Alice: Where is Rich?

Sara: Saw him when I was leaving school. I think he muttered something about rugby practice. He was mad about his rugby gear not being washed. So....guess he won't look great for the rugby groupies.

Alice: Well he knows the rules. I have told him a dozen times I'm going nowhere near his sports bag. What rugby groupies?

*Alice and Sara each pull a face. Alice puts the evening meal on the table and dishes out three helpings with inadequate assistance from Tony.*

Alice: For goodness sake, sit down Tony, stop fussing.

Sara: Can I have some wine mum? It is Friday...

Alice: Just pour her half a glass Tony...none for me.

Tony: You don't want any. Are you OK? Have you got a headache?

Alice: Fine (*sighs*) just a bit tired. I want to keep a clear head for tomorrow, early shift for the three of us.

Tony: Lucky old me then, house to myself. Shall I invite one of my paramours round?

*This well-worn comment is greeted with a sigh from his daughter and a frosty look from his wife.*

*Alice's phone rings.*

Alice: Text from Rich. Now there's a surprise. He is staying to tea at Daniel's and will 'defo' be home by lockdown. That boy drives me to distraction. He never lets me know what he is doing and I've prepared acres of extra pasta.

*Sounds of eating. No conversation for a few minutes.*

Tony: What are your plans tonight Sara? Friday night, are you painting the town pink?

Sara: What exactly do you mean by that dad? I'm not gay you know.

Alice: Really Sara there's no call for that your dad didn't mean anything-

Tony: Sometimes I wonder why I come home at all. I'll rephrase my remark. Are you going out?

Sara: I'm going over to Mary Ann's... to complete our UCAS applications.

Tony: Sure you don't want any help? Are you still set on Media Studies? (*frowns*)

Sara: Yes, yes, yes father dear. I know you don't approve. We can't all study what you did. I couldn't do Economics to save my life and mum's degree doesn't fit her for the real world. I'm not going to spend three years studying Medieval English. There are only so many museum jobs, sorry mum. But it's my life and my decision.

Now if you don't mind I'll load the dish-washer and then I'm out of here.

*Actions suit her words and she leaves the dining room. Sara and Tony look at each other. Both seem nervous.*

Alice: Take your drink through to the sitting room Tony. I'll be through in a minute.

*Tony goes into the sitting room. Alice stands, sits, stands and eventually walks slowly after him.*

### Scene Three: The Sitting Room

*Well used room. Three settees, wall mounted television, sideboard. Tony enters. Pours more wine and collapses on the corner settee nearest the television programme details. He looks through for a few minutes before flinging it on the floor.*

Tony: *(calls out)* Alice are you coming? Can't see anything on television for tonight. Did you record last night's snooker?

Alice: *(comes slowly into the room and sits down opposite Tony)* I did record the snooker for you. Before we watch, we need to have a talk.

Tony: I knew things weren't right. You aren't ill are you love.

Alice: Nothing like that. *(She twists round and removes the bank statements from behind a cushion)*. These came yesterday. I thought it was our usual one. I don't know anything about this account. Would you care to tell me? *(She leans across and hands him the statement.)*

*Tony peers at the statement.*

Tony: *(angrily)* How did you get this? It's supposed to be collected by hand, you've no right to open my mail.

Alice: Tony we've been married nineteen years, I've been raising invoices and banking cheques for all that time. Of course I can open the post. As I said, I didn't even know it was anything special.

Tony: I don't know what to say.

Alice: Start with the truth.

*Tony sits for a few seconds before leaning forward.*

Tony: OK. I'll come clean. As you know, the business has been in the doldrums for the last few years.

Alice: Tell me about it. Why do you think I slave away at the supermarket?

Tony: Yes, well it's not my fault, market forces and all that. I know you did your best but I was at my wit's end when I came across an advert in the 'Manchester Evening News'. I was desperate. Sara will be going to university and the household bills were mounting. I even thought I might end up in prison because of non-payment of council tax.

Alice: So what was the ad about?

Tony: They wanted someone for part-time work, preferably self-employed, to work evenings, no age limit (although I know they can't really discriminate). I fitted the bill.

Alice: But why didn't you tell me about it?

Tony: Once I was accepted for training, I simply had to keep it to myself.

Alice: Why?

Tony: Listen and I'll tell you. My initial interview was in a high-rise office in central Manchester with an awful man called Mike who insisted on calling me 'Tone'.

*Alice snorts with laughter.*

Tony: When I looked at their brochure, I learned 'the organisation embraces many aspects of the leisure industry'. What an eye-opener. I did not know what half of it was about. What a waste of my time I thought. Mike said a job could be found for me in a niche market.



I tell you Al the training was hard work. I felt out of place. After a while, I had a sense of achievement. Also, found the clientele could not get enough of me. My overnight stays are exclusively in this new line of business. For obvious reasons, I refused to work nearer home. If any friends had seen me...(pause)

I make most money from 'hen nights' although I'm also popular with gay groups. Women tend to think 'I've got one better than that at home', men, predictably, think by gum he's gone to seed.

Alice: *(getting more distressed as the monologue unfolds)* But what do you do? Do you sleep with women? Do you sleep with men?

Tony: *(shocked, then he burst out laughing)*. No, it's nothing like that. Look at me. Do you honestly think I'm much of a proposition?

Alice: Nice one Tony, that says a lot for my taste in men.

Tony: Sorry, I didn't mean that. *(pause)* I guess you could say that I am an inadequate version of 'The Chippendales'. If you like, the easiest thing would be if I showed you my routine. Stay right there and be prepared to be entertained.

*Tony takes his overnight case into the kitchen. Alice sits in a stunned silence, she earnestly wishes she had drunk her share of the wine. She gets up and empties the dregs from the bottle into Tony's glass. Drinks. Pulls a face. After a few minutes Tony re-appears. He has a strange costume seemingly made of animal hide. His face is made up, coal black eyes and an artificial designer stubble. A black wig, almost Rastafarian completes the picture. He places a CD on the coffee table. Switches it on. Strange music with a very loud base rhythm emanates from the speaker.*

Alice: Good lord Tony what on earth are you doing? Where did you get the wig, the clothes, have you been stealing Sara's make-up?

*Tony puts his finger on his lips and begins a dance routine.*

Alice: Tony, be careful, you'll strain a ligament.

Tony: Ugg Ugg Ugg

Alice: Or give yourself a hernia, lord help us all.

Tony: Ugg Ugg Ugg Yagoo *stamps his feet.*

Alice: I can't stop....laughing.

Tony: Be still wooomaaan. Ugg.

*After a twenty-minute sequence of movements and posturing, a be-clubbed caveman stands in front of her. His many chins and stomachs quiver, jelly like. He switches off the music.*

Alice: *(convulsed with laughter, eventually straightens her features)*. What an amazing experience...performance of a lifetime. I wish the video camera had been handy. Now I want a straight answer *(smiles)* tell me Tony, do cave men kiss?

Tony: *(kneeling and catching his breath)* Not in general, but they do this time. *)He opens his arms and gives her a huge hug)*. What say you we could give snooker a miss? How about an early night?

#### Scene Four: Supermarket canteen

*It is lunchtime on the following day. Alice and Maggie are in a corner near a noisy coffee maker. Each has finished their lunch and are having a final cup of coffee before the nightmare of a Saturday afternoon shift begins. Two handbags are on adjacent chairs to repel invaders.*

Maggie: Come on Alice, spill the beans. Why were you and Sara late? You know Saturday working is special. We are so busy. The bosses don't look kindly on what they see as slackers. Your Richard hasn't even turned up.

Alice: It's never happened before Maggie. Anyone can sleep in. Richard did not come home last night. Tony has gone looking for him.

Maggie: Richard might think shifting trolleys doesn't matter. But when one lad cries off the other has to work twice as hard. It isn't fair.

Alice: I know. I know. Please have a word with the manager for me....I can't afford to get on the wrong side of him. I think he has a soft spot for you.

Maggie: Soft spot. I don't know about that. He's three years younger than me. I'd feel like he was a toy boy. That reminds me did you get to the bottom of Tony's shenanigans?

Alice: (*looks embarrassed*) Yes, well that was the reason we were late.

Maggie: You didn't row all night did you? Come on tell all we've only get ten minutes to the start of the shift.

Alice: (*she looks even more embarrassed*) We did not row all night. Rather the reverse if you know what I mean.

Maggie: Too much information.

Alice: Tony revealed all.

Maggie: Still too much information.

Alice: (*laughing*) Don't be daft Maggie. Listen to me. When I showed him the bank statements, he was angry. They should never have come to the house. It turns out that my overweight, going to seed husband, (*pause waiting for Maggie to disagree, which does not happen*) has been making money by performing.

Maggie: Performing. What on earth do you mean?

Alice: 'Man Alive Productions' hire him out to hen parties and clubs.

Maggie: Doing what for goodness sake?

Alice: He gave me a performance last night (*Maggie sniggers and is ignored*). He dresses up in animal hides, wears a big black wig and make-up.

Maggie: Make up. Like a drag queen?

Alice: Anything but! He has black round his eyes, make-belief stubble and a tattoo of a cave-man on each arm.

Maggie: Didn't you notice them before?

Alice; No, Maggie. Not real tattoos, fake ones – transfers like we had when we were kids. Next thing I knew he had put on a CD. I've no idea who the band was but the base was

deafening, thud, thud, thud. I was sure you'd be round to find out what the noise was about.

Maggie: Last night was the u3a film night. I was in town. You were going to come, remember, but Tony was coming home that day.

Alice: Of course. Good, so we didn't disturb you. Tony went through an amazing dance routine, twirling and stamping and threatening the audience (*points to herself*) with a plastic club. I know it sounds daft but he was really good. He has obviously worked hard on his dance steps, something he never did when we were courting.

Maggie: How long did it last?

Alice: Nearly half an hour. Apparently he shares the gigs with a young Chippendale look-alike. A sort of before and after, Tony certainly being the after. Although if you think of evolution he should have been the before (*contemplates the idea*).

Maggie: I've had a brilliant idea I'd like to run past you.

Alice: (*starts to clear away the lunch debris*) Yes

Maggie: Well, you know I am the event's organiser for the u3a. Do you think Tony would come along and give us a talk and a demonstration at a monthly meeting?

*Alice is left speechless.*