

THE HELICOPTER

by

Nick March

Cast

June *late thirties*  
John *mid forties*  
Johnny *around seven*

Nick Mercer

June stands centre stage and checks her make-up in a mirror. She is in her late thirties and wearing an old party dress.

JUNE  
(calling offstage)

No, you play, Johnny!  
While the sun's still out.  
It won't stay out forever.  
I'm okay.  
I'm fine.

Johnny returns to play. June smooths her dress, and drinks from a cheap plastic cup.

Enter John. He is slightly older than June, and wearing a large outdoor coat.

Are you enjoying the bouncy castle?

JOHN

No ball games.  
No cycling.  
No dogs.

JUNE

Well it's not a ball pit.

JOHN

All the local kids are asking to play.

JUNE

Well, as long as they're well behaved,  
let Johnny have his day, and  
keep their shoes off -

JOHN

What are the council going to say?

JUNE

That a crime is being committed.

JOHN

I'm amazed you got it on the forecourt.

JUNE

It was all he wanted.  
Offered me fifty pence towards it -

JOHN

Fifty pence!

JUNE

- he borrowed a measuring wheel from the school.  
Marched round, counting out the metres.  
I could hear him from up here.

The noise of children playing can be heard.

JOHN

(gesturing offstage)

Poor Sally thought her one had gotten stuck along the wall.

JUNE

Sally?

JOHN

Sally de Wit.

JUNE

The de Wits.  
They drove all this way?

JOHN

That behemoth can't be doing too many miles to the gallon.

JUNE

I'll have to put some petrol in their party bag.

JOHN

That reminds me!  
I thought I could contribute a little -

JUNE  
Oh, no, no, no, no, John.

JOHN  
Just for the castle.

JUNE  
You'd be cutting out my business partner.

JOHN  
50p can't be paying for much.

JUNE  
No, really, it's all right.  
Most of it's air.

JOHN  
(laughing)  
It's so cold in here, June.  
You must be freezing.

John goes to put his coat around June.  
Are you sure I can't help at all?

JUNE  
(shrugging him off)  
I can't help the lad's birthday any more than you could.

JOHN  
You could wear a coat, or turn the heating on?

JUNE  
They don't suit me.

JOHN  
Coats?

JUNE  
I need to do the party bags.

JOHN  
(making to leave)

Yes.

JUNE

Where's Helen?

JOHN

I said I'd bring Harry, and she could have a day off.  
A chance for a lie-in!

JUNE

She deserves a little love and attention.  
Always worked so hard.

JOHN

I took her in some toast before we set out, and -  
someone needs to be in for the tutor,  
for the youngest.

JUNE

Having another go is Alice?

JOHN

Yes, it was a bit of a shock, but  
she is a summer birth.

JUNE

(nodding)

Siblings should go to school together.

JOHN

In an ideal world.

Pause.

The little terror should sleep well tonight.

JUNE

A trouble at bedtime?

JOHN

There is the odd skirmish - how's Johnny?

JUNE

Got me wrapped around his finger.

One story.

Two.

I'm talking out of my arse by the third.

Hot air balloon pirates.

Lions from space.

JOHN

That sounds wonderful.

Feed the imagination!

Helen mentioned that he's on a full scholarship.

JUNE

They didn't pay for his silly cap that I had to buy.

So I wouldn't say full, no.

JOHN

She was so surprised to see you at the gates!

JUNE

You mean a maid?

JOHN

No, all that time, and a boy, Harry's age, in the same class!

JUNE

Johnny.

JOHN

I didn't realise you were with somebody.

JUNE

(pausing)

It's means tested, John.

Johnny's bright -

and I don't know where he gets it -

but it's the household income.

JOHN

I'd have given my left testicle for a scholarship.

JUNE  
You're a bit old.

JOHN  
For Harry - if he saw the fees!

JUNE  
Would Harry give up a testicle, John?

JOHN  
They haven't even descended!

JUNE  
(cutting him off)  
It's not important, where you go to school.

JOHN  
Well, you can't tell me it's not a start, or you wouldn't have -

JUNE  
It's what you get at home.  
Love. Silly stories.

JOHN  
You were a member of our family.

JUNE  
I cleaned your bathroom.

JOHN  
(taking her arm)  
We didn't know where you'd gone.  
No notice, no nothing!

JUNE  
I took on different work.

JOHN  
I never thought I'd see you again.

JUNE  
John, why don't you take down the cake?  
I detect rumbling tummies.



JOHN

(caressing her)

Whenever she was away - do you remember?

JUNE

Where is that cake?

JOHN

(drawing in)

On the sofa -

JUNE

When did you pick up again with your wife?

A week?

Harry's birthday's coming up.

It can't have been long -

John releases June.

JOHNNY

(offstage)

Mum!

I want to open my presents!

Can you come down?

JUNE

(calling offstage)

No, John.

JOHN

Why don't you let him open one?

The one from me and Harry?

JUNE

(shouting)

No, not until we've had the cake!

(searching)

The little caterpillar bastard.

Where are you?

June rummages.

It's already out.

JOHN

Candles!

JUNE  
(making to leave)

Wear my coat.

JOHN  
(offering again)

No.

JUNE

I insist.

JOHN  
(stopping her)

It's cold today, John -  
but I remember,  
I remember the warmth on the sofa -  
and the doctor's appointments,  
the decisions,  
the sickness,  
all of it.

JUNE

This wasn't a good idea.

JOHN  
(drawing back)

It's too late for that - we're paid up in full.

JUNE

It's not in the best interest of the kids.

JOHN

They're having a whale of a time!

JUNE

Listen to your boy, John!  
Can't you make out his voice?

The noise of children playing.

Exit John.

JOHNNY  
(from offstage)

Mummy!  
Harry got me a helicopter!  
It flies and everything!

JUNE  
(calling)

We're not doing presents now!

JOHNNY  
You've got to come down and see!  
Mum, it's wicked!

JUNE  
(collecting herself)

Well, that's very generous!  
You'll have to thank his parents, Johnny.  
You'll have to say thank you.