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## Amy's View

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Act 1. The living room of a house in rural Berkshire, not far from Pangbourne. 1979. It is midsummer and past midnight.

*Amy Thomas (23) is 'dark-haired, in jeans and a T-shirt, she is . . . thin, with an unmistakable air of quiet resolution'. She works for a London publishing company. Her mother Esme Allen (49) is 'in a simple dress . . . She is surprisingly small, her manner both sensitive and intense. Something in her vulnerability makes people instantly protective of her.' She is a famous West End actress, specialising in boulevard comedies. Her artist-husband, Bernard, died fifteen years previously and she and Evelyn, Bernard's mother, live together in their comfortably faded and slightly bohemian home. Amy has come to visit her mother, bringing her latest boyfriend, Dominic, with her. He is an ambitious film critic and wannabe director. Amy is devoted to Dominic and idealises him. Every evening after work she doggedly distributes Dominic's film magazine. In this scene Esme has just arrived home. One of her little extravagances, and part of her financial naiveté, is to take an hour-long taxi ride all the way back from London after every evening performance. As this scene begins, Dominic has just gone off to repair a bike and the two women are left alone together.*

**ESME.** You'd better say. I'm not such a bad mother.

**AMY.** What?

**ESME.** Not such a bad mother that I can't tell. Please, I don't think I can stand an engagement. Do people still do that?

**AMY.** No. I promise that's not what this is.

**ESME.** Well?

AMY. It's not serious. I promise you, it's nothing serious at all. I'm waiting to borrow some money.

ESME. Ah, thank goodness. Money, that's all. (*She seems genuinely relieved.*) Of course. How much do you need?

AMY. I'd like five thousand.

ESME. I'm sorry?

AMY. That would be perfect.

ESME. Say that again. (*She suddenly looks at AMY directly.*) Why on earth do you want five thousand? There's nothing in the world which costs five thousand pounds.

AMY. If you don't mind, I don't want to say.

ESME. I'm glad, in that case, it's not serious. What would have been serious? Ten?

AMY. I will tell you. I promise I will tell you one day. But you've always said: if I needed anything I was to come to you.

ESME. Why, surely.

AMY. No strings attached. Well, Mother, I'm here. (*ESME recognizes a note of challenge and rises to it.*)

ESME. That's fine. That's no problem. Now? How do you want it? Do you want a cheque?

AMY. If you could.

ESME. Sure. Yes, of course. Let me do it. Now where exactly did I put my things?

AMY. There. Behind you.

ESME. Of course. (*She takes her bag across to the table.*) How much?

AMY. Five thousand.

ESME. You mean five thousand pounds? Do you mean all in one go? Not in instalments? One day you will give it back?

(*AMY smiles politely at these jokes. Esme has opened her cheque book.*)

AMY. You always said, if ever . . . if ever something came

up, you wouldn't ask anything, you'd simply give me whatever I asked.

ESME. Oh yes. (*She pauses a second.*) But first just tell me what this something is.

AMY. Mum . . .

ESME. No, really, I'm joking. I trust you. You know I do. I'm not asking anything. Not a thing. I know if I asked you would tell me, but I'm not going to ask. (*She starts writing.*)

AMY just watches.) Which account is it? I have no idea. There's money from Bernard's estate. Well, something. The ludicrous thing is, I don't make anything at all from the play. I'm losing. By the time I've got a taxi from London, I don't have anything left. (*She looks up at AMY.*) Now what is the date?

AMY. June 25th. It's 1979.

ESME. Well, I know that. Please, do you think I live in a dream? (*She hands AMY the cheque.*)

AMY. Thank you.

ESME. How did I do?

AMY. Brilliantly.

ESME. Aren't you proud of your Mum? Cash it quickly before it can bounce. No, really. You're fine. It'll pay. (*She kisses AMY.*) The Trappist. I shan't say any more . . . Well, there it is. It's extraordinary. You've found yourself such a handsome young man.

AMY. Why? Does that surprise you?

ESME. Not in the slightest. Any man's lucky to end up with you.

(*The tone of this is light and friendly but AMY is ill at ease.*) The theatre, of course, is full of these people. Good-looking young men who have yet to find out who they are. I see them all the time.

AMY. Is that meant to be Dominic?

ESME. Well, you know him better than me.

(*ESME waits but AMY says nothing.*)