

ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY

by Joan Humphreys

The play is set in the 1920s on a country estate somewhere in the South of England.

Characters: James Waterson-Smythe
Charlotte Waterson-Smythe, his sister

Higgins, footman
Mrs Bentwood, cook
Lisbeth, maid
Patrick, footman

ACT ONE

JAMES: I say, Charlotte, the maid's awfully late with the tea, isn't she? You did tell her that we would have it in the summerhouse today?

CHARLOTTE: Of course I did. It's really too bad of her. I'm awfully thirsty. You would think she would get a move on, wouldn't you? After all, she can't have had much to do all day. The parents are away until the weekend. I've been playing tennis and you've been out riding.

JAMES: Yes, it's ages since I left my horse for the stable boy to rub down, and my boots for the lad to see to. (Pause) I'm glad you suggested coming here to the summerhouse, I've not been for ages, and you get such a spiffing view of Papa's acres from up here.

ACT TWO (at the Manor house)

PATRICK, the footman (testily): Why the blazes can't they take tea in the drawing room as usual? Don't they know how much work they make for us when they decide to have it outdoors?

HIGGINS, butler: I don't suppose they ever think about it, and it's not your place to think like that. They pay your wages, so just get on with it. If you want to keep your job, and there's plenty out there waiting for it if you don't want it, you'd better get a move on. Now, have you got everything? Primus, water, kettle, teapot, teacups? Where's that girl got to? You can't manage all that lot by yourself.

LISBETH: I've got the brown bread and butter, sir.

HIGGINS: What about the teaspoons, the sugar and milk, the plates and some of that cake that Mrs Bentwood made this morning?

LISBETH: Yes, yes, come on. We've got everything except the cake. Quick, Patrick, go and get it or we'll be late and they won't like that. They'll kick up an dreadful stink. James is awful when he's in a temper.

MRS BENTWOOD: What the heck do you want, Patrick? Surely you've got everything by now? You must go! They'll be spitting feathers up there in the summerhouse.

PATRICK: We've forgotten the cake, we've forgotten the cake. Where the hell is it?

MRS BENTWOOD: Watch your language, Patrick. The cake's on the table under your nose! And don't forget to take the china plate that matches the tea plates. Madam will have your head if it's not properly presented. Doily, doily, you must put it on a doily. Take the silver cake slice, and mind you bring it back. (Pause) Don't carry the cake like that, all the icing will be running by the time you get it there.

ACT THREE

JAMES: I'm looking forward to this weekend, Charlotte, aren't you? All our friends coming for the tennis. It will be splendid to see Nigel and Jennifer and everyone. Especially Jennifer!

CHARLOTTE: Now, James, you know that she's engaged to that wet chap who is at Oxford. You mustn't be a tease.

JAMES: Well at least as the son of the house, I'll be able to bag a few dances with her, and she's bound to be my doubles partner at least once. I don't mean anything by it, you know. (Sigh) I suppose at the end of the day I'll have to propose to that awful horse-faced Pamela. You know Papa has threatened to cut my allowance if I don't? But you can't keep a good chap down, can you, and I must have a little fun before then. What about you, Charlotte? Hasn't William made up his mind yet?

CHARLOTTE: Oh William. He's such a wimp.

JAMES: But a very well-healed wimp. You could do a lot worse, you know I can hear someone coming. It must be our tea at last. I suppose now we'll have to wait while that blithering idiot Patrick does something odd with the primus. I say, why don't we go back by the path through the shrubbery and hang the tea? We can always get a drink from Papa's study.

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes, do let's. It will be fun to have the maid and Patrick arrive with the tea to see that we've gone. I'd like to see their faces; they've been such ages anyway. Come on, quick, let's get back to the house.

THE END