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creative writing
workshops

Nothing like a Dame

by Daniel Judd

They were late. Julia had made them late. During boarding for the 4pm flight from Gatwick to Edinburgh, she'd realised she'd left her handbag and heels in the bar and now Fi found herself seething, having missed a meal with Mr Producer for a cheap gin and flat tonic in the airport 'Spoons."

The stewardess was helpful and had put them on the next flight but the damage had been done.

"Don't worry, I'll pay!"

Too right, thought Fi, imagining a jab in the ribs to land her in the audience at the Festival venue, quaintly but inaccurately called a theatre.

They'd been in the same thing before, but not at the same time. The ITV sitcom *Man About the House* as Richard O'Sullivan's love interests, episodes apart. Dolly birds - when the phrase didn't bat an eyelid and when the dresses didn't need to be so maxi.

Fastforward 45 years and they'd been cast in this two-hander as two actresses living their last in Denville Hall, with the director oblivious they'd both dated party boy Dicky. They weren't rivals then but whenever they met it was too delicious not to be.

Old school pros they nailed their parts on day three of rehearsals but they were both biding their time.

Some actor described theatre as "shouting in the evening" but once the try-out had started, Julia took it to the next level.

"I thought I'd play Marjorie as going deaf but in denial," was her excuse.

"Art imitating life, more like," responded Fi, who retaliated by adding a stooped back and cane to hit things with (including Julia) into the mix. A moving play about time passing was now a farce.

But three hours in a British Airways members lounge and four Hendricks and Fever Tree down, can mellow any old bird. Tall tales of disastrous runs, short-lived series and lecherous leading men flowed.

Time was indeed a great healer.

"You know you were quite brilliant, last night," said Julia.

The jab could wait, thought Fi.