

# Shirley valentine essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

We are introduced to the first character Shirley.

She likes wine whilst cooking. 'Everybody drinks wine now' suggests that she is making an attempt to fit in. second character is introduced. 'Our Millandra.' I miss them kids Description of her children. Brian and Millandra.

Brian is a poet who lives in a squat whilst Millandra is an excited youth.

Shirley does not quite seem to understand her children. Tea on time Panic at the thought of preparing her 'fellas' tea late. Classic expectations of women introduced. Exaggeration of circumstances.

Typical husband role displayed. 'I always said I'd leave when the kids grew up.' Ambition not pursued. Direct indication of unhappiness. No more chocolates Shirley discusses that all men are the same. 'Marvellous' treatment before the 'horizontal party'.

Reference to the milky tray advert where a man takes a woman chocolate. Mockery of the advert insinuates mockery of society where women no longer receive gifts or graces after having intercourse with their partner. 'Cadburys would go out of business if women didn't hold back a bit.' No more milk Shirley's friend Jane in bed with the milk man and turns to feminism and turns very much against milk. Dependency Shirley tells us that Jane is to go to Greece for a fortnight, Jane is 'the only one who keeps me [Shirley] sane', and the only person she talks to apart from the wall.

Jane wants Shirley to come with her, but as Shirley considers her husbands objection, we realize that he is entirely dependant on her. 'Jesus if I go to the bathroom for 5 minutes he thinks I've been hijacked'. Wine by the sea

buy one get one free Joe says wine is a ' posh way to get pissed' whereas Shirley ventures to the culture of the substance and dreams of drinking wine in the ' land where the grape is grown'. We perceive the absence of culture and interest in Joe through his detestation of travelling. He gets jetlagged travelling to the Isle of Man. It's ' logical' that she should go to Greece if she wants to, but marriage and logic don't seem to go hand in hand.

War in marriage There is a comparison between the middle east and marriage, Shirley believes there to be no solution for either subject matter, she views her only option as the ' observation of the curfew.; this tells us that, like a sergeant she has now lost all hope of peace and purely lives off commands. Choice ready made Jane purchases Shirley's ticket to Greece without her consent from the money from the sale of her house. ' She'll easily find someone else to go with her' is Shirley's response, still in attempt of escaping the holiday. The belief of feminists: ' if something is impossible, it's the perfect reason for doing it.' Housewife wall Shirley mocks her situation suggesting that she would slide in her vacation as if it was an ordinary matter.

She speaks to the wall expecting a response. No satisfaction We discover that Shirley is not fond of sex. She believes it to be over rated however also believes that Joe would immediately suspect that as the motive behind her travels. She then continues to discuss the clitoris and how it had not been discovered until the generation which came after her.

There is reference to Sigmund Freud's misleading theories. At this point in the play Shirley plays a game with the audience where she repeats a word

which would generally carry an element of shock however through her repetition the audience becomes numb to its effects. She relates 'clitoris' to a woman's name, comparison with both male and female parts being names, 'dick' or 'clitoris'. Ignorant car buff She asks hoe about the clitoris, he mistakes it for a type of car. She's serving the wrong dish for a Thursday, instead of mince, she prepares chips and egg. This is the first time Shirley uses heightened language to mock religion through 'Mosses' 11th commandment, Mince on a Thursday! 'Veggie hound It's not Shirley's fault that she doesn't have mince.

She works for a vegetarian couple who feed their blood hound vegetables. Shirley believes this to be entirely unnatural. Hence she uses the mince she has in her bag to introduce to the dog his god intended diet. Faking loop Hoe will think her mental for giving the dog the mince. Shirley adopts a posh dialect and further mocks the idea of asking or rather telling Joe she is going to Greece? Mary and Joseph arrive at the inn Brian tells Shirley to go without his father's consent. Brian 'buggers the consequences', Shirley supports this accusation with an anecdote from Brian's youth, the nativity play.

Teachers told Shirley it would be beneficial for him to take a leading role. Brian gets frustrated at the lack of professionalism in the manner of the other cast member and forces his way into the inn, improvises until the cast realise that the script was abandoned. This event is later on published in the news that 'Mary and Joseph fail to reach Bethlehem. Unworthy Shirley Shirley believes god to have punished her because of her son by not letting her travel. She had wanted to become an air hostess but it didn't happen. ' I

confidently predict that Miss Valentine will not go far in life' by her headmistress on her report card.

Her father bought her an encyclopaedia which he used to read and quite. The headmistress asked questions in assembly with house points to the correct answers. Shirley put her hand up to answer but was dismissed when she answered correctly the headmistress did not believe her to be genuine, ignored her and continued with the assembly. This is an important element in the play as this mistrust in her is quite possibly the prerogative behind of her failure in life. Rebel with a causeThe beginning of the rebellion.

Disinterest in school. High skirt. Gum. Constant expressions of boredom and hate when the only thing she truly hated was herself. She spent her time bullying Marjorie majors, when all she ever wanted to do was be like her, she didn't want to be a rebel.

She wanted to be nice, ' like Marjorie Majors'. Tea with MarjorieWhilst Shirley is out shopping in town, it begins to rain, sods law, all forms of transport disappear from sight. Drowned in the opened heavens looking utterly dire, she is drenched by a near by car. Expression of overwhelming rage releases as scream.

Mid scream a woman exits the car which just splashed her. In the purest form of elegance, Marjorie Majors pulls Shirley into the Adelphi hotel for tea. Shirley puts forward her belief that Marjorie is an air hostess, when she clearly states that she is in actuality, a whore. Shirley continues to mock the elocution lessons which Marjorie's mother invested in.

the two former enemies discover each others longing to be like the other. It's upsetting to Shirley to realize years of a wasted friendship. Neither of them wanted the conversation to end. Long since needed company for Shirley. Discovery of a true friend after years of talking to the wall.

A tender kiss placed on Shirley's cheek as Marjorie left for Paris. The good ole' days Crying on the way home with memories of the past days with her maiden name, when she was still named Shirley Valentine. ' Who turned me into this?' she looks to transferring the blame even though she was ' still happy with the surname Bradshaw.' She reminisces about the play fight which she had had with Joe whilst painting the kitchen. Description of the vanilla ice cream bath, days where ' Shirley Valentine knew what love meant.

' Questions of failure What happened to Joe and Shirley? Shirley contemplates that it would have been preferable to have found her husband in bed with the milk man as opposed to fading out of love and out of existence. There was no truly disturbing event which brought the love to an end but a general area of ' nothingness' along the way where Joe turned into ' him' and Shirley turned into ' this', she objectifies herself making her inanimate and nameless, or ' another name on the missing persons list'. Meaningless Love She describes a state where ' I love you' has become a mere three words. When there is an absence of action supporting the words they may as well fall to dust.

Joe is another tragic example of someone who uses the words ' I love you' as a consolation for all wrong actions, a leeway to further mistreatments. Why

don't I leave? She observes her opportunity to fulfil her dream, questions her toleration of a life she hates. She fears the life beyond 'the wall'. She has a naivety about Greece, like many of us, she fears the unknown.

She faces her fears by degrading Greece to a substance used to cook chips and egg. Pretence She hits the alcohol. She imagines the sea, as if she were in the country 'where the grape is grown'. This is a cyclic reference to her previous stream of consciousness. Act One Scene Two Passport, tickets, money Shirley in an utter state of panic continuously reassures herself, she perceives the journey as an epiphany, 'this year Greece, next year..

. the world.' Gone to Greece back in two weeks Doubts about not telling Joe. She knows he would have convinced her otherwise however she still feels guilty. Three weeks of illicit preparations followed by remaining streams of doubt.

She compares her situation with living under floorboards and behind wardrobes in Colditz. She asks god to keep her family safe showing ever lasting compassion towards her children and husband although her actions seem like betrayal. She is aware of the consequences she will face when she is to return, when Shirley mentions that she had prepared food for the duration of her vacation at which her mother will cater for Joe, she displays a true sense of responsibility. She feels that with luck Joe is unlikely to even comprehend her absence. Egged Shirley's doubts are repeated, she informs us of the consequences of having chips and egg on a Thursday instead of mince.

Joe questions ' what's this?' violent behaviour of throwing the plate across the table where Shirley is covered in egg and chips. Shirley writes ' Greece' in bog letters across the kitchen wall then leaves to go to Millandra's flat but she isn't home. She tried to phone Jane but the phones don't work so she returns home. The notion that she has no one to turn to in a moment of crisis conjures up emotions of loneliness and helplessness.

Epiphany Shirley goes back home to the profuse questioning by Joe regarding the writing on the wall. She states that it is a place which she intends to go to. He accuses her of saving money on food to go on holiday and states that he will not be going with her at which point Shirley bursts into hysterics, this is her point of epiphany, when she knows that she has to go to Greece. Silk lingerie Shirley goes into town for last minute shopping.

She goes into Marks and Spencer's to get some silk lingerie. Gillian (her neighbour) walks in. Shirley breaks through the conservative barrier and decides it would be nice to own some sexy lingerie. Gillian is introduced as a notorious bragger: ' you'd almost think it was silk if you weren't familiar with the real thing' Gillian assumes the items are for Millandra. Shirley goes off on her own course and claims that she's going to Greece with her lover etc.

Feeling ashamed of her careless outburst she returns home. Knocked confidence Millandra was at home with rage at her flat mate. Shirley enters ' auto mother mode' she tells Millandra that it will be useful to have her around when she is in Greece. Millandra jets into an outburst, she erupts with the ideas that Joe is likely to consider. Millandra is utterly enraged; she immediately calls a taxi and goes back to her own flat.



At which point Shirley screams out from the window about the 'f' plan sex diet. Direct summoning of doubt and instant loss of confidence. As good as silk Gillian comes to the door with a gift of a silk robe. She tells Shirley how brave and marvellous she is. Shirley tries the robe and sees its beauty. By doing this she realizes her own beauty.

She prepares to make a complete change 'I don't like olives but I might like them in Greece'. She abandons all fear. Last minute Shirley talks to the wall for the last time in the play; she reconsiders her conversation with an inanimate object, and then tells the wall to 'shut up'. This could be seen as a personal revolution. At 2: 20 she is ready with 1: 40 till departure.

Act two The Greek Rock Shirley discovers a 'wall' substitute and introduces us to rock. She describes her reluctance to venture down to the beach without a tan. 'Fresh coat of white emulsion'. Shirley provides us with a gleam of hope of her realisation that her conversations with inanimate objects are absurd by saying 'but he doesn't talk back to me, however she smears our hope by continuing to say 'it's a Greek rock, it doesn't understand a bleedin' word I'm saying' as if to suggest that the difference in language is the only communication barrier they should ever encounter. Designer teeth milkman Jane meets a sporty man with 'designer teeth' and abandons Shirley before they even land. 'I didn't want her spending her time with me when she'd rather be somewhere else,' bitter that Jane's met someone, rightfully announces that Jane has 'blown the feminist of the year award'.

Shirley takes surprise to Jane's thankful manner. Jane doesn't come to the hotel for several days, metaphor used... ' They must have been good olives.' Couldn't say no could I? Cultural difference is introduced through the disturbance caused by an isolated diner.

Shirley is offered a seat at the table of Jeannette and Dougie Walsh from Manchester as they noticed that she was on her own. Greece too Greek. Shirley resents her unsatisfied hosts. Typical lower class holiday goers, ' if they'd been at the last supper they would have asked for chips.' They comment on Greece as if it were a ' 4th world country'.

The neighbouring table joins the discussion; Shirley has another outburst, ' the Greeks who invented the Olympic Games.... the most important invention of all.

.. the wheel.' She uses repetition from events mentioned previously in the play, ' the wheel'. Dougie and Jeannette regret their invite.

Awkward silencesThe Walshes question the waiter about calamari. Jeannette faints when she realizes she has eaten squid. They consume ' proper Greek food' in the back of the hotel in the form of doner kebabs. Costas Columbus'We...

discovered it.' Shirley meets Costas, ' a married woman, 42' her age is revealed for the first time. Jealousy evident as Shirley describes the event to Jane ' you're acting like a stupid teenager' sincere compassion is uncovered through ' he kissed my stretch marks' the part of herself which she finds the most grotesque. Costas is Shirley's milk tray man. He knew how to listen.

' Words die' this has relevance to the three words ' I love you' numb words without meaning. Costas makes her dream come true ' we put this table to the edge of the sea, it makes your dream come true?' she has wine by the sea as she had previously wished. A dream is not a dream Shirley mentions wasted life, so much concealed within us but so little can be used. A dream come true represents her loss of belief in dreams as they are different in reality. Costas observes Shirley's fear of coming on a boat with him ' foak is foak, boat is boat.

' The following morning Jane arrives to the hotel and profusely apologizes but insults Shirley in the mean time. ' I suppose you've just been sitting here talking to the wall haven't you' by which Shirley is enraged hence with her vigour towards Jane she meets Costas on the quay. Alive Shirley and Costas sail and swim in water ' maybe so deep it goes on forever'. Shirley exits being Shirley Bradshaw, and is reborn as she breaks her promise to Joe when she married him, and makes Costas break his promise to her by doing ' the most natural thing in the world'.

I'm not going back After the occurrence with Costas Shirley apprehends that her absence at home would not ' damage anyone' or cause any ' real suffering'. She recognizes that from a distance it would seem tragic, a mother and wife who went on holiday and didn't return. She ' falls in love with the idea of living' rather than falling in love with Costas. ' Most of us die before we're dead'. Shirley turns around from the airport and leaves. Life worth living Shirley goes back to the taverna to get a job.

She serves the Brits chips and egg. Shirley argues with Joe over the phone, he rightly presumes that she has had a romance in Greece ' the only romance I've had is with me self Joe'. The woman he wanted back didn't exist anymore. She asks for the same table to be put out to sea as she awaits joke's arrival. Words in preparation to say to him; ' I'm Shirley Valentine, would you like to join me for a drink?'