

# FALL OUT

Written by James Carrick  
Edited by Liz Cannon  
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*Dedicated to Lilibet,  
who told me I could.*

## **Stage plays by the same author:**

*Shaving Ewe.*

*Call Girls.*

*Welcome to Hellansville.*

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## **Synopsis**

*Fall Out* is an absorbing theatrical dramedy; a play about two polar opposite war veterans, an artistically stifled housewife, a terracotta beauty warrior, a pseudo-educated conman and a mysterious new flame, who all gather over vegetarian lasagne one fateful night. The journey takes us from an inner-city tower block estate to the streets of war-torn Iraq, inviting the audience to ponder over the beauty of Giverny water gardens whilst questioning the suspect artwork on display. As the evening unfolds, sharp comedy turns increasingly sour as uncomfortable truths are told, sordid secrets are revealed, and the horrors of combat are chewed over and washed down with brutal home brew and sophisticated red, white or pink wine. Laugh-out-loud funny, occasionally confronting, but always compelling, *Fall Out* is a barbed social commentary exploring the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder, domestic discord and violence, greed and ultimately the perception and impact of truth versus lies. A cleverly crafted exposition of coming out and the 'fallout' of rank, friendship, love and marriage.

## **Playwright**

James Carrick was born and raised on the south coast and the north of England from the 1970s to the 2000s and has been a resident of Auckland's North Shore since 2008.

James began his journey into drama and theatre in 2015 after many years of being a successful musician, songwriter and stand-up comedian. His playwriting career brings together his natural comedic talents and insightful social commentary, whilst offering the challenge of a new genre.

## CHARACTERS

**DAVE.** A wounded war veteran with a proud limp. A depressed, homophobic bully who drinks heavily to mask PTSD as he clings to the narrow-minded estate-and-regiment-bred views that are his truth. As the night unfolds, his vulnerability shows as his mind unravels. He has a secret.

**SUZY.** Dave's wife. Intelligent, creative, and artistic, but worn down by his jokes and anger. Trusted by everyone, she can both soothe and provoke Dave. Over the evening, she grows more assertive and defiant. She has a secret.

**PHIL.** Dave's best mate is a fellow war veteran, having served together in the same battalion. Fit, lean, handsome, also funny, gregarious and generous, with a hidden intelligence - he has learnt to be a great judge of character. Post-war, he worked as a security advisor in the Middle East but returned home to settle down with the love of his life. A changed man who has finally found his true self. Dave finds this difficult to deal with. He has a secret.

**KAYLA.** Suzy's best friend since school days, she's a self-proclaimed, self-made businesswoman. Although she thinks Dave is a war hero, she's loyal to Suzy and has always thought Suzy could have done better. She harmlessly flirts with Dave, leading him to believe they have chemistry. Kayla is desperate to fall in love and settle down, and in Felix, she believes she has found her soul mate. She has a secret.

**FELIX.** Suzy's latest flame - intelligent with aspirations to be a psychiatrist. He's witty, sarcastic and patronising. He's never met Kayla's friends before, and on first impression, he believes he will never meet them again. They are not his kind of people, seeing them as nothing more than cannon fodder for his superior intellect and rapier wit. He has a secret.

**ALEX.** Phil's new partner and the love of his life. An unknown entity to the group. Brutally honest and refuses to have anything to do with secrets.

## PLOT

The play begins with stressful preparations for a dinner party that Dave and his wife, Suzy, are hosting. It involves three couples: Dave and Suzy, Kayla and her latest boyfriend, Felix, and the guest of honour, Phil and the mystery new love of his life, Alex. The dinner party is being held to welcome home Phil, who is returning from the Middle East. The long-absent Phil has an unexpected announcement to make regarding his new partner, Alex, and their long-term plans. Suzy also has an announcement to make, a secret to reveal, and her character develops on an intimate and personal journey as the plot unfolds. Joining them are Kayla and Felix. Kayla, long-time friend of Suzy, Dave and Phil, is the owner of a small chain of tanning and beauty salons. Although bolder than brass, she is wracked with self-doubt and a crippling lack of confidence. Felix, her current boyfriend, is a psychiatrist-in-training, but isn't all he seems. Both also have secrets to reveal. The plot builds and crescendos to the revelation of a dark secret that Dave and Phil share from their war-torn past. The only character who doesn't hold a secret is Alex, who makes an entrance towards the end of the play.

## SET

Split stage: dining/living room stage right, functional kitchen stage left with an interconnecting door. Front door and other areas (bedrooms, bathroom, etc) off-stage right.

Décor: dining/living room is simple, minimal and tasteful but with incongruent pictures of fantasy females riding an assortment of dragons and sabre-toothed tigers. Functional kitchen with one or two idiosyncratic items (e.g. inappropriate corkscrew, bottle opener, fridge magnets, etc.) Overall style is clearly Suzy's influence, anomalies are unwanted compromises - a physical manifestation of the state of their marriage, implied at first and increasingly obvious as the play progresses.

## PROPS

**Dining Room:** Table, four matching chairs, two unmatched stools (one for Felix - too low, one for Alex - too high); four pictures, large and imposing on the walls; sideboard with drawers holding six sets of cutlery, six sets of crockery and Christmas-themed napkins, not pristine or matching. Assortment of spirit bottles, cans of beer, Fiasco-style wine bottle candle holder. Hi-fi unit and CD tower with CDs in the dining room. Irritating doorbell chime for the front door off-stage right.

**Kitchen:** Kitchen units, fridge-freezer, cooker, small central island, flip-top bin, wine glasses, sieve, utensils, kettle, mugs, etc. Food/drink: cans of lager, bottles of home brew, lasagne, salad, prawn cocktail crisps, a bag of large carrots.

**Cast:** Kayla - handbag; Felix - man bag, bottle of good red wine; Phil - two bottles of very good red wine; Suzy - tattered child-story manuscript from years ago (off-stage).

## MUSIC

*Kissing a Fool*, George Michael.

It is a legal requirement to apply for music rights from APRA prior to performance.

# ACT ONE

## Scene One

*Curtains open to reveal a half-laid table in the living room, set upstage. Dave is finishing laying the table, checking for regimental lines - this is a big occasion with every effort being made. He's excited about the prospect of seeing his best friend for the first time in years. Suzy is in the kitchen, busy preparing dinner.*

DAVE. *(Claps hands together)* Right.

*To the sideboard, opens drawers and rummages. He can't find what he's looking for.*

DAVE. Suze. *(No reply)* Suze? *(She's lost in thought. Dave creeps into the kitchen, stands behind Suzy, and shouts)* Suzy!

SUZY. Jesus. What did you do that for?

DAVE. Where are the napkins? *(Back to the drawer)*

SUZY. In the drawer, where they always are. We've only got...

DAVE. *(Finds the napkins)* Christmas napkins. In July?

SUZY. Why not?

DAVE. We can't use Christmas ones. *(Demanding - it's an order)* Go down to the shop and get some proper ones.

SUZY. What? Now?

DAVE. Yes, now.

SUZY. *(Sensing an imminent mood change, switches to a placating tone)* I'm doing the dinner, love. You run down...

DAVE. You trying to be funny?

SUZY. It's only down the road. It'll take five minutes.

DAVE. If you'd taken a bullet to the knee, would you be running anywhere?

SUZY. Would you be happy if I burnt the dinner? Use the ones we've got. It'll be fine. Fold them inside out. No one's going to notice.

DAVE. Phil will. I'll never hear the end of it.

SUZY. He's not your squad leader anymore, love.

DAVE. No, but he's been in the Middle East. He won't have had a decent meal in years.

SUZY. He won't get a decent meal now if I have to go and get bloody napkins.

*Dave continues with the table. He wants it perfect, but nothing will line up. The stress is building. He slams down a handful of soup spoons.*

SUZY. *(From the kitchen)* Are you alright in there?

DAVE. *(Bangs down the last spoon)* Fine.

SUZY. *(Comes through from the kitchen)* You sure?

DAVE. I said, I'm fine.

SUZY. Why are you messing around with soup spoons?

DAVE. I'm not messing around. I'm trying to make a good impression.

SUZY. With soup spoons?

DAVE. With all of it. You're always saying I should make an effort, and when I do, you... you question me. I can't win.

SUZY. Well, no love. You can't. We're not having soup. *(Heads back to the kitchen with a wry smile - she takes the win)*

*Dave scoops the spoons off the table and slams them back into the cutlery drawer. He heads back to the kitchen, grabs a beer from the fridge, and opens it.*

SUZY. Dave...

DAVE. What?

SUZY. You promised.

DAVE. I promised what?

SUZY. You promised you wouldn't get drunk tonight.

DAVE. It's only my second one. I'm not drunk, am I?

SUZY. *(Under her breath)* Not yet.

DAVE. What did you say?

SUZY. Nothing. Just leave it. *(Back to preparing dinner)*

DAVE. *(Slowly, with menace in his voice, advances toward her, a palpable sense of impending violence)* What did you say?

*The doorbell chimes - she's saved by the bell.*

SUZY. Get the door, love. Let's not keep them waiting.

*He stands trance-like, staring at her, almost through her. The bell chimes again. In an instant, he snaps out of it.*

DAVE. Right. Lock 'n load.

SUZY. It'll be Kayla. She's bringing her new man, so be nice to him.

DAVE. Why wouldn't I be nice?

SUZY. He might not be your type. You know what I mean.

DAVE. I promise to be the perfect gentleman. Just for you.

SUZY. That'll be a first.

DAVE. I swear to God...

*Doorbell, for the third time.*

SUZY. Just get the door, Dave.

*Dave exits SR and re-enters, followed by Kayla and Felix. She's carrying cheap bubbles, he's carrying an expensive red. Felix is typically metro-sexual, complete with a man bag. Kayla is terracotta in hue and overdressed. Flirtatious, easy banter between Kayla and Dave, Felix is left to survey everything with palpable disdain.*

DAVE. Come on, in you come. Kayla. How've you been, darlin'?

KAYLA. *(Drips double-entendre)* Been pushing the button for ages, getting all frustrated. *(Dave laughs nervously, unsure how to react)* I'm peachy, darlin'. Building my empire one tan at a time. Where is she then?

DAVE. Suzy, Kayla's here. *(Beat)* She's probably in the shed putting her makeup on.

KAYLA. The shed?

DAVE. It's where I keep my trowel.

*Laughter from Kayla and Dave, disdain from Felix. Suzy is listening.*

KAYLA. Don't be so bloody rotten.

SUZY. *(Enters dining room)* Kayla.

KAYLA. Hello, sweetheart. Look at you. Give us a twirl, then. *(Suzy obliges, they hug)* God, you're all skin and bone.

DAVE. I wish she had your curves

KAYLA. *(Cups one of his 'moobs')* She'll have to settle for yours. *(Dave freezes to control his knee-jerk aggressive reaction)* Mine are taken.

SUZY. *(Looks at Felix pointedly. It's the first time he's been acknowledged)* So, are you going to introduce us then?

KAYLA. Oh, my God. *(To Felix)* Sorry, babes - where are my manners? *(Faux-formal)* Suzy, Dave, this is Felix. Felix, this is Suzy and Dave.

FELIX. *(Offers his hand to Dave)* Delighted. *(Kayla bursts with pride at the 'posh' greeting)*

DAVE. Nice handbag.

FELIX. I'm sorry?

SUZY. *(Embarrassed)* Dave. Don't be so rude. *(To Felix)* Ignore him, he thinks he's being funny. It's lovely to meet you. *(Goes to hug Felix at the same time Felix attempts a double cheek 'air kiss'. Awkward pause as neither greeting is successful. She shakes his hand)* K's told me all about you.

FELIX. Has she?

KAYLA. Don't worry, lover, I've only told her the good bits. *(Holds her hands apart and mouths the word 'huge')*

DAVE. Come on then, give us your coats and I'll get the drinks in. *(Exits SR with the coats)*

*Kayla goes to the kitchen for Champagne flutes. Suzy starts to follow, but stops to invite Felix to join them. Felix is looking intently at the pictures on the wall. He studies the 'art' with a wry smile.*

FELIX. *(Thinks he's alone, sarcastic)* Wow, they're... errr... *(searches for the right word)* interesting.

SUZY. *(With equal sarcasm)* Really? You think?

FELIX. *(Startled)* Oh sorry. *(Back in control)* Who doesn't love a semi-naked, axe-wielding warrior queen, astride an armour-clad tiger?

SUZY. *(Flatly)* They're Dave's.

FELIX. Of course.

SUZY. I prefer Monet.

FELIX. *(More sarcasm)* And what is it about Claude that floats your boat?

SUZY. (*Matter of fact*) I love the Impressionist period. Monet is quintessential Impressionism - the way his brush strokes engage light, colour and movement. There's no intricate detail, but you find yourself seeing everything he saw, right there, in that moment. Ripples and reflections, swathes of pastel shades. It's an almost hypnotic event. You don't just look at a Monet. You immerse yourself in it. You absorb the beauty.

FELIX. Did you go to art school?

SUZY. I wish. Dave says it looks like he painted with his thumbs. (*Beat*) D'you want that drink?

DAVE. (*Reappears SR*) That's my job, Suze. (*Calls to the kitchen*) What d'ya want, K? Bubbles?

KAYLA. (*Enters from kitchen with flutes*) Lovely. (*Dave opens the bubbles with a loud pop. They give the obligatory cheer - Felix refrains. Dave pours the girls their drinks*) C'mon, Suzy, what can I do?

*The girls disappear into the kitchen, drinks in hand. Dave opens his drinks cabinet.*

DAVE. Right then, fella. What's your poison? Gin, vodka, whiskey...? (*Silence*) Okaaayyyy... how about... (*misprounounces each spirit*) Cream du Memf? Dubonet? Pernod?

FELIX. (*Emphasises the pronunciation so it sounds like 'No'*) Per...NOD?

DAVE. You're right. Too early for the top shelf just yet. How about some home brew?

FELIX. I brought a good red with me. If that's okay with you?

DAVE. Wine? Isn't that a bit...

FELIX. A bit?

DAVE. You know? Girly? Come on. Have a proper drink.

FELIX. Tell you what, I'll have a pint of wine. A proper man's pour, yes?

DAVE. A pint of wine. Right.

*Dave goes to the kitchen to find a corkscrew. Felix hangs his bag on the back of the central chair.*

SUZY. You two getting on?

DAVE. Dunno yet. He wants a pint of wine.

KAYLA. He's pulling your leg. (*Hands him a glass*) Give him a wine glass and tell him to stop being a prat.

DAVE. But he's so good at it.

KAYLA. Give him a chance, Dave. He's very funny if you dig beneath the surface.

DAVE. I'll get my spade.

SUZY. It's in the shed. *(Beat)* Next to my makeup and trowel.

*Dave can only find a penis-shaped corkscrew. He heads back to the dining room, tries to open the wine with it, but fails. Both he and Felix continue trying to get the cork out. Felix finally succeeds, and Dave pours him a pint of wine.*

KAYLA. How's it going with you and Dave? Getting any better?

SUZY. Getting worse, but it hasn't been right for years. Not since he came back. Wasn't just his knee that bullet shattered.

KAYLA. Maybe you need an addition. Give you something to fight for together.

SUZY. A baby?

KAYLA. Why not? It's what normal married couples do.

SUZY. *(Beat)* I'm not sure a sticky-tape baby would help.

KAYLA. Something needs to hold you two together.

SUZY. Truth is, we are kind of trying, but it's just not happening. I know when, he knows where. I give him the green light and off he goes, frantically humping away like a podgy clockwork bunny.

KAYLA. *(Laughs)* So romantic.

SUZY. It'd be better if he took his socks off. And Little Dave doesn't seem too keen.

KAYLA. Oh, dear. Still not standing to attention? Didn't you go for tests?

SUZY. We did. And to add insult to limp injury, the specialist told him that he has lazy sperm, too.

KAYLA. At least he's consistent. *(Beat)* Is Phil definitely coming?

SUZY. He says he is, but you know what he's like. He's not exactly Mr Reliable.

KAYLA. Well, I'm fully prepared. Lippy on, knickers off.

SUZY. Kayla!

KAYLA. What, and you wouldn't?

SUZY. What about Felix?

KAYLA. Joking! Ish.

SUZY. You're terrible. Anyway, Phil's bringing someone. And... apparently, he's got an announcement to make.

KAYLA. An announcement? You don't think...

SUZY. (*Faux mourning, holds up her hands over her heart*) Maybe it's finally happened.

KAYLA. Impossible. He's still on my list of things to 'do'. I wonder what she's like.

SUZY. Don't know. He wouldn't tell Dave a thing. But whoever she is, she's managed to do what we couldn't.

KAYLA. She's obviously a very nice girl... Bitch. (*Beat*) What do you think of Felix?

SUZY. He's not your normal type.

KAYLA. What's that supposed to mean?

SUZY. He seems quite intelligent. Educated even.

KAYLA. Cheeky cow. (*Haughty tone*) I'm a successful businesswoman, don't you know? Want to know the truth? I think this is it. I think it's love.

SUZY. (*Laughs*) Oh my God, Kayla. Again?

KAYLA. Yeah, but I'm sober this time. Seriously, this feels different. He could be 'The One'.

SUZY. (*Doubtful*) You never know. (*Pause, sipping their bubbles*) It's gone very quiet in there. (*Pokes her head through the kitchen door to see Dave and Felix standing in silence, drinking their drinks, looking bored*) You boys alright in here?

*They reply together.*

DAVE. (*Flat*) Fine.

FELIX. (*Cheerful*) Fine.

SUZY. Dave, have you got a minute?

DAVE. What for?

SUZY. I just need a hand for a second.

DAVE. To do what?

SUZY. (*Gritted teeth*) Could you just come here, please?

*Dave heads to the kitchen, leaving Felix to have a closer look at the art. The conversation is had in an urgent whisper inside the kitchen door. Kayla is 'busy' downstage.*

DAVE. What?

SUZY. For God's sake. Make an effort, will you?

DAVE. I'm trying. He drinks wine. What the hell am I supposed to say to him?

SUZY. Ask him if he wants a refill. He's down to half a pint. Talk to him about something.

DAVE. Like what?

SUZY. I don't know. You're both men, you must have something in common.

KAYLA. *(Deadpan)* Socks.

DAVE. *(Clueless)* But he drinks wine.

SUZY. So, ask him about wine.

DAVE. Right.

*He grabs another can of beer, the hiss of the beer opening eliciting disapproval from Suzy. She turns back to Kayla. Dave heads back to Felix.*

DAVE. You want a top-up there... erm?

FELIX. Felix. No, no – more than enough to be going on with, thank you. *(Pours the remaining half-pint of wine into a wine glass)*

DAVE. So, you're a wino then?

FELIX. I'm sorry?

DAVE. You like wine.

FELIX. I do.

DAVE. Red or white?

FELIX. Both. Equally.

DAVE. Pink?

FELIX. You mean Rosé?

DAVE. The one that comes from roses.

FELIX. (*Bemused*) Roses?

DAVE. Well, yeah. (*Slow, deliberate and loud, in the belief that Felix is thick*) Red wine - red grapes. White wine - white grapes. Rosie - roses.

FELIX. Not quite. It's actually the process of adding...

DAVE. What about Bubbles?

FELIX. (*Condescending*) Fizzy wine?

DAVE. Yeah. (*Beat*) So, how'd they get it fizzy?

FELIX. Soda Stream.

DAVE. That'll be why it's so bloody expensive.

*Felix eye rolls into silence.*

DAVE. Nuts.

FELIX. Sorry?

DAVE. Want some nuts?

FELIX. No, thank you.

DAVE. They're honey-roasted.

FELIX. I've a nut allergy.

DAVE. We've got dry-roasted. They any good?

FELIX. Still quite nutty.

DAVE. Crisps then? We've got prawn cocktail.

FELIX. Sophisticated. Are they nut-free?

*Dave dashes to the kitchen, pushes past Kayla, and rummages through the cupboards.*

KAYLA. Oi, careful.

DAVE. Where's the prawn cocktail?

SUZY. Would you look at that - he's cracking open the good stuff. They must be getting on. (*Dave frantically reads the packet*) What are you doing?

DAVE. Checking for nuts... There you go. 'This product may contain traces of peanut, soy and milk'. How much is a trace?

KAYLA. A tiny amount, hardly anything. *(Dave empties the crisps into a sieve and gives them a quick rinse under the tap. The girls stare in disbelief)* Dave, what are you doing?

DAVE. *(Agitated)* Better safe than sorry.

SUZY. But they're...

DAVE. *(Rants)* He can't eat nuts, and we've only got prawn cocktail crisps, and they might have something 'nutty' in them, and I can't offer him a snack and then say he can't have a snack, can I? I'll look stupid.

SUZY. You're going to look a bit bloody daft if you offer him a sieve full of soggy crisps.

*Dave spins on his heels and glares at Suzy. He throws the sieve and the crisps into the bin with such force that both women jump.*

KAYLA. Jesus, Dave. Calm down.

DAVE. He wants a snack.

KAYLA. He usually has organic carrot nibbles.

*Dave grabs a huge carrot from the fridge and rushes back to the living room. Dave shoves the carrot at Felix, who, once more, is totally bemused.*

DAVE. Nibbles?

FELIX. Perfect. *(Takes a bite)*