

Just Good Friends

Aim

- To stimulate students to read the book.

Note: Be aware that if you use this lesson plan, you will have to deal with a story which involves an extramarital sexual relationship.

- 1 Ask students if they understand what it means when a man and woman say that they are 'just good friends'.

Answer: it means that they are not lovers.

- 2 Write these two adjectives on the board: jealous, guilty. Ask students to talk to a partner about times when they have felt these two emotions. What were the situations, who was involved, why did they feel like that? Elicit some of their stories in a whole-class setting.

- 3 Ask students to read the Blurb (next page) and then speculate about who in the story the phrase 'just good friends' applies to and who might be jealous and who feels guilty.

Answers: (although you may not want to tell students at this stage) Stephany uses the phrase about her relationship with Carlo. Ruth is jealous of Stephany; Max is jealous of Carlo. Carlo (definitely) and Stephany (maybe) feel guilty after they make love.

- 4 Ask students to read Extracts 1 and find out what the main characters think about each other. Write the character names on the board in pairs (Ruth/Stephany, Ruth/Carlo, Stephany/Carlo, Max/Carlo) and note the relationship dynamics the students suggest.

Answers: Ruth trusts Carlo, but doesn't trust Stephany. Carlo says Stephany is just a good friend. Stephany says she doesn't know Ruth and is worried she might be boring. Max gets a bit angry about the way Stephany tries to make him and Ruth jealous.

- 5 Ask students to read Extracts 2. What does Luigi think Stephany's motives are? Is he right? What is Stephany's explanation?

Answers: Luigi the waiter thinks she only had sex with Carlo so she would get the flat for free; Stephany herself implies she did it to keep Carlo as a friend, although it looks as though she was jealous of Ruth, too.

- 6 Tell students that the two couples decide to go to a festival in a village one evening, but Max is ill and Ruth has to look after the children, so only Carlo and Stephany can go. Ask students to look at the Evening Out text and decide which of these Carlo and Stephany do.

Answer: The students will need to read the book to find out.

- 7 Tell students that Max and Ruth don't know that the other one didn't go to the festival. Ask them to read Extracts 3 and find out how they discover the truth and what they think.

Answers: Ruth realises that Stephany hasn't told Max that she (Ruth) didn't go to the festival from talking to him. Carlo told Ruth that Max hadn't gone to the festival, but she worries that someone like Stephany could push him to make love. Max only realises that Carlo and Stephany were alone and didn't go to the festival when Luigi the waiter talks to them.

- 8 Ask students to work in pairs and decide what they think happens to the four main characters at the end of the story.

Answer: (Do not confirm these to students.) Max leaves Stephany. Carlo (it seems) decides not to see Stephany again.

Just Good Friends

Blurb

It's Stephany and Max's first holiday away together and they want to get to know each other. They go to Italy and stay at Stephany's friend Carlo's flat in a Mediterranean village. But Carlo's wife is not very happy to see Stephany – and the two couples find out why, and a lot of other things about each other, in a hot Italian summer

Extracts 1

- a** 'Listen,' he said, taking Ruth's hand. 'You mustn't worry about Stephany. She's just a good friend. You're the only person I love.'
- Ruth looked up. She was crying.
'And anyway, Stephany is coming with a new boyfriend!'
Ruth put her arms round Carlo. Perhaps things would be all right if Stephany had her own boyfriend now. She smiled at Carlo.
He was such a lovely man and she wanted to trust him. She did trust him. The trouble was, she just could not trust Stephany.
- b** 'What's the matter?' Max asked. 'Aren't you looking forward to seeing them?'
- 'Of course I am,' said Stephany. 'At least, I'm looking forward to seeing Carlo. He's like my brother, but I'm not so sure about Ruth. I don't know her very well.'
'Are you frightened of her?' asked Max.
'Frightened? No!' said Stephany quickly. 'I just don't know her, that's all. And you know women with children can be very boring.'
- c** 'Last time I was here Carlo taught me to water-ski!' she said. Her eyes were happy.
Max began to feel a tiny bit angry. Stephany knew he couldn't water-ski. Was she trying to make him jealous? Or perhaps she was trying to make Ruth jealous. She seemed to be doing a good job.

Extracts 2

- a** 'I'm Luigi,' said the waiter. 'Carlo's one of my oldest friends. We all went out together one night, about two years ago. Remember?'
- Stephany felt her face go red ...
'Carlo liked you very much,' said Luigi. 'We thought he would leave his wife and marry you!'
Stephany looked at Luigi ... What did he know? ...
'And now you've got a free holiday flat. People pay a lot of money to stay here for just one week,' he said.
... Was he saying she had made love with Carlo so that he would let her stay in the flat for nothing? It wasn't true.
She had just had a very short affair with Carlo last time she was here. He had already offered her the use of his flat a long time before they ever had that little affair.
- b** She remembered seeing how happy Carlo and Ruth were together, and feeling afraid that she was going to lose Carlo as a friend. Surely, she had thought, she was more interesting to him than Ruth. Although she had never found Carlo attractive before, she suddenly wanted him now that he was married.

Evening Out

- a** Carlo and Stephany decide it would not be a good idea to go out alone together, and so they both stay at home.
- b** Carlo invites Stephany to his house for the evening to get to know Ruth and the children better.
- c** Carlo and Stephany go to Bianca Beach and make love again.
- d** Stephany and Carlo stay at the flat and Carlo helps her to look after Max.
- e** Carlo and Stephany go to the festival; they enjoy themselves eating and dancing, then go home to their partners.

Extracts 3

- a** 'How was last night? Max asked ...
'Last night?' Ruth didn't understand.
'The festival you and Carlo and Stephany went to while I was in bed.'
Ruth looked at Max. Didn't he know she hadn't gone? She thought quickly. If Stephany hadn't told Max, then she was trying to hide something. Ruth felt herself go red with anger. But she decided it was best not to tell Max now. She wanted to talk to Carlo first.
- b** 'I met Max in town today, and he thought I was there last night,' Ruth replied.
'Perhaps they hadn't had a chance to talk.'
Ruth looked hard at Carlo.
'Carlo. I want you to tell me the truth. Is Stephany trying to hide something?'
- Ruth wanted to stay calm. She didn't want to get jealous and angry. She wanted to believe Carlo. After all, he had told her Max was ill last night. If he had had something to hide, he wouldn't have told her. He had other women friends. She knew Carlo wasn't the kind of man to go with other women ... unless he was pushed! And Stephany was the kind of woman who might push him.
- c** Luigi ... spoke in English. 'I expected to see you at the festival the other night.
Where were you?'
- Max laughed. 'I was ill in bed,' he said, 'but Stephany was there, with Carlo and Ruth.'
'No,' said Luigi ... 'They were not there. I looked out all evening for Carlo and he wasn't there. And when I asked Ruth, she said she stayed at home with Thomas.'