

John Osbourne: Look back in anger

The action throughout takes place in the Porters' one-room flat in the Midlands.

Time: The Present.

ACT I

Early evening. April.

Characters: Jimmy, Cliff, Alison

Jimmy and Cliff are seated in the two armchairs and they are reading, Alison is leaning over an ironing board. Jimmy starts conversation about newspapers and then he starts arguing with Alison. Cliff tries to stop him but he is not successful, they start insulting each other. Cliff shows attention to Alice. Then they talk about the news and if they go to the pictures. Alison iron Cliff's trousers. They start arguing about cigarettes. Jimmy asks Alison if her friend Webster is coming and after a while he starts provoking her. He insults her, her friends and family. But she carries on with ironing. Jimmy complains about sound of ironing because he wants to listen to the concert on the radio. Therefore, he continues insulting her. Cliff tries to force him to dance. They grapple and while wrestling they push the ironing board. It collapses, fall on the floor and Alison gets burned by iron. Jimmy has to leave the apartment. Cliff assists Alison with her injury. They talk about Alison and Jimmy's relationship. Alison tells him that she is pregnant. Jimmy returns and they talk. Then Cliff gives him a tug, he falls to the floor and Cliff is dragging him along the floor by his feet. Cliff goes out to buy some cigarettes, Jimmy and Alison have a conversation and he apologizes. They play a game in which they are bears and squirrels (their erotic game). She tries to tell him about pregnancy but Cliff enters and tells that there is a phone for Alison. Jimmy goes through her belongings and insults her friends and family again. Alison tells them Helena is going to stay there for a couple of nights. Jimmy is angry with it.

ACT II, scene one

Two weeks later.

Characters: Jimmy, Cliff, Alison, Helena

Alison is preparing tea, Jimmy is playing trumpet in the back. Then she prepares a table for four and Helena enters. She and Alison are talking about how different it is with her presence, about Jimmy, Cliff and her marriage. Then Alison tells her about Hugh Tanner, Jimmy's friend. She and Jimmy lived in Hugh's flat, because they did not have any money. Alison and Hugh disliked each other. Alison tells that her family did not approve the wedding. She fell in love with him because he seemed like a knight in shining armour. Helena says that Alison has to tell Jimmy about having a baby. Cliff enters and calls Jimmy for the tea. Jimmy tells that he thought out a song. Alison tells that she is going to church with Helena. Jimmy becomes angry and jealous. He insults Alison, her mother and then Helena. He describes how he felt when he was watching his father dying. He tells that he had already learnt at an earlier age what it meant to be angry and helpless. He insults Alison and tells that he wants her to grovel someday. Helena tells Jimmy that there is a phone for him. Helena tells Alison that she has sent her father a wire to come and take her home. Alison agrees with her to go home. Jimmy returns and tells that Hugh's mom had a stroke. Cliff exits. Jimmy expects that Alison is going with him to Hugh's mom, but she decides to go to church with Helena.

ACT II, scene two

The following evening.

Characters: Alison, Alison's father Colonel Redfern, Cliff, Jimmy, Helena

Alison is packing her things to leave. She is discussing with her father. He sorts of apologises for behaviour when they trying to prevent his daughter and Jimmy getting married. He even accuses Alison of not committing herself fully to Jimmy. Alison tells him how her husband offended him and her mother. She thinks that Jimmy married her for revenge on her and her social class. Colonel talks about India. Helena enters and tells that she can not come with them. Cliff enters and Colonel leaves with suitcases. Alison gives Cliff a letter for Jimmy, says goodbye and leaves. After a while Cliff leaves because he knows that Jimmy can come any minute. He gives the letter to Helena. Jimmy enters and tells that he was nearly hit by Colonel and that Cliff turned away from him. Helena gives him Alison's letter, he reads it. He is angry and insults Alison. Helena tells him about the baby, Jimmy tells that he do not care and insults her. She slaps him and then they kiss.

ACT III, scene one

Several months later. Sunday evening.

Characters: Helena, Jimmy, Cliff, Alison

Helena is ironing, Jimmy and Cliff are sitting in armchairs and reading newspapers. They talk about different things. Then Jimmy starts arguing over religion with Helena, but she defends herself better than Alison. Then Jimmy and Cliff sing, dance and preforms a »nobody sketch«. Men starts to fight and fall on the ground. Helena goes out to wash Cliff's shirt. Cliff tells that he wants to leave. Helena enters, Cliff leaves. Jimmy and Helena are talking. He embraces her and ask her not to let anything go wrong. Alison enters and she looks rather ill. Jimmy exits quickly.

ACT III, scene two

A few minutes later.

Characters: Helena, Alison, Jimmy

Jimmy is playing trumpet, Helena and Alison are drinking tea and talking. Alison apologizes for coming back, but she has to accept that this happened to her. But Helena says that she is who is in the wrong. They agree that Jimmy was born out of his time (he believes in past values). Helena decides to leave him. She tells that she was shocked when she noticed that Alison had lost her child. Helena calls Jimmy and tells him that she is leaving. She exits. Jimmy accuses Alison not to send flowers to the funeral and about other things. She is crying. She explains how she felt. She is grovelling. She collapses on her feet; he bends down and takes her shaking body in his arms. Then they hug.