

# **Home Economics**

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**From Fact to Fiction**  
Radio 4

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## Information

**Gemma, 25-50**

**Andrew, 25-50**

They could live anywhere  
But it's now.

/ in a line of dialogue indicates where the next line should start being spoken, creating an overlap.

\*\* at the end of a line means the actor should run straight on to their next line of dialogue.

1.

Kitchen.  
Morning.

GEMMA It's a mess.

ANDREW It is a bit of a mess.

GEMMA I'm sorry, Andy.

ANDREW God, Gemma, don't apologise.

GEMMA Well I am, I'm sorry.

ANDREW We both –

GEMMA You didn't –

ANDREW My bike? for starters.

GEMMA You need that to get to work.

ANDREW Didn't need to get a whole bells-and-whistles job, though, did I?

GEMMA It's so you to be like this, but I need to hold my hands up and take my share of the blame –

ANDREW It's totally not a blame thing.

GEMMA No but I do –

ANDREW No no, Gemma. That's not what this is.

GEMMA Well that's – that's – well, I appreciate that.

ANDREW I mean I think it's good.

GEMMA How 'good'?

ANDREW In a way.

GEMMA I don't –

ANDREW It's a wake-up call.

GEMMA What do you mean?

ANDREW We have to face facts here – because you know I love you – / but we have oh I know, love \*\*

GEMMA I love you too.

ANDREW but you know?

GEMMA Yes –

ANDREW We have been living beyond our means.

GEMMA We have, I know.

ANDREW I told you, it's not just you, it's both of us.

GEMMA That's very nice of you but Sharm El Sheikh was totally my idea.

ANDREW I could have said no.

GEMMA I booked it without even / asking –

ANDREW Because you wanted it to be a surprise. And it was.

GEMMA Selfish –

ANDREW A brilliant surprise.

GEMMA I just feel so stupid –

ANDREW Gemma, seriously, that's not – we're married, we're – this isn't about your spending versus my spending. We're a team, yes?

GEMMA I know.

ANDREW So look. Let's work this out together. Cards on the table: we're in debt. In fact we're in debt to our debts: we're in / deficit. Exactly.

GEMMA We're in deficit –

ANDREW So what are we going to do about the deficit?

GEMMA We'll have to cut back on our spending.

ANDREW And some.

GEMMA No more eating out in the week for a start.

ANDREW Absolutely. And we should plan ahead with food; it's cheaper –

GEMMA        Yeah yeah

ANDREW       we do a big shop and

GEMMA        Yep, plan our meals and stick to it.

ANDREW       We should actually make a planner, put it on  
the / wall. \*\*

GEMMA        Yes.

ANDREW       Just paper I mean, / nothing \*\*

GEMMA        No! no

ANDREW       fancy, nothing like that, just a piece of A4.

GEMMA        And that goes for the kids too, yes?

ANDREW       I'm afraid they'll have to, yes. We're all in  
this together.

GEMMA        And it'll be good for them both to know that  
the bank of mummy and daddy doesn't, you know -

ANDREW       And I don't like saying this, but holiday  
plans:

GEMMA        You're right.

ANDREW       On hold.

GEMMA        Tough decisions.

ANDREW       Got to be done.

GEMMA        It's so good that we can talk to each other.

ANDREW       Some couples couldn't do it.

GEMMA        Definitely

ANDREW       I mean it's just balancing the books.

GEMMA        Well then and don't hate me for saying this  
but: do we really honestly need Netflix?

ANDREW       Wow, you are brutal!

GEMMA        It's a chance to declutter. It'll be good for  
us.

ANDREW I mean, we haven't finished Jessica Jones...

GEMMA We can't have any no-go areas, Andy.

ANDREW Okay, what the hell? Cancel it.

GEMMA Good.

ANDREW It's not as if we're on the verge of ruin. I mean look at us.

GEMMA It's not as if we're in Syria or Brazil with that / virus absolutely \*\*

ANDREW Zika! Wow yes, those poor / people -

GEMMA Yes, those poor poor people. It's not like we're, my God, Greece. Most people would envy us. This house, our beautiful kids.

ANDREW This area which, my God -

GEMMA Green space, our kids can actually play in the streets, which -

ANDREW Because sometimes you read the newspapers and

GEMMA some sort of war zone.

ANDREW Exactly. We're healthy. We're happy. We've got us, which is the main thing.

GEMMA It's a chance to look at ourselves. To to to find out who we are if that doesn't sound too -

ANDREW We're fine. We'll be fine.

Sound of children playing in the street.

2.

Kitchen.  
Two weeks later.

GEMMA Family meeting.

ANDREW I think we're quorate.

GEMMA I'll take minutes, Mr Chair!

ANDREW Item 1 on the agenda. Spending review.

GEMMA I circulated the papers by email.

They laugh.

So, we're doing the big shop; the planner thing is working.

ANDREW I'm actually really enjoying cooking at home.

GEMMA I feel healthier, more focused at work.

ANDREW And the kids, bless them, the kids are playing their part.

GEMMA ... yes.

ANDREW I mean it's hard, don't get me wrong.

GEMMA Yes, it is. But it's not like we're on the the some sort of on the breadline situation.

ANDREW We still have our Saturdays out and -

GEMMA Which I love -

ANDREW And maybe we won't have a holiday this year but so what?

GEMMA It's not going to kill us, is it? Do without a holiday. Boo hoo.

ANDREW 'I had to have a staycation this year.' Boo hoo.

GEMMA First-world problems. Boo hoo.

ANDREW So and I know it's only been a fortnight but I think we should be pretty bloody proud of ourselves.

GEMMA Me too and we should take this as real encouragement to / go maybe a bit \*\*

ANDREW Carry on, absolutely.

GEMMA Carry on, yes, absolutely, but also go further, if anything.

ANDREW Further? / What?

GEMMA We've just skimmed the surface, really.

ANDREW Okay, yes.

GEMMA It's so good for us, so good, I don't think we should stop now. I don't think of it as cutting back on spending: I think of it as a journey of self-discovery if that doesn't / sound too –

ANDREW Absolutely. Like Michaelangelo finding the, the statue in the marble sort of thing.

GEMMA Yes. Did he? I don't know that story but yes.

ANDREW Question is: what though? Because we're pretty much down to the bone, / aren't we?

GEMMA Well, Andy, I mean, come on now, hardly down / to the bone

ANDREW You know what I'm saying though.

GEMMA What I mean is, for example, we like our glass of wine at the end of the evening, but what if / we did without –

ANDREW One glass of wine / is hardly going to break the bank –

GEMMA I'm just using it as an example, Andy, I'm just saying, it's about imagination. It's about being imaginative about us.

ANDREW I'm listening.

GEMMA I think we have room for some more efficiency savings. That's all I'm saying.

ANDREW Efficiency savings?

GEMMA Yes.

ANDREW Such as?

GEMMA The kids for instance.

ANDREW What about them?

GEMMA Because they've been up for it so far.

ANDREW They've been amazing.



GEMMA Nick maybe more than Jess.

ANDREW She at that / age -

GEMMA I was thinking and look shoot me down in flames if you disagree on this, but with Jess... there's the whole faddy food thing.

ANDREW I don't -

GEMMA 'I'm not eating that'. 'I'm not hungry'. 'I don't eat meat all of a sudden'. It's a waste.

ANDREW Lots of kids / go through

GEMMA Well that's, I'm sorry, because I love our kids, you know I do, but I'm just not sure that's good enough any more.

ANDREW It seems a bit -

GEMMA We have to live within our means. I mean, come on.

ANDREW What are you saying? She -

GEMMA She eats with us. She has the same thing as us. We put our foot, feet, we put our feet down, and we say enough's enough. Sorry, but that's the deal.

ANDREW We can try I suppose.

GEMMA I think we have to do more than try. We can't go back to the bad old days of throwing money at her problems.

ANDREW It's true that she can be -

GEMMA I mean, she has that job in the café. If she wants to use her own money to buy her faddy foods, now that's a different matter.

ANDREW Let's talk to her.

GEMMA Good, so we're agreed. No more faddy food stuff. We can start thinking about holidays maybe next year. And no more glass of wine at the end of the evening.

ANDREW Oh I - thought that was just an example.

GEMMA It is. It's a perfect example.

Sound of children playing in mud.

3.

Kitchen.

Morning.

Two weeks later.

ANDREW (entering) Morning, love.

GEMMA Hey.

ANDREW Jess not joining us?

GEMMA Nope.

ANDREW It's been two weeks.

GEMMA She's punishing us.

ANDREW Oh that's just –

GEMMA I know.

ANDREW We should say something.

GEMMA I put a note under her door.

ANDREW Saying –

GEMMA Thanking her for her contribution to getting the family's finances back on track but explaining that civil conversation is a key part of home life and we think it's regrettable she has felt it necessary to cut back on this frontline service.

ANDREW Any reply?

GEMMA Not yet. Oh and Andy, I know you're very busy but could you call someone today about the playground?

ANDREW They're not still at it!

GEMMA At all hours. And the noises those children make.

ANDREW I'll call them.

GEMMA Please.

ANDREW Have you told Nick not to go out there?

GEMMA He's pretty sensible.

ANDREW True. Wouldn't hurt to email the school, pass him a message.

GEMMA He's not in school.

ANDREW He's – what? He's – why?

GEMMA He's working.

ANDREW On what?

GEMMA It's Wednesday. He's got a stall at the market.

Beat.

ANDREW I'm confused.

GEMMA We all have to muck in.

ANDREW He's twelve.

GEMMA And he sits around all day playing computer games and not contributing to the family.

ANDREW He can't work.

GEMMA That's what I thought.

ANDREW Well?

GEMMA But then I had him tested...

ANDREW You what?

GEMMA Fitness for work sort of thing and he came through – you'd have been really proud of him actually – with flying colours.

ANDREW But he's got to go to school.

GEMMA In an ideal world, yes, Andy, but I'm afraid we're not living in an ideal world, actually.

ANDREW But in the long term –

GEMMA            Unfortunately the long term is a luxury we  
                         can't afford.

ANDREW            What's he selling?

GEMMA            Surplus assets.

ANDREW            Which means –

GEMMA            Toys he doesn't play with any more. Clothes  
                         he's grown out of. Books no one reads.

ANDREW            Which books?

GEMMA            It's not as if you read them, Andy, they just  
                         gather dust.

ANDREW            Wait – he's selling my books?

GEMMA            He got this grey apron and he shouts like a  
                         proper market trader. It made my heart burst,  
                         Andy, you should see him.

ANDREW            Sure but –

GEMMA            It's genuine talent rewarded. I love it.

ANDREW            Gemma, my God.

GEMMA            Don't worry Andy. It'll be good for him. It's  
                         good for all of us. Getting us back on our  
                         feet. It's all good.

Sound of children playing with weapons.

4.

Kitchen.  
Birds.  
Two weeks later.  
Morning.

ANDREW            I'm cold, aren't you cold?

GEMMA            Put a jumper on.

ANDREW            It's ridiculous.

GEMMA            It's refreshing.

ANDREW        You sold the walls of our house.

GEMMA        Walls are lazy. They were just sitting there.  
They were holding us back.

ANDREW        It's freezing.

GEMMA        Cold is in the mind.

ANDREW        Is it though?

GEMMA        Those kids are making a racket.

ANDREW        I'm not talking to them. Not after last time.

GEMMA        The bruise has virtually gone.

ANDREW        Don't suppose you've seen Jess.

GEMMA        Not in ages.

ANDREW        I can't say I'm surprised.

GEMMA        Why?

ANDREW        Fancy selling her room.

GEMMA        It was an underused resource.

ANDREW        Do we even know where she sleeps?

GEMMA        She finds places.

ANDREW        I don't like thinking about it.

GEMMA        It's more efficient, Andrew.

ANDREW        Are you really not cold?

GEMMA        It clears my head.

ANDREW        They really are making a terrible racket.

GEMMA        (takes a look) Oh I see.

ANDREW        What's happening?

GEMMA        They've got one of the estate boys and yes  
they're hitting him with something.

ANDREW        Something like what?

GEMMA A bar of some -

ANDREW I wish we could call someone but they never come.

GEMMA It's the estate boy making the noise. He'll stop soon.

ANDREW I hope they clean up after themselves.

GEMMA Shouldn't you be getting ready for work?

ANDREW I've got this scratchy throat.

GEMMA Do you want me to do a capability assessment?

ANDREW No thank you, Gemma.

GEMMA Because, now that Nick's bought us out we need your income stream, I'm sorry.

ANDREW I know, I know.

GEMMA I thought you were with me on this.

ANDREW I am, it's just -

GEMMA Because it's good, isn't it? It's good to cut, always to cut. Like a garden. Cut it back to help it grow. Cut back. Cut through. Cut down. Always cut.

ANDREW Yes.

GEMMA Well then.

ANDREW But when do we stop?

GEMMA Cutting is good. You said so yourself. Why would you ever want to stop being good?

Beat.

ANDREW When you put it like that.

GEMMA In fact.

ANDREW What?

GEMMA I want to make a suggestion.

ANDREW What.

GEMMA We talk. We talk a lot.  
ANDREW I've always loved that about us.  
GEMMA Not saying don't talk.  
ANDREW Phew!  
GEMMA More just, I don't know, trim the fat a bit.  
ANDREW I don't understand.  
GEMMA Cut it down. Cut it back.  
ANDREW Talk?  
GEMMA Stop the bla bla.  
ANDREW Talking though.  
GEMMA It'll be better. It'll be good.

5.

Wasteground.  
Chairs only.

ANDREW it would get this cold  
GEMMA like really needed the ceiling  
ANDREW boys burned the table last  
GEMMA wrong with eating off your  
ANDREW appetite after they found Jess  
GEMMA learning to say no to  
ANDREW to admit I resent this  
GEMMA joint decision as you well  
ANDREW certain quality of life issues  
GEMMA fix the roof while the  
ANDREW wonder if you really mean

GEMMA work hard and get on  
ANDREW even our children our lovely  
GEMMA no one regrets more  
ANDREW this and for what  
GEMMA days are over and  
ANDREW happiness like a distant  
GEMMA luxury we no longer  
ANDREW books and conversation even  
GEMMA price on everything  
ANDREW Please can we not do this / please Gemma  
please.  
GEMMA NO. NO.  
Pause.  
ANDREW cutting into bone  
GEMMA always the same  
ANDREW lost what we  
GEMMA the new us  
ANDREW memories all I  
GEMMA yes memories okay  
ANDREW just keep remembering  
GEMMA the future though  
ANDREW sharm el sheikh  
GEMMA sure yes that  
ANDREW do you remember  
GEMMA look on your  
ANDREW believe my eyes  
GEMMA be a surprise



ANDREW was a surprise  
GEMMA the whole idea  
ANDREW a brilliant surprise  
They laugh slightly.  
GEMMA better now though  
ANDREW don't see how  
GEMMA simple clearer  
ANDREW angry everywhere  
GEMMA after ourselves  
ANDREW viruses and  
GEMMA worry too  
ANDREW Europe now  
GEMMA mosquitoes here  
ANDREW feel defenceless  
GEMMA strong actually  
ANDREW we've lost  
GEMMA far from  
ANDREW haven't we  
GEMMA nothing  
ANDREW everything  
GEMMA hardly  
ANDREW darker  
GEMMA better  
ANDREW when  
GEMMA soon  
ANDREW cuts

GEMMA money  
ANDREW love  
GEMMA money  
ANDREW love  
GEMMA you  
ANDREW we  
GEMMA no  
ANDREW we  
GEMMA I  
ANDREW we  
GEMMA I