

THE INSTANT SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

When
Gavin
met
Stacey
and everything
in between

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Ruth Jones
& James Corden

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Gavin
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Stacey

and everything
in between

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When
Gavin
met
Stacey
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*a story of love and
friendship*

Ruth Jones
and James Corden



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Days off.

Ruth Jones

Mon 20

Thurs 21

Fri 1st

Mon 4th

GAVIN & STACEY

by

James Corden and Ruth Jones

EPISODE 1

Shooting Script

28th October 2006

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Dedicated to our dear friend and
brilliant director, Christine Gernon

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INTRODUCTION

We may never see its like again. A romantic comedy that started out as a modest, little-heralded series about a love-at-first-sight romance between an Essex boy and a Welsh girl and the thornier relationship between their seemingly incompatible best friends Vanessa and Smithy, airing on the BBC's 'youth' channel, watched by barely half a million viewers. Seventeen years later, having made stars of its creators, built an ever-increasing, loyal audience and moved to its spiritual home on mainstream BBC One, from the 2008 Christmas Special onwards *Gavin & Stacey* has become the most-watched scripted TV show since records began, a symbol of the national public service broadcaster's power – even in these days of streaming blockbusters – to bring millions of people together, still, to watch a TV show.

Across its twenty-two episodes, all directed by Christine Gernon, *Gavin & Stacey* has given us many indelible moments, from having a heated debate over the best motorway service station to finding the eroticism in a KFC corn on the cob, the poetry in an Indian takeaway order, and the joy in a new pair of fully functioning oven gloves. Not forgetting the mysterious fishing trip, whose secrets still remain tantalizingly out of reach. Probably for the best.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, the show feels like a sure thing, with that core ensemble of perfectly cast actors – Mathew Horne, Joanna Page, Rob Brydon, Alison Steadman, Larry Lamb, Julia Davis, Adrian Scarborough, Melanie Walters, Robert Wilfort and Steffan Rhodri – playing an extended family of funny, fundamentally decent people with peculiar foibles living relatively modest lives; the kind of people who are rarely seen on television, characters for whom drama means pretending to go vegetarian or making an omelette.

There are no superheroes or aliens here, no major crimes, no dead bodies (apart from the one Mick discovers on his way to work, leading to his blink-and-you’ll-miss-it appearance on BBC News). Instead, there’s a Wales/Essex culture clash, a love that dare not speak its name, and one that just needs a bit of hard work and a dominatrix every now and then. It’s about the life events that affect us all: the births and marriages, the unexpected romances, the moments when friendships crystallize over a ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’ singalong or a ‘World In Motion’ dance routine, the little things and the big, life-changing moments.

More than anything, this is a show in touch with its emotions. So when the 2019 Christmas Special arrived, it built up to a cliffhanger for the ages as Vanessa Shanessa ‘Nessa’ Jenkins went down on one knee and proposed to Neil Noel Edmund ‘Smithy’

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Smith. A breathtaking moment – and then the world had to wait five years to find out what the hell happened next. And what happened next was that the finale on Christmas Day 2024 broke all ratings records and has now been watched by upwards of 21 million people. Of course, Ruth and James have gone on to huge success with myriad other projects, but *Gavin & Stacey* is where their unique partnership as friends and creative colleagues began. That's the legacy of *Gavin & Stacey*, the little show that could. And most certainly did.

Boyd Hilton

PROLOGUE

May 2000. A church hall in Headingley, Leeds. It's the read-through of Kay Mellor's brand-new series *Fat Friends*, charting the lives of a group of Yorkshire slimmers, which will become Britain's highest-rated weight-loss-related comedy drama! Sitting with scripts in hand, a few chairs apart, are thirty-three-year-old Ruth Jones and twenty-one-year-old James Corden. There's a polite hello between them that day, nothing more. But twenty-five years later, James Corden and Ruth Jones have become the best of friends, who between them have created one of Britain's best-loved TV shows.

This is the story of that unexpected friendship and the even more unexpected success of a TV show called *Gavin & Stacey*.

CHAPTER I

When Ruth met James:
the backstories

JAMES: What was odd about that first read-through was that it was just for episodes one, two and three, and my character, Jamie, only really popped up every now and then. I only had one or two lines in those episodes.

RUTH: People ask me what my first impression of you was back then – I just thought you were very nice and sweet, and very young.

Well, I remember that you were really, really good. I remember thinking, ‘Oh, she’s brilliant.’

Did you keep that opinion of me or did it change?

Well, we all change, Ruth!

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So were you not in the scenes we did in the National Super Slimmers' Competition – with Richard Whiteley and Alison Steadman's character, Betty, having that fantasy sequence?

No, I wasn't there. I was literally only in the local slimmers' club scenes, where Janet Dibley's character . . .

Carol something . . . McGary!

. . . Yeah, she'd go, 'Oh, well done, Jamie – you're down two pounds.' And I'd go, 'Thanks.' Or she'd go, 'You've got to do better,' and I'd say, 'I'm trying.' And that was it.

I remember one bit of dialogue where Carol goes to you, 'Jamie, you've put on five pounds,' and you go, 'We've had visitors.' And Carol says, 'What did you do – EAT them?'

Oh yeah . . . classic Kay Mellor, that! Then when I did my episode, everyone pretty much disappeared because it was mainly about me on my own at school, getting bullied.

You were superb in that ep. Didn't you get an RTS [Royal Television Society] nomination for it?

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Yeah, but I got beaten by Rob Brydon.

He is the better actor, to be fair.

I know.

That scene, though, where you got attacked by those school kids, when they smashed up your mother's birthday cake – it was horrible . . . D'you remember?

Yeah, I'm incredibly proud of what I had to do in that scene. What I didn't know, though, was that the rest of the cast had to stop themselves laughing because they all had to run down a hill in the park where I was getting beaten up!

We weren't laughing at your traumatic scene, though; it was just funny that we suddenly had to run down a hill to get to you. Cos I know this will surprise you, but I'm not actually a runner. And nor was Alison Steadman, and we just got a bit hysterical about it all.

There was quite a gap between series one and series two of *Fat Friends*, and I was in it a lot more in that second series, and that's when you and I would start to hang out and chat in the bar of the Crowne Plaza hotel.

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Ah, the Crowne Plaza Leeds . . . where we stayed during filming. And where *Gavin & Stacey* was eventually born.

That's right . . . but not till we were filming series three of *Fat Friends* in 2003.

It had very orange decor, didn't it? The Crowne Plaza.

Yeah, and there was this sort of mezzanine, with a bar, and these sofas which looked inwards to the reception. And we all used to gravitate to that one area and sit there, and almost always, if you came down after a filming day, you'd find a couple of members of the *Fat Friends* cast there. You'd just join them, and then more people would join. Some nights after filming there'd be fifteen people there. Some nights there'd be three. Some nights people would drink till eleven p.m., twelve midnight, or on other nights everyone would head to bed at nine thirty p.m.

You didn't really drink much back then, did you?

No, but when I first met you, you were a teetotal vegetarian!

Oh yes. That didn't last long . . .

Well, it lasted through series one, then it really fell off . . .

Anyway, one night in 2003, while we were filming series three of *Fat Friends*, we were sat in that bar and I told you about how I had been to a wedding with an ex-girlfriend of mine from Barry Island, which is a place I'd been to before because she had family there.

And I remember it was just the two of us talking, and you described it so vividly.

It was so weird that no one else was at the bar that night at the hotel, and actually, had anyone else at all been around, I don't think we would have had that conversation and we wouldn't be sitting here today. No question.

It's so odd thinking things like that . . . Can you imagine!

The wedding was at this place called St Mellons, which we ended up using in *Gavin & Stacey* – it's actually where Dawn and Pete renewed their vows, and it's also where Smithy and Nessa ended up having their register office ceremony in *The Finale*.

I'm so glad you said 'register office' then and not 'registry office'. It's one of my bugbears. Like when people say 'sicth' instead of 'sixth'.

Yeah, sicth.

No, it's SIXTH – it's the number SIX, not SIC.

Yeah, sicth. So I'd been at this wedding, and I didn't know many people there and it was a long day. It started at one p.m. with the actual wedding, then we waited around for the photos, then there was a sit-down meal. Then everyone left and went into this other area while all the tables were taken out, and the dance floor was put in, and they had a partition in the room. Then when they pulled the partition in the room back, suddenly it looked like a theatre. It struck me that it looked like a proscenium arch.

Anyway, I didn't know many people there, and my ex-girlfriend knew lots of people, so she was off chatting, and I was just sitting there looking at everything going on, taking it all in, and thinking, 'Fuck . . . all human life is here, in this room of people.' The bride was Welsh, from Barry, and he was English, but a lot of these people didn't know each other, and there were people flirting, and there were people speaking excitedly or drunkenly, and

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all kinds of stuff was happening. And you saw this ripple effect of this one event, this wedding, having this impact on all these people's lives just for one day, because two people were to stand up in front of all their friends and family and declare their love for each other.

So as you talked to me about that wedding day, I remember at some point we both said it could be a really good basis for a TV show, a one-hour comedy drama, about a wedding and the people that you meet when you go to one. The show would just be these little vignettes of people's conversations. It wouldn't even need to have a particular structure. And we were going to call it *It's My Day*, because the mother of the bride was going to be this really overpowering character who overshadowed her own daughter and felt that it was *her* day. (Actually, that character became the mother of the groom – aka Alison Steadman's Pam in *Gavin & Stacey*.) But it's interesting that some of the details you told me about from the wedding, little bits of overheard dialogue, did end up in the final script, like the discussion about the digital camera . . .

Which is a real thing that I heard when I was there at the wedding . . . We used it in the final episode of series one:

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BRYN (wielding his digital
camera to show Budgie)
Ever seen one of these?

BUDGIE

What?

BRYN

No film in there. Digital!
I've got night mode, and
black and white . . . I'll
use that later probably, for
effect. It's got 'seppiah', or
sepia. I don't know how you
say it. I've got a feeling
it's faulty. It just makes
everything go brown.

We came up with this treatment for *It's My Day* and some of the lines from *that* ended up in the script, like the motto on Dave Coaches' bus – '*We'll get you there – if we possibly can!*' – as well as Nessa's lines at the end of Stacey's hen night, which became quite an iconic Nessa speech.

Towards the end of the night everyone is worse for wear and the philosophising is in full flow. Nessa is lighting three fags at the same time and giving them out to the girls who are all sat around her listening. She doesn't actually make a point – but sounds as if she does:

"I not bein' funny . . . , don't get me wrong . . . , but to be honest, at the end of the day, . . . if truth be told, no word of a lie, . . . d'you know what I mean?"

And after a lot of thought the girls all say, **"Yeah."**

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Another thing that I heard there, at the wedding, was my ex's uncle talking about his Citroën Picasso, saying, 'It's got a three-year warranty or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. Well, let me tell you, if I do 50,000 miles, I'll be a walking miracle.' And we put that straight into the mouth of Bryn as well.

Oh yeah – in ep three, when the Barry lot go to Essex for the first time.

And so I was telling you about all these things I heard people say, and when we were sat there at the Crowne Plaza, there was an event happening in the hotel – a conference of some kind, with lots of people walking in and out – and we were observing them and deciding, 'Oh, they're from Barry,' or, 'They're from Essex.'

Yeah, we were already thinking of possible characters for the show: that's the drunken auntie, and that's the nerdy uncle...

We should also say that another key element in the birth of the show was that I actually had a mate called Gavin, who had met his wife through their work. She worked in sales, and he worked in purchasing or whatever, and they met over the phone and they would speak every week. I used to go to West Ham

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with him, and he would say to me, ‘Oh man, I was only supposed to be on the phone for a few minutes to this girl, but we’ve just started talking.’ And this was before the internet. She couldn’t google him. He couldn’t look her up on Facebook. None of those things. It was completely pure. They didn’t know what each other looked like, and eventually they met up, had a brilliant weekend together, and then later they got married. It really happened . . . So the idea for *Gavin & Stacey* was a mix of that story and the wedding I’d been to.

Then a few days later you said to me, ‘James, I keep thinking about that idea. Why don’t we try and write it?’ And I was like, ‘Yeah, OK.’ And actors say that all the time. You constantly meet actors who are writing something, and you never hear anything more of it, you never read it. It never gets finished. And truthfully, without your passion for it, I think I’d have just let this idea go by the wayside. But you were insistent, saying, ‘No, come on. We think we’ve got a good idea for a show. We could both be in it, so let’s do it.’ And I was like, ‘Great!’

But I’d never written anything ever in my life.

At that point I’d only written an episode of *Fat Friends* and a couple of screenplays, but nothing came of them . . . One of the screenplays was called *Never*

Greener, which I ended up turning into a novel many years later . . . You love my books, don't you, James?

I've read every one.

(You haven't!)

And the episode of *Fat Friends* I wrote – it was in series four and it was Lynda Baron's story, d'you remember?

'The Baroness', we called her. She played Nurse Gladys in *Open All Hours*.

When you think about it, Kay Mellor played a massive part in the creation of *Gavin & Stacey*. We may have never met if it wasn't for Kay. God bless you, Kay Mellor!

The first time we wrote together was the day we went on *This Morning* in 2005. To promote *Fat Friends*. And you had been very, very adamant that we write this thing. You said, 'We're both going to London to be guests on *This Morning*. Why don't we meet and try to hammer it out and see if we can make something of it?' So we met before the show, at the Marriott hotel in London by the river.

The old GLC building . . .

And that was the first time we'd put anything down. I came to see you very early, we worked a bit on the treatment, then we went on *This Morning*, and afterwards we went back to the hotel and carried on working on it some more.

I remember we had a late check-out. Which was handy!

The important thing to say is, when we'd written this treatment, you said, 'I'll tidy it up, and then I'll show it to you to look over before we send it.' Then I called you and said, 'I think it looks great. I think it's good.' And you said – and this is so pivotal – 'Should we put the characters' backstories in?' And I said, 'I don't know. Does it not make it look too big?' Because we really just wrote the backstories for us, to know who the characters were. But you suggested it could be, like, a companion alongside the main thrust of the treatment; I remember you saying, 'I don't think it can do any harm. I'm going to put it in.' And I said, 'Sure, fine.' And had we just sent the standalone treatment, and not included all the backstory stuff, it wouldn't have got green-lit because all the backstory stuff is what the show is.

So, here are a couple of extracts from that first treatment and scene ideas for the wedding. It's funny re-reading it now, because actually a lot of the stuff in

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there is NOT what we're about any more. And not very Gavin & Stacey at all. I think we just didn't know what it was at that stage, we were just finding our way . . .

'It's My Day' by James Corden and Ruth Jones

(Feb 12, 2005)

A sixty minute drama about the coming together of two different worlds – Buckhurst Hill in Essex and Barry Island in South Wales. A hundred and four people who would never normally meet are spending the best part of fourteen hours together.

Because today is special.

Because today, as Stacey's mum will point out later on, "is my day."

Gavin West, 26 is from Buckhurst Hill in Essex. Stacey Shipman, his intended, is 30 – she's from Barry Island in South Wales. Stacey's been engaged before. Twice.

Gavin works for Bedmores Electronics, a Leytonstone company that makes circuit boards for CB radios. Stacey works in the offices of Wenvoe based company Shellfords. They sell CB radios.

For two years Gavin and Stacey talked and flirted regularly on the phone and in emails whenever Shellfords had orders to place. And yet they never actually met. Gavin listened to all the ins and outs, ups and downs of Stacey's colourful love life and will often be quoted as saying, "***there ain't nuffin' I don't know about that girl.***"

Then a year ago, Stacey was off on a trip to London with the girls to see Marti Pellow in "Chicago" (they'd all loved the film but they loved Wet Wet Wet even more). The idea was that they get the coach up, see a matinee, get wrecked in the night and crash at the Thistle hotel in Piccadilly. All booked through Cresswells of Barry – a local travel agent whose motto is "***We'll get you there! – if we possibly can!***" Gavin seized the opportunity of Stacey's

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trip to the Big Smoke and arranged to meet her, impressing both Stacey and the girls by getting them half price tickets for the Hippodrome.

The night was a huge success – Stacey and Gavin got it together – so much so that they had sex down the side alley of Mr Woo’s all-you-can-eat Cantonese buffet. As Stacey says in hindsight, “***What was the point of waiting? We’d known each other 2 years all told. And at the end of the day, I knew straight away he was my soul mate.***”

She took him back to the Thistle where she was sharing a twin room with Nessa (aka Vanessa) who’d managed to cop off with Gavin’s best mate Kyle. Out of politeness Kyle and Nessa offered to do it in the ensuite, but Gav pointed out that they were all friends together and as long as the lights were off no-one need be any the wiser.

The next morning the girls were at Victoria Station waiting for the National Express to Cardiff. Stacey and Gavin couldn’t let each other alone. They snogged relentlessly – eating each other’s faces despite the other passengers. When it came to the sweet sorrow of parting, Stacey became almost hysterical with grief. As her mother often says, “***She’s fond of a bit of drama is Stace.***” Looking back on the event Gavin says “***There was no getting away from it. I’d found my soul mate.***”

Kyle said goodbye to Nessa a little less lovingly, “***See you round. Like a rissole.***” To which Nessa replied, “***Don’t be a twat Kyle. Come on girls – down the back so we can smoke.***”

Kyle and Gavin waved them off and headed for the tube. Kyle told Gavin that Nessa nearly let him go up her arse – and wondered how far he got with Stacey. But Gavin was in love and refused to be drawn. “***I knew straight away she was a lady and an angel.***”

By the time the coach pulled into Cardiff station, Gavin had been home, picked up his car, driven down the M4 and

was there to meet Stacey off the bus clutching a bunch of wilting Spar carnations. She of course was delighted. And they spent two hours together before Gavin set off for home. Kyle told him he was off his head.

And so began the love story that is Gavin West and Stacey Shipman. They could only see each other on weekends – she'd go up, he'd come down. And of course – they'd continue to talk all the time on the phone.

After six months Gavin took Stacey to Madame Tussauds for a Christmas treat and whilst marvelling at the workmanship that'd gone into the waxen Robbie Williams, Gavin got down on one knee, told her he wanted to grow old with her and together watch their grandchildren play. (He'd heard this line in 1991 on an episode of *Home And Away* and always knew that's how he would propose when he met the right girl).

Then he told her to look in Robbie's hand – ***"I know you'd probably rather marry Robbie, but will I do instead?"***

In her apoplectic excitement Stacey snapped off Robbie's thumb trying to get the ring. This set off the alarm and the happy couple got thrown out. Gavin didn't mind though, and was heard later to say – ***"It was crap in there anyway. Kylie had a squint."***

The wedding was arranged for the following summer. A Cardiff wedding – at St Mellons Country Club – ***"We got to 'ave it in St Mellons. I's always dreamt it would be in St Mellons."***

And only when they return from honeymoon will the happy couple move in together – ***"I don' believe in pre habiting before marriage"*** says Stacey.

The photos

We don't see the photos being taken. We just see various groups of guests standing around with their sherries, most of them smoking, waiting to be called to come and be in shot. One such group might be the Essex

boys – Gavin’s mates. They might be discussing the bride’s plump figure:

- **Well all I’m saying is, see the mother – see the bride. In 30 years time. And I don’t mean no disrespect and you know that.**

They are interrupted by the photographer’s ineffectual assistant. **“Right then. Friends of the groom. Can I have friends of the groom please? Come on lads.”** Some of the lads leave for the photo. But some of them carry on smoking:

- **You comin’ Phil? Friends of the groom.**
- **Nah fuck it.**
- **Yeh . . . See, I tried to tell him on the stag – and I’m not telling you nothing I wouldn’t tell Gav. It’s like a car innit – you clean the car to sell it, you get it serviced – get it looking the best you can.**
- **What you fuckin on about Mickey? She’s not a fuckin car.**

Uncle Trefor

Stacey’s uncle Trefor from Barry is obsessed with his new digital camera. And he doesn’t miss an opportunity to tell anyone who’ll listen, all about it. Trefor’s late brother was Stacey’s dad. And secretly Trefor believes that he should have given his niece away and not Neil the family friend. He has managed to trap a fellow guest:

“Sit down a minute now. Right. Look. The thing is with this, you take NO bad pictures – see – look I mean, I dunno, I take that – look see? Bop. I don’t want it – so I gets rid of it. Take one of your shoe? See? Bop. There it is. Don’t want it. I gets rid of it! That’s the beauty of it. See? Now look at these