

MIXED DOUBLES

by

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INT/EXT. CAR - EVENING

A car drives along the motorway. TIM and CHARLOTTE SHERMAN occupy the front seats. MARTIN and MIRANDA DANIELS are in the back. They sing a song, a cappella in a four part harmony. They body-jive and groove, clicking their fingers and clapping their hands to provide the rhythm. The over-riding impression is of one big happy family, totally in tune with each other.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - EVENING

The car winds its way along a country lane.

EXT. FRONT COTTAGE - EVENING

The car pulls up in front of an idyllic, quaint cottage.

INT. COTTAGE - EVENING

On the mantelpiece are two wedding photos. Martin and Miranda / Tim and Charlotte. Tim enters the dining room from the kitchen, brandishing dainty starters.

TIM

Perfect! Even though I say it myself!

MIRANDA

That looks absolutely fantastic, Tim!

TIM

Just trying out a new tit-bit for the cooking show!

MARTIN

Lucky us! We get to eat the rehearsal!

Tim gleefully plonks the plates on the table.

TIM

Voilà!

CHARLOTTE

One doesn't say voilà in polite company, Tim. It's pretentious.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

This is not polite company,
Charlotte, it's only Martin and
Miranda!

They chortle.

MARTIN

Come on, Charlotte, he's only being
himself now. Tim is pretentious!

They laugh again and take their places at the table.

TIM

Bon appétit!

CHARLOTTE

There you go again! Tim, it's not
clever to spout French just to make
yourself look sophisticated. It
makes you sound nouveau riche.

MARTIN

Nouveau riche? What's the game,
Charlotte? You're allowed to speak
French, but Tim isn't?

CHARLOTTE

Speak French? Moi?

They all chuckle and tuck in with gusto.

CHARLOTTE

Mmmm! Delicious! You've surpassed
yourself, Tim!

MARTIN

Now that's praise, coming from your
own producer!

Miranda hands Tim a cook-book.

MIRANDA

Here, Tim, I got you a present. A
little thank-you for all the
wonderful meals you cook us.

TIM

"Erotic recipes"! You shouldn't
have!

MIRANDA

Who knows, it might even inspire a new cooking series?

TIM

What do you think, Charlotte? Boost the ratings! Aphrodisiacs are sexy, after all!

Charlotte pulls a face. She doesn't like Miranda adopting the mantle of Tim's muse.

CHARLOTTE

You're a TV cook, Tim, not a TV cock!

They laugh.

MIRANDA

Anyone fancy coming with me to the demonstration tomorrow?

CHARLOTTE

What's it in aid of?

MIRANDA

There's a doctor who's suspected of performing female genital mutilation for rich African families. We're going to demonstrate outside his surgery. Doctor Abra Lalli.

MARTIN

Lalli? From Harley Street?

MIRANDA

Yes.

MARTIN

He's a client of ours!

MIRANDA

What, you represent that scum?

MARTIN

At least a doctor performs the operation safely and painlessly under anaesthetic. It's the lesser of two evils. Or would you rather the grandmother did it in the basement with a blunt, rusty knife?

TIM
Er...do we really have to discuss
this while we're eating?

INT. TV STUDIO / COOKING-SHOW SET - DAY

Tim addresses the camera.

TIM
Now, what's the secret of a great
cake?

Tim opens the oven and whips out a baking pan.

TIM
They say, "You can't have your cake
and eat it."

Tim pulls another baking pan out of the oven.

TIM
Well, don't believe a word of it!

Tim flips a baking pan upside down and the cake pops out.

TIM
You can!

Tim flips the other baking pan upside down.

TIM
If you've got two cakes!

Tim takes off his asbestos gloves.

TIM
You don't want people calling you
half-baked, now, do you!

Tim nonchalantly strews powdered sugar over the two cakes.

TIM
And this is the proverbial "icing
on the cake"!

INT. COTTAGE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the camera tracks back we see we are watching Tim on TV,
as opposed to Tim recording the show live in the studio as
we had initially assumed. The shot widens to take in the
whole bedroom with Charlotte and Tim in bed. A grandfather
clock shows 12.30.

(CONTINUED)

TIM
Don't you think the presenter's
incredibly handsome?

CHARLOTTE
I certainly do!

Charlotte nuzzles into Tim, trying to interest him in sex.
Tim continues watching himself on TV.

TIM
What a crap shot!

CHARLOTTE
Turn the video off, Tim.

Tim rewinds the video and presses play.

TIM
Can't you get anyone better than
that bunch of idiots, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE
What do you want me to do? Sack the
whole crew?

TIM
Yes! And start with the camera man!

Charlotte sighs. She gives up trying to seduce Tim, gets out
of bed, and puts on a dressing gown.

TIM
Where are you going?

CHARLOTTE
Get myself a night-cap.

TIM
What do you want a night cap for?
You cold?

CHARLOTTE
A drink, you dummy!

Charlotte leaves the bedroom, frustrated.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Charlotte enters the kitchen and pours herself a glass of brandy. She sits down at the table, brooding. Martin enters.

MARTIN

I thought you'd gone to bed...

Martin notices Charlotte is in a foul mood.

MARTIN

What's wrong?

CHARLOTTE

Tim's lying in bed watching himself on video. Again!

MARTIN

Oh...

CHARLOTTE

Is Miranda asleep?

MARTIN

No. She's writing an article, plotting the downfall of some poor, unsuspecting jerk who she figures is flouting some moral code or another.

CHARLOTTE

Can you believe it? He wants me to get a job producing another show.

MARTIN

Why?

CHARLOTTE

For the sake of our marriage!
Because we're always arguing about work.

Martin nods understandingly.

MARTIN

He can't force you to do that!

CHARLOTTE

No, he can't force me - he wants me to volunteer to move on.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Why don't you just argue about something else instead of work? Then you can keep your job!

CHARLOTTE

A good attempt at wit, Martin. But not good enough!

MARTIN

Yeah, you're right though, Charlotte. His new-found celebrity has gone to his head.

CHARLOTTE

He's turned into a self-obsessed, narcissistic, arrogant monster.

MARTIN

Come on, be fair. Those are his good qualities. What about his bad ones?

CHARLOTTE

Perhaps Miranda ought to write an article about him?!

They laugh.

CHARLOTTE

You want a brandy too?

MARTIN

Yeah, sure.

Charlotte gets up and fetches the bottle. She puts a glass on the table in front of Martin and pours him a brandy. They form a silhouette of stillness: Martin sitting, Charlotte standing beside him. Martin desperately wants to touch her but must restrain himself. He clears his throat.

MARTIN

Charlotte...

Charlotte turns her head and looks at Martin straight in the eyes, reading his desire for her. An erotic spark ignites between the two of them.

Miranda peers round the kitchen door. She notices Martin and Charlotte close to each other. Charlotte discretely edges away from Martin.

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA
I'm sorry Martin, I didn't really
mean what I said...

Miranda had obviously laid into Martin before he came into
the kitchen. Martin stares straight ahead.

MARTIN
It's alright. Forget it.

CHARLOTTE
You want a brandy, Miranda?

MIRANDA
No. I'm ok. You coming to bed,
Martin?

MARTIN
What for?

Miranda is embarrassed.

MIRANDA
Alright, I might as well have one,
then.

Charlotte pours her a brandy.

MIRANDA
(subdued)
Cheers!

MARTIN / CHARLOTTE
Cheers!

Tim enters the kitchen.

TIM
My God, do you three never stop
boozing?

MARTIN
You want one?

TIM
Damn right I do!

Tim pours himself a brandy. The atmosphere is redolent with
repressed tension.

CHARLOTTE
(coily)
Martin, would you represent me, if
I wanted to sue my husband?

MARTIN
(mock-charmingly)
Charlotte, no lawyer would take on
a case against his best friend!

CHARLOTTE
Tim says I'm only in the job
producing his cooking show, because
I'm his wife!

TIM
It's true!

CHARLOTTE
Bull-shit! It's me who discovered
you in the first place and me who
clinched the deal with the TV
network. Martin, he's casting
aspersions on my professional
reputation. That's libel!

MARTIN
Charlotte, it's not libel.
(beat)
It's downright slander!

Martin and Charlotte hoot with laughter. Miranda and Tim
frown.

TIM
Very funny!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - THE FOLLOWING DAY

The two couples wander along the banks of a tree-lined
brook, snaking through the lush, verdant fields. High above,
a lark warbles in the clear, blue sky. Martin drapes his arm
affectionately around Miranda's shoulders. Tim and Charlotte
hold hands. They leave the stream behind them and scale the
slopes of a hill.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Gradually Charlotte and Martin start to lag behind while Tim
and Miranda forge on up ahead.

MIRANDA
What a fantastic day!

(CONTINUED)

TIM

Wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! It almost makes me want to burst into song.

MIRANDA

(joking)

Oh...please don't, Tim!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Out of sight of Miranda and Tim, Martin and Charlotte clamber over a style. Charlotte catches her foot and lands in Martin's arms.

CHARLOTTE

Oh!

MARTIN

Are you alright?

They gaze into each other's eyes for a moment. Charlotte doesn't extricate herself from Martin's grasp. They hold on to each other.

MARTIN

Listen, why don't we meet for coffee in town next week? Just you and me?

CHARLOTTE

Coffee? Do you really mean coffee?

Tim hollers from up ahead, snapping Charlotte and Martin out of their intimacy.

TIM'S VOICE

Charlotte! Martin! Where are you?

Charlotte takes a step back.

CHARLOTTE

Come on, race you!

Charlotte sprints up the hill with Martin in hot pursuit.

CHARLOTTE

(calling out)

Coming!

As Martin overtakes her, Charlotte's elbow digs him in the ribs, knocking him off balance. He slips and loses his footing. He tumbles half way down a grassy bank. Charlotte profits from his mishap to go into the lead.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Charlotte and Martin catch up with Tim and Miranda.

CHARLOTTE
(out of breath)
The winner!

Charlotte punches the air with her fist.

MARTIN
She elbowed me!

Tim and Miranda are highly amused by Martin's pained expression.

TIM
Excuses, Martin! Excuses!

MARTIN
She did! She elbowed me in the ribs!

INT. TIM AND CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - MORNING

Tim scrabbles to find his things, in a hurry to leave for work.

TIM
Oh shit, where are my keys? Shit
shit shit shit shit!

CHARLOTTE
What do you think of this dress,
Tim?

Tim is looking in the opposite direction and doesn't even look at the dress.

TIM
Sweet!

CHARLOTTE
Getting compliments from you is
like drawing blood from a stone!

(CONTINUED)

Tim is frustrated by Charlotte's fishing for compliments while he is searching for his stuff.

TIM
Darling, it's an absolutely
exquisite dress.

CHARLOTTE
At least you could try to sound as
if you mean it.

TIM
Oh my God, look at the time! I'm
late! Bye!

Tim pecks Charlotte on the cheek.

CHARLOTTE
Is that all I get? What about a
proper kiss?

TIM
For God's sake, Charlotte, I
haven't got time to stand around
smooching!

CHARLOTTE
Alright, have you got time for a
quick argument instead?

TIM
No, sorry.

CHARLOTTE
Pity! I love a good argument! Shall
we take a rain-check?

TIM
How about this evening?

CHARLOTTE
It's a date!

TIM
See you later!

Tim leaves. Charlotte picks up the phone and dials.

CHARLOTTE
Hello, Martin?

INT. TOWN CENTER / CAFE "KAMASUTRA" - EARLY EVENING

Martin enters the cafe. He adjusts his tie and neatens his hair, peering at his reflection in a mirror.

Charlotte is sitting at a table, sipping her coffee. She spots Martin preening himself and waves. Embarrassed at being caught out, Martin returns the wave. He joins Charlotte at the table and sits down.

MARTIN

Hi, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Martin!

MARTIN

So here we are, then...

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Here we are.

Martin shuffles around on his chair, making himself comfortable.

MARTIN

It's good to see you.

CHARLOTTE

You, too.
(beat)
So how's Miranda?

MARTIN

Oh, er...fine. And how's Tim?

Charlotte draws a breath.

CHARLOTTE

Fine. Just fine.

The waiter appears.

WAITER

What can I get you, sir?

MARTIN

A coffee, please!

The waiter leaves the table. Martin and Charlotte sit in an awkward silence for a while.

Martin looks around the café. The walls are covered with pictures depicting erotic scenes from the Kamasutra.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

It's, er...it's a really nice café.
(clears his throat)
Isn't it!

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

MARTIN

Excellent idea of yours...to meet
here...

Close-up on an explicit picture of a couple making love.

CHARLOTTE

So why did you want us to meet on
our own, Martin? What do you want
to talk about?

MARTIN

Huh? I thought you knew....

Martin's eyes gleam like an erotic laser beam.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not a mind-reader. Tell me!

MARTIN

Oh, right. Ok...can we talk openly?

CHARLOTTE

Try me!

Martin tries to come over suave, but in fact he is nervous.

MARTIN

Er...Have you ever had an affair,
Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Have you?

MARTIN

Look, Charlotte, you and I have
known each other quite a while now,
haven't we?

CHARLOTTE

Yes...

MARTIN

And during that time we have got to
know each other almost as well as
we know our own husband and wife.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Yes, well...we do see a lot of each other.

MARTIN

Yes. There's not that much more we could see...

(gulps)

Unless we took our clothes off!

Charlotte scrutinizes him intently. Martin has even surprised himself with his bravado.

CHARLOTTE

Take our clothes off? So that's what's on your mind. Or should I say in your pants?

Martin fears he has made a dreadful faux pas. Charlotte drums with her fingers on the table. She suddenly stops.

CHARLOTTE

So you want to go to bed with me, huh?

MARTIN

Er...yeah...

CHARLOTTE

I see...

Martin can hardly stand the tension.

CHARLOTTE

Aren't you afraid I'll tell Miranda about this?

MARTIN

You wouldn't do that...would you?

His state of sexual anticipation is mixed with the fear of getting involved in something that could destroy his marriage.

CHARLOTTE

Martin, are you nervous?

MARTIN

Me? Nervous? What makes you think that?

(CONTINUED)

The waiter deftly reaches a coffee cup over Martin's shoulder. The cup entering his lateral field of vision out of nowhere startles Martin, causing him to fling up his arm and knock the cup out of the waiter's hands.

MARTIN

Sorry! Sorry!

The waiter goes to retrieve the fallen objects from the floor.

MARTIN

Here, let me...

WAITER

No, really, sir. I can manage. I'll bring you another cup.

The waiter departs. Charlotte stifles her mirth.

CHARLOTTE

So do you find me sexy, Martin?

Martin squirms in his seat.

MARTIN

A lot of people do.

(stupidly)

And I'm certainly not amongst those who don't.

CHARLOTTE

So tell me, what is it exactly that excites you about me?

MARTIN

God, Charlotte...you...well, quite a lot of things.

CHARLOTTE

Be specific.

MARTIN

Be specific? It's your...It's the way you...it's quite difficult to even find the right words...but, basically, you have a certain...

Charlotte drawls sumptuously.

CHARLOTTE

It's incredible how sexual tension can charge the conversation with such erotic energy, isn't it!

MARTIN

Yeah...it's...it sure is!

CHARLOTTE

I remember when you used to drool
over Miranda.

(beat)

Now you're drooling over me...

MARTIN

Is it that obvious?

CHARLOTTE

Martin, I'm not stupid. I've seen
you undressing me with your eyes.

MARTIN

You know how men are.

Close-up on a picture on the wall of entwined naked bodies.

CHARLOTTE

(deadpan)

You've got balls...to proposition
your best friend's wife!

The waiter approaches gingerly, calling out from a
considerable distance, making sure Martin sees him coming
this time.

WAITER

Coffee coming up!

CUT TO:

INT. MIRANDA AND MARTIN'S FLAT / TIM AND CHARLOTTE'S FLAT -
EARLY EVENING

Miranda is writing an article and the telephone rings.

MIRANDA

Hello.

TIM

Hey, Miranda. What's up?

MIRANDA

Writing an article about the ethics
of the legal profession. Or to be
more precise, the lack of them!

(CONTINUED)

TIM
(joshing)
Speaking of Martin, can I have a
word with him?

MIRANDA
He's not back from work yet.

Miranda and Tim are blithely unaware of their spouses' whereabouts.

TIM
Ok. Tell him I called.

MIRANDA
Will do! Say hello to Charlotte
from me!

TIM
Hey, see you soon...

MIRANDA
Yeah...Take care, Tim...

TIM
You, too...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CAFÉ - EARLY EVENING

Shot of an erotic sculpture on an antique, mahogany
side-board in the cafe.

CHARLOTTE
You are a very attractive man,
Martin. And I'm extremely flattered
by your offer. It's tempting.
(beat)
But we don't want to do anything
we'd regret, now, do we?

Despite her protest, Charlotte's body language speaks
volumes.

MARTIN
We don't?

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF MARTIN'S LEGAL FIRM - LUNCH-TIME

Miranda observes the comings and goings from Martin's office. Martin leaves the office.

MIRANDA

There goes a man with a mission!
Lunch!

Miranda makes a bee-line for the building and enters.

INT. RECEPTION AT MARTIN'S LEGAL FIRM - LUNCH-TIME

MIRANDA

Hello, Betty, how are you?

RECEPTIONIST

Fine thanks. And yourself?

MIRANDA

Pretty good! Will you buzz Martin and tell him I'm here to pick him up for lunch, please?

RECEPTIONIST

He just left! Didn't you see him?

Miranda feigns surprise.

MIRANDA

No!? Never mind, he probably just popped out. I expect he'll be back in a jiffy. It's alright. I'll wait for him in his office.

Miranda enters Martin's office.

INT. MARTIN'S OFFICE - LUNCH-TIME

Miranda takes the folder marked "L" down from the shelf and locates the name "Lalli".

MIRANDA

Doctor Lalli!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LUNCH-TIME

While Miranda sifts through his client's file, Martin rams his tongue down Charlotte's throat.

MARTIN

Uhhhh...er...uhhh...

They dive into bed and devour each other as if they were starving.

INT. TV STUDIO - LUNCH-TIME

Meanwhile Tim presents a beautifully-composed plate of salmon in an orange sauce on a colourful bed of vegetables to the camera.

TIM

And because of its Omega three fats, salmon is incredibly healthy! In fact it's the healthiest fish of them all! So tasty, too! Enjoy!

FLOOR-MANAGER

Thanks everybody. That's a wrap!

INT. RECEPTION AT MARTIN'S LEGAL FIRM - LUNCH-TIME

Miranda tootles out of Martin's office, her cell-phone glued to her ear.

MIRANDA

Oh damn! His mail-box is on!

Miranda speaks onto Martin's mail-box.

MIRANDA

Hello, Martin. I thought we were meeting for lunch today, obviously not, silly me!

Miranda is pleased with herself, how she has created a smoke-screen to justify her presence in Martin's office.

MIRANDA

(grinning)

Bye, Betty!

RECEPTIONIST

Bye, Miranda!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LUNCH-TIME

After their amorous wrestling-match Martin and Charlotte prop themselves up against the pillows, basking in the after-glow. Martin raises Charlotte's hand up in the air.

MARTIN

The winner! By two pin-falls to one! Charlotte croons.

CHARLOTTE

Ok, but I grant you a rematch! You put up a good fight!

Martin suddenly notices the time.

MARTIN

Shit!

He leaps out of bed and dresses in a hurry.

CHARLOTTE

What's up?

MARTIN

Tennis with Tim!

CHARLOTTE

What, you fixed a game against Tim at the same time as meeting me?

MARTIN

Hey...

CHARLOTTE

What am I? Just a quick fuck?

EXT. TENNIS COURT - AFTERNOON

Tim is passing the time by practicing his serve. Martin arrives late.

MARTIN

Sorry! Tail-back.

TIM

No time for knocking-up today, I'm afraid. I've got to get back to the TV studio. Let's get stuck into a game straight away.

Having just screwed Tim's wife, Martin now aces him with the very first ball. And the next! And the next!

(CONTINUED)

TIM

You've sure got ants in your pants today! Have you been taking steroids on the sly?

MARTIN

Pure testosterone, mate!

Martin promptly aces Tim again to win the first game to love.

INT. TIM AND CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Tim and Charlotte get ready for bed.

CHARLOTTE

Tim, I've been thinking about what you were saying. You're right.

(beat)

Our marriage is suffering because of us working together.

TIM

Uh huh...

CHARLOTTE

I've been weighing it up. What's more important to me? You? Or my career?

TIM

Charlotte, we're just treading on each other's toes, that's all. I didn't mean...

Charlotte cuts him off.

CHARLOTTE

But you're right. It's best if I leave the show!

Tim stops undressing and looks at her.

CHARLOTTE

(false smile)

For the sake of our marriage.

TIM

Oh! That's incredibly unselfish of you, Charlotte, I...

Charlotte cuts him off again.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

And I'll create a brand new show of my very own!

Charlotte has outmanoeuvred Tim.

TIM

You don't have do that. You can just move to another programme.

CHARLOTTE

No, I want to be in there at the birth.

(beat)

And make it my baby! My very own baby!

INT. PUB - EVENING

The four friends meet for a drink.

MIRANDA

I can only stay for one drink, you guys. I've got to shoot off to a fund-raising event. Anyone fancy coming along?

TIM

What's the occasion?

MIRANDA

Raising awareness about prostitution in South Africa. I'm a panellist.

CHARLOTTE

I'd love to, Miranda but I'm pitching to a network tomorrow. I want get a new show off the ground.

MIRANDA

Oh, really?

CHARLOTTE

So I have to be a good girl and stay in tonight, preparing.

MIRANDA

A new show?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Yes. I'm leaving Tim's show.

MIRANDA

My goodness!

CHARLOTTE

Yes, Tim and I thought it would be
a good idea.

(beat)

For our relationship!

Miranda is uncomfortable, given the parallel discord between her and Martin.

MIRANDA

Oh!

Tim gets them off the subject.

TIM

But Miranda, I'll come to your
fund-raiser!

MIRANDA

Sweet. You can film my speech with
my camera phone. It would be cool
to put it up on my home page.

(beat)

And what about you, Martin?

MARTIN

Yeah, sure. Give you some moral
support...

MIRANDA

Moral support? Moral? That's a bit
of a devalued concept for you these
days, isn't it, Martin?

Martin looks perturbed, unsure whether Miranda is alluding to the waning of his political ideals or whether she might have cottoned on to his dalliance with Charlotte.

MARTIN

I still have some ideals, Miranda.

MIRANDA

Had, Martin. You had ideals. Now
you just have fees!

MARTIN

And to think we used to share the same passion for changing the world when we first met!

MIRANDA

Yeah.

(beat)

Then you became a corporate lawyer!

Martin hurts. Miranda has left him for dead in the ideals stakes.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, well, on that note...

Charlotte gets to her feet to leave.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - EVENING

Tim and Martin admire how Miranda addresses a crowd of socialites holding Prosecco glasses.

MIRANDA

"With apologies to the PC lobby, I think John Lennon got it right when he said that "Woman is the Nigger of the world!" Personally, I'm more of a Yoko fan myself - now there's a strong woman! Not just a simple feminist, but someone who's truly pro-woman. And the sad fact is that for most women in the world little has changed. Hundreds of thousands of women are still enslaved by the sex industry, victims of serial abuse which ends in death from Aids. Tonight, we all have the chance to do something about it. Earlier this month, the World Health Organisation launched a ground-breaking new programme aimed at educating women about contraception and sexual health. And with your help ladies - AND gentlemen! - we can ensure that some of these women at least, can be free at last!

Tim joins in the applause enthusiastically. Martin sulks.

INT. LEGAL FIRM - DAY

Martin's boss, BARRY, enters Martin's office and throws a newspaper onto Martin's desk.

BARRY
Seen this?

MARTIN
What is it?

BARRY
An article by your revolutionary
wife pillorying a client of ours.
(beat)
Doctor Lalli.

MARTIN
Oh no!

BARRY
Where did she get this information?

MARTIN
What are you getting at, Barry?

BARRY
He's our client and you're married
to the journalist.
(sarcastic)
That's a bit of a coincidence,
isn't it!

MARTIN
I would never betray the confidence
of a client!

BARRY
Where else could she have got it,
if not from you?

MARTIN
That's preposterous!

BARRY
Martin, if I find out you have
anything to do with this it will
have drastic repercussions for your
career. Fucking drastic!

Barry walks out slamming the door shut behind him.

INT. TV STATION OFFICE - DAY

Charlotte pitches a reality show to a TV executive.
Ironically the pitch is clearly inspired by Martin!

CHARLOTTE

Be a lawyer for a day! Pit yourself
against another contestant. You're
the prosecution and your opponent
is the defense.

The executive raises his eye-brows.

EXECUTIVE

(dryly)
Or vice-versa?

The executive looks totally unimpressed.

CHARLOTTE

Er...yes, quite! Or
vice-versa...that's quite right...

Charlotte is treading water.

EXECUTIVE

(negatively)
So how do you decide who's the
defense and who's the prosecution?

The executive is devoting more attention to the cross-word
in the newspaper in front of him than Charlotte. And if
there's one thing Charlotte cannot stand, it's not getting
attention! But she must keep her cool so as not to blow her
pitch.

CHARLOTTE

Er....Toss a coin!

EXECUTIVE

Hmmm...five letters. Do you happen
to know a song bird that went to
number one?

CHARLOTTE

Song bird? Number one?

EXECUTIVE

Yes. Five letters?

CHARLOTTE

Easy-peasy!
(sings)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)
The red, red robin comes bob, bob
bobbing along! That's a song bird
isn't it?

EXECUTIVE
Correct! Robin!

INT. CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Martin and Miranda drive along a country lane on their way
to the cottage for the weekend.

MARTIN
Miranda. I need to clear something
up.
(beat)
Where did you get the low-down on
Doctor Lalli?

Miranda is circumspect.

MIRANDA
A journalist never reveals her
sources!

MARTIN
Barry is pointing the finger at me.
He thinks I gave you access to
Lalli's files.

MIRANDA
Well, you didn't. You know that.

MARTIN
But you were in my office last
week.
(beat)
What were you doing there?

MIRANDA
I told you, I thought we had a
lunch date.

MARTIN
Huh...

MIRANDA
Why was your mail-box on, by the
way?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Er...to stop clients disturbing my lunch break.

MIRANDA

You didn't used to turn your phone off at lunch-time...

Martin is riddled with guilt about his affair with Charlotte.

MARTIN

(hypocritically)

What are things coming to, when a man can't trust his own wife? I could lose my job over this.

MIRANDA

Don't exaggerate.

Miranda kisses Martin to placate him.

MIRANDA

Come on, lighten up! You don't want to spoil the weekend at the cottage because of a stupid tiff, do you?

INT. COTTAGE - LATE AFTERNOON - SATURDAY

Tim and Charlotte are tidying up the kitchen. Martin enters.

MARTIN

Fancy a bike ride, Tim?

TIM

No thanks, mate.

MARTIN

Come on!

TIM

No, I'm going to start preparing dinner.

Tim flexes his fingers in keen anticipation.

MARTIN

How about you, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, ok. Where's Miranda?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Taking an afternoon nap.

CHARLOTTE

Ok. See you later, Tim.

TIM

Yeah, have fun!

Martin and Charlotte leave the cottage.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Martin and Charlotte peddle off on their bikes.

INT. COTTAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Miranda enters the kitchen, yawning.

MIRANDA

Where are the others?

TIM

Gone for a bike ride.

MIRANDA

Oh...

TIM

Means I can cook in peace without Charlotte constantly sticking her oar in!

MIRANDA

Can I give you a hand?

TIM

You wanna chop the vegetables?

Tim rattles off the ingredients as if he were presenting his TV show.

TIM

Two carrots, two ribs of celery, one onion, two cloves of garlic, four tomatoes, one eggplant...

MIRANDA

Ok.

Miranda gladly assumes the role of Tim's assistant. She selects the vegetables and starts chopping.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

Then we add one tablespoon of quick cooking tapioca. And most importantly bay leaves and brown sugar. That's the secret to pot roast.

MIRANDA

Really?

TIM

Bung it in the oven with the joint of meat and Bob's your uncle!

MIRANDA

No he's not!

TIM

Huh?

MIRANDA

My uncle's called Tony!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

CHARLOTTE

Nice ploy, Martin, inviting Tim to come along.

MARTIN

You don't think he suspected anything?

CHARLOTTE

He's so obsessed with his cooking he wouldn't notice if the roof fell in on his head!

They park their bikes at the roadside. Charlotte yanks Martin by the hand, pulling him into a wood.

INT. COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

TIM

So how's your article coming on, by the way?

MIRANDA

Not bad. Just the words get in the way sometimes!

Tim laughs.

(CONTINUED)

TIM
Do you mind if I have a read?

MIRANDA
Be my guest!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Martin nails Charlotte up against a tree, submerged in the dense undergrowth.

INT. COTTAGE LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Charlotte and Martin enter to see Tim leaning over Miranda's shoulder reading her article.

TIM
Wow! Hot stuff, Miranda! "The female orgasm is a political issue"! I like it!

Tim looks up.

TIM (CONT'D)
Did you two have a good ride?

CHARLOTTE
(provocatively)
Sensational!

Martin twitches.

MIRANDA
You were away for ages. We thought you'd got lost.

MARTIN
You should have come with us.

MIRANDA
No one asked me!

Awkward silence. Martin changes the subject.

MARTIN
Mmm, smells great! What's for dinner, Tim?

TIM
Pot roast.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Excellent!

MIRANDA

(curtly)

Lay the table, Martin.

Martin hastily sets about laying the table and tries to be cheery.

CHARLOTTE

Say, anyone fancy a game of mixed doubles on the way back to town tomorrow?

TIM

Yeah, why not? Miranda?

MIRANDA

(pointedly)

Yeah, I could do with some exercise!

CHARLOTTE

Let's swap partners for a change. I'm fed up with playing with Tim all the time. I get to have Martin!

Martin tries to play down Charlotte's innuendo.

MARTIN

Cool! Why not?

Tim and Miranda exchange glances, seeming to share something. Then they divert their gaze to look quizzically at Charlotte and Martin.

EXT. PARK / TENNIS COURT - AFTERNOON THE NEXT DAY

The four friends play mixed doubles. Charlotte and Martin against Tim and Miranda. Tim double-faults to lose the match. Martin and Charlotte's team are thus victorious.

CHARLOTTE

Game, set and match!

Tim shrugs apologetically at Miranda. He is miffed at losing, but tries to hide it.

TIM

Sorry, Miranda. I think I must have had one glass too many last night!

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

Perhaps you should restrict your doubles to tennis?

CHARLOTTE

We ought to play together more often, Martin. We make a damn fine team!

Martin flinches at her heavy-handed hint.

MARTIN

Isn't she just delightful?

INT. BOTANICAL GARDEN HOT-HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Martin and Charlotte stroll through the sticky, cloying atmosphere.

MARTIN

Charlotte, could you try to be a bit more discrete at dinner tonight? You've been dangling clues in front of their noses like an exhibitionist in a nunnery!

CHARLOTTE

What are you worried about?

MARTIN

You'll give the game away.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, so it's just a game for you, is it?

MARTIN

Please don't drop any more blatant hints, ok?

CHARLOTTE

Martin, I'm sick of meeting secretly for sordid sex!

MARTIN

Hey, what's wrong with sordid sex?

CHARLOTTE

Me and you would make such a perfect couple, Martin!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

We're married, Charlotte. All of us. And that's not going to change. Okay?

Charlotte points at a plant.

CHARLOTTE

Oh look, there's a Venus Fly-trap! Petals wide open! The fly is tempted in. And while the unwitting victim gorges itself on the nectar...Snap!

Martin flinches.

CHARLOTTE

She closes her petals around him!

Charlotte turns to Martin and envelopes him in her arms.

CHARLOTTE

Do you love me, Martin?

Martin has no option but to respond in the affirmative.

MARTIN

You know I do.

CHARLOTTE

Well, say it, then.

MARTIN

Charlotte, I love you.

CHARLOTTE

You don't sound very convinced. Sounds more like you're defending what everyone knows to be a heinous criminal in court, but you have to make out as if you actually believe in their innocence.

MARTIN

Don't be so insecure, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I want to know where this relationship is going, Martin.

MARTIN

Charlotte, stop pressurizing me, will you.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

I need some commitment. I'm a woman, Martin. Or hadn't you noticed?

MARTIN

My perception may occasionally be somewhat blurred, through the odd tippie or two, but not even I could fail to notice that you're a woman!

CHARLOTTE

Wally!

MARTIN

Come on, I've got to get back home and pick up Miranda for dinner at your place.

INT. CHARLOTTE AND TIM'S FLAT / DINING ROOM - EVENING

Tim pours red wine into fine, bulbous glasses. Everyone is slightly tipsy already. Martin is wearing a rather gaudy suit.

TIM

That's some suit, Martin! Where'd you get it?

MARTIN

You like it?

TIM

I didn't say I liked it. I just wanted to know where you got it so I can put the shop on my black list!

They all laugh. Tim distributes the wine glasses.

TIM

It's dazzling me! I think better get my shades!

They laugh again.

MIRANDA

He thought he'd spruce himself up for dinner tonight. To impress the ladies!

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Well Martin, your sartorial taste
is certainly not wasted on me!

TIM

I hope that is not going to be the
theme of the evening, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

What, dear? Sartorial?

TIM

No. Wasted!

They chortle.

TIM

Excuse me, I just have to stuff the
olives!

Tim zips off to the kitchen as they giggle at his innuendo.
Martin shouts after him.

MARTIN

Can we watch?

Charlotte, Martin and Miranda take their places at the
dining table which is laid with the best silverware. Tim
reappears in a flash with a tray of assorted starters.

MIRANDA

Isn't it delightful to be able to
share these wonderful moments with
such dear friends!

Martin winces.

MARTIN

Don't get all soppy, please
Miranda. Your mawkish
sentimentality can be so
embarrassing sometimes.

MIRANDA

(vexed)

Martin, men are simply not as
fluent in the language of emotions
as women.

CHARLOTTE

You carry on and say what you want,
Miranda. Never mind him!

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

Thank you, Charlotte, and I shall say what I want.

CHARLOTTE

And so shall I!

Charlotte gives Martin a wicked smile, making Martin nervous she might drop some hint that gives their adultery away.

MIRANDA

Friendship is not something one can ever take for granted. It should be nurtured and celebrated. And this evening I want to share something really beautiful with you...

CHARLOTTE

(cutting in)

Speaking of celebrations, we have an excellent reason to celebrate this evening!

TIM

Oh yes? What then?

Miranda is put out. Nobody is listening to her.

CHARLOTTE

My pitch went down extremely well with the TV people!

MIRANDA

(ingenuously)

Oh, fantastic! Tell us about it!

CHARLOTTE

Martin instigated the concept, actually.

MIRANDA

Since when have you two been hatching ideas together?

Martin is uncomfortable.

CHARLOTTE

(self-importantly)

It's a reality show where normal people can play at being lawyers in court.

TIM

But, Charlotte, isn't the public perception of lawyers that they're grey, drab and boring? What about focusing on a more glamorous professional group?

Tim's jibe riles Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Well, thank you for your opinion, Tim, but it's a bit late now. The pitch meeting's over and done with!

TIM

So did you get the commission?

CHARLOTTE

Not yet. But I will.

TIM

I wouldn't bet on it. I'd say a celebration is a trifle premature.

CHARLOTTE

What do you know about developing programme ideas anyway? You're just a flipping cook!

TIM

The cook will bring the next course.

Tim buzzes off to the kitchen, miffed.

MIRANDA

Charlotte, you know one should never criticize the cook!

MARTIN

But Tim's marvellous, isn't he? Not only a gourmet cook, but an outstanding waiter to boot!

MIRANDA

Yes, one must also say in Tim's favour - he always dresses smartly when he cooks. Even in an apron he still manages to retain a sense of decorum.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE
Decorum? That sounds like something
from a realtor: the walls are
papered with decorum.

MARTIN
Yes, that's because in Latin
decorum means "we decorate"!

Renewed laughter. Tim brings the next course.

CHARLOTTE
Oooh. What's that?

TIM
Ginger pumpkin soup! Prompted by
the erotic cook-book Miranda gave
me!

Charlotte pouts.

CHARLOTTE
Oh...

MARTIN
Superb, Tim!

MIRANDA
So. Are you all ready to hear my
good news at last?

TIM
Sure.

MARTIN
Ok.

Miranda finally gets their attention.

MIRANDA
I also have cause for a
celebration.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, yes? What then?

MIRANDA
I'm pregnant!

MARTIN
What?

TIM
Pregnant?

MIRANDA
Yes.

Charlotte turns white. Miranda looks from Martin to Tim. Martin coughs.

TIM
Er...congratulations...you guys!

CHARLOTTE
You don't seem to be very pleased, Martin...

MARTIN
No, I am. I'm just...It's a complete surprise, that's all. It's great. Why didn't you tell me?

MIRANDA
I just did.

MARTIN
I can't believe it!

CHARLOTTE
It's funny, isn't it, how men always seem to be shocked when their wives are pregnant. As if they had nothing to do with it!

TIM
I wish you wouldn't make such sweeping, cryptic comments, darling.

CHARLOTTE
Comments can't be sweeping and cryptic at the same time, darling.

TIM
Why not, darling?

CHARLOTTE
You can stop calling me darling now, darling.

TIM
Yes, darling. Tim gets to his feet.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

I'll just go and check on the main course.

MIRANDA

Do you need a hand?

TIM

No, it's alright.

MIRANDA

Come on, I'll help you.

Tim and Miranda go into the kitchen, leaving Martin and Charlotte alone in the dining room.

CHARLOTTE

You never told me you wanted kids with Miranda.

MARTIN

It's totally out of the blue!

CHARLOTTE

And at the same time you're screwing me on the side?

MARTIN

I don't know how it could have happened.

CHARLOTTE

Did you skip sex education classes at school?

MARTIN

Charlotte, this is no laughing matter.

Charlotte starts to get loud.

CHARLOTTE

No, it's not. Who do you love? Me or Miranda?

MARTIN

Keep your voice down. They'll hear you! Let's not get carried away. It was just a bit of fun!

Charlotte glowers at Martin.

CHARLOTTE

What do you mean "was"?

MARTIN

Charlotte...Miranda's pregnant.
That puts a completely different
complexion on things.

Charlotte starts shouting.

CHARLOTTE

So I'm just another notch on your
bedpost? How many others have there
been?

MARTIN

Keep your voice down!

CHARLOTTE

You've just been using me, haven't
you?

MARTIN

Don't take things so personally.

CHARLOTTE

Oh yeah? And what about us?
Shouldn't I take our relationship
personally? You lied to me! You
don't love me at all!

Charlotte screams at the top of her lungs.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You bastard!

Charlotte hurls herself onto the sofa, sobbing. Tim has heard Charlotte hollering from the kitchen and comes into the dining room. Tim sits down beside Charlotte and tries to comfort her.

TIM

Charlotte. What's wrong?

CHARLOTTE

Leave me alone. Miranda enters the
dining room.

Martin is totally unnerved by her piercing look.

TIM

I didn't mean to be so dismissive
about your new show, Charlotte.

(CONTINUED)

(double-edged)
It could possibly work...

CHARLOTTE
Fuck you!

Tim gets up from the sofa and fixes Martin with a steely glare. Martin forces an unconvincing smile.

MARTIN
Tim, I think me and Miranda ought to go.

Charlotte wobbles to her feet. She is drunk and out of control.

CHARLOTTE
I can't stand this any longer.

MARTIN
Miranda, I'll get your coat! We're going! We'll leave you two to work this out in private.

CHARLOTTE
I don't want to work it out. I'm sick to the back teeth of this hypocrisy!

TIM
What are you talking about, Charlotte?

Charlotte looks at them, one after the other.

CHARLOTTE
Me and Martin have been having an affair!

TIM
What?

MARTIN
Charlotte. Stop this right now!

MIRANDA
Martin!

CHARLOTTE
Yes.
(beat)
But it doesn't matter anymore.

Charlotte slumps back down onto the sofa.

CHARLOTTE

Nothing matters anymore. It's all over.

TIM

Jesus Christ!

A dreadfully long beat.

MIRANDA

What have you got to say for yourself, Martin?

MARTIN

I wish the ground would just open and swallow me up.

MIRANDA

So do I!

Miranda grabs her coat and makes a bee-line for the door. Tim jumps up and runs to block her way out.

TIM

Wait, Miranda!

MIRANDA

Get out of my way!

TIM

This is stupid, don't you think?

(beat)

Shouldn't we come clean, too?

MIRANDA

Shut up, Tim!

Tim looks from one face to the other, trying to pull himself together.

TIM

Since Charlotte has let the cat out of the bag, I might as well make it two cats! From one bag!

MIRANDA

I said shut up!

Tim burps.

TIM

Me and Miranda have been having an affair, as well!

(CONTINUED)

Charlotte and Martin are stunned. They myopically thought they were the only ones.

MARTIN

No!

CHARLOTTE

What?

TIM

And you didn't even notice?

CHARLOTTE

Since when?

TIM

Does it matter?

MIRANDA

Judas!

Miranda walks out of the flat. Martin scurries after her. Charlotte takes a swig of whisky directly from the bottle.

TIM

I'm sorry...

Tim burps again.

CHARLOTTE

Fuck you!

Charlotte vomits.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Miranda hails a taxi and gets in. Martin tries to get in but she slams the door in his face. The taxi drives off. Martin searches frantically up and down the street for another taxi.

MARTIN

Taxi! Taxi!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MARTIN AND MIRANDA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Miranda gets out of the taxi and enters the flat, cursing.

INT. MARTIN AND MIRANDA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Miranda locks the door, puts the latch on and fastens the safety chain.

MIRANDA

Bastard!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MARTIN AND MIRANDA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Martin alights from his taxi.

INT. MARTIN AND MIRANDA'S FLAT / HALLWAY IN FRONT OF THE FLAT - NIGHT

Martin tries to open the door with his key but the latch is on.

MARTIN

Shit!

He rings the bell but Miranda doesn't answer the door.

MARTIN

Miranda! Open the door!

Martin bangs on the door.

MARTIN

Miranda! Let me in!

Martin gets down on his knees in front of the door and pleads to her through the mailbox.

MARTIN

Miranda! Don't be an idiot!

MIRANDA

Go away!

Miranda puts on a CD and turns the volume up to drown Martin out.

MARTIN

(shouting over the music)
You can't just lock me out!

MIRANDA

(shouting)
I can!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
(shouting)
Where am I gonna sleep?

MIRANDA
(shouting)
Go stay in a motel.

MARTIN
(shouting)
Let's discuss this in a civilised
fashion. It's all a big mistake.

MIRANDA
(shouting)
You are a big mistake!

MARTIN
(shouting)
But we're having a baby, Miranda.

The NEIGHBOUR's door opens.

NEIGHBOUR
What the hell is going on here?

Miranda opens the door. Martin is on his knees.

MIRANDA
It's not your baby anyway!

Martin is thunderstruck. He looks pitifully at the neighbor.

NEIGHBOUR
You're waking up the whole damn
neighborhood.

MIRANDA
It's Tim's!

Miranda shuts the door on Martin again. Martin gets to his feet.

MARTIN
(pathetically)
Tim's baby?

The neighbour realizes what has happened and feels pity for Martin.

NEIGHBOUR
Well, I'll be blown...

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Tim?

Martin slopes away. The neighbour calls out after him.

NEIGHBOUR

You wanna drink? I got a bottle of
Jack Daniels, if you want...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Martin wanders away down the street. He kicks a stray beer can against a wall. The film's theme music (the a capella song the four friends sang in the car in the opening scene on the way to the cottage) plays in a minor key.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Tim drags his feet along a street. He comes to a halt in front of a motel. He goes inside to check in for the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK. CLOSE-UP MARTIN'S FACE.

MARTIN (VOICE-OFF)

I hate her.

CLOSE-UP CHARLOTTE'S FACE.

CHARLOTTE (VOICE-OFF)

Eat shit and die.

CLOSE-UP MIRANDA'S FACE.

MIRANDA (VOICE-OFF)

Highly immoral, irresponsible,
antisocial.

CLOSE-UP TIM'S FACE.

TIM (VOICE-OFF)

That's the way the cookie crumbles.

CLOSE-UP MARTIN'S FACE.

MARTIN (VOICE-OFF)
I hate him.

CLOSE-UP CHARLOTTE'S FACE.

CHARLOTTE (VOICE-OFF)
Who cares anyway? Piss off!

CLOSE-UP MIRANDA'S FACE.

MIRANDA (VOICE-OFF)
I really can't condone such selfish
behaviour.

CLOSE-UP TIM'S FACE.

TIM (VOICE-OFF)
That's the way the cookie crumbles.

CLOSE-UP MARTIN'S FACE.

MARTIN (VOICE-OFF)
I hate her, too.

CLOSE-UP CHARLOTTE'S FACE.

CHARLOTTE (VOICE-OFF)
Who do you think I am, for God's
sakes?

CLOSE-UP MIRANDA'S FACE. MIRANDA (VOICE-OFF)

One should show more respect for
one's fellow human-beings.

CLOSE-UP TIM'S FACE.

TIM (VOICE-OFF)
That's the way the cookie crumbles.

CLOSE-UP MARTIN'S FACE.

MARTIN (VOICE-OFF)
I'll never speak to any of them
ever again. Till the day I die!

CLOSE-UP CHARLOTTE'S FACE.

CHARLOTTE (VOICE-OFF)
What's wrong with me? Aren't I
attractive enough, or what?

CLOSE-UP MIRANDA'S FACE.

A tear rolls Miranda's cheek.

CLOSE-UP TIM'S FACE.

TIM (VOICE-OFF)
That's the way the cookie...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFE "KAMASUTRA" - EVENING

Charlotte sits in the cafe where she and Martin first rendezvoused to initiate their wild affair. She is lost in a reverie, gawking at a loving couple canoodling at another table. The couple gets up and leaves. The waiter approaches reverentially. It is the same man who served them when Martin knocked the coffee out of his hands.

WAITER
Er...excuse me. We're closing now,
madam.

He snaps Charlotte out of her mournful daydream. The cafe is empty. She is the last customer. Charlotte starts to cry. The waiter is embarrassed and hands her a napkin to dry her tears.

INT. MIRANDA'S FLAT - DAY

The phone rings. Miranda doesn't answer it and the answering machine which sits next to the aquarium kicks in.

(CONTINUED)

ANSWERING MACHINE

(Miranda's voice)

You talk to the fish, and the fish
talk to me.

MARTIN'S VOICE

Hello, Miranda, it's me. Are you
there? Pick up the phone.

Miranda goes to the aquarium and feeds the fish.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Martin jogs along the river on his own. He sits down on the bank and gazes melancholically out across the river, grieving.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - DAY

Charlotte opens a letter.

LETTER

Dear Mr and Mrs Sherman, we would like to inform you of the forthcoming doubles tournament on August the 30th. May we enquire if you and your husband would be available to represent the club?

Charlotte rips up the letter. Then she retrieves the shreds of the tennis club invite, pieces the torn-up bits together and re-reads the letter. She bursts into tears.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Miranda takes part in a demonstration. She waves a placard and chants slogans, but she lacks her customary fervour. She lets the placard fall limply down by her side and looks passively on at the other protestors.

MIRANDA

Oh, what's the point?

Her personal pain overrides her proselytising zeal.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Tim shops in a supermarket. He sullenly puts a chicken in his shopping trolley but then realizes he doesn't need a whole chicken now he is on his own. He puts it back and replaces it with a chicken leg. He pushes his near-empty shopping trolley to the check-out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tim leaves the supermarket with a single carrier bag in his hand. He drags his heels along the street, downcast, absorbed in his solitude. Martin rounds a corner and spots him. Martin's face drops.

MARTIN

Oh no...

Martin ducks into a shop door-way and conceals himself to avoid Tim seeing him. After Tim has passed by, Martin slinks away in the opposite direction. Then he halts and turns round. He makes to call out after Tim, but thinks better of it and continues on his way.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - DAY

The door-bell rings. Charlotte opens the door.

TIM

I've come to get my things. I've found a flat.

CHARLOTTE

I've packed your stuff into cardboard boxes.

TIM

You needn't have done that.

CHARLOTTE

Better than having you faffing around all day packing.

TIM

No. I mean I wanted to do it myself. Those are my personal things.

CHARLOTTE

Shall I unpack them all again?

(CONTINUED)

TIM

I think we should talk about what went wrong.

CHARLOTTE

You are pathetic. That's what went wrong. It's your spinelessness that caused the rot in the first place!

TIM

Little things are sent to try us.

CHARLOTTE

What did you study at university? Was it a degree in platitudes?

TIM

You screwed up, Charlotte. Admit it.

CHARLOTTE

Miranda getting pregnant screwed things up. Not me.

TIM

You ruined everything through your desire to possess Martin.

CHARLOTTE

Possession? We should have called an Exorcist! He might have saved the day.

TIM

You're so fucking cold-hearted - callous.

CHARLOTTE

If those are my good qualities, what are my bad ones?

TIM

You have just destroyed two marriages and all you care about is topping the conversation with snide remarks dressed up as witticisms!

CHARLOTTE

This is very unlike you, Tim. Fighting back...

INT. MIRANDA'S FLAT - EVENING

Miranda makes herself a hot-water bottle and sits down on the sofa. She watches a romantic film on TV. It hurts her to see others in love. She switches off the TV and feeds the fish, emitting a single, plaintive fish-sound.

MIRANDA

Blub...

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - EVENING

The doorbell rings. Charlotte opens the door to Martin.

MARTIN

Hi, Charlotte.

INT. MIRANDA'S FLAT - EVENING (INTER-CUT WITH NEXT SCENE IN CHARLOTTE'S FLAT.)

The doorbell rings. Miranda opens the door to Tim.

TIM

Hi, Miranda.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - EVENING

MARTIN

I just wanted to...

CHARLOTTE

Wheedle your way back in?

MARTIN

No. It's a genuine visit, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

My God, you've got a cheek, coming round here like this! I'm not accepting your apology.

MARTIN

I'm not apologizing. I thought I'd give you the chance...

CHARLOTTE

Me? Me? You were the one who backed out!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

I told you to put the brakes on.
You just didn't listen. I never
wanted to out our affair, but you
bull-dozed ahead regardless. Talk
about rocking the boat! You damn
well sank it!

INT. MIRANDA'S FLAT - EVENING

TIM

I thought I'd just drop by and see
how you're doing.

MIRANDA

Yeah, that's...that's nice of you.

TIM

Well?

MIRANDA

Well, what?

TIM

How are you doing?

MIRANDA

You know...

TIM

Yeah...me, too.

MIRANDA

That was quite an evening!

TIM

Sure was.

(beat)

Look, I wanted to say sorry.

MIRANDA

Are you doing the rounds?

TIM

What do you mean?

MIRANDA

Who did you visit first? Me or
Charlotte?

(CONTINUED)

TIM
Does it matter?

MIRANDA
So you've already been grovelling
to her. And I'm only second on your
list of apologies?

TIM
Oh, Miranda. What's the difference?

MIRANDA
A big difference! It shows where
your heart lies.

TIM
(lying)
Ok, no, I haven't spoken to
Charlotte.

MIRANDA
Have you seen Martin?

TIM
No.

MIRANDA
Why don't you phone him?

TIM
If he phones me, ok, I'll talk to
him. But I'm not phoning him.

MIRANDA
Men!

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - EVENING

CHARLOTTE
Have you seen Tim?

MARTIN
No, and I don't intend to.

CHARLOTTE
Don't be so childish. He's your
best mate.

MARTIN
Was!

INT. CHARLOTTE'S FLAT - EVENING LATER THAT WEEK

The door bell rings. Charlotte answers the door. She is surprised to see Miranda.

CHARLOTTE

Miranda!

MIRANDA

Hi Charlotte.

(beat)

Well? Aren't you going to ask me in?

CHARLOTTE

To what do I owe this visit, might I ask?

MIRANDA

I was in the area. I thought I'd drop by.

CHARLOTTE

What do you want?

MIRANDA

I'm not going to stand here talking to you on the bloody door-step!

CHARLOTTE

Ok. Ok. Come in.

Miranda enters the flat.

MIRANDA

I want to discuss what happened.

CHARLOTTE

Hmmm. Where do we start? It's a bit like trying to describe where a circle starts and ends, isn't it?

MIRANDA

You have wrecked two marriages through your selfish, callous, brazen attitude.

CHARLOTTE

Have you been comparing notes with Tim? That's exactly what he said!

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

Don't be flippant. What have you got to say for yourself?

CHARLOTTE

You are a self-righteous hypocrite! It wasn't just me. It takes two to tango. Or four in this case.

MIRANDA

But I wasn't trying to take Tim off you.

CHARLOTTE

So what?

MIRANDA

You were going to take Martin away from me!

CHARLOTTE

Ah, forget it. He got cold feet anyway. I was self-deluded.

MIRANDA

And now I don't have anyone.

Miranda bursts into tears. They hug for a long time.

MIRANDA

Charlotte, I'm so lonely...

Despite the clash, they have initiated the healing process.

MIRANDA

I've missed you...

CHARLOTTE

Hey, shit happens.

MIRANDA

We've ruined everything.

CHARLOTTE

Come on, how about a cup of tea?

MIRANDA

Tea?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, to hell with tea! Let's have a real drink! Who needs tea and sympathy anyway?

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

Absolutely!

Charlotte fetches a whisky bottle and two glasses.

CHARLOTTE

Wait a minute. You shouldn't be drinking liquor in your condition.

MIRANDA

There is no condition. I got rid of it.

CHARLOTTE

What?

Charlotte pours the drinks.

MIRANDA

What's the point of having a baby in this mess?

They take a swig of whisky.

MIRANDA

Have the guys met up, do you know?

CHARLOTTE

Fat chance. They're avoiding each other like the plague.

MIRANDA

Stubborn as mules.

CHARLOTTE

Worse than mules!

MIRANDA

If they would just say sorry to each other it would clear the air.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, wait a minute. I've got an idea!

Charlotte picks up the phone and dials.

CHARLOTTE

Hi, Tim! It's me! You fancy meeting up for a drink tomorrow in the Unicorn? Seven o' clock. Yeah? Cool. I'll be standing at the bar. Yeah. And don't be late. Ciao!

(CONTINUED)

Charlotte terminates the call and dials the next number. She winks conspiratorially at Miranda.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, Martin, I was just thinking of you. What about hooking up for a drink? You free tomorrow? Seven o'clock? Excellent. Let's meet at the bar. And do try to be punctual! Yes, I know you are. See you tomorrow. Bye!

Charlotte hangs up.

MIRANDA

Well now, Charlotte, you're one helluva a smooth operator, I must say!

INT. THE UNICORN PUB - EVENING

The Unicorn is packed with boisterous, chatting customers - a roaring hubbub. Tim enters and sees Martin standing at the bar, drinking a beer. Tim jostles his way through the crowd.

TIM

Martin!

MARTIN

What are you doing here?

TIM

Meeting Charlotte! What are you doing here?

MARTIN

What! She called you, too?

BARTENDER

What's your poison, sir?

TIM

A Beck's, please!

INT. THE UNICORN PUB - EVENING

Charlotte and Miranda observe Tim and Martin's encounter from a concealed vantage point.

INT. THE UNICORN PUB - EVENING

MARTIN
What's her game?

TIM
Perhaps she's trying to get us to talk?

MARTIN
I've got nothing to say to you, mate.

TIM
Well, there's no point ignoring each other now we're here.

Martin ostentatiously turns his back on Tim.

TIM
Alright, so you're not talking to me, then?

MARTIN
(absurdly)
No!

TIM
So what don't you want to talk about, then?

MARTIN
I'm not telling you.

TIM
Ok. Please yourself.

Tim turns his back on Martin. Both stand at the bar with their backs to each other.

INT. THE UNICORN PUB - EVENING

MIRANDA
This doesn't bode well, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE
God, they're so stubborn! Charlotte gets to her feet.

CHARLOTTE
Come on. Let's introduce them to each other, shall we?

INT. THE UNICORN PUB - EVENING

Charlotte and Miranda make their way to the bar. The bartender gives Martin his beer.

CHARLOTTE
Hi, Martin! Hi, Tim!

TIM
Charlotte! Miranda!

MIRANDA
Hi, guys!

Martin doesn't reply. He remains standing with his back turned to the other three.

TIM
He's not feeling very talkative.
Are you, Martin?

MARTIN
(stupidly)
No.

TIM
(explaining)
He's not talking to me.

MIRANDA
Well, you can talk to us, Martin.

Martin turns round.

MARTIN
You set this up!

CHARLOTTE
Who's a clever boy? Did you figure that out all on your own?

MARTIN
I think that's very low.

MIRANDA
Trying to get you two back on talking terms?

MARTIN
Well, it won't work. I'm not talking to that bastard!

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

That bastard happens to be your best friend.

Martin raises his voice.

MARTIN

Not any more. God, Tim, you are such a tosser! Screwing Miranda behind my back like that!

TIM

I can't believe I'm hearing this! Me? Have you been taking some sort of memory-loss drug? Have you forgotten what you were doing with Charlotte, you asshole?

Martin throws beer into Tim's face! Tim retaliates by throwing beer into Martin's face! The two women pull them apart to stop them coming to blows.

MIRANDA

Hey, stop that!

CHARLOTTE

You cretins!

The patrons in their immediate vicinity start to take an interest in the altercation.

MIRANDA

Are you two crazy? You should be ashamed of yourselves!

Martin directs his attention to Miranda.

MARTIN

And I'm not talking to you, either!

MIRANDA

No. You're shouting.

MARTIN

You slut!

MIRANDA

So it's one rule for men and another rule for women? You hypocrite!

Martin addresses the onlookers histrionically.

MARTIN

That's right, she's a slut! So now all of you know it. My - wife - is - a - slut!

MIRANDA

How dare you! You can sleep with someone else but I can't? Go back to the Stone-age, you Neanderthal!

The crowd eagerly lap up the dirt.

MARTIN

And not only that. She's pregnant. How delightful. But I'm not the father, no. He is the father. This man here. My best friend.

(Martin indicates Tim)

I'm just the cuckold. He is the sperm donor!

Miranda slaps Martin in the face, splitting his lip.

MARTIN

Ouch!

MIRANDA

For your information I'm not pregnant. Not from you. Not from nobody. Not anymore.

TIM

What? You...

MIRANDA

Yes, I did!

TIM

No!

CHARLOTTE

Er...Martin, you're bleeding.

MARTIN

Where?

CHARLOTTE

There.

MARTIN

Oh...

(CONTINUED)

At the sight of blood Martin faints and collapses to the floor. They have now gained the attention of the entire clientele. A couple of people cheer.

The enormous, imposing landlord makes his way to the scene.

LANDLORD

What's going on here?

MIRANDA

It's nothing to worry about - he always faints at the sight of his own blood.

LANDLORD

But you hit him. I saw you. I've got a good mind to call the police.

MIRANDA

Don't be silly. It's only my husband!

CHARLOTTE

Come on, Miranda, let's go!

Charlotte and Miranda make their way to the exit.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Hang on a minute.

Charlotte turns back and wallops Tim with her handbag.

TIM

Ow! What was that for?

CHARLOTTE

I don't know, but I'll think of something!

The pub patrons guffaw derisively. Martin comes to his senses and lurches to his feet. Tim helps him up.

MARTIN

Hey, don't touch me!

TIM

Oh! You spoke to me! That didn't take very long to win you round, did it!

(CONTINUED)

Tim goes and sits down on a bar-stool at one side of the horseshoe-shaped bar. Martin occupies a bar-stool on the opposite side of the bar. They mop themselves dry with paper napkins and start to trade insults under their breaths, their lips articulating each barb.

MARTIN
You prat!

TIM
Bastard!

MARTIN
Jerk!

TIM
Arsehole!

MARTIN
Tosser!

TIM
Dickhead!

MARTIN
Mother-fucker!

TIM
Wally!

MARTIN
Cocksucker!

TIM
Scumbag!

Martin can't read Tim's lips.

MARTIN
(normal volume)
What?

TIM
(whispering again)
Scumbag!

MARTIN
Arsehole!

TIM
(normal volume)
You said that one already!

Having exhausted his repertoire of insults, Martin waves dismissively and gives up. It gradually dawns on them what fools they have made of themselves. They both start to grin inanely.

EXT. OUTSIDE A MALE STRIP CLUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

CHARLOTTE

Come on, Miranda. Let's go in.

MIRANDA

And how should I reconcile my condemnation of the sex industry with patronising a strip club?

CHARLOTTE

Don't exaggerate. It's only guys taking their kit off!

They snigger as they open the door to be met with a wall of sound. They enter the club.

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Tim and Martin stagger down the street, drunk, their arms round each other's shoulders.

MARTIN

That was some evening, I tell you!

TIM

Yeah. I never wanna experience a dinner like that again till the day I die.

MARTIN

My God, was it harrowing! In fact I don't think I've ever been so flipping harrowed in my entire flipping life!

TIM

We only got as far as the starters then it was all over.

MARTIN

(sardonically)
Bar the shouting!

(CONTINUED)

TIM
But can I tell you something?

MARTIN
Yes, you can tell me something.

TIM
Thank you.

MARTIN
Well, are you going to tell me,
then?

TIM
God, I've been missing her so bad.

MARTIN
Me, too.
(beat)
Er...Who d'you mean now?

TIM
Charlotte.
(beat)
My wife.

MARTIN
Oh, right...

TIM
(plaintively)
But the stupid thing is...I miss
your wife even more!

The mournful duo erupt into laughter at the utter absurdity
of it all.

INT. MALE STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

The music booms as the male strippers dance and cavort on
stage.

CHARLOTTE
Do you fancy that one?

MIRANDA
No.

CHARLOTTE
What about that one?

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

No.

CHARLOTTE

That one?

MIRANDA

Do you think it's just padding?

CHARLOTTE

Look at him!

MIRANDA

Yeah, I wouldn't kick him out of bed.

CHARLOTTE

I wonder what he does for a day job?

MIRANDA

Shame about Tim and Martin.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah. I thought I was missing them. But after their antics tonight I don't think I'll be missing them any more!

MIRANDA

What I miss most is the cottage!

CHARLOTTE

Yes, it's a big loss, the cottage!

MIRANDA

Such a waste!

CHARLOTTE

Men! Who needs them?!

The male strippers gyrate their groins in Miranda and Charlotte's faces.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Martin and Tim sit down at the side of the road.

MARTIN

Oh shit! Why did I have to go and do that?

(sighs)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN (cont'd)
Do you think they'll ever forgive
us?

TIM
Us?
(beat)
You!

MARTIN
I wish I could just wind back the
clock.

TIM
You'd have to do the slimiest
grovel in history to get back in
their good books, mate.

(Beat)

MARTIN
Alright then, watch me slime!

Martin fumbles for his cell phone.

INT. MALE STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Miranda's phone rings.

MIRANDA
Hello?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

MARTIN
Hello? Miranda?

INT. MALE STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

MIRANDA
You've got the wrong number!

Miranda terminates the call.

CHARLOTTE
Who was it?

MIRANDA
Only Martin!

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Oh. Right.

MIRANDA

(pouting)

How dare he call me a slut!

Charlotte nudges her playfully.

CHARLOTTE

Well, aren't you?

MIRANDA

Not any more than any other
self-respecting woman!

They laugh uproariously.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

TIM

What did she say?

MARTIN

Wrong number.

TIM

You dialled the wrong number?

MARTIN

No, she said wrong number.

INT. MALE STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Miranda's phone rings again. Miranda lets it ring. Miranda finally answers the phone irritably.

MIRANDA

Yes? What?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT / INT. MALE STRIP-CLUB - NIGHT

MARTIN

(desperate)

Please, Miranda, listen to me.

MIRANDA

(to Charlotte)

It's that nuisance caller again!

Charlotte smirks.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

(pleading)

Miranda. I'm sorry. I didn't mean what I said about you being a slut. I totally...totally...regret...

MIRANDA

To think we condescended to try to get you two peacocks to kiss and make up! And what do you do? You cause a disturbance in the pub like a couple of yobs.

MARTIN

Look, me and Tim are pals again now, alright.

(swallows his pride)

And we're inviting you out to dinner to make it up to you.

Tim gives Martin the thumbs up.

MIRANDA

(to Charlotte)

They're inviting us out to dinner.

CHARLOTTE

Tell them to piss off!

MIRANDA

(to Martin)

Sorry. Charlotte's not the slightest interested. And nor am I.

MARTIN

At La Garrotte.

MIRANDA

(to Charlotte)

La Garrotte.

CHARLOTTE

Huh?

TIM

(correcting him)

Gavrotte, Martin, Gavrotte.

MARTIN

La Gavrotte.

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA
(to Charlotte)
Gavrotte.

Charlotte perks up and nods enthusiastically.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, that's in the "Good Food
Guide"!

MIRANDA
(to Martin)
How about Friday?

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Charlotte and Miranda teeter along a street, tipsy.

CHARLOTTE
So if we pursue the logic of the
situation...

MIRANDA
...the logic?

CHARLOTTE
...if we pursue the logic...

MIRANDA
...of the situation?

CHARLOTTE
Yeah.

Charlotte looks blank.

MIRANDA
What then?

CHARLOTTE
I dunno. I forgot what I was gonna
say. I've completely lost the...

MIRANDA
Plot?

CHARLOTTE
No.

MIRANDA
Thread?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

Yeah. That's it. I've lost the thread.

MIRANDA

It's alright. I think I know what you're getting at.

CHARLOTTE

Do you? I don't have a goddamn clue anymore!

MIRANDA

It's like this.

(beat)

One man - one woman. Two men - two women.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah.

(beat)

Two men - two women.

MIRANDA

Charlotte, we could break new ground here. We could take a giant step forward for women's rights!

CHARLOTTE

Could we?

MIRANDA

But we'll need a new strategy to implement this.

CHARLOTTE

(swaying)

What?

MIRANDA

We're going to have think laterally!

CHARLOTTE

(yawns)

Laterally? Does that mean I can get some kip now?

INT. LA GAVROTTE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Tim, Martin, Charlotte and Miranda are seated at a table.

CHARLOTTE

So how are you coping with life in the single lane, Tim?

TIM

Er...tremendous. Yeah. Couldn't be better, in fact. How about you?

CHARLOTTE

It's amazing. There's loads more room in the flat now and the bathroom is always clean.

TIM

How come? Have you stopped using it?

CHARLOTTE

You are the only person I know who, when you clean the bathroom, it's more of a mess when you've finished than it was before you started!

After brief laughter the conversation goes quiet.

TIM

But er, talking about being single...Here we are again, the four of us. Just like old times!

MARTIN

We really messed up bad, didn't we!

The four of them smile sheepishly at each other.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah. But at least we're back on talking terms.

(beat)

That's quite something.

No one knows what to say anymore. They are all very emotional and chocked up. Then Miranda dares express what all are thinking.

MIRANDA

We've still got feelings for each other...

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA (cont'd)
Am I right?

MARTIN
You could say that.

MIRANDA
Well, do you or don't you?

(Beat)

MARTIN
Yeah...alright. I do.

MIRANDA
For me or Charlotte?

MARTIN
Er...I don't want to offend anyone
here...

CHARLOTTE
Or is it for both of us?

Martin nods.

MARTIN
Yeah.

CHARLOTTE
Tim?
(beat)
Me or Miranda?

TIM
Alright. Both of you.

The waiter arrives and overhears the conversation.

MIRANDA
There is a possible solution...

Charlotte and Miranda exchange looks.

MIRANDA
I take Martin back...
(beat)
...on one condition. I also get
Tim!

MARTIN
Oh!

(CONTINUED)

WAITER
Rack of lamb with gratin potatoes?

MIRANDA
Mine!

The waiter places her dish in front of Miranda.

MIRANDA
Thank you. And what about you,
Charlotte?

They all look at Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
Alright. I'll take Tim back.
(beat)
But I also get Martin as part of
the package.

WAITER
Lobster in Champagne butter?

CHARLOTTE
That's me.

TIM
Sounds like you two have got this
all mapped out already. Do we get a
say in it?

MIRANDA
We're just presenting you with a
blueprint. We want to know what you
think.

MARTIN
Did both of you come up with this
idea?

Miranda smiles.

CHARLOTTE
No. It's Miranda's brainwave. She's
the radical social reformer, after
all.

MARTIN
I thought as much!

TIM
Sounds more like one of Charlotte's
concepts for a reality show to me!

WAITER
Stuffed rabbit a la Provencal?

TIM
Yes, please.

Martin clears his throat.

MARTIN
So, basically, what you're talking
about is a foursome, then?

MIRANDA
Yes.

WAITER
(to Martin)
And the breast is for you, sir?

They all look at the waiter.

WAITER
Chicken. Breast of chicken.
(coughs)
In black truffle sauce.

MARTIN
So what we're talking about is
group sex, then?

The waiter departs.

MIRANDA
No. We're not talking about orgies,
if that's what you mean.

MARTIN
Right. No problem. Just checking.
(beat)
Although we could always get a
bigger bed...

CHARLOTTE
Martin! Really!

TIM
So it's wife-swapping, then?

CHARLOTTE
Don't make it sound so crude!

MIRANDA

Ok. Look. This is my suggestion.
How about we go to the cottage for
a break, and have pure,
"unadulterated" fun?

The newly-reconciled quartet snigger at her pun and raise their glasses in approval.

ALL

Cheers!

INT. RESTAURANT. WAITERS' STATION - EVENING.

The waiter hisses animatedly to a colleague.

WAITER

It's that TV cook, Tim Sherman.

WAITER 2

The one who's been doing the erotic
cooking series?

WAITER

Yeah. But guess what! Erotic
doesn't stop at cooking with him!
They're having a foursome!

INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

Charlotte drives along the highway with Tim, Martin and Miranda as passengers. They sing along to a CD, clapping their hands to the rhythm.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Martin and Tim row a boat across a lake, each pulling on an oar. Miranda and Charlotte sit at the rear of the boat on a bench facing the men.

CHARLOTTE

About the sleeping arrangements for
tonight...I get to sleep with
Martin. Any objections?

MARTIN

Charlotte, we could at least
discuss it first.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

I'm saving us a useless discussion.

MARTIN

No, you are pre-empting a discussion.

MIRANDA

But then, that's Charlotte all over, isn't it? Her personality is rather like a pre-emptive strike, after all!

Charlotte gives Miranda a dirty look.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Just joking, Charlotte. You're not really that bad.

(beat)

You're just tactless!

CHARLOTTE

So by default, that makes the other sleeping partners Miranda and Tim.

TIM

Hold your horses! I'm not sure if I like being put into the category of "by default".

MIRANDA

No, nor do I. It has a sort of second-best ring to it.

TIM

Don't get me wrong. It's not that I object to being with the delectable Miranda. It's just that I don't appreciate not being consulted.

CHARLOTTE

Alright, alright. Let's start again, shall we? Hands up who wants to sleep with me tonight.

Martin sticks his hand up in the air. Tim and Martin shout simultaneously.

MARTIN

Me!

(CONTINUED)

TIM

Me!

Martin and Tim look at each other.

TIM

It's alright. You go ahead.

Charlotte gives Tim an affectionate cuff around the head, which causes him to comically burst into song with the round, "Row, row, row the boat". Martin joins in, then Charlotte, then Miranda. They stop singing one by one.

MARTIN

Simple solution. We just need a system - take it in turns to choose sleeping partners. Tonight one of us gets to choose their partner. Then tomorrow someone else gets to chose. And so on.

CHARLOTTE

A system? What are you doing, drafting the constitution of sex with multiple partners? The second we break the mould of the restrictive structure imposed by monogamy, you erect another one in its place?

TIM

"Erect" being the operative word here!

MARTIN

Nice one, Tim!

MIRANDA

I'm all for adopting Martin's system.

TIM

So am I!

MIRANDA

Seems like you're out-voted, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Huh!

MARTIN

Well, now we've sorted that out I get to choose!

TIM

Why you?

MARTIN

I thought of the system! So I get first choice.

TIM

Hang on, Martin, not so fast!

MIRANDA

Yeah. We'll do this fair and square. We'll pull names out of a hat. Ok?

TIM

Good idea!

Miranda rips up a sheet of paper and writes down their names. She folds the pieces of paper, and puts them in her straw hat.

MIRANDA

The first one out of the hat is the last to choose! The last one is the first to choose. You draw, Charlotte.

Charlotte takes a piece of paper out of the hat, unfolds it and reads out the name.

CHARLOTTE

Martin!

TIM

Wooo! Your idea back-fired on you there, you wally!

MARTIN

Huh!

Charlotte draws another piece of paper from the hat.

CHARLOTTE

Tim.

TIM

Uhuh...

(CONTINUED)

Charlotte takes the second-to-last piece of paper out of the hat.

CHARLOTTE

Miranda.

Charlotte triumphantly takes the final piece of paper out of the hat.

CHARLOTTE

And last of all, but first to choose. Me! How ironic. I get to decide on the sleeping partners for tonight after all! System short-circuited!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY EVENING

Tim and Martin go for a jog.

TIM

So will you be jealous, when I sleep with Charlotte?

Martin doesn't answer.

TIM

If you're jealous, you might as well just admit it.

MARTIN

Yeah, alright. I'll be jealous.

TIM

What about when I sleep with Miranda?

MARTIN

I don't know...doesn't bother me so much.

TIM

Hmmm. Interesting.

MARTIN

Interesting? I call it shit. Here's us meant to be having the time of our lives, total sex, and there's me feeling pathetic pangs of jealousy!

(CONTINUED)

TIM
You're only human.

MARTIN
What are you, then? An
extra-terrestrial?

TIM
No. I get jealous, too.
(beat)
When I see you kissing Miranda!

MARTIN
And Charlotte?

TIM
No.

Martin stops in his tracks and cracks up.

TIM
You want to let me in on the joke?

Martin can't spit the words out, he is laughing so much.

TIM
I don't see what's so funny.

Martin gets a grip of himself.

MARTIN
No, ok, I suppose it's not.
Actually it's sad. Very sad, in
fact.

TIM
Do we have the guts to actually go
through with this?

MARTIN
We can't back out now. We'd look
complete jerks.

EXT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

A window is flung open from the inside. The cottage quakes with music pumping out into the stillness of the night. The four friends sing at the top of their lungs, as they get down and boogie. They dance a choreographed routine together. Then Martin dances with Charlotte and Tim dances with Miranda, swaying slowly to a ballad, hugging. Martin and Charlotte kiss. Miranda nestles closer into Tim.

(CONTINUED)

TIM
You alright?

MIRANDA
Yeah.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

The dancing partners have swapped. Now Martin dances with Miranda and Tim dances with Charlotte. Tim and Charlotte smooch and fondle.

TIM
So come on Charlotte, it's time to hit the sack. Who are you selecting this evening? Me or Martin?

CHARLOTTE
Guess! Who do you think, Miranda?

MIRANDA
Well, it's a difficult choice. They're both so handsome!

CHARLOTTE
And they're both extremely sexy!

MARTIN
Alright, spill the beans. Me or Tim?

CHARLOTTE
I've been mulling it over...

TIM
You certainly know what tenterhooks are, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE
It's been occupying my mind all day.

MARTIN
Been occupying your crotch, more like!

MIRANDA
Martin, you can be so crude sometimes.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

But I finally came to a decision.
(beat)
And the winner is...Miranda!

MARTIN

No, come on, stop messing around.
Be serious.

CHARLOTTE

I am serious. It's my choice and I
choose Miranda.

MIRANDA

Me?

TIM

What?

MARTIN

We never agreed to this.

CHARLOTTE

No, Mister Lawyer. But it doesn't
break the rules of your System.

TIM

No, it just bends them!

MIRANDA

You want to sleep with me?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Unless you don't want to, of
course.

TIM

Bollocks!

MARTIN

You don't have to go along with
this, Miranda.

MIRANDA

No, I know.
(beat)
But I will!

CHARLOTTE

Shall we retire, my dear?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

What about us?

CHARLOTTE

Hey, no one's stopping you guys getting together!

MIRANDA

Sure, go ahead. Do what you want.

Miranda and Charlotte wend their way hand-in-hand to their bedroom, performing little dance steps on the way.

MARTIN

That leaves you and me.

TIM

How perceptive of you, Martin!

MARTIN

What are we gonna do?

TIM

Play chess?

MARTIN

You can't play chess.

TIM

I could learn!

MARTIN

You prat! How do you feel about the fact we are married to lesbians?

TIM

Well, that does re-shuffle the cards a bit.

MARTIN

And they're holding all the trumps! I was prepared for the sharing bit...but I didn't expect to be sharing my wife with another woman!

INT. COTTAGE / BEDROOM - NIGHT

The women get undressed.

CHARLOTTE

They fell for it!

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA
Did you see their faces?

CHARLOTTE
Yeah! Shock-horror!

MIRANDA
Brilliant!

Charlotte and Miranda are pulling a stunt! They get in bed together, giggling.

INT. COTTAGE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARTIN
Well, you heard what they said: No one's stopping you and me getting together.

Tim wags his finger.

TIM
No way, Hosé!

MARTIN
We've got no alternative! They are forcing our hand.

TIM
No one's forcing my hand, mate! I'm not touching you!

MARTIN
If you don't, we'll never live this down. You are damaging our credibility!

TIM
Martin, the whole planet isn't bi-sexual.

MARTIN
They'll be so damn condescending towards us tomorrow. There's them breaking new ground and we're just inhibited. Not in touch with our feelings.

TIM
Oh God, yes. I can just hear that coming from Miranda - the queen of the political orgasm! "Not in touch with our feelings".

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Hey, but wouldn't you just love to be a fly on the wall when they do the Hokey-Pokey?

TIM

Fly on the wall? Your flies will be splattered all over the wall if you went waltzing in there in the middle of their sister solidarity session!

MARTIN

We could watch through the key-hole.

TIM

Hey, I bet it's just a gag. They're simulating just to tease us.

The sound of moaning emanates from the bedroom.

MARTIN

It's not us they're teasing. They're teasing each other.

TIM

You don't think they're going to turn lesbian over night, do you?

MARTIN

It sounds pretty convincing to me!

TIM

I'm going to get a drink. A stiff one!

MARTIN

I've already got a stiff one!

Tim heads off to the kitchen. Martin gets down on his knees and peers through the key-hole. He springs to his feet and runs to the kitchen.

INT. COTTAGE / KITCHEN - NIGHT

MARTIN

Tim! Tim! It's for real.

TIM

What?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
They're really doing it!

TIM
How do you know?

MARTIN
I looked through the key-hole.

TIM
What are they doing?

MARTIN
Oral.

TIM
Nothing drastic, then!

MARTIN
No, really. Go and see for yourself
if you don't believe me. Take a
look.

INT. COTTAGE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim goes to the bedroom door and kneels down to peep through
the key-hole.

TIM
Jesus! Ring-a-ding-a-ling!

Martin pushes Tim out of the way.

MARTIN
My turn!

Tim lands on his back.

TIM
Ouch!

As Martin kneels down the door opens! Miranda glares down at
him.

MIRANDA
What are you doing, Martin?.

MARTIN
Er...Looking through the keyhole?

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

Pervert!

Miranda slams the door in his face.

TIM

Why did you have to do that?

MARTIN

Me?

TIM

It was your idea.

MARTIN

This is driving me crazy just imagining the pussy-shuttle going on next door! There's nothing else for it. I've gotta have a wank!

Martin sits down on the sofa.

TIM

What?

MARTIN

I thought I was going to get laid tonight and now this happens. I gotta shoot my load or my balls will ache all night!

TIM

Don't let me stand in your way!

(beat)

Er...I'll rephrase that.

MARTIN

What are you looking at me like that for? There's no shame in admitting I toss off is there?

TIM

I don't want to talk about it.

MARTIN

Come on! The four of us letting it all hang out and you're shy talking about jerking off? Haven't you ever tossed off in front of a man?

TIM

Look, I don't care what you do. I'm gonna watch TV. You can do what you want! Just don't do it here!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Where do you suggest? The garden?

TIM

Yes, the garden!

MARTIN

You want me to toss off in the garden?

TIM

I didn't say I wanted you to. I just said go away! Where's the flipping remote control for the TV? You're not sitting on it, are you?

MARTIN

No. Maybe it's under the sofa?

Tim gets down on his hands and knees and looks under the sofa. He spots the remote control.

TIM

Aha!

Tim fumbles for it under the sofa directly where Martin is sitting. Charlotte and Miranda stick their heads round the bedroom door. The remote eludes Tim's grasp. He grunts from the exertion of trying to get hold of it. From the women's point of view it looks like Tim is on his knees giving Martin a blow-job.

MARTIN

Jesus! I think my cock's gonna explode!

TIM

(meaning the remote)

Wait, I just need to get a grip on it.

Charlotte clears her throat. Tim looks up.

TIM

Charlotte! Miranda!

Tim gets to his feet.

CHARLOTTE

What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

TIM

Looking for the remote control.

CHARLOTTE

Did Martin hide it down his pants?

MIRANDA

It didn't take you two long to warm up to gay sex!

MARTIN

Who are you to talk? You're lesbians!

TIM

Martin wants me to play with his cock and you two are singing a new song now: Sister's are doing it together! I'm the only straight person here, for God's sake!

MARTIN

The only inhibited person!

TIM

You're a queer, Martin! So just fuck off!

CHARLOTTE

Don't you think you're being an itchy-bitsy bit homophobic, Tim?

MARTIN

Tim, I just don't have as rigid boundaries as you.

TIM

The only rigid thing here is your cock!

CHARLOTTE

Hey, cool it, Tim.

TIM

(to the women)

How long have you been doing this? We all know about two affairs. But has it been three all along?

It suddenly also dawns on Martin that Miranda and Charlotte might have been having sex with each other for years!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

No!? You two? Behind our backs? Why didn't you say? We could've watched!

TIM

Martin, really! Don't be vulgar!

MIRANDA

Hey, it was just a joke!

TIM

What was?

MIRANDA

Me and Charlotte in bed.

TIM

Just a joke?

CHARLOTTE

What? Did you think we were doing it for real?

MIRANDA

Didn't you guys notice we were joshing?

MARTIN

What?

TIM

(saving face)

Er...yeah. Of course we did! Didn't we, Martin?

MARTIN

(idiotically)

Yeah. We're not as stupid as we look!

CHARLOTTE

You could have fooled me!

MARTIN

So, we've cleared that up now, then?

TIM

No we haven't. You weren't joking, Martin! You're a fucking queer!

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Everyone sleeps alone in separate rooms.

EXT. COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

The four friends play monopoly, lounging and sprawling on the lawn. Charlotte goes straight to jail.

CHARLOTTE

Oh no, not again!

MARTIN

It's not your lucky day, Charlotte!

TIM

Tough luck, Charlotte!

MIRANDA

Oh, what a pity!

Having gone bust, Charlotte gets up and leaves. The others carry on playing, ignoring her as she wanders back towards the cottage. Charlotte turns and studies their body language.

Miranda is flirting overtly with both men, stroking first Martin's arm and then fondling Tim's hair. From the expression on his face this evidently disturbs Martin. He suddenly notices Charlotte watching them and feels awkward.

MARTIN

Uh...

Charlotte goes into the cottage and returns with her camera phone. She presses record. We see a shot of what the camera is recording: Miranda, Tim and Martin's faces turn to look at the camera as the red record-light blinks in a corner of the picture.

TIM

What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE

(dryly)

Documenting these incredibly joyous moments!

Tim throws the dice.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

Yes! Six!

Tim moves his piece around the board.

TIM

One, two, three, four, five, six!
Buy it!

MARTIN

I'll buy it off you.

TIM

You only want to buy it to stop me
owning the whole street. That's not
very friendly!

MARTIN

Since when has Monopoly been
friendly? It's cut-throat, dude!

Martin's competitiveness annoys Tim.

TIM

I'm fed up with this. Let's do
something else.

MARTIN

No, finish the bloody game, you
prat!

MIRANDA

(peace-making)

Martin, we can take a break and
carry on later.

Tim and Miranda get up and leave the board. Charlotte
close-ups on Martin's face.

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong, baby? Nobody want to
play with you any more?

MARTIN

Cut it out!

CHARLOTTE

Perhaps you play too hard, Martin?
Is it because your testosterone is
firing on all cylinders competing
with your best friend for the girl?

Charlotte captures Martin's annoyance with her camera as he
gets to his feet.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

You're really quite photogenic,
Martin, when you're riled. You've
missed your vocation. You should
have been a film star!

Martin stalks away. Tim stands looking at Charlotte, his
weight sunken into one hip, his arms folded.

TIM

(suspicious)

What are you up to, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, that's a nice pose. Don't move!
Stay like that.

Charlotte points the camera at Tim.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

((TV presenter voice))

Introducing the infamous TV cook,
Tim Sherman, enjoying a
well-deserved break with his
closest and dearest friends.

(beat)

Tell me, Tim, when you're not
cooking, what do you do in your
spare time?

TIM

(sarcastically)

I make home-videos with my talented
but somewhat misguided wife and
former producer of my show!

Tim slopes off. Miranda has been watching Charlotte's
interaction with Martin and Tim.

MIRANDA

What are you doing, dreaming up a
new reality show or something?

CHARLOTTE

Hey, now you mention it - that's
not a bad idea! Not a bad idea at
all!

Charlotte points the camera at Miranda.

CHARLOTTE

So tell me, Miranda, why are you
flirting so overtly with both of
them?

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA
(righteously)
I can't favour one of them to the detriment of the other. Didn't you see how they're competing for me?

CHARLOTTE
(bitingly)
Oh yeah? You think so? And had it occurred to you that you might be competing with me?

Miranda flounders.

MIRANDA
Well...erm....no....

CHARLOTTE
Where's your female solidarity gone, Miranda?

INT. COTTAGE - EVENING

MIRANDA
Me and Tim were talking about going to see a ballet this evening in town.

MARTIN
Oh, were you?

MIRANDA
You fancy it, Martin?

MARTIN
Yeah, sure. I could wear my yellow suit!

MIRANDA
You'd never get past the bouncer wearing that thing!

Martin laughs.

MIRANDA
You want to come, too, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE
Mmmm. Give me moment to think it over.
(immediately)
No!

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Come on, don't be a party-pooper!

CHARLOTTE

I'd rather watch dwarves
kick-boxing than a bunch of pansies
in tights groping some anorexic
sylph.

MARTIN

Do I ascertain from your statement
that you're not exactly a fan of
ballet?

MIRANDA

Ok, we'll do something Charlotte
likes instead. Let's catch an Art
film!

CHARLOTTE

I feel like I'm living in an Art
film! I tell you what. You three go
out. We don't have to do everything
together all the time.

TIM

Why not?

MARTIN

Come on, Charlotte.

MIRANDA

What about the group spirit?

CHARLOTTE

Stop ganging up on me!

MARTIN / TIM / MIRANDA

(in unison)

We're not ganging up on you!

CHARLOTTE

I've just about had enough of this!

Charlotte puts on her coat and grabs the car keys.

MARTIN

What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE

Going out! On my own! I need a
break. It's getting too
claustrophobic.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

You can't just take the car and leave us here.

CHARLOTTE

It's my car.

MARTIN

Hey!

CHARLOTTE

I said we should bring two cars but you guys were all so into the togetherness-trip you wouldn't listen.

TIM

Where are you going?

CHARLOTTE

That's my business.

MARTIN

We have a right to know.

CHARLOTTE

God, you sound just like a possessive husband. Only there's two of you! Double the dose!

Charlotte storms out.

INT. COTTAGE - EVENING

MARTIN

So what are we going to do now?

MIRANDA

Looks like we're stuck here for the night.

MARTIN

Huh! Great! And what about the sleeping arrangements? We're an odd number.

TIM

(quipping)

You're the odd number, Martin!

Miranda laughs.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Which of us do you want tonight,
Miranda? It's your turn to choose.

MIRANDA

Hmmm.

Miranda looks from one man's expectant face to the other.

MIRANDA

I pass. Decide amongst yourselves
who gets to sleep with me. I'm
going to the loo.

Miranda goes off to the bathroom.

MARTIN

Alright. If Charlotte can do as she
wants, then so can we. The three of
us!

TIM

A threesome?

MARTIN

Yeah, why not?

TIM

An orgy is against the rules!

MARTIN

It's not an orgy, Tim, it's a
threesome!

TIM

A threesome's not an orgy?

MARTIN

Course not.

TIM

I thought I'd made it absolutely
clear already. I'm not going to bed
with a man.

MARTIN

We're not going to bed with a man,
you idiot! We're going to bed with
Miranda.

TIM

But me and you, we'd have to touch
each other.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
Stop quibbling.

TIM
Well, I'm not doing it! Alright?

MARTIN
Ok, how about we take it in shifts?

TIM
Now, that's fucking tacky. I'm not suggesting that to Miranda.

MARTIN
Alright, I'll tell her.
(calling out)
Miranda!

MIRANDA
(calling out from the
bathroom)
Yes.

MARTIN
(calling out)
We've had an idea.

Tim gives Martin an admonishing look.

TIM
You've had an idea. Not me.

MARTIN
(calling out)
We could take it in turns.

Miranda returns from the bathroom.

TIM
It's not my idea. Martin suggested it.

MIRANDA
Sleep with you one after the other?
Like a conveyor belt!

MARTIN
I didn't see it quite as
industrially as that...

MIRANDA
Well, since it's your idea, Martin,
I assume you will be chivalrous
enough to let Tim go first?

(CONTINUED)

Martin shrugs his unwilling acquiescence.

MIRANDA

And what if I don't feel like
changing partners once I've got the
"bit between my teeth".

MARTIN

What do you mean? Are you saying
Tim's a better in the sack than me?

MIRANDA

Well, Martin, there's no denying
you have the stamina of a horse,
but Tim is more attuned to a
woman's needs.

Miranda puts her hand on Tim's shoulder. She smiles at
Martin and then kisses Tim.

MARTIN

(under his breath)

Oh, go on then! Have a fuck! I
don't care.

Martin grabs his coat and leaves the cottage.

TIM

You might as well have just kicked
him in the nuts. It would have had
the same effect!

EXT. FIELD - EVENING

It is drizzling. Martin slouches through a sodden field in
almost pitch darkness. He gets entangled in prickly briars
in a dense thicket and gets scratched badly.

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Miranda make love.

INT. COTTAGE - NIGHT

Martin re-enters the cottage soaking wet, bedraggled and
covered in mud. He shuffles off his coat and pours himself a
whisky. He sits down on the couch.

Miranda's yelps of joy emanate from the bedroom. Martin
sticks his fingers in his ears to block out the sound.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN
Shit! Fucking shit!

Martin throws his glass against the wall which shatters into tiny pieces.

INT. COTTAGE - LATE MORNING

Martin hears the sound of a car drawing up in front of the cottage. He scampers to the window. Charlotte enters the cottage.

CHARLOTTE
Morning! Where are Tim and Miranda?

Martin gestures limply in the direction of the bedroom.

CHARLOTTE
Oh! You're all on your own, you poor thing?

Martin forces a weak smile. Tim enters the living room.

TIM
Hey, Charlotte.

Miranda enters, yawning.

MIRANDA
Hi, Charlotte, did you have a nice evening?

CHARLOTTE
Great. How about you?

MIRANDA
Not bad.

CHARLOTTE
When's brunch, Tim?

Tim goes off into the kitchen.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I'm ravenous!

MIRANDA
So am I!

Tim returns to the dining room carrying cold roast beef, bread and butter and cranberry sauce. He adopts his role as TV cook.

(CONTINUED)

TIM
Here's a little something I
prepared earlier!

Charlotte and Miranda pounce on the food.

MARTIN
What's that?

Martin pokes at the roast beef with his finger.

TIM
Roast beef.

MARTIN
Cold?

TIM
I didn't check it with a
thermometer, but since I didn't
heat it up, I reckon you might just
be right, Einstein!

MARTIN
You call that brunch? Cold roast
beef?

MIRANDA
I love roast beef!

MARTIN
So do I!
(beat)
When it's served up properly.

TIM
What's that supposed to mean?
Served up properly?

MARTIN
Hot!

TIM
Roast beef is normally eaten cold.

MARTIN
Well, I like it hot.

TIM
Ok, I'll take it back and complain
to the chef.

Tim whisks Martin's dish away from under his nose and takes it back to the kitchen. Tim resumes his place at the table.

(CONTINUED)

TIM (CONT'D)

Anyone else got any complaints?

CHARLOTTE

No, it's perfect, Tim. You might have your faults, but cooking is not one of them!

TIM

You are the only person I know, Charlotte, who can make a compliment double up as a criticism!

CHARLOTTE

(flattered!)

Why, thank you!

MARTIN

Alright, sorry. Look, I didn't mean to seem ungrateful.

TIM

You were ungrateful.

MARTIN

I'll eat it cold.

TIM

Too late. I threw it away.

CHARLOTTE

That'll teach you to beef about the beef, Martin! How about some bread and butter?

MIRANDA

With cranberry sauce!

MARTIN

Oh, fuck you! Fuck you all!

Everyone stops eating. Martin next directs his ill humour at Charlotte.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

So where did you stay last night?

CHARLOTTE

I beg your pardon?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Why didn't you come home?

CHARLOTTE

You sound like my father when I was fifteen!

MARTIN

Did you pick someone up?

CHARLOTTE

What if I did?

MARTIN

You what?

CHARLOTTE

We never ruled out sex with someone else.

MARTIN

Promiscuity was never agreed upon.

CHARLOTTE

And what do you call the four of us screwing like bunny rabbits on speed? Isn't that promiscuity!

MARTIN

Sex with someone else is totally different.

CHARLOTTE

Your double standards make me puke!

MARTIN

So you had a one-night-stand, then?

CHARLOTTE

What's it got to do with you?

MARTIN

Well, did you, or didn't you?

CHARLOTTE

I didn't say I did. I just reserve the right to make my own decisions, thank you.

Martin stands up and starts shouting.

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

You did, didn't you!

CHARLOTTE

Don't you raise your voice to me!

MARTIN

You like to think you can pull any guy you want, don't you? But everything you do is just an attempt to get attention. You need constant reassurance, like some teenage girl, always needing men to find you attractive. And you know why? Truth is, deep down, Charlotte, you actually think you're worthless. You've got absolutely no self-esteem!

Charlotte leaves the cottage, hurt to the core.

TIM

That was a bit over the top, Martin.

MARTIN

Well, do you think she should be allowed to sleep around?

MIRANDA

Martin, you're pushing your luck.

TIM

You don't know if she even slept with anyone. You're jumping to conclusions. I think you owe her an apology.

MARTIN

Do I?

TIM

Yes. You do.

MARTIN

I don't think I've ever said sorry so much in my life as these last couple of days.

MIRANDA

It's good for you. It's like medicine. It's unpleasant but it makes you feel better!

EXT. GARDEN BEHIND THE COTTAGE - DAY

Martin leaves the cottage to look for Charlotte.

MARTIN
Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE
You are a patriarchal, dominating,
possessive pig!

MARTIN
I'm sorry. I...

CHARLOTTE
You come crawling and think you can
make it up by simply saying sorry?

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Tim observes Charlotte and Martin through the window.

TIM
He's got his tail between his legs!
Unusual for him, huh?

Miranda looks out of the window, too.

MIRANDA
What if I had a one-night-stand?
Would you care?

(Beat)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
Would you feel hurt?

TIM
Yes, I would.

EXT. GARDEN BEHIND THE COTTAGE - DAY

MARTIN
I've made a complete fool of
myself.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, you have. Remember when we
went on that bike ride?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

Yeah...

CHARLOTTE

And we screwed in the wood?

MARTIN

Yeah...

CHARLOTTE

Oh, you still remember that, do you?

MARTIN

Of course I do.

CHARLOTTE

That was fun, wasn't it?

MARTIN

Yeah...

CHARLOTTE

But it's not much fun anymore, is it!

INT. CAR - DAY

The quartet drive back through the countryside into town in silence. Martin and Charlotte in front. Tim and Miranda in the back.

INT. CAR - DAY

They drive through town.

CHARLOTTE

Where's good for you, Tim?

TIM

I'll take the tube.

CHARLOTTE

Which station?

TIM

Any will do.

CHARLOTTE

Miranda?

(CONTINUED)

MIRANDA

I'll take the tube with Tim.

Charlotte stops the car. Tim and Miranda get out.

INT/EXT. CAR - CITY CENTRE - DAY

In the rear-view mirror Charlotte watches Tim and Miranda walk away. Tim slips his arm up around Miranda's shoulder. She nestles her head into the nape of his neck.

MIRANDA

You can stay at my place tonight,
if you want.

(beat)

You want to?

TIM

Yeah...ok.

INT. CAR - CITY CENTRE - DAY

CHARLOTTE

Looks like they're becoming an
official item.

MARTIN

It wouldn't surprise me.

Charlotte and Martin drive on in silence for a while.
Charlotte breaks the silence.

CHARLOTTE

So much for our honest attempt at
adultery!

MARTIN

Here, this'll do.

Charlotte pulls up.

CHARLOTTE

You sure? I could drop you at a gay
bar if you want.

MARTIN

Hey, I'm not gay.

CHARLOTTE

No? You sure put the willies up
Tim!

(CONTINUED)

Martin can't help but laugh at Charlotte's wit.

MARTIN

Jesus! What do you expect? I hadn't had sex for ages, and then I go to the cottage horny as hell and you and Miranda lock yourself in the bedroom.

It's Charlotte's turn to laugh.

CHARLOTTE

You're just too highly sexed, Martin.

MARTIN

You didn't used to complain.

Martin opens the door and gets out. Charlotte calls out.

CHARLOTTE

And what about us?

Martin leans back in through the open door.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Or don't you fancy me any more?

Martin gets back in the car. Charlotte drives off, with Martin's arm around her shoulder. A second new couple has formed.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO. EVENING - SOME MONTHS LATER

Charlotte presents a TV show, speaking directly to the camera. Charlotte is flanked on either side by the four participants.

CHARLOTTE

Good evening and welcome! Tonight, we go behind the scenes and peek through the bedroom curtains of this country's real secret societies - our open marriages! With soaring divorce rates, and the damage that separation can cause to children, many couples are embracing a radical new solution to marital strife and a boring sex life.

INT. TIM AND MIRANDA'S FLAT - EVENING

The camera tracks back to show Tim, Miranda, Martin and Charlotte sitting in a line on the sofa watching Charlotte's (pre-recorded) show on TV. Martin has his arm around Charlotte's shoulder. Tim has his hand on Miranda's knee. They start to smile.

CHARLOTTE

Tonight, we meet a quartet who claim their open relationship has not only saved their marriages, but actually strengthened their friendship! Clive, Laura, Dee & Mike, welcome to my brand new show, "Mixed Doubles"!

Tim, Miranda, Martin and Charlotte cannot contain themselves any longer. The four of them burst out into uproarious laughter.

THE END

FADE OUT.