

Juicy Bits

By Kay Adshead

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ACT ONE
SCENE 1

Liz Sharp's office

LS is sat at her desk (only partly suggested) with a glass and a bottle of champagne. She is a well preserved woman in her late 40s - stilletoed, big hair and 'tasteful' jewellery. She wears an expensive little black frock. Her nails are bitten.

This is the 2nd of June and its already very hot. In offices all over London English air conditioning is failing to deal with global warming - a freak summer has been promised.

Outside her office is the party to celebrate Xtremis five years publishing success.

She is silent, gingerly she pushes a button on her desk panel. The button is of an inter - communicator to her staffs adjoining office.
She eavesdrops, two voices: one middle aged London female, - young Australian male.

Elsbeth : The tits are out!

Anthony: And that's bad?

Elsbeth: Catastrophic! The last time she got her tits out Nasa sent up Apollo 7.

Anthony sniggers

I wouldn't.

Anthony: What?

Elsbeth: Laugh .

Anthony: **(incredulous)** You can't laugh!

Elsbeth: **(moving in, more confidential)** She heard a temp laugh in this office couple of years ago - over there it was by the photocopier. He was sent away suddenly on a crash course in "windows".

Anthony: Ouch !

Elsbeth: To West Hartlepool.

Anthony: Oooh ! **(Shudder)**

Elsbeth: Never heard of again! I had to bag up his bits. Harrowing - weekly bus pass the lot. **(Sound of packet drink being drained with straw, unusually loud)** . I shouldn't say this...

Anthony: Go on...

Elsbeth: Did you catch her left nostril twitch when she opened the door this morning ?

Anthony: Yes! - Yes I did now you mention it.

Elsbeth: The Moschini pour homme...

Anthony: What about it?

Elsbeth: Don't.

LizSharp presses the inter - communicator button twice firmly

Liz: Elsbeth

Elsbeth: **(brightly)** Yes Miss Sharp

Liz: Would you be so exceptionally kind as to ask Mr. Jay Stern to come into my office now please.

Elsbeth: Certainly Miss Sharp.

Liz: Oh and Elsbeth. put the spicy chicken and tarragon mustard bap away would you.

Elsbeth: **(sudden rustling of paper)** Of course Miss Sharp.

Two sharp prods Liz disconnects. She's still. Suddenly and very self consciously she stretches out both arms over the desk in front, sits up very straight , closes her eyes and attempts two deep (very deep) Yogic breaths. In - out. In - out. She opens her eyes(pauses) she delves into bag takes out handbag mirror hold it up scrutinising her face - (her tits) They do not displease her. She tosses mirror back in bag She drums fingers. Then takes up glass of champagne hold the stem in her fingers twisting it. She is in the process of swigging it back when Jay Stern enters - she stands, elegant, expansive, gracious, absolutely in control.

Liz: **(arms outstretched)** Jay!

J: Elizabeth.

slight pause

She leans over and kisses him on both cheeks

Jay Stern is in his late 40s, worn lumberjack shirt, faded denims, desert boots, bearded, bespectacled. He has the look of an old hippie / university lecturer, shy - short sighted and shambolic

Liz: Do sit down.

Jay: I'd rather....

Liz: Of course.

Jay: If you don't...

Liz: Not at all. **(she leans back extravagantly in her chair)** Well!

He is peering around short sightedly

This is nice!

He peers at her, she returns his gaze confidently.

Jay: Yes.

Liz: After all these years (pause) Will you...? (She offers him a glass of champagne)

Jay: Oh no. no.

Liz: What about...? (she takes out a pretty carved box - she offers him a ready -rolled spliff - he appears tempted)

Jay: No... Thank you - Do you mind if I - (he is picking up books from a pile on the floor)

Liz: Go ahead please. (watching him) That's last years books. We publish 12 a year.

Jay: An Empire.

Liz: Quite.

Jay: I was....

Liz: Surprised.

Jay: Yes.

Liz: I expect Sheridan was shocked wasn't she...?

Jay: (confused) Er...

Liz: Horrified ?

Jay: (reading cover) 'Licking'.

Liz: (humorously, sipping champagne) Set in a small Sub-Post Office in the Black Country.

Jay: (laughing) Really.

Liz: Part of a panoramic examination of the underbelly of quiet middle England.

Jay: (reading) " His fingers tugged at the thin lace string pulling it roughly to one side. She gasped a little, arching her back into him moaning and rocking. He took the smooth golden orbs in his callused palms, first stroking, stroking then fiercely parting them, breathing in the sudden sweet sharp pungent smell of her c.." I don't see where the post -office comes in.

Liz: (briskly) Well it was probably half day closing. - There's a whole pile of the shit over there - ones set in a Nat West bank - the manageress Mrs. Smithers Brown explores an alternative to repaying mortgage loans, - and there's one in Waitrose, the local library of course, and the last in the series, Spec-Savers, - that's very good, Matt discovers an innovative use for out of date contact lens fluid.

Jay: You actually read them ?

Liz: I wouldn't go that far. They were my idea, created to feed the starved imaginations

of Mrs, Miss, Ms Average and bring a frisson into her daily trudge to the High St. We've moved on now of course - introduced our trademark black matt covers with the embossed postage stamp size image.

Jay: I like this one . (picks up plastic book)

Liz: That's for Mr. Average set in the local B&Q, - a very sensual chapter on black & decker accessories

Jay: Why is it plastic?

Liz: It's stain proof.

Jay: Why?

Liz: I told you it's for men.

He laughs

(Pause)

Liz reaches for the box of spliff, she offers one to Jay

Jay: No, thank you.

Liz: Me neither, I believe it contributes to my restless leg syndrome

Pause

(casually) And how is the fragrant Sheridan Hammel?

Jay: **(blinking)** I'm sorry?

Liz: How is she? I see she's stopped writing the themed verse novels, - burnt themselves out I imagine. I mean Earth was alright and Air, Fire got right up my nose, but Sea, I mean unless you'd got a degree in marine biology....

J: Liz..

Liz: The last I heard and this is years ago now, she'd given up writing and was marketing vegetarian dog food.

Jay: Sheridan is dead.

stupefied pause

Liz: Dead

Jay: Yes . Dead.

pause

Liz: What do you mean dead?

Jay: I mean dead.

Liz: You can't mean dead dead.

Jay: **(puzzled)** I'm afraid I do
(long pause)

Liz: **(stunned)** Well you don't seem very upset.

Jay: ...It was ten years ago now I suppose

Liz: Ten years!

Jay: Yes. To the day.

Liz: To the day.

Jay: Yes Sheridan died on 2nd June 1988 - I wondered if that's why you wanted to meet.

Liz: You mean to say Sheridan Hammel has been dead for 10 years, and I Liz Sharp know nothing about it.

Jay: **(equally surprised)** So it would appear.

Liz: **(she slams her fingers down on the intercommunicator button)** Elspeth

Elspeth: **(surprised mouth full)** Yes Miss Sharp?

Liz: I told you to put that frigging bap away.

Elspeth: Sorry Miss Sharp.

Liz: Ring my home.

Elspeth: Your *home* ?

Liz: Yes, you know, where I go every night when I put my coat on...**(looking at watch)**
 ▶ My cleaning woman'll be there, ring her and ask her to look for my diaries. Tell her to look up 1988...what I was doing on...

Jay: June 2nd

Liz: On June 2nd 1988. Do you hear me? It's urgent.

Elspeth: Right away Miss Sharp. ▲

Liz appears shaken to the boots, she pours herself the rest of the champagne

Liz: What did she die of?

Jay: She was run over by a tram in Blackpool.

Liz: **(spewing up champagne)** What?

Jay: There was an International Poetry Conference there. She was run over by a tram on the way from the station. It was in most of the papers.

Liz: **(incredulous)** Run over by a tram. Sheridan Hammel run over by a tram in Blackpool. That's like saying the Pope was knocked down by a skate-boarder outside Sega World. I mean...

Jay: I'm sorry, obviously - I assumed you knew.

Liz: Yes, yes of course well, never mind back to er...did she have a funeral ?

Jay: Not really.

Liz: But her remains I mean..

Jay: She was cremated privately, just me and family. You know how she loved trees....

Liz: Yes. **(attempt at sincerity)** I think she was, one of the first people I'd ever met who hugged one.

Jay: Her father planted a forest in her memory, hard wood, soft wood, evergreen, flowering and fruit tress. A virtual forest.

Liz: A forest, right yes obviously I'm er...sorry and er...condolences etc...well back to er..

Jay: Business?

Liz: You must be wondering why you asked to see me today **(pause)** I mean why I asked to see you today.

Jay: Yes.

Liz: Right **(she takes a deep breath)** Xtremis has been publishing erotic writing for women for 10 years now, our profile has changed quite a bit in that time. Our last 3 books: Omega, Downloading and The Net were specifically targeted at er..professional women in their late 20s to early 40s.*As you see **(she hands him a paper)** we're attracting bigger and better writers and from this year we are looking to publish 1 of our 12 annual books by a significant author.

Jay: I see.

(pause)

Liz: You are of course a very good novelist **(pause)** Perhaps you're even a great novelist I don't know..

Liz: I want you to write a book for me. I want you to write for Xtremis books an erotic masterpiece to rival Story of O or Anais Nin. I want you to write me a great book. **^**

Very slowly light comes up in the next segment Liz Sharp's flat. Bella her cleaning woman is in the process of taking things out of a large wicker picnic basket, a gingham table cloth, HP sauce, large squeezee plastic tomato, plastic cutlery. She proceeds to lay a table (possibly only half suggested as for a meal)

Jay: I see.

Liz: Obviously, your own publishers want you to write a great book for them, I have to offer an incentive and the only incentive I can offer at Xtremis books...

Jay: Apart from our friendship.

Liz: Apart from our long friendship - is money, a great deal of money, no I'll go further than that, an obscene, a phenomenal amount of money (She stands) I'm prepared to offer you an advance of 2-million pounds.

Jay is gobsmacked

In addition there will be another million on delivery and a further million on publication. Royalties will be negotiated as usual. There is absolutely no restriction on the book you will have an entirely free hand, my only requirement is that it is sexy and that we can market it and women will want to read it.

So what do you say?

Jay: You have that amount of money in Xtremis books?

Liz: Yes I do...Just...It's a gamble. I'm taking a gamble. I'm prepared to sink the entire profits of the last 5 years of Xtremis publishing into one book, if it succeeds..well, we'll have turned a significant corner at Xtremis publishing. If it fails...

Light segment snaps to black, light full on LS flat, Bella has laid the table- she stands back and admires it - hazy sunshine streams in.

Sudden violent sound tape of car backing bad temperedly into a drive - a dog barks.

SCENE 2

Liz Sharp's flat

Bella moves to the window and looks down - car door slams- hasty footsteps on the gravel - immediately she takes her mobile from the pocket of her pinny and dials

Bella: It's me.

Sound of distant key jangling and door opening, somebody noisily climbing stairs 2 at a time

She's coming back! She's on her way up.- No, I mean now, now this minute! I don't know - ...look we'll have to cancel this week.

A scream of pain, falling sound - a baby cries - shouting

Good grief - (somebody mounting stairs) I'll have to go (tenderly) - Don't be. Next week unless I call.. Same time and place. (she hangs up)

Raised voices, - 1 foreign, Bella suddenly remembers the meal, she starts frantically to put things away. Stops. - Thinks better of it

Row in full swing. - baby crying. Door slams shut

Absolute silence

Shuffling sound

Liz blasts her way in cursing and limping

Bella: What happened?

Liz: I fell over next doors baby.

Bella: Oh dear.

Liz: I could have broken my neck.

Bella: But the baby..

Liz: Bounced. It bounced Bella. It's that kind of baby..It's all (she shudders) rubbery.

Bella follows her gaze.

Bella: Your diaries. they weren't where you said.

Liz: Yes, yes..

Bella: I rang the office but you'd already left. Are you all right?

Liz: Would you find 1988 please?

Look up June 2nd....tell me what I was doing 2.30 in the afternoon...

Bella: It says tripped over uneven paving stone in **King St** spent afternoon in St Thomas' suspected fracture turned out to be a strain. (She looks at Liz). How...funny.

Pause

Liz: Hilarious.

Get me a very stiff whisky will you Bella please.

As Bella does so, Liz notices the table. She looks puzzled.

Liz: What the...?

Bella: **(registering the table)** It's for you.

L: Me?

Bella: A meal. - I decided to cook you a meal.

Liz: Why?

Bella: I had a feeling you'd be needing a bit of .. TLC today.

Liz: But how could you possibly know I'd be back this afternoon.

Bella: **(shrugs)** I had a hunch I suppose...a sort of intuition.

Liz: **(gobsmacked)** Bella you are amazing, do you know that, - an amazing woman. - I swear you're a witch. What is it?

Bella: What?

Liz: The meal.

Bella: Oh. - Egg and chips. I thought I'd join you. I thought you'd appreciate a bit of company today.

Liz: **(gesturing to the whisky bottle)** Help yourself.

A moments companionable silence

Liz: Sheridan Hammel's dead.

Bella: Is she?

Oh yes. The poet, yes. **(slight pause)** But she died...

Liz: Years ago

(Liz groans)

Bella: She was a friend was she?

Liz: **(indicating pile of diaries)** You see the brown one, it's a photo album.

Bella opens it, - a large black and white photo from the 60s drops out. The photo is immediately projected overhead. Enormous filling the auditorium. It shows a group of smiling young women - 2 in the foreground.

Bella: Sheridan Hammel! Of course, I recognise her now. **(softly to herself reads caption)**

'Liz Sharp and Sheridan Hammel crack open the bubbly to celebrate the launch of Mama Quillo, the first feminist publishing house dedicated to publishing womens writing from all the world. Liz Sharp said today "We will look for the new global voices, voices for the future, hard, young female voices defining women's aspirations in the second half of the 21st century'.

Liz Sharp starts to laugh softly

Mama Quillo. - Of course all those gold coloured books. Don't you look sweet.

And look at her..

Liz: Sheridan.

Bella: She's impossible...

Liz: Oh no, not at all. Sheridan was real, even her eyelashes. - I mean everybody else got there's from a promotion stand in Debenhams. - but not Sheridan.

Bella: She looks like an angel, - how sickening.

Liz: Yes. Unfortunately, she was also the sweetest, kindest, gentlest, most generous spirited individual I've ever met in my life.

Liz Sharp appears close to tears, - Bella is astonished.

Bella: (gently) Who are the others ?

Liz: What does it matter ? Only Sheridan was indispensable. Editing, design, contracts, bringing raisin cookies on Mondays, spicy bean stews on Fridays, answering the phone, charming everyone, disappearing infuriatingly, every now and then to model, paint, - travel. Anyway one day she disappeared for good, we got a note saying she was back in California nursing her father who had had a heart attack, we got the telegram Wednesday afternoon. - on Thursday morning Jay Stern walked into the office.

Bella: Jay Stern. The booker prize nominee...

Liz: The very one.

Bella: But he was...

Liz: Married to Sheridan Hammel. That's right.

Bella: (interested) I'd better put the chips on. -

Liz: He was South African - been deported for anti-government activity...etc. Faber had just published his first novel...a political satire well reviewed and damn good. I told him we didn't publish men. He had a manuscript - hand-written on Basildon bond paper from a young black dead South African woman. We read it, - it was sensational, Jay Stern and I edited it together. The book was published, and well the rest is...

Bella: (riveted) How do you like your eggs? -

Liz: So we looked around for something else to work on, - together, - and before long a draft of a huge rambling crazy novel we called it the Machu Pichu book, from a South American woman, from Peru of all places, we decided to go over both of us, have a holiday to joint edit into a 2nd draft. We hired a 2 roomed apartment with a balcony just off the flower market in

Cuzco and fell madly in love (pause) We were there 10 weeks when a telegram came from Sheridan, - she was with her father in South America, she'd be in Peru next week. I knew after 10 minutes of Sheridan and Jay clapping eyes on each other that was it. It was all over. That all was lost. And ..er..we never edited the Machu Pichu novel. I don't think I have any cooking oil....

Bella: I'm sorry ?

Liz: For the chips.

Bella: No, no, I've brought my own.

Liz: (suddenly animated) Listen.. ♣

Bella: Yes.

Liz: I need you to do something for me.

Bella: (anxious) Yes ?

Liz: Cook a meal.

Bella: You've only got one plate..

Liz: A South American banquet.

Bella: ...one knife and fork

Liz: I'll pay you. I'll pay you anything you ask, I'll pay £300. ♣

SCENE 3

Bella's flat.

High rise council in North London. The look is authentic London squat, cheap Formica, sticky lino, cheap rugs and cushions, garish painted walls. The space is dignified by one wall covered in striking masks, some grotesque...seated is Jo in vest pyjama bottoms, barefoot, smoking, reading Automart with a can of Stella. It is hot

Bella enters, hot, flustered, sweating

Jo: (Glaswegian - without looking up) Your client rang.

Bella: (dumping bags, moving straight to the pile of books, starting to flick through) Did she?

Jo: Him! Him The Client!

Bella: (looking up concerned) Really?

Jo: His voice was just as I'd imagined it. Weaselly with a whiff of damp underpant.

Bella: I wonder how he got this number?

Jo: Problems?

Bella: No, it's just that I couldn't see him this afternoon. Liz Sharp came back unexpectedly. I managed to ring him and he sounded a bit...

Jo: Weaselly with a whiff...

Bella: No....desperate! Did he say what he wanted?

Jo: Well we know what he wanted. I told him to bog off and have a wank.

Bella: (concerned) You didn't..

Jo: No, but I will next time (suddenly) I feel..violated. I hope he wears a condom on the phone.

Polite distinctive tap on the door, it is obviously a well known signal, Bella cheers, Jo jeers. Door opens Sef pops head round. He is laden down with cheap camping paraphernalia.

Bella: Oh, Sef you were on "News at Ten" - You looked so..dashing.

Jo: (incredulous) You could only see his arse.

Sef: (South London softly spoken) We done good.

Jo: (To Sef) You looked a wally.

Bella: They'd sent bulldozers in and everything.

Sef: Big army presence.

Bella: You're so brave.

Sef: Stun gun, batons, tear gas canisters, bayonets they were the worst . (winces)

Bella: How many days were you up there?

Jo: It's the trees I feel sorry for.

Sef: Actually..

Jo: Don't tell us you fell out.

Sef: It wasn't my turn.

Jo: I mean if you were a hundred year old oak.. Would you want some smelly bastard in combats planting their fat arse all over your nice new shoots ?

Sef: They only let me up for the TV bit, - director said I had a sympathetic face.

Jo: Sure he didn't say pathetic?

Sef: There was a very nice fully qualified veterinary nurse called Karen from Sunbury in the next tree.

Jo: Tell me do different socio economic groups go for different trees, you know media arty types, - the beech, concerned mums in Laura Ashley smocks - the laburnum and unemployed wiffos like you, the privet.

Sef: (attempting sarcasm) I'm sure there's a very interesting sociological debate behind that Jo.

Bella: (who has been flicking through mags/books) Well, I'm getting nowhere here.

Jo: What you doing?

Sef: (blushing, speaking quietly so Jo can't hear) Er, Bella, I wonder if I could have a quiet word with you

Jo: (laughing) Oh no, no, it's 'the problem', the little problem, I'm sorry I'm sure its very distressing, I can't help it. Didn't the bayonet up the bum sort you out.

Sef: They've asked me to leave the trials !

Bella: No !

Jo roars with laughter

Sef: They said a year was long enough without any notable signs of success.

Bella: Oh dear.

Sef: Said I should take a break.

Jo: 'Magic bullet shoots blanks for Eco - boy'.

She roars again

Bella: (consoling) It might be for the best I mean we don't really know the side effects.

Jo: A compulsion to shin up big hard oaks.

Phone rings, Jo answers

Jo: Yes...

Sef: I'm not giving up.

Jo: (handing receiver over to Bella) It's the Duchess.

Bella scuttles to the phone

Bella: Mrs Rimmer Brown.....Honor

Jo moves off to adjoining room, she is changing

Jo: (loudly off) There's this stuff you can paint on the inside of your trousers..

Bella: (hand over the phone) Ssssh!

Sef: I'd rather not talk about it if you don't mind.

Jo: Or you can have an injection..

Sef: Please.

Jo: In your prostate gland..

Sef: I'm certified needle phobic.

Bella: Yes, well you know I can't do much until I've had a meeting with Fiz and er...

Jo: Bloody big needle..

Bella: Darius. I need to take a mould of their faces.

Jo: Then there's always powdered rhino horn...

Sef: Now that is below the belt.

Bella: Tomorrow!

Sef: I wouldn't plunder an endangered species just so that...so that...

Jo: Yes..

Sef: So that..

Jo: Yes!

Bella: Well I suppose so. I'm ever so booked up...er I charge a flat fee independent of my original quotation...for fittings....£75. OK then. Well, 3 'o'clock then. Thank you. Yes. I look forward to it. (Bella puts the phone down)

Sef: Is something up?

Bella: When am I going to shop for this food for Liz Sharp if tomorrow I'm making masks?

Sef: I'm sorry?

Bella: **(distracted - still flicking through magazines)** I'm making masks for Honor Rimmer Browns daughter Fiz and er...

Sef: Darius'

Bella: Wedding.

Sef looks at masks

Bella: **7** No, no beautiful masks, they carry up the aisle with flowers. **(suddenly)** Tatiana! I've had a brain wave. Look I've got this mad Peruvian friend, she's a fabulous cook **(to Sef)**. Could you pay her a visit tomorrow, she's not on the phone, ask her advice on a sensational South American meal, all courses, two people_ make a list of ingredients, buy them **(whispering)** don't spend more than fifty **(she takes notes out of bag)** and er give her this **(she takes down one of the grotesque masks)** by way of thank you **★**

Phone rings. Sef answers

Sef: Hello. Yes. Yes. Right **(to Bella)** Some bloke wants to speak to you...sounds a bit...

Jo: **(re-entering, very smart in prison officer's uniform)**..Weaselly with a whiff of damp underpant **✓**

In the distance, screaming, many voices, female, loud, far away.

SCENE 4

Chloe and Leonard's bedroom

An hysterical scream. Early Evening. Leonard and Chloe's cream and gold bedroom shimmering in the heat. One corner of the bed only is seen.

They enter, - Ken and Barbie, all light golden tan, cuticles and Armani. They are both exuberantly pissed and bear triumphantly (like booty) armfuls of Xtremis books, unmistakeable in their black matt covers.

Chloe: Ahhhh! (screaming dropping piles of books on bedroom floor)

Leonard: You clicked! (He drops books likewise. Chloe screams) It was a click ! click!
(He has his hand up her skirt, they are in an embrace) You were all set to clinch..

Chloe: (under her breath, nibbling his ear) A clinch - click.

Leonard: The most important...

Chloe: (under her breath) Lucrative...lucrative..lucrative.

Leonard: (he is unclipping a suspender) The most important and fucking lucrative contact ever given to a market research company (he removes her stocking and shoe) since..since..

Chloe: (giggling) You don't know any market research companies except mine

Leonard: Soon, my darling, there won't be any but yours! (He starts on another stocking)

Chloe: She listened.

Leonard: (nuzzling her) Sexy ears..

Chloe: Really listened..

Leonard: Silver tongue..

Chloe: Not that Liz Sharp ever really listens. I told her..

Leonard: It's almost poetic.

Chloe: I did!

Leonard: The way your nipples stand out.

Chloe: I bloody told her.

Leonard: When you make a point.

Chloe: A 3 month survey, comprehensively assessed would supply her with the information to up..

Leonard: I know what I want to up.

Chloe: Her readership 50%.

Leonard: I love the way your buttocks clench. (another stocking off)

Chloe: I told her only I had access to the 14+ readership following my recent success with

Smash Hits survey...

Leonard: When you bullshit...

Chloe: On losing it.

Leonard: I'm losing it.(hands still up skirt, fondling buttocks)

Chloe: I nearly lost her. I mean so nearly. She didn't want to know.

L: Started paying with her vol au vents..

Chloe: Turns out she's not interested in "Teen Stream"

Leonard: Very good

Chloe: I just made it up. write it down..

Leonard: (both hands up skirt) I don't have a free hand...

Chloe: So I u turned..

Leonard makes car noises.

Chloe: You'll die.

Leonard: I'm dying..

Chloe: Made out I was..

Leonard: Passionate about the wrinklies..

Chloe: She's got this seriously wacko idea..

L : I've got an idea...

Chloe: To pay bucks a - blitzin'...

L : It'll be blitzin...

Chloe: (quickly) To some heavyweight author, I mean Salmon and Martins pal, to write the definitive once and for all dirty book. And she wants my survey...

Leonard: No I want..

Chloe: As a comprehensive work tool. Turns out she's been chasing the 45+ readership.

Leonard: All that old lolly.

Chloe: For the past 2 years, nobody could get in there.

Leonard: All that tight old pussy. 

Chloe: She's certain. Absolutely certain that the future of ..

Chloe: {Smutty crap..

Leonard: {Crappy smut..

Chloe: Publishing lies in Erotica for Eggheads.

Leonard: Being an Existentialist (he is taking her knickers down) Or is it a rationalist. At this moment. Only one thing (he produces her knickers with a flourish) is certain...

They move off to make love.

The next scenes 5a - 5g may run into each other, overlapping. Some parts of some scenes may be played simultaneously. Maybe parts of 3 scenes or more may play together.

SCENE 5a **Prison**

Jo in Prison. Light on segments out, characters remain as shapes only. Top lighting creates bars, grills.

Sound tape - clanking, moaning - inexplicable breathing, footsteps and an echoey prison silence.

Jo has a torch and passes each segment on her rounds, rattling keys. Outside one cell (segment) she stops. Lights up on woman in cell writing - about her a veritable tower of regular school exercise books. Her cell is freezing. Sound of cooling fan.

Jo: Martha (Martha doesn't look up, Jo watches). Scribble. scribble, scratch, scratch. Give us a shift, eh Mart? A wee gander. A quick flash.

Martha ignores her. Pause

Your memoirs - I say (She chuckles) Dynamite! A timely retrospective News of the World's to die for.

'Hairdo' says "Bollocks"

"Memoirs is Bollocks" she says

Says you sit there

Day after day

Year after year

Writing your name

Martha Corpus Christi M'Looley

Martha Corpus Christi M'Looley

Line after line

Page after page

Book after book

Hairdo says you're a fucking mad Catholic cow.

Blenkin says she has a flick through when you're in the yardy, she says it poetry. Poetry to cry for - Blenkin says (Martha is ignoring her, writing steadily)

But I say Bollocks Blenkin. (we hear a strange scratching sound) I say memoirs . (scratching louder and louder) You'd be mad not to. (scratching sound again) Hear that? Cockroaches. It's the heat.

Nice and cool here, Martha, cool to the skin.

I told them

About the fan

That if the fan wasn't repaired

You wouldn't be responsible for your actions

They listen to me, Mart

They listen to me.

SCENE 5b

Chloe and Leonard's bedroom.

Chloe: In each finger and thumb, quite delicately he took the lips of her vagina and parted them..

The segment represents only a section of the bedroom. We see a corner of the bed only. A candle flickers to the air, clothes are strewn. Chloe is reading from an Xtremis book. It is apparent - breathing, groaning - they are fucking. Leonard is close to coming.

Chloe: ...revealing the small pink glossy nob of her clitoris (breath) ~~The guard's grip was vice like, she couldn't move. His great hand on her mouth stifling her virgin cries. He licked it, the sweet hard little lump, his tongue like a cat, his tongue circling, then pressing, then sucking, stopping sometimes to draw back and inspect her. His fingers probing and detached. After a while she grew wet and slippery. "Set her down" he said, "This Goddess, this chosen woman, this Sacred Muse of Sapa Inca. The guard pinned her to the circle of bare earth where the wet grass had been burnt, holding her shoulders and legs. He took his hard penis in his hand and guided it into her (breath). Suddenly ferocious his teeth barred, his eyes bulging and glowing like coals, he rammed himself up her again and again, asking the guard to release her mouth so that he could hear her moans ..~~

Leonard starts to come

Less than three feet away the dismembered head of Ayahulla spiked on a bloody pole, flies and blue bottles flying round, watched the rape and defilement of the Sacred Eternal, watched the theft of her female soul juice, the treasured secret of his people Ayahulla - Emperor betrayed by Francisco Pizarro ..

Leonard is still coming but is not too pleased with the dismembered head

So the dream of the monkey with 2 faces had been a portent after all!

SCENE 5c

Prison

Lights back up in prison. Jo facing out speaks to Martha. Martha listens.

Jo: (very softly) Up the ginnel, smell of vindaloo and pee. 'Happily' bending over, only 3 or 4 counting the flea bites going sceptic on your shin, while the big kids inspected our bums.

Mrs McIntyre leaving a red hot hand print on my scrawny thigh for spitting on Wendy Worsleys shiny red princess shoes. - and Mr. Fry, every childhood has a Mr. Fry, natty in his gold buttons, who got the naughty girls to hang from the gym ropes in their pants 'til their palms bled, and who left under a cloud one Thursday dinner, Thursdays being dog food pie and snot crumble.

And girl-chase - the Friday ritual. if you lost, your knickers'd be tied around the football post in time for 1 'O' clock practices.

You know Martha. And there's more. 'No nose' who lost it to a pit bull, back from the pub, pink and stinking with your dad, handing out compliments on your nice wee bust".

Mammy pulling me from under the table by my plaits, to kiss Grandpa's rotten peach cheek.

Your brother's black eye glinting through the bog key hole. We know what they do - It's endless.

Waking up, the night spiked, to find some shit up you. Playing dead. We know.

It goes on and on what they did to us. We spent half our lives playing dead. We know. And we know, what we want.

SCENE 5 G

Tatiana's flat

Tatiana and Sef sit facing each other in vivid pink light, green pin spot on faces (this is the same segment as Martha's prison). Between them a copiously smoking oil burner, that gives off smoke and sweet, heady pungent scent. Tatiana is reading off a list of ingredients for Bella's South American feast, she has a thick Peruvian/South London accent. Sef has a notebook and is carefully jotting them down. They are exotic and sometimes improbable, - last but not least....

Tatiana: According to appetite 2 or 4 fresh fat guinea pigs

Sef: (looking up) I'm sorry?

Tatiana: You heard me. ♪

SCENE 5 H

Outside

Jay has sat down on a park bench. On the opposite end is an urban monk, a holy man - Brown robe, hooded, rope belt, sandals and a wooden staff, possibly an Augustan. He is talking, Jay listens.

Holy Man: So I took Marjore, Whittle was her maiden name, to the Startled Parrot, one of those trendy wine bars. (lots of parrots, plastic but quite realistic in pretty wrought iron cages entwined with artificial ivy. - up to the roof garden with it's hanging baskets and rhododendrons. I ordered a brandy and babyham and a pint of John Smiths. And she said "Where's me Amorello then?" and we laughed, because that's exactly what she used to say all those years ago. And I came back with olives stuffed with pimentos, green cherries, red cherries, silverskin onion and a baby gherkin, all skewered on a little stick with a plastic orchid at one end. And that was our first date.

Well, as you can imagine, two normal red bloodied people, unattached, in robust middle age, old sweethearts at that, it wasn't long before....And it was...well....sensational, quite frankly. To my surprise, for she'd been a hard nut to crack as a girl, she boasted quite a comprehensive collection of well, lace naughties of one sort or another, bras with holes where the nipples poke out, frilly crutchless panties, stay up sheer black stockings and novelty musical suspender belts, fur lined handcuffs, ankle chains, neck collars, vibrators of every conceivable colour, size and design, knobbly, smooth ribbed pronged and her favourite - her collection of fake leopard skin whips.

Jay: Whips?

Holy Man: Anyway this went on and was all so perfect that we decided to tie the knot, so to speak. Had a lovely registry office wedding in the New Forest. She gave up teaching business studies at the local tech. Took a reflexology course, specialising in feet, passed out with a starred distinction, turned the back bedroom into a consulting room, filled it with silk rubrium lilies and got quite a few regulars, and all the time helped me so much with the business, accounts, typing, presentation, my annual profits went up an average 30 / 35%.

He looks at his watch.

Oh, I must get back she'll be worrying. She likes me out of the house Fridays between 9 and 10.

Long pause

(whispers) - Dresses up. French maid, Jungle girl, - Nurse, Bunny girl as well as quite a few more....original, - likes me to do the same (he gestures to his own outfit) - surprise her.

He makes a bell tugging noise.

Yes?

(door creaking noise)

Who are you?

Does it matter?

Foot in the door.

Of course it matters. My husband is due back...

▶ But can't you see...

I'm a man of the cloth.

A man of God.

A holy man.

On a sacred mission.

It goes on like this. A witty to and fro. A merry banter. Then I barge in, more repartee, earnest protestations, not always from her. ThenFollowed by one of her speciality suppers. oysters, moules mariniere, lobster, mange tout tossed in lemon juice and virgin oil, baby new potatoes. Then an aloe vera and walnut juice foot massage.

He stands to go.

Holy Man: This heat eh?

Jay smiles.

He looks at her. I love it. (walking off) I'll see you again. .

Jay looks puzzled.

He looks at her. I will.

SCENE 5 I

Bella's flat. The balcony.

Night. Sef and Bella stand looking out over London. Between them in a small travelling cage is a live guinea pig.

Sef: (referring to cage) I'm sorry.

Bella: You did the right thing.

Sef: I knew, if I left him, the little fella'd end up in a bap next to oven chips and a portion of frozen peas.

Bella: Oh, dear.

Sef: She said it's a pity I didn't come yesterday.

Bella: Really ?

Sef: 'Cos she had four.

Bella: (suddenly) I wonder how she kills them?

Sef: I mean she strikes me as a woman of gargantuan appetites.

Bella: I hope it's humane.

Sef: Stamps on them probably..

Bella: No.

Sef: Or just bites their neck..

Bella: Never.

Sef: Wouldn't surprise me. I got the impression that little chap there is to her what a...

Bella: Mars bar?

Sef: What a packet of salt and vinegar crisps. is to you and me.

Bella: How awful. How truly awful.

pause

Sef: What will you do?

Bella: Do?

Sef: Yes, you know the meal?

Bella: Oh...Oh... The recipe's magic, I'll just substitute chicken for guinea pig.²

pause

Sef: Chicken?

Bella: Yes.

pause

Sef: Chickens are lovely things.

Bella: **(dismayed)** Are they?

Sef: I've no experience of them myself but I've heard they're very sociable..

Bella: Oh?

Sef: Rather creative..

Bella: Goodness.

Sef: And loyal.

Bella: Oh!!

They're both slightly depressed - phone goes Bella jumps, pause, they let it ring.

Sef: Is that?

Bella: Probably.

Sef: Shall I...?

Bella: No, no. I can't put it off forever.

She moves into her room, picks up the phone while Sef takes the guinea pig out of his cage and pets him.

Hello! Yes... Yes it is.

Sef: Aren't you a big fat boy..

Bella: **(softly)** I'm sorry I...I... I just haven't been able to turn around this week. Absolutely fine.

Sef: You didn't want to end up in a booty did you?

Bella: Wednesday. Same time. Same place. She won't come back - that was extraordinary circumstances.

Sef: You don't want to end up in streaky bacon wrapped round your little tum.

Bella: **(formal businesslike)** Yes. I'll see you there then.

Sef: Do you Fatso?

Bella returns balcony sighing

Sef: **(still petting guinea pig - looks at her - softly)** I don't know why you do that.

Bella: What?

Sef: That.

Bella: Oh.

Sef: Why?

Bella: Well, - the money I suppose- ...partly..

Sef: Partly. Only partly...

Bella says nothing. pause.

Sef: I don't want you to do that. You're special Bella. Special and very beautiful.

Bella: (touched)Thank you. Sef.

pause

Sef: (significantly) Bella...

Bella: Oh yes, oh I'm sorry. I've been meaning to ask you. Is there any?

S: No. No change.

Bella: How long is it now?

Sef: Nearly 18 months. I'm frantic.

Bella: Hasn't the Doctor helped at all ?

Sef: He says it's psychological. he says 95% of men will suffer temporary impotence at some point in their life. I'm seeing an NHS psychologist Norman...

Bella: Norman?

Sef: I've got 4 freebie sessions.

Bella: But if it's psychological...did something..

Sef: Traumatic happen...No...The last erection I got was after Eastenders, watching David Attenborough's Survival..

Bella: Really?

Sef: Yes, it was a programme about jaguars, I mean the cat Jaguar. It was extraordinary. First the chase, then the male jaguar sort of finally wrestling the compliant but exhausted female to the ground, mounting her, sinking his teeth into the folds of furry flesh round her neck, licking her ears with his great thick lolling yellow tongue, all the time growling, the female half lying, sphinx like, her bum slightly wriggling upwards, accepting him barring her teeth but purr moaning and rolling her eyes, lashing her taut, ferociously sort of proud, angry, and very pleased.

Bella: Heavens. And that was the last time you...Maybe your expectations are a bit high

Sef: Not really...

Bella: But that was the last time you felt aroused?

Sef: No no, I feel aroused all the time. I mean I seem to find everything sexy that's the problem.

Bella: Everything? (she's watching him with the guinea pig)

Sef: (affronted) Well not everything. But a lot of things Anna Ford, knickers glimpsed from the back of a van, slung carelessly over a strangers washing line: the tiny pearlised nails of the Taiwan girl as she passes me my fortnightly giro. I'm sort of in a state of semi - permanent arousal, but I just can't, you know... ♣

Bella: Get it up?

Sef: No.

Bella: Not even..

Sef: Half mast.

Bella: You're just to have to keep on trying Sef.

Sef: Oh I am. I am.

Bella: When you're not up trees..

Sef: Oh even then. Especially then.

Bella: Really ?

Sef: Yes. All that fresh air. No, rest assured, I'm trying all the time. ♣

Anna Ford

SCENE 6

Liz's office.

**Sunshine. Morning. Liz and Chloe. Liz is on the phone juggling coffee and cake .
Chloe is appearing to scrutinise the books, she listens to Liz.**

Liz: **(in between mouthfuls)** CUM's out, it's come, or ...well something else.*Avoid volcanic or detonatory illusions obviously. Twot isn't popular at the minute, or minge, - muff, fanny and surprisingly enough pussy have had a bit of a renaissance.....Be wary of tool, member, manhood etc., limit penis to one a double page, - but you can have as many erections as you like!

Squeals from the other end of the phone, Liz removes receiver from ear.

Fuck, frig, shag, bonk, cunt, stuff, dick, cock and prick are all fine
Enjoy (phone down).

Liz turns to Chloe, mouth full.

Liz:: You realise I intend to stake my business on this book don't you?

Chloe: ...Yes...

Liz: The preferred author of my choice. - if he agrees, has not yet dabbled in this genre before. He'll need all the help he can get from this survey of yours.

Chloe: Of course.

Liz: You boast a particularly personal service.

Chloe: Yes.

Liz: ...So... Tell me about yourself.

Chloe: Well I was born in Nottingham, Mansfield actually, that's a small town outside....my father was a sales engineer, well until he ...

Liz: The juicy bits Chloe... That's all I want just the juicy bits.

Chloe: Juicy bits ?

Liz: Yes (pause suddenly chilly) unless of course...

Chloe: No no (deep very deep breath she plunges in) I lost my virginity at 14 to Karl Roper who was my mum's best friend's son one Saturday when my mum and dad were at Asda (warming up) we did it more or less solidly for the next two years; - then I er sort of went on the prowl..Oh yes - at uni I became a bit obsessed with my lecturer who it turned out was into anal sex, watersports, and spanking. Finished with him (she smiles) eventually. Several liaisons followed couple of "lads", you know spent 6 months on my tummy, one bisexual cellist with a huge, I mean mega ...seriously in touch with his bank balance...oh and a real Spanish waiter, rather proud of that as there were 10 of us after him. Eventually I nailed Léonard who I'd fancied from day one but who brought with him his gormless girlfriend from back home. Fell in love, -and un---married and am now living happily ever after in Clapham.

Chloe flushed with success

Liz: (well and truly gazumped, questions fired out) And are you faithful ?

Chloe: Yes

Liz: You've never ever been ...?

Chloe: Never

Liz: Ever had an abortion?

Chloe: No

Liz: Lucky

Chloe: Careful

Liz: How d'you sort out money ?

Chloe: Joint and single bank accounts

Liz: Who earns most?

Chloe: Me

Liz: What do you drive ?

Chloe: An MX5, Leonard a Porsche

Liz: What do you want to drive ?

Chloe: An MX5.

Liz: How often do you make love?

Chloe: Every day

Liz: How often do you wish you made love ?

Chloe: Every day.

Liz: What's your favourite position?

Chloe: On top.

Liz: How often do you receive oral sex?

Chloe: Every day.

Liz: Give it?

Chloe: Once a week.

Liz: Ever made love out of doors?

Chloe: Frequently.

Liz: What's the most adventurous place you've fucked?

Chloe: Clapham Police Station.

Liz raises eyebrow.

Chloe: Or Chelsea Football Stadium F stand.

Liz: Ever been attracted to a member of the same sex?

Chloe: Yes.

Liz: Ever made love to a member of the same sex?

Chloe: Once briefly.

Liz: Well Chloe I'll expect it on my desk within 6 1/2 weeks.

Chloe pink and flushed.

Liz: The survey dear.

Chloe makes to go she hesitates turns back.

Liz: I think you've got the gist.

SCENE 7

Bella's flat.

Night. Popular South American music. Bella in nightie is working at the coffee table. There are two fine chicken wire mask bases on rotating supports, she takes strips of thin pink tissue paper and builds up a 'skin' over the frame. She works quickly and skilfully. Sef lies on the sofa, guinea pig on his chest, reading an Xtremis book

SCENE 8

Liz's flat.

Music continues under the scene for a while.

Liz and Jay. Dim lights. Night. It is apparent they have recently eaten Bella's South American feast. The carcass of a small chicken is central. They are drinking, the atmosphere relaxed and congenial. Liz wears something low cut and clingy. Jay's in tee shirt and jogging bottoms.

Liz: (Softly) The walls been made into paperweights for city bankers, Lenin's been pickled, Mao's a fashion guru, and Marx is a modern myth. And women can do it all, if they want, and that includes necking 12 pints a night, vomiting in the gutter, and giving out a good kicking and smoking themselves into an early grave - God help us. We've moved on, the sad thing about Sheridan was that she stayed exactly the same, floating about in her ponchos, writing wispy sound scores, and speaking for the seals. We've got to march on - the millennium beckons eh... Next stop Mars.

pause

I'd forgotten..

Jay: What ?

Liz:: That you don't actually communicate yourself. That what you do is create white space and sit back and wait for other people to fill it, or should I say black holes and wait for us all to fall in, I'd forgotten that you let people disembowel themselves in front of you, then you go and sniff round the carnage.

Jay: (laughs gently) You really haven't changed.

pause

What about the Machu Picchu novel?

slight pause

Liz: (deliberately evasive) I'm sorry?

Jay: (gently) The book we went over to South America to edit. Do you still have it?

Liz: Yes... (covering herself) ...somewhere.

Jay: It was never published?

Liz: No - well not as far as I know. - No.

Jay: I have thought about it from time to time - wondered if it was a really great book, a masterpiece that through...

Liz: Circumstance.

Jay: Yes. Never made it into print.

slight pause

Liz: Yes. Yes so have I, often actually. (brightly) So you are going to write that book for me?

Jay: I haven't decided yet

Liz: Wank aids are socially useful you know, and much more important, they're hip, quite seriously hip.

Jay: (amused) Really?

Liz: Who knows you could find yourself popular...

Jay: God forbid.

Liz: A popular writer! Women go crazy over men who write sexy books.

Jay: Well I'll definitely have to give it some thought then.

long pause

Liz: When did you last have sex?

Jay laughs.

Tell me.

Jay: Why?

Liz: Because I want to know.

Jay: (seriously) Two days ago at your party about ten minutes before I saw you.

pause. Liz takes this in she leans forward and whispers.

Liz: I would like you to take me upstairs. I would like you to hurl me onto the bed. I would like you to slowly, button by pearl button undress me, till I'm raw bollocked naked. I would then like you to lick, suck, chew my nipples for a near unbearable length of time, till I moan and writhe and slither, before, with a just agreeable degree of force you give me a severe and merciless rogering.

Do you think you can manage that Mmmm? For old times sake?

Long pause

Jay: (softly) Liz I've had a really lovely evening. It was sweet of you to cook for me, to go to all this...trouble, and I'm seriously thinking about writing a book for you, because I like you and admire you - but I'm sorry I don't want to go to bed with you. ♣

He looks at his watch. pause

Liz: Don't tell me you've a bus to catch. ♣

SCENE 9

Chloe and Leonard's bedroom.

Dim light they're in night clothes Chloe is sat on the segment of bed working furiously at her laptop, occasionally she sips wine from a glass. She's excited, animated.

Lawrence stands reading the survey. Chloe reads from screen

Chloe: The "last word survey of the twentieth century, that puts the hallmark on women's and men's, aspirations"

"For women, and men, who have to know what they want"

"Find out what you want in the new century".

Leonard: The last one's best.

Chloe: Did I tell you Marie Clare's finally pitched in?

Leonard: Yes, yes you did.

Chloe: Telephone interviewers have gone up to three thousand, a thousand street interviewers, this is mega Leonard --- mega. I can't stuff up on this.

Leonard: You won't.

Chloe: **(laughs)** People will fill it in won't they?

Leonard: I think so.

Chloe: I mean that's the criteria that people will want to answer the questions...that it's fun.

Leonard: Mmm **(slight pause)** Mmm...

Chloe: What's up ?

Leonard: **(smiling relaxed)** Nothing.

pause - Chloe goes back to typing

Well..

Chloe stops typing

It's just if you're going to conduct a survey on this scale, why not try and make it really....meaningful?

pause

Chloe: Meaningful?

Leonard: Yes....mean something. Who gives a fuck whether women fancy tall men with medium sized dicks, or bald men with hairy bums. I mean Christ..

Chloe: **(sighs)** I see.

Leonard: Let's really find out what women want. I mean do women want to fight in the next armed conflict, do they want an all women section of the police force?

Chloe: You seem to be forgetting the point of this survey Leonard. Primarily this will be given to Liz Sharp's sado author. It is to sell more smutty books, we are clear on that point are we? Not effect foreign policy, or as an advisory tool to the fucking UN. It is to sell more crappy books to crappy people. ♣

Leonard: **(who has been flicking through the pages of the survey)** And what's all this 'and men' in brackets stuff, doesn't that strike you as the teeniest bit token, the weeniest bit patronising?

Chloe: It's cute.

Leonard: Have another survey for men.

Chloe: The point is men and women do it together, knee to knee, breath on neck, it's a teaser, a kind of foreplay, to help ring the changes, and possibly stoke up the evening bonk.

Leonard: Why include men anyway if you're just going to tack them on?

Chloe: I agree with you there, the men's questions are a waste of space. **(mischievously, flirtatiously)** I mean you're all such simple, fleshy predictable creatures, it's a foregone conclusion what men want... ♣

SCENE 10

Lights up on Bella in Liz Sharp's flat, tidied from previous evening. Lights down on all other segments.

Afternoon - bright sunshine. She has the picnic basket but it is not open, she looks groomed and in a pretty dress.

Her mobile rings - the research phone calls fade out.

Bella: ♡ Yes (surprised) Oh hello.

She moves to the window and looks down.

Yes. I see you...

No fine absolutely fine - keys in the usual place ♡

♡ **In the near distance we hear key turning footsteps up the 846 steps getting closer Bella turns as someone enters**

Bella: Leonard!

It is indeed a happy looking Leonard. Lights snap down

Leonard: Bella - before I go, remind me, there's something really important I want to ask you.

SCENE 11

Liz Sharp's office

Liz is eavesdropping again via the Intercom. It is hotter than ever. She is sweating, she looks different., less structured, - as if in a kind of disarray

Jay enters, he tries to speak but Liz furiously places her hand over his lips, stops him. They listen.

Elsbeth: What's the bet he's got her bent over that desk now?

Anthony: Scch!

Elsbeth: Don't tell this to anyone right.

Anthony: Temps Honour.

Elsbeth: No. This is in absolute confidence I mean she'd kill me if she thought I told you

Anthony: The lips...superglued.

Elsbeth: She hasn't had sex for five years.

slight pause

Anthony: At all, - Not even a...

Elsbeth: Not even a Clinton.

Anthony: And she looks such a slapper.

Elsbeth: She let it slip over a second

Anthony: Rat...arsed

Elsbeth: Or was it a third, bottle, of bubbles...she said it was ironical, here I was (meaning me) a virtual camel in Clark sandals and M&S cardy, venturing no further socially, than my Wednesday upholstery class, getting well stuffed every night from Big Stan, the Well Hung Man, and there she was already well-upholstered, with extensive above the neck repair work...

Anthony: So many tucks she's virtually pleated.

Elsbeth: Thinking, breathing, living, sex 24 hours a day, and she can't get a shag to save her life

Anthony: 5 years, Christ! It must be steaming in there.

Elsbeth: Looked in her shopping today - big bugger of a Boots bag, ...giant tube of (more confidential still) Replen.

Liz Sharp stabs at the Intercom button

Anthony: (knowingly) Ah ha (slight pause) What's that?

She makes several more frantic stabbing attempts, but it won't turn off.

Elspeth: It's artificial lubrication, no taste, no smell, dried up old hags like her and me put it up themselves, don't they? To kid their chaps they're juicy for them.

Anthony: Ooh! GROSS!

Liz Sharp's final stab at the Intercom button. An appalled silence. Liz Sharp is white and grim. Jay Stern pink and excruciated!

They attempt to speak - together

Liz: I want to explain about the..

Jay: (forcibly) I think it's best to get straight to the point...

Jay: I can't do the book. I'm sorry.

L: Why?

Jay: Because, like the majority of men on this planet I don't know what women want, in the erotic department, or any department come to that, so you see I can't write this book.

Liz: I don't believe you Jay.

pause, Jay starts to pace

Jay: OK, perhaps it's worse than that. perhaps I do know what women want, think I know, and it's abhorrent to me. surely that's a good reason not to do the book.

Liz: Sounds rather a good reason for writing the book to me.

Jay: You won't give up will you...

Liz: (Interrupting, - calm, quiet, oddly robotic) I want to explain to you about...

Jay: I was so flattered. I'm sorry if I...

Liz: (Intense) Jay, please! I want to explain to you about the other night because it's a bit more complicated than you think. (deep breath) You see, for years now, I've had a plan, a plan concerning you and Sheridan and myself...

Jay: You me and Sheridan?

Liz: One day, when I had a lot of money I would ask you to write a book for me, not just any book, - a great book, a definitive erotic masterpiece, for the New Century. I would ask you to write this book offering such an absurd sum of money, that you could not refuse. By necessity we would start meeting again you, me and Sheridan. I would be gracious to you both, (in my plan) forgiving. You'd stay in my house in the country, - a whole summer - treating it as your own, I'd pop over for the odd weekend. Sheridan and I, darling Sheridan and I, would become friends again, and I would see you Jay, after all these years.

(pause)

And I would be happy with that but...

But, it seems the impossible, the inconceivable has happened. Sheridan is dead. So Jay now, I must tell you, at last, ... and after all these years....despite not being the best of my lovers, the handsomest, the cleverest, the kindest

the phone goes..she picks it up

..Yes

(trying to shorten conversation) objects up rectum are fine -- ..What about tea strainers ? Which end ? (getting cross) which end up first ? What the fuck difference ? ...so it's smaller than a Japanese tea strainer. Bigger...much bigger.. (desperate to get off the phone)

~ Fabulous. The Americans'll love it. The irony, - well English tea and Japanese...straining. Fabulous.

She puts the phone down, back to Jay

Or even the most talented, for some reason, that I can't begin to explain, I love you Jay, have always loved you, and since we spent that magical 10 weeks together in Cuzco 20 years ago, not a single day or night has gone by, that I have not thought of you, ached for you, and that I believe in the spirit of Austen or ..or..Tolstoy, the one constant thing in my turbulent, disappointing and ultimately solitary life has been my love for you.

Phone goes again, she picks it up, - slams it down

pause

Jay: I know.

pause

Liz: (swallowing) You know ?

Liz: (softly) (pause) Of course you do.

Jay: (with difficulty) I do not want to be loved..

Liz: Sorry..

Jay: I do not want to love. For 10 years I was loved by Sheridan...

Liz: I could never replace Sheridan..I...

Jay: Please.

pause

When I was a kid in Jo'burg, we had to write this essay, tell the story of a Christian martyr from his point of view, they knew I was Jewish of course, I don't know if this was malicious, anyway I picked some poor sod, who was disembowelled alive. Oone by one, his vital organs, his liver, his spleen, his kidneys were ripped out and he was made to hold them in his hands. Apparently he lived, gave the appearance of living, right up until he held his own beating heart. Well, when Sheridan was killed, that is how I felt. She was my life and I was hers.

Long pause, Liz pours him a drink, he refuses

(darkly) But then, miraculously, it all started to change, I realized that, over a period of some months, I had begun to feel lighter. I'd had migraines for years, so bad they stopped me working, sometimes a whole week - these stopped.

My days seemed to stretch cool and pleasant before me. I could eat, sleep, walk, when and where I wished and my social diary became over a period of time, completely empty.

I realised that Sheridan's immense love for me and mine for her, had been exhausting ... a dead weight, and more terrible still. I realised truthfully I was glad to be rid of it.

Liz: And since ?

Jay: I've had one or two short relationships with perfectly nice women, as soon as they told me they loved me I'm afraid I finished it.

Liz: I see. (only half joking) Well, how about a quickie? I mean I've still got tits to die for, - a quickie it'll only take 5 minutes over the desk ?

Pause . Jay appears shaken and upset.

Liz: (Softly) Think about the book, please, take another few weeks, no pressure. (she picks up a piece of paper) You asked for a list of the people who came to the celebration party.

Jay: (looking at it) Don't worry, I've already got it. ,

SCENE 12

Chloe and Leonard's bedroom

Chloe in scanties, from time to time she glances at a great wad of surveys on the bed appearing to be checking and then initialling them. She is also getting ready to go out.

A polite tap on the bedroom door. She jumps. Jay Stern enters. An astonished and very startled Chloe freezes.

Jay: I'm sorry please don't be alarmed but I've been sat in your lounge.

Chloe: Sitting room we don't have a lounge.

Jay: I've been sat in your sitting room for nearly an hour and actually, (he looks at his watch) oh dear, I should have been somewhere fifteen minutes ago.

Chloe: **(Flabbergasted, disorientated)** But...but how did you get in?

Jay: The lady downstairs let me in when I pressed the buzzer.

Chloe: How did you get in the flat?

Jay: The door was open, I just pushed it. Please. There's nothing to worry about. I'm not a stalker or...

Chloe: A psychopath.

Jay: **(attempting a laugh)** No.

Chloe: Or a desperately sad individual.

Jay: No. It's just I found our...encounter...charming.

Chloe: Charming?

Jay: Yes, so charming, nothing like that has ever happened to me before.

Chloe: Come! come!

Jay: I promise you nothing remotely like that, I couldn't stop thinking about you! I had to meet you.

Chloe: You don't expect me to believe that? **(carrying on dressing)** A Booker Prize winner...

Jay: I didn't win...I er, well..lost.

Chloe: A celebrity author, handsome, straight, single, you must get women throwing themselves at you at all those literati parties.

Jay: Well yes, but I can honestly say I have never been pushed into a stationery cupboard by a complete stranger, had my trousers unzipped and enjoyed a moment of perfectly delicate and rather fabulously performed fellatio, before being impaled by an extremely moist and beautiful young woman, with hair smelling of wild orchids, who, after a magically mutual and elegantly timed climax, dismounts me, zips me up and completely disappears off the face of the earth.

Chloe: **(frowning, still getting ready)** You said Liz Sharp gave you the list. You haven't...

Jay: Of course not - she knows I had sex with someone at her party...

Chloe: She does?

Jay: Yes. But she doesn't know that was you.

Chloe: I see.

pause

Chloe: **(relieved)** Good. I'm working for her you see, I run a market research company. She's commissioned a survey, what women (and men) want in the new century. She's an important client I don't think she'd...well...

Jay: No, no she probably wouldn't. Of course it's our absolute secret.

Chloe is now dressed, brushing her hair, Jay watches her with pleasure.

pause

Chloe: I don't do twice.

Jay: No?

Chloe: Never.

pause

Jay: So there's been other...encounters?

Chloe: Of course, you surely didn't think you were the only one.

Jay: **(hastily)** No, no...**(slight pause)** Many other encounters?

Chloe: Many?

Jay: What monthly - weekl ?

Chloe: **(half laughs)** What is this? I thought I was the one with the questions and answers.

Jay: I'm very interested, well fascinated actually, in an academic way you understand.

Chloe: **(slight pause)** Well, it probably depends on what's happening in my life at the time.

Jay: So it could be more than that then ?

Chloe: **(defiant)** Do you have a problem with that?

Jay: No, no far from it. Always with older men?

Chloe: Famous you mean - no not at all. I had a very "charming" encounter with a pizza delivery boy last month.

Jay: I see. And what criteria do you use to ...choose these men ?

Chloe: Look I'd love to chat, but I'm scheduled to meet my husband in 10 minutes.

Jay: Husband!

Chloe: Yes, my husband.

Jay: Does your husband know about the...?

Chloe: No of course not.

Jay: Why not?

Chloe: **(sighing)** Why do you think?

Jay: Does *he*...

Chloe: Have encounters? No.

Jay: You sound very sure.

Chloe: I am.

Jay: Do you love your husband?

Chloe: **(sighing, now completely dressed, made up, and ready)** Look, I'm always punctual. if I'm as much as a few minutes late, my husband will think something's happened to me.

Jay: **(standing)** Of course! I was particularly impressed with the way you put on the condom. very...

Chloe: Please don't say that word.

Jay looks puzzled

The C word. is such a particularly ugly and crude little word.

Jay: You're right. it is. Anyway, you did it with great skill...dexterity and real beauty.

Chloe: Thank you. it's a Japanese technique, very little known in the West and rather...ancient.

They both move off.

I'm sorry you're not writing the book, by the way.

Jay: The book?

Chloe: **(with irony)** The definitive erotic masterpiece. I know Liz Sharp is trying to illicit a serious author, that's principally why she needs my survey. I assume that author is you.

Jay: Yes, - but I am writing the book, haven't you hear? And I shall be most dependent on you to ... point me in the right direction. ▲

SCENE 13

Bella's flat

Jo is seated in full prison uniform regalia. She picks peanuts out of a bowl and sometimes throws them into her mouth.

Bella has entered with a particularly happy and relaxed Leonard, clutching expensive looking flowers.

Bella appears anxious.

Bella: Oh...

Jo: I changed shifts...

Bella: Did you...? Yes, well, Jo this is Leonard.

Leonard smiles warmly.

(Bella is awkward) Leonard, this is my flatmate, Jo.

Law: **(Holding out hand)** I'm very pleased to meet you at last.

Jo: **(dangerous and, astonished!)** Are you now?

Leonard: I've heard so much about you.

Jo looks horrified, Bella quickly intervenes.

Bella: Leonard fancied a change, Jo.

Leonard: I thought it was about time I saw in her surroundings...her own ambience - at home, meet some of her friends **(he proffers the flowers)**. These are for you **(he registers Bella)** both.

Jo: **(saccharine sweet)** How simply divine!

Bella: **(quickly)** I'm doing roasted peppers, I know you don't like vegetarian cooking so I assume you'll be popping down to The Fiddlers for your usual cow pie and a pint.

Jo: No, no not tonight - that sounds yummy.

pause

Bella: **(threateningly)** No, - I feel sure you're expected at The Fiddlers.

Jo: No, I'll give it a miss tonight I'm in a mood for a bit of home cooking.

pause

Bella: **(easy)** Leonard come in the kitchen will you, you know how you like to watch me cook.

Leonard: No, that's fine Bella, I'll stay here if that's all the same to you, - talk to Jo.

Bella: **(very uneasy pause)** Right, **(pause)** well I won't be long. **(reluctantly she leaves)**

Bella: **(popping head back)** I won't be long.

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Bella: **(very uneasy pause)** Right, **(pause)** well I wont be long. **(reluctantly she leaves)**

Bella: **(popping head back)** I wont be long.

Bella leaves. 10 seconds later, Jo springs onto an unsuspecting Leonard, pinning him against the sofa by the throat, using the govt. issue baton. Jo is a strong girl, an expert in methods of restraint and Leonard has been caught off guard. Red faced and choking, he desperately tries to push the baton off his wind pipe.

Jo: (ferocious, but quiet enough so Bella won't hear) Now look here, you disgusting perverted saddo. What you get up to for crisp £5 notes every Wednesday in Liz Sharp's flat is your business; do you hear me? yours and Bella's, but this is my flat, our flat, our fucking home, so I'll thank you not to come swanning in here playing the big man with your lip and your friggin' flowers. setting down for a cosy night in front of the box, scoffing our grub. As far as I'm concerned you've crawled out from under a stone do you hear me? Men who pay for sex should disappear, evolve and come back in a few thousand years, so why don't you just bugger off to the bathroom or the bedroom, do your bit, hand over the beanies and then bog off - do you hear me?

Sef all spruced up in best bib and tucker pops his head round the door. The baton tightens even further over Leonard's wind-pipe. Leonard is turning purple. Sef sees him, but does not take it in.

Sef: Where's Bella?

Jo: (through gritted teeth) In the kitchen.

Sef: Oh..well tell her I'm off to see you know who, you know where, for you know what, will you?

Jo: Will co..

Sef: I'll report back later tell her.

Jo: Dismissed.

Sef makes to go ...turns back, looks at Leonard -smiles-makes a thumbs up.

Sef: Alright mate? See you.

He leaves.

Bella enters.

Bella: Jo, if you're going to bring the salt and pepper in here I do wish...

Like a cat, Jo springs off Leonard, opens paper, makes to read. Bella notices Leonard red faced, clutching his throat and making strange gurgling noises.

Bella: Leonard! (she looks at him) What on earth's the matter with you? (she looks at him closer) Jo, what's the matter with Leonard?

Jo: (Casually looking at him) He choked on a peanut.

Leonard finally finds his voice.

Leonard: (strangled voice) I did not choke on a peanut, (outraged) the minute you left the room she sprang on me and pressed her...

Jo: Baton.

Leonard: Her baton against my windpipe. It was like some sort of SAS, Martial Arts manoeuvre, I couldn't breathe. it was..terrifying. I was completely paralysed. I could actually feel myself turning blue, there was this high pitched ringing in my ears, everything started to spin. I was just about to black out.

slight pause

Bella: (with salt and pepper moving back into the kitchen) Oh dear, well don't do that again Jo please.

Leonard: (stopping her) Bella! Don't you want to know why she tried to as near as damn kill me?

Bella: (mildly, trying to get back to the kitchen) No, no.. that won't be necessary.

Leonard: I'm afraid it is. Jo has completely got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

Jo: Baton!

Leonard: Yes!..she thinks we have sex - every Wednesday at Liz Sharp's flat, - she thinks I pay you to *have sex* with me. (beginning to see humorous side) Isn't that just too funny?

Bella: (blankly) Yes. (she attempts to go back into the kitchen) Now really I must...

Leonard: Well, tell her!

Bella: Tell her?

Leonard: Yes. tell her. that we've never had sex at Liz Sharp's, or anywhere else. I don't even think we've ever kissed each other on the mouth.

Bella: (swiftly) No, no that's right, we've definitely never kissed each other on the mouth. (moving into kitchen) Now Leonard, maybe if you make...

Jo: (gob smacked) Hang on there, hang on, just one friggin minute - what is this? What's going on here, because you know what? I smell a rat colony!

Long pause. Jo stares at Bella.

Bella: I never *said* I had sex with him.

Jo: You never *said*?

Bella: No.

Jo: You never *said*, you had sex with him? But you knew we assumed that?

Bella looks uncomfortable.

Did you?

Bella shrugs.

You knew friggin well we did.

Jo looks between Leonard and Bella.

But he does pays you, right?

Bella: Yes.

Jo: He pays you in crisp readdies. 20 £5 notes.

Bella: Yes.

Jo: (empathically) What the fuck's he paying you for?

Bella seems distressed, - she sits down.

Bella: Leonard?

Both Bella and Leonard seem abashed.

Leonard: To be honest. I don't exactly know what I pay Bella for...

Bella: No.

Leonard: In fact, (they share a smile) this was something we discussed only recently.

Jo: Oh, was it now?

L Yes...

pause

Bella: (Softly, tentatively) Friendship is it, Leonard? Do you think it could be said to be...?

Jo: (exploding) Friendship!

Leonard: (emphatically) No. Bella I really don't think it is friendship exactly, I mean that makes me sound so...

Jo: SAD.

Leonard: Yes, and actually I've got loads of friends. I play rugby for a local club every Saturday afternoon. I really like the people I work with and Chloe, my wife and I ...

Jo: Your wife?

Leonard: Yes, we belong to a guided meditation circle..

Jo: Really?

Leonard: And we've met some really good people,...particularly nice women, through that, so it's not friendship Bella, it's much more than that.

Jo: (dangerous) More than friendship?

Bella: (hastily, attempting to explain) Leonard and I met 7 years ago.

Jo: 7 years now.

Bella: I was cleaning for the accountants, Chandler & Sprocket, do you remember?

Leonard:: Bella cleaned the offices every Wednesday afternoon. My partner Davy Sprocket...

Jo: Who?

Leonard: Davy Sprocket and his secretary had Wednesday afternoons off, don't ask me why ...

Jo: Maybe they went racoon trapping..

Bella: Well...

Leonard: We suspected they were probably having an affair. Anyway, Bella cleaned the office Wednesday afternoons. It worked out cheaper than getting someone to come in at night. ...so I'd be working and Bella'd be cleaning, we'd share coffee breaks and that's when we started ...talking.

Jo: Talking?

Leonard: Getting to know each other.

Jo: ...Jesus wept..

Leonard: Anyway in the end, come Wednesday afternoons, I'd put the phone on ansa and join Bella wherever she was...

Jo: Charming.

Leonard: For a ...chin wag.

Bella: Leonard used to help me clean.

Leonard: Wednesday afternoons became my time with Bella.

Jo: Time?

Leonard: Yes. Anyway Bella came in one day...

Bella: After about 2 years.

Leonard: And said that she was leaving the job because she'd been offered a much better job - with Liz Sharp.

Bella: Mon, Wed and Friday for 3 hours at double my hourly rate.

Leonard: This may sound...

Jo: Unlikely?

Leonard: Even..

Jo: Fantastical?

Leonard: But I was quite simply devastated. I did not know how I was going to manage without my Wednesday afternoons with Bella...so suggested that we continue to meet Wednesday socially for coffee, but Bella said she was paid for by the hour and simply couldn't afford to take the time out. so that's when...

Jo: You offered to pay.

Leonard: Yes.

Bella: And at a very generous rate too.

Leonard: Well you're worth it.

Jo: Please no more. I'm going to throw up. **(to Leonard)** Why Wednesday afternoons?

Leonard: I didn't want to meet in the evening then.

Jo: Why not?

Leonard: Well...

Jo: Does your wife know about Bella?

Leonard: **(bleakly)** No. No, she doesn't. I couldn't really meet Bella in the evenings and not tell Chloe, it wouldn't seem right.

Jo: Up till now?

Leonard: Yes **(troubled)** up till now.

Jo: So why the change of plan? Why Thursday evenings? **(Bella and Leonard both look uneasy)**

Leonard: I honestly don't know why, but one thing I can say, it's not to have sex.

Leonard and Bella smile.

Jo: **(Seething)** Long intimate chats over a bottomless coffee pot, soul mating, exclusive shared confidences ...

Bella: **(Very softly)** No...no...

Jo: ❖ Mind fucking! Have you any idea what this does to me? **(to Bella)** I thought I was your best friend. I thought we were closer than any 2 human beings could be, closer than sisters...than lovers. I thought, we knew everything about each other, and now I find all this has been a sham. You realise this changes everything ?

Bella: **(horrified)** Don't say that

Jo: I mean, I cracked on I didn't like you fucking the guy, but in reality I admired you for it. I mean you were out there screwing the bastard. Isn't that what we should all be doing ...but this...

➤ **phone goes**

After what you've just told me, I feel betrayed, humiliated, usurped, and terribly, terribly hurt.

the phone rings

Jo: And what makes it worse, he's a friggin man.

Bella, gratefully answers it

Bella:

Speaking...

Leonard and Jo are uneasy together.

Liz? I'm sorry you're breaking up...

Liz who?

Liz Sharp. Oh hello.

Now?

Where?

But...you're breaking up...oh..oh alright. Don't worry. I'll be there in 10 minutes, no 5 minutes. 5 minutes. Just hold on. that's right.

She puts the phone down and gets her coat.

That was Liz Sharp. I hope I won't be long... well I don't really know to be honest. It would appear something terrible might have happened.

SCENE 14 **Tatiana, Bella's South American friend's flat**

South American dance music. A flickering candle - the same strange pink and green lights.

Two figures, only just visible. Tatiana, wearing the mask Bella gave her, her hair, dressed with flowers, is dancing slowly and sensuously. She wears a spangled bra top, a floating see-through skirt. She is barefoot, the dance involves a lot of cupping of breasts, and stroking her buttocks and thighs.

Sat opposite is Sef, totally naked, a large pink ostrich feather covering his privates.

Tatiana: (Lisping seductively - in Peruvian) Is it up yet darling?

Sef: (Who is having a lovely time) I'm sorry?

Tatiana: (again in Peruvian, only this time gesticulating) Is it up?

Sef: Oh right (discreetly he looks under the pink feather) no, no I'm afraid not.

Tatiana: (in Peruvian) Right then...

(In English) It's time to mamba...☞

The music changes, faster, charged, erotic, dangerous. Tatiana is a whirl of spangles, flowers, hair and flesh.

Soundscape of phones ringing - questions only half heard..and “do you prefer older men or younger”, “younger by 5,10, 15 or 20 years” More telephone rings, - voices street interviewer, “Excuse me could you spare a few minutes if your time we're conducting a nationwide survey stating today on what women, and men in the new”...phone again “Do you wish to be dominated or dominate sexually. Do you take part in sadomasochistic activities?”

And so on and so on and so on throughout the interval

END OF ACT ONE

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Tatiana's flat

Same wild South American dance music. She is drenched in sweat, her hair greasy, the flowers wilting, she looks absolutely knackered, she is in caught putting her spangly bra back on

Sef sits sipping bottled water still naked, relaxed, as fresh as a daisy.

Tatiana: (rather irate in very broken English) My first husband was a dentist, impotent for 3 whole years due to his constant exposure to radiation and amalgam fillings. I danced for him one night. One night he went out and he (Peruvian word for fucked) his father's prize bull

Sef looks horrified

You are no man. do you hear me..!

You are (she gesticulates stabbing the air with her fingers) a grey skinned, wet mouthed, rabbit eyed, floppy penised GRUB!

You will never get an erection. You will never be able to satisfy a woman. You might consider a religious calling. That'll be £30.

SCENE 2

The same night.

Jay is sat on the park bench with the Holy Man, now dressed as an Elizabethan executioner, black leather mask, leather singlet, throng sandals, leather wrist bands, with a large silver axe.

Jay: You said your wife's 34?

Holy Man: 46 actually. she had a birthday last Monday.

Jay: Oh. wish her Happy Birthday for me...And she's a graduate /

Holy Man: Oh yes, as I said. before she took up reflexology, she went to Hull University, graduated in Business Studies. got a 2.1 taught at the local tech for years.

Jay: She's perfect, you see, perfect for me. Xtremis publishing are trying to expand, target the older, more successful woman.

Holy Man: That's my wife to a t.

Jay: And she likes Erotica?

Holy Man: Loves it, we had to turn the downstairs loo into a library, not just for videos.

Jay: Well look. (taking papers out of his briefcase) Here are 3 outlines, that's a synopsis tell her. What I want your wife to do is read them, they're numbered and put them in the order she likes best. and remember the judging criteria is easy, its simply the one that turns her on the most, that makes *her* feel sexy.

Holy Man: She'll love that.

Jay: (nervous) I'm so grateful., I mean I could show them the editor indeed any of the women, I know, but that...

Holy Man: I understand...

Jay: This way I can learn, gather information, try out some ideas for this book....

Holy Man: Without putting your neck on the block, so to speak. I must fly..

Jay: What is she tonight?

Holy Man: Actually I *did* have a little peak in the bag in the hall.

Jay: Ann Boleyn?

Holy Man: Got it in one. (shyly producing a paper bag) I've got a couple of little surprises, for her myself. I felt inspired to do a bit of shopping.

he takes out 2 square metal objects and something penile shaped

Jay: What an earth?

Holy Man: Nipple clamps and er...erection tamer. Drive me wild this will.

Jay: She likes nipple clamps does she?

Holy Man: Oh they're for me as well.

Jay: I see you er....

Holy Man: Don't know. I've never tried it before. **(making to go)** I'm starving.

Jay: Don't tell me, you're having roast swan.

Holy Man: ♣ Do you know you can't get swan anywhere. The girl in Waitrose was positively rude, so she's making a game pie.

He seems very happy

Then we're set for a bit of nude croquet on the back lawn, apparently.

Jay: Well you've got the weather for it.

Holy Man: Next Friday.

He makes to go

Jay: **(calling after)** The sexiest! ♠

SCENE 3

Same night

Lights down on all segments. Prison bars - effect lighting. Night light only.

In each segment is a masked (wigged if necessary) figure. Some of the figures are presented by suggestion only.. mask? gloves? shoes?

Jo walks around the segments, with her is a Pestilence Controller in full regalia, white suite, mask etc

Jo: (lowering her voice, reverentially) And finally Martha Corpus Christie M'Looley ↓

The Pestilence Man sighs audibly

Jo: Yes. Our superstar. The infamous Iceland Murderess. Killed 12 men, her husband, Len; her lover, Len; PC Leonard Rivers; Head of Beckenham Social Services, Leonard Banacaruzi; the chap she used to talk to walking the dog; the tv repair man and various other sundries. Oh, I know what you're thinking, but it was sheer coincidence, apparently. Decapitated them with a meat cleaver, and kept all their heads in a large wardrobe fridge, in a back room of Iceland Superstore in Beckenham High Street, where she workd for 5 years as a night time shelf stacker.

(pause) She's writing her memoirs by the way. see the exercise books. Hot stuff... a couple of the Sundays are said to be killing for it.

We hear the scribble of Martha's pen

Doesn't say much doest she? But I know in her life in the world outside, she often felt betrayed, humiliated, usurped and terribly, terribly hurt.

pause

(softer still) A passionate woman see. It's a privilege to serve them, that's how I see my job here. Men kill for money, power, reputation, revenge, - mostly, sometimes they don't even need a reason.

It's a well documented fact, on the whole, sane women commit desperate acts for love! ↓

What was it again ?

She looks him up and down.

Oh yes, cockroaches. ♣

Huge shadow of Martha, her back to the audience, on back wall.

SCENE 4

A boiling night. Liz Sharp's garden, very overgrown, like a jungle. Bella appears, she is following a trail of dropped papers.

Bella: (nervous, anxious) Hello? (pause) Liz? (pause) Are you..?

She stops suddenly, she spies Liz Sharp lying spread eagled in the long grass, she is wearing a nightie, resting on her chest - an old manuscript, her eyes, still and glassy.

Liz? (she whispers calmly to herself) She's... dead... oh Christ...Hello? Hello? Are you ...?

Liz: No... I'm not..

Bella jumps, giggles nervously

But everyone else is.

Bella: Jesus, what happened...what..

Liz:: Doris and Frank. they're dead.

Bella: Are you alright? Are you hurt? Are you?

Liz: You know they weren't like a mum and dad really, just two people who ran a wool shop who I roomed with as a child - two small, baffled people in woolly jumpers. Then there's my babies...

Bella: I was scared stiff when I arrived and all the doors were open.

Liz: You didn't know about *them*, did you?

Bella: Were you robbed?

Liz: I had two abortions, one before meeting Jay, one two years after..

Bella: The flat's been ransacked, turned upside down, draws out, tables overturned...
(suddenly nervous) There's no chance they're still about, is there?

Liz: And, worst of all... Sheridan, Sheridan is dead.

Bella: What am I thinking of? I'd better call the Police.

Liz: (suddenly compos mentos) Oh, I'm sorry about the mess.

Bella: (stopping in her tracks) The mess?

Liz: Yes, the flat. I.. er.. made a bit of a mess - I was looking for something. (she hugs the manuscript) I found it. see. The Machu Pichu novel. Jay and I went over to edit it. I found it. I haven't re-read it yet, but it was lost and I found it.

Bella: (relieved almost giggly) Grief!

Liz: And finally - there's Jay. He's dead.

pause

Bella: Have you been drinking?

Liz: No... I've been.. (she mimes a cigarette)

Bella: Oh dear.

Liz: And I inhaled!

Bella falls back, lying in the long grass, alongside Liz looking up at the stars.

pause

Liz: Doris used to say that when you died, God took the light that lived inside you and took it up to the sky to make into stars. Do you think that's true?

Bella: Yes.

Liz: I loved him so much Bella, for all those years. I loved him.

Bella: Why?

long pause

Liz: Men are wonderful things aren't they? I mean they're everything a woman wants, needs, in one handy package.

The head, - the way they think, so well.. directly so simply.. perfect for mending boilers, or navigating from Kilburn to Constantinople.

I mean they actually know how to change a gear sprocket, they're good with their hands, positively inspired with fuses.

They're so calm, aren't they, all through the month, I mean yes they get a bit miffed if the lawnmower breaks down, or someone scratches the car...

And they stay firm for longer, no come on fair do...By and large they stay fuckable about 15 years longer than we do.

Mens cocks are designed to turn us on, aren't they? Peeing apart, that's why they're hanging there, fundamentally, to fill up a little empty void in a part of us.

Bella: (softly, firmly) You talk crap, do you know that? Absolute crap.

Liz: (softly laughs. pause. sensuously)

He fucked me harder than any man I'd ever known. That's why I loved him. He made me feel so powerless - pathetic. isn't it?

She starts to cry softly

Bella starts to laugh

Liz: Are you in love?

Bella: Yes.

Liz: I thought so.

Bella: But I daren't tell them.

Liz: Why?

Bella says nothing

Do you know Bella, you are the only person on this planet, it can be said I enjoy any kind of intimacy with, do you know that?

I am a rich powerful and successful woman and the only person I can really talk to is my cleaning lady. Isn't that sad?

Bella: Tragic.

pause

Leonard: Are you crying?

Bella: Yes.

pause

Liz: You don't fancy coming back upstairs and doing rude things together, do you?

pause

Mmm?

Bella says nothing just stares - transfixed at the stars

I'll pay!

Bella freezes, then sits up and stares at Liz

pause

Bella: What did you say?

Liz: I said I'll pay.

pause

→ Sorry, no really, sorry! Forget that, forget I said that.

pause

quietly, patiently, Bella stands up, dusts herself down

Bella: If you're really alright I'd better be getting back home...

pause

Liz: Bella?

Bella: Yes...

Liz: Can I come to your house sometime, you know just pop round as a friend, say hello, have a cup of tea, would you mind? Can I? ↑

SCENE 5

Same night. Chloe & Jay are in Liz Sharp's office.

Some of the surveys have come back. Chloe is taking Jay informally through early findings. She is sat on Liz Sharp's desk, she wears a 90's power suit, extremely short skirt and high heels. She has taken the jacket off and her top is skimpy and revealing. Jay has a bottle of wine and 2 glasses. He drinks and is tiddly.

He looks different, sharper more sculptured, his hair is combed, he wears a good jacket and a shirt. The atmosphere is of a giggly schoolboy with his favourite teacher. Jay watches Chloe. He is not quite drooling.

Chloe: ♣ 64% of men said women on top was their favourite position, only 39% of men were said to be happy with the amount of oral sex in their present relationship. 59% of men preferred doggie position. and a surprising 62% of men under 35 said anal sex was practised regularly in their relationships which is surprising because 91% of women under 35 said anal sex was not a part of their regular sex life.

Jay: Obviously a lot of guys out there with a bad aim.

Chloe: Well I'm sure it can be tricky for you in the dark. ♣

Jay laughs

Phone rings

Chloe: (answering it) Xtremis Publishing. No I'm afraid Liz Sharp is off sick. I'll certainly do that.

Phone down

Chloe: ♣ 65% of women over 35 and 49% of women under had indulged at some time in sado masochistic practices, most popular being ...spanking..

J: Ah! The bare bottom peculiarly English...The submissiveness, the crack out of the air, the steaming hand print, owning the flesh...

Chloe: *Weekend Bondage.*

Jay: (posh accent) Can't see you on Saturday darling, I'm tied up.

Chloe: And mutual defecation. ♣

Jay is stumped

Phone goes. Chloe picks it up.

Leonard!

Jay listens

She looks at her watch

I know, isn't it madness?

Jay turns his fingers very lightly over Chloe's stockinged foot and ankle

No, that's fine. You have a lovely, lovely time. I'm going to be here very late anyway. Don't worry. See you at home.

Phone down

Jay continues to turn one long sensual finger over her ankle and calf

Chloe: 72% of women under 35 said receiving oral sex was the best bit of love making.

Jay: Every woman tastes different.

Chloe: 60% of women performing oral sex was integral to their love making. 45% of women under 35 and 39% of women over swallowed semen.

Jay: What did I taste of...?

Jay's hand has travelled up Chloe's skirt

Chloe: 75% of women over 35 said orgasm was an irreplaceable element in love-making.

Chloe puts her legs firmly together

Chloe: I don't do twice.

SCENE 6 **Bellas flat...the same knock-knock code, Sef used in Act 1**

Sef: **(Whispering)** Bella sweetie...

He enters tip toeing over to what might be Bella's bedroom door, he carries his jacket, his shirt is open to the waist, he is rumpled and sweaty.

Bella, it's me.

pause

I know you said not two nights on the run and I know it's late. but I...

Leonard: **Appearing behind from the balcony, holding a can of beer.**

She's not here!

Sef jumps

Lawrence too has removed his jacket, he looks hot and creased

Sef: Oh!
Oh right,
Yes,
You're er. Jo's friend.

Leonard: Bella's friend actually.

Sef: **(surprised)** Bella's? Bella's friend.

Leonard: Yes, that's right, she er...invited me to dinner.

Sef: Did she?

Leonard: Yes.

Sef: To dinner?

Leonard: Yes.

Sef: I know she's got heaps and heaps of friends.

Leonard: Has she?

Sef: Oh yes, the phone never stops going. ...morning noon and night.

Leonard: Really? (jealous)

Sef: But she normally meets them out.

Leonard: I see.

pause

And you wanted ?

Sef: Sorry?

Leonard: You wanted Bella for something?

Sef: Did I?

Leonard: Yes (pause)

Sef: Where is she?

Leonard: Oh.. she got a phone call, the woman she works for, some emergency...

Sef: And she just dropped everything ?

Leonard: Yes -

Sef: At the drop of a hat -

Leonard: Yes -

Sef: Typical. Typical of Bella - wonderful woman, clever, beautiful...

Leonard: Clever?

Sef: She'd do anything for anyone...

Leonard: (smiling) Mmm...

Sef: Of course, she collects lame ducks.

Leonard: Does she?

Sef: Oh yes. (chuckling) You know, vulnerable types, after a shoulder to cry on.

pause

Leonard: (suddenly uneasy, draining his beer) Look would you mind if I moved back to the balcony, only there doesn't seem any air tonight?

Sef: Of course.

Sef follows Leonard onto the balcony

pause

The two men stand uneasy together

Leonard: (edgy) Do you want me to let you know when she gets back? ...Only..(he looks at watch)

Sef: (smiling) I'll wait. It's well, important I talk to her tonight.

Leonard: Is it? Right.

pause

Leonard: Actually, I'm a bit worried, - her employer's only over the Park and she's been gone, well

over an hour.

Sef: You go then.

Leonard: No! No it's well.. it's important I talk to her tonight.

Sef: Right.

Leonard: If she's not back in the next half hour I was thinking of going to look for her.

Sef: Right, - well I'll come with you then.

Leonard: Oh. Right.

Awkward silence between the two men

Leonard:) Would you like a beer?

Sef:) Would you like a beer?

Sef: (laughs) Never touch the stuff.

Leonard: There's a couple of bottles of wine in the fridge I brought with me.

Sef: (suspicious) You brought wine with you?

Leonard: Yes.. a really special Chardonnay, it'll be ice cold now actually.

Sef: Wine to drink with Bella?

Leonard: Yes -

Sef: After dinner?

Leonard: Yes, well during dinner, - and after.

pause

Leonard is thinking

Leonard: You're Sef!

Sef: Yes.

Leonard: Oh of course. Bella's told me about you.

Sef: (Nervous) Has she?

Leonard: Yes...(he laughs)

Sef: (edgy) What's so funny?

Leonard: (sheepishly) You er...climb trees.

Sef: (defensive) Yes?

Leonard: No..no...It's good, very commendable. We should all er...be climbing trees really.

Sef: Then why are you smirking?

Leonard: Smirking?

Sef: Yes... You've got a smirk on your face.

Leonard: Sorry.

Sef: What else did Bella tell you ?

Leonard: Nothing!

(pause)

You only came up once or twice in conversation.

Sef: What?

(puzzled)

Leonard: You only came up once...

Sef: (aggressive) Yes I heard, thank you. (slight pause) I've been out tonight!

Leonard: Yes?

Sef: With my girlfriend! You know (he makes dance moves) clubbing it.

Leonard: (pleased) Ah... Your girlfriend is she ?..(he indicates...Sef's flat)

Sef: No...no.. I er...left her in the club.

Leonard: Yes?

(slight pause)

Sef: She's a dancer there actually.

Leonard: Really?

Sef: An exotic dancer.

Leonard: She er...dancing tonight is she?

Sef: Yes.

Leonard: You don't mind that?

Sef: What?

Leonard: Your girlfriend dancing...

Sef: In front of crowds of men you mean. all...cheering and clapping, whooping and whistling and leering and screaming at her to get her clothes off?

Leonard: Yes.

Sef: No. Actually I rather like it.

Leonard: Really?

Sef: Well it's flattering isn't it? All those men lusting after my woman.

Leonard: I suppose.

Sef: I mean she dances for them right, but it's me she comes home to, know what I mean?

Leonard: I do indeed.

They both share a dirty laugh

Leonard: Don't know if I could handle it myself though.

(pause)

Sef: That's the woman's prison over there.

Leonard: Is it?

Sef: Oh yes.

Yes it is indeed. A thousand bad girls over there. All banged up over there.

Sef: There's something about bad girls...really...

Leonard: Turns you on. Yes, I know what you mean. I think...

Sef: Barbara Stanwick, Margaret Lockwood, Diana Dors...

Leonard: **(taking the piss)** Deirdre Raskid...

Sef: Real women with balls, know what I mean?

Leonard: Ah..

Sef: Not these "babes with attitude" ..

Leonard: **(being polite)** No.

Sef: Foul mouthed little girls pushing their tits up, playing at being sassy.

Leonard: No.

Sef: Real women.

Leonard: 'Course a lot of them - are in there for not paying their TV licence.

Sef: **(very disappointed)** Are they?

Leonard: I believe so, shop lifting in M&S.

Sef: Oh.

Leonard: So I've heard.

Sef: Still. A thousand bad girls banged up and gagging for it eh er...sorry I didn't catch your name.

Leonard: Leonard.

(pause)

Sef: I'm sorry?

Leonard: Lawrence.

(Sef is stopped in his tracks)

Sef: Leonard? Not Leonard, Leonard. You're not *the* Leonard?

(pause)

Oh man, you're sick. I mean you're not what I expected, and I'm sorry for you and everything, but you need help.

I mean that is so uncool.

L I think I'd better explain...

SCENE 7

Same boiling night. The park opposite Bella's flat. Jay (still slightly pissed) is walking Chloe home.

Chloe: Sex... after birth and death is the single most dynamic, dramatic, exciting, interesting act experienced in the course of the average adult life...Okay maybe that's not true if you climb Everest, or ...win the Grand Prix.

Jay: Or write a really great book.

Chloe: Isn't it typical of the English that we are indoctrinated into believing that it's to be rationed, yes you can fuck, because we know it feels nice, but preferably with only one person at a time and only 3.2 times a week. I mean Christ , that's pathetic.

Jay: But isn't it dangerous ?

Chloe: Well I wouldn't do it here.

Jay: (disappointed) Wouldn't you?

Chloe: Not with someone I wasn't sure of, I do use my head.

Jay: (dirtyly) You certainly do.

Chloe: I'm not a serial cock sucker.

Jay: Aren't you ?

Chloe: What happened between us, happened between us, it's different every time.

Jay: I see.

Chloe: Though I do find the combination of feeling powerful and powerless in fellatio, quite exquisite.

Jay: Exquisite? So these encounters are never..less pleasant.. than you anticipate.

Chloe: Sometimes.

J: I see. Do you ever start and make the decision you'd prefer not to continue ?

Chloe: I have done.

Jay: How do you manage that?

Chloe: I have a sure fire way of ending an encounter suddenly if I choose.

Jay: Really ..

Chloe: That never fails..

Jay: The mind boggles. You choose not to enlarge on that point.

Chloe: Yes.

Jay: Are these encounters planned?

Chloe: Sometimes. For example I'd seen you on TV and thought you were cute. I watched you

arrive at the party. I liked what I saw. And I watched Liz Sharp watch you. I was rivetted. From the moment she clapped eyes on you she seemed almost possessed that interested me.

Jay: I'm astonished.

Chloe: So I manoeuvred myself into a situation that could make the encounter possible.

Isn't it a wonderful time in the history of women, without the fear of pregnancy, able to protect from disease, that I can make that happen.

Jay: Presumably any...risks involved, heighten your excitement.

Chloe: My enjoyment, well yes.

Jay: And what about the pizza delivery boy ?

Chloe: When I ordered the pizza I had no such idea in my mind, waiting for it I played around with the possibilities, when he arrived 6ft 2, coal black hair, spaniel eyes and smelling of anchovies, then it became a certainty.

Jay: Have you ever been rebuffed?

Chloe: Yes...About 6 or 7 times, probably most difficult is the men who want to perform under the circumstances dictated by me, but can't.

Jay: Poor fuckers.

Chloe: That can be embarrassing I admit.

Jay: And disappointing.

Do men ever make nuisances of themselves, try to follow up encounters ?

Chloe: You mean like you?

Jay: Yes.

Chloe: Sometimes. I always make it clear. I don't do twice.

Jay: Your husband ?

Chloe: Look of course, my husband doesn't know. If the truth be told he's a bit of a prude. I mean don't get me wrong sex is fantastic.

Jay: (sourly) I'm glad to hear that.

Chloe: You know -- reassuring but innovative and passionate.

Jay: Ah...

Chloe: Leonard believes in fidelity.

Jay: Whatever that is.

Chloe: Exactly. And that's what I love about him, his straightness, integrity, his absolute honesty.

**Jay and Chloe have reached the park bench
The light comes up. The strange small figure of Martha M'Looley is sitting there.
Unknown to them smiling she watches Jay and Chloe.**

Jay goes down on his knees and kisses Chloe's feet

Chloe: (laughing) What are you doing?

Jay: I am worshipping you. you are the most interesting, exciting, original, sexy woman I have ever met in my entire life. I kiss your feet and by this simple act evoke all women to rise up before the ancient oppressor, man, to take the cudgel of desire in their own two hands, and slice into the future.

Chloe giggles - delighted

Martha clears her throat.

Jay and Chloe had not seen her.. they jump their heads swivel round

She smiles pleasantly and then applauds.

The scream of sires..female screams. The snogging couples have become men with torches.

SCENE 8

Bella's balcony

Both men are now bare chested, one empty bottle of Chardonnay is between them one lays drunk. Sef is pissed, - Leonard well on the way.

Leonard: No seriously. bang it against your dressing table.

Sef: I don't have a dressing table.

Leonard: Side of your bed then.

Sef: I have a futon.

Leonard: Take a nylon stocking.

Sef: It's been a big disappointment to me.

Leonard: Then lie down.

Sef: I find it hard on the small of my back.

Leonard: And tie it round the top of your knob. Tight.

Sef: No this only works if you've got an erection...

Leonard: It hurts a bit.

Sef: And where would I get a nylon stocking?

Leonard: My wife wears them. well you know sheer lacy hold up things I'll give you one of hers.

Sef: **(brightening up)** Would you?

Leonard: Sure. I mean she doesn't wear suspenders...well only in bed actually.

Sef: In bed?

Leonard: Yes, you know. she wears these frilly crutchless pants, or a thong.

Sef: A thong?

Leonard: Yes and those push up bras, lace ones with holes for the nipples.

Sef: **(swallowing)** Go on... will you please...

Leonard: **(sussing it out)** I mean that's in bed. she doesn't wear any underwear when she goes out

Sef: No bra?

L Oh, no...well unless the bras built into the dress and pushes the tits..

S Up, and..out.

Leonard: If the blouse is sheer she likes her nipples to show, she's got really nice big brown nipples.

Sef: I like brown ones.. **(pause)** and pink ones.

Leonard: She loves the cool silk of the blouse to...

Sef: Rub against them...

Leonard: Yes, making them hard. It turns her on.

Sef: And what about...(he swallows) knickers?

Leonard: Oh she never wears knickers...never.

Sef: So you see the curve of her buttocks then, through the sheer silk of her skirt ?

Leonard: Yes she never wears knickers because of V.P.L.

Sef: (getting very aroused) (sexy) VPL?

Leonard: Visible Panty Line.

Sef: (coming down) Visible Panty Line? Oh I see. I don't like that much either. VPL

Leonard: There you go.. I quite like it myself.

Sef: Really?

The games stopped, Sef is downhearted.

Leonard: ♡ Sorry mate. Did we get anywhere?

Sef: Not really. Thanks for trying.

Leonard: It's not nice anyway is it? Using my wife to turn you on. Not very PC. \

Sef: No.

They both look at each other and giggle

Leonard: Wonder where Bella is?

Sef: Listen there's one thing I want to ask you, if your wife is so beautiful and clever and sexy why is it you've been seeing Bella one afternoon a week for 5 years ?

Jo charges in panting and breathless. She is chuckling and exuberant, as high as a kite. She carries two heavy carrier bags.

Jo: You'll never guess what? She's out!

Sef: Out?

Jo: Martha's out!

Leonard: Martha?

Sef: Jo's friend, she decapitated 12 men and kept their heads in a freezer in Iceland supermarket..

Leonard: That figures.

Jo: (very excited) I went to give her her supper, the door was wide open, her cardy was on the

back of the chair, book open, crossword in Peoples Friend half done and she'd gone. Gone.

And look what she left behind....

She opens the carrier bags and reveals piles of exercise books

Martha's Memoirs. I tell you they're worth a fucking gold mine.

Sef: Isn't that stealing?

Jo: It's got to be an inside job they said. We've all been questioned, all the wardens, and we're all suspended on full pay and I am top suspect seeing as how I had a "special relationship".

I've got to report tomorrow for questioning. It's thrilling.

Jo's eyes narrow

Where's Bella?

Sef: Sorry?

Jo: She'll go crazy in this heat. Martha. She hasn't got the same blood cooling system as everybody else. That's what the prison doctor said. They had to put a special cooling fan in her cell. That's why she worked at Iceland.

I tell you (looking directly at Leonard) while Martha M'Looley's out and the temperatures up - no man's safe - Leonard.

SCENE 11

Same boiling night . Chloe and Leonard's bedroom

Chloe is seated she wears a short fluffy night shirt. She is barefoot, removing her make up. Leonard stands, still pissed, sweating, red faced, shirt buttoned up wrong, totally dishevelled.

Leonard: (sheepish, little boy lost act) I'm sorry. I'm really...

Chloe: (quiet, stiff, strained) There's no reason .

Leonard: No...no...I should have..

Chloe: Stop going on about it. It really doesn't matter that much.

Leonard: It does matter. I have been married to you Chloe for 10 years, therefore I know your every waking thought. and you are my dearest darling. just a teensy bit pissed of with me.

Chloe: Leonard if you must know I've only been in 15 minutes myself.

(pause)

Leonard: You have?

Chloe: Yes. So you see I wasn't worried or anything.

Leonard: Oh right.

Chloe: It's stifling in here.

Leonard: Yes.

(pause)

Chloe: I've been working.

Leonard: Poor baby.

Chloe smiles weakly Leonard watches

Leonard: I love the little suburban housewife look. ~~The fluffies~~ , the just scrubbed face, the air of slight reproach. it really...

Leonard makes a move on her

Chloe: (backing off, pleasant) Leonard would you mind ?

Leonard: Mind?

Chloe: Only it's 3am. I'm really shattered.

Leonard: (moving in again) When has that ever stopped us before.

Chloe: Leonard please. I'm. ...well just not in the mood. OK.

Leonard: Not in the mood.

Chloe: No.

(weighted pause)

Leonard: No in the mood. This is a first.

Chloe looks questioning

This is the first time in all the years I've known you, you've said no to sex.

Chloe: Is it?

Leonard: You know it is, you pride yourself on always being up for it, you know you do

Chloe: **(smiling, attempting to be pleasant)** Yes. Yes I suppose I do.

Leonard: **(he makes a move again tender this time)** Sweetheart....

Chloe: **(moving off - changing subject - briskly)** What about you? What have you been doing tonight?

Leonard: Me?

Chloe: Yes, you.

Leonard: Oh you know... **(vague)**

Chloe: **(Light)** No I don't know. **(Looking him up and down curious)** What?

Leonard: Oh well I...

Chloe: Yes ?

Leonard: **(firmly)** I went out with the rugby lads.

Chloe: **(suddenly interested)** The...rugby lads. You mean..

Leonard: Geoff and Rob yes...

(DEAFENING SILENCE)

Chloe: You went out tonight with Geoff and Rob ?

Leonard: Yes. Yes **(chuckling)** They was on great form we...

Chloe: Leonard you are lying to me.

Leonard: **(swallows, red faced)** Am I?

Chloe: Yes Leonard, you are not telling the truth.

(pause, she faces him)

Chloe: Are you?

Leonard: **(slowly)** Look Clo, lets go to bed. I've had a funny day too, I think...

Chloe: **(standing suddenly stern)** Do tell me about it Leonard. If you dare. I could do with a

laugh.

Leonard: **(crumpling)** Oh Christ. This would happen wouldn't it, on the first fucking night.

Chloe: What?

Leonard: This - you finding out! Christ!

Chloe: Finding out?

Leonard: Yes

Finding out about Bella.

(dead silence)

Chloe: Bella?

Leonard: Yes

Chloe: And who's Bella?

Leonard: Bella's Bella really...

Chloe: Oh for Christ sake, don't be so obtuse. Who is Bella and where have you been tonight ?

Leonard: **(groping about)** Bella's a ...

Chloe: **(sick and aghast)** A lover?

Leonard: No! No! don't think that, not even for a minute. She isn't a lover no... &

Chloe: **(relieved)** You're sure about that ?

Leonard: Yes

Chloe: What then? What is she?

Leonard: I ...I..

Chloe: **(helpfully)** A friend is she. A new friend ?

Leonard: No. She's not a new friend. I've known her for 7 years.

Chloe: Why then have you never told me about her?

Leonard: Well...I don't know really

Chloe: Where did you meet her?

Leonard: Oh she's a cleaning lady. She cleaned my office.

Chloe looks at him and bursts into laughter

Leonard looks non plussed

Chloe: A cleaning lady?

Leonard: Yes.

Chloe: You have been out tonight with a cleaning lady ?

Oh Leonard.

Leonard: **(coming clean)** Not just tonight I have seen her, met with her, every Wednesday afternoon for the past 5 years.

Chloe: **(interested, intrigued)** Really?

Leonard: Yes.

Chloe: Why? How?

Leonard: Well she used to clean the office on Wednesdays and then when she got another job I er...made arrangements to see her socially **(pause)** for coffee.

Chloe: Coffee?

Leonard: Yes. Where she works. Till now. Yesterday it changed I saw her for the first time in the evening, in her home.

Chloe: Why?

Leonard: **(nervy)** What?

Chloe: Why the change ?

Leonard: **(shrugs)** I er..I don't really know

Chloe: Well Leonard. This is all very intriguing. I wish to meet Bella the cleaning lady. Can this be arranged?

Leonard: Oh well I really don't..

Chloe: I'm afraid I'm going to have to insist on this.

Leonard: **(bluff)** Yes. Yes of course, no problem.

SCENE 12

Mid morning. Bright sunshine. Another hot day. Park bench. Seated is Holy Man/Executioner in normal clothes, a short sleeved colourful shirt, slacks, white socks and sandals and Jay Stern.

Jay: Your wife...? (he looks around)

Holy Man: Couldn't come. You remember the game pic ?

Jay: Absolutely.

Holy Man: We think the grouse might have been a trifle too well hung.

Jay: (sympathetically) Oh dear.

Holy Man: She's more or less welded to the lavatory as we speak.

Jay: Poor thing.

Holy Man: I'm rather afraid I might need access to conveniences myself shortly.

Jay: (standing up) Oh please don't bother with this I...

Holy Man: No no. I'm here now, and I have got her explanatory notes.

Jay sits

Holy Man: Now - (he takes out of his pocket a small notebook and Jays treatment folded up)

The first one.

Jay: Right.

Holy Man: Oh yes, the soft spoken lady on the edge of the wood and the er...visitors "Arty farty a bit poncy" I'm reading from her notes you understand.

Jay: Of course

Holy Man: "Heroine a bit of a 19th century drip" Too passive. Women don't wait these days. As I remember she thought she detected a poetic tone in there.

Jay: Maybe

Holy Man shakes his head

Jay: Not her thing ?

Holy Man: Don't get me wrong, she's all for what you might call a 'high literary content'.

Jay: Is she?

Holy Man: She's a very intelligent woman, got a library of those old women books in the gold covers.

Jay: Right

Holy Man: She can't stand rubbish.

Jay: But this scenario didn't turn her on ?

Holy Man: Got it in one and the er...visitors?

Jay: Yes

Holy Man: Those things at the end. from the woodland. they wouldn't be to everyones taste you see?

Jay: No

Holy Man: I mean my wife loves hairy men.

Jay: Ah !

Holy Man: But take my sister in law well she was quite insistent that I should shave my shoulders last summer.

Jay: I'm not sure they *were* hairy were they, the er...?

Holy Man: Yes .. They were. My wife said..

Jay: (surprised) Oh?

Holy Man: No. 2. Oh yes she loved this one.

Jay: Good.

Holy Man: This really hit the spot.

Jay: Excellent.

Holy Man: But it's been done before... well a few times actually and she caught a late film on cable, with a similar storyline only set on a space shuttle.

Jay: Right.

Holy Man: And that brings me to No. 3 .

Jay: (anxious embarrassment) Oh well, that was a bit of an afterthought really I don't think we need to...

Holy Man: Older man, haunted by the tender image of a dearly loved wife is virtually accosted by promiscuous young woman and becomes obsessed...

Jay: Ridiculous. So sorry to waste your time I mean *that* has been done before -

Holy Man: Shades of "Last Tango"

Jay: And a thousand other 2nd rate novellas and B movies.

Holy Man: "Emmanuel", "Confessions of a Nymphomaniac".

Jay: No look, I'm really...

Holy Man: She's made some really interesting comments I think.

Jay: Has she?

Holy Man: She didn't think it was sexy at all. because she didn't believe either of the characters.

Jay: Oh well. of course. it is supposed to be...

Holy Man: For example. she thought the female character was a male fantasy figure?

Jay: Really?

Holy Man: Yes. She didn't believe any sensible woman would behave like that for a single minute.

Jay: ...Well the object was to write an erotic aide

Holy Man: She said it turned her off thinking about all the horrors likely to be experienced in your average spontaneous encounter. you know. lack of personal hygiene, bad breath, ginger pubes..

Jay: Right

Holy Man: And she found *him* a bit well...seedy ♣

Jay: Oh?

Holy Man: And sad. Voyeurism, isn't really her thing

Jay: Well no no...

Holy Man: (twinkling) Though I'm working on it. Right well...(he gets up ready to go)

Jay: So it's back to the drawing board.

Holy Man: Take a tip. I know this genre is new to you. so stay close to home on firmer ground try and draw from your own experience. ,

Jay: Thankyou. I will.

SCENE 13 Bella's flat. Early evening. Bella is sat at the table working on the masks. They are very near completion, they show the outline of a pretty female and handsome male. They are painted, ribboned and encrusted tastefully with semi-precious gems.

Also on the table, in an open wire cage, is the guinea pig

Bella looks terrible, as if she has worked through the night. Her hair is greasy and scraped back, she wears a shabby dress and dirty work apron, popsocks and awful slippers. About her are empty cans and old take-away food cartons.

Jo sits close by swigging stella. She is barefoot in dirty vest and jogging bottoms.

Chloe and Leonard have evidently arrived. She is expensively immaculate in a little suit and high heels, she is specially coiffured and made up. Leonard too looks especially smart.

They have brought expensive flowers, chocolates, and a good wine.

Leonard: (smiling, nervous, introducing Chloe) Chloe. Bella. - Bella. Chloe.

pause, Bella doesn't look up, but keeps working

Jo observes, enjoying herself

Leonard clears his throat

Leonard I'll..er pop these down here, shall I? (he puts flowers, chocs, wine, on the only available space)

(pause)

They are both still standing

Chloe: These are beautiful. (referring to the masks) Is it a hobby of yours ?

(Jo sniggers)

Leonard: : No Chloe. Bella makes masks, she's a professional... (he looks for the word)

Chloe: : Mask maker ?

Leonard: : Yes

Chloe: (peevish) I thought you said she's..

Jo: A scrubber, char, "cleaning lady".

Leonard: : (to Chloe) Yes, she is, as well.

Chloe: (very sweetly) Well, it's really beautiful.

pause

Bella continues to work without looking up

awkward pause

Chloe: (to Leonard) Look darling, it's obvious your friend...

Jo sniggers again

(firmly) Your friend is very, very busy why don't we come back another time...

Bella: Yes, bugger off why don't you?

Leonard (astonished) Bella !

Bella: (carrying on working) Well, you've seen what you wanted to haven't you. I, present no threat to you. I'm not smart or attractive or sexy, or clever or...

Leonard (shocked) Bella!

Bella: Or any of the other things you were scared of, you've satisfied your curiosity so you can go home now, relieved and happy. Go on. "F" off.

I can't stomach your perfume anyway

Jo roars with laughter

Jo: Christ, I thought it was the glue you're using

Leonard Bella, what do you mean by this ? This isn't like you at all.

Bella: (looking up, vicious) Isn't it ? And what is like me ?

Leonard Sorry ?

Bella: What do you actually know about me ?

Leonard Lots. I know lots about you.

Bella: You know nothing ! You paid for my time, and that time was spent on you. You know nothing about my life.

Leonard That is simply not true !

Chloe: Paid. You paid ?

Bella: (shouting) Yes....He paid to spend time with me, £100 for 3 hours, every week for 5 years, you don't honestly think if he hadn't paid I would have chosen to spend time with him. Do you ?

Leonard (hurt) Bella !

Chloe: (very cool) Leonard I don't see what we're gaining by staying here (to Bella) You're obviously overwrought. My husband is a very generous man, its clear to me now - (she looks round the flat) he felt sorry for you and...

Jo: Ha !

Chloe: Contrived a situation he could financially help you in some way...

Leonard (turning to Chloe) No ! That is not true.

Chloe: Leonard!

Leonard Bella, what is all this about ?

Chloe: Leonard, come on, you're making a complete fool of yourself.

Leonard Shut up Chloe! **(To Bella)** I thought we enjoyed each others company, I thought there was something special between us, something special and true.

Chloe: : Leonard?!

Leonard **(ignoring her)** Bella, please, please don't tell me it was just for the money, all those afternoons for all those years, I couldn't bear it

Sef's knock

Sef enters, he looks unusually funky, in a leather jacket, vest top with a new cool hair style, he carries a few droopy daisies, a crunchie and a bottle of lucozade.

Sef: Bella sweetie...

Jo: Christ

S: Look I have to talk to you I know you're busy. I know you've got guests..

He clocks Leonard and Chloe

Hi mate!

But I'm...

Bella: **(looking up)** No ! I don't have time now. And even if I did I wouldn't want to talk to you.

Do you know why ?

(Sef is gobsmacked)

I am not interested in your dick. Do you hear me ?

It's a source of absolute total indifference whether it goes up, down or ties itself in a reef knot. When I think of the hours, in the middle of the night, whole evenings, mornings, discussing the insignificant little thing, I could...

Jo: Spit.

Bella: Thank you, so go and perch up some tree, - that bloody bores me as well.

Another knock

Sef sits. Lost for words

Liz Sharp enters - she is in an extraordinary lush evening dress, high heels, hair extravagantly "dressed", she holds very expensive flowers, very expensive choc, and a good champagne.

Behind her is Jay Stern in dinner jacket. He looks sheepish but pleased. He holds the old

Machu Pichu manuscript .

Liz: Bella...

(Both Jo and Sef appear very taken with Liz. Sef stands and gawps, Jo leans forward and leers with some surprise, Jay clocks Chloc, Chloe - Jay)

You said pop round, anytime so here I am. With my old friend Jay Stern, the Booker Prize winner...

Jay: Er.. I lost..

Liz: Who I thought you'd like to meet because he's famous - Jay - Bella my cleaning lady.

This is a Truly Great day. A time for joyful celebration and I couldn't do that, my darling, without you my friend and confidante.

(Liz beams at everybody)

I read it..The Machu Pichu novel

Well we read it, re-read it after 20 years,...Jay and I together, this evening. And do you know what ? It isn't a great novel at all, more important it was never going to be. I can't tell you what that means to me. All these years I've worried secretly that the world had lost some great piece of work

And really darling, it's average, very average. And I can't tell you how much better that makes me feel

Bella: **(vicious)** And that's all that matters isn't it ? What *you* feel !

Liz: Sorry ?

Bella: How dare you come round here, invading my space. Don't you think I have had enough of your overbearing presence at work ?

I am not your darling Bella, and you are not my friend. I pick up your dirty knickers, clean your fridge, and toilet, scrape crap off your Gucci boots and leave out the occasional cold collation because you *pay* me. I don't do it because I enjoy it. I certainly don't do it because I like you.

The phone rings

If that's the Honourable Mrs Rimmer Brown tell her to stuff the phone up her Honourable but tight arsehole!

Bella storms out

Jo picks phone up

Jo: **(politely)** Mrs Rimmer Brown...yes...yes...well I've just spoken to Bella and she asked me to tell you to...

Sef grabs phone, puts it down

Liz: **(indicating to where Bella left)** P.M.T is it ?

I know a fabulous Doctor, remind me to tell her **(pause)** I'll pay.

(She looks at Chloe questioningly)

Chloe dear, what a surprise. You're another 'friend' of Bella's are you ?

No.. Don't answer that.

(phone rings again)

I don't know who these delightful young people are...

(Sef inches even further, Jo can't take her eyes off her)

(To Chloe) But anyway, I'm very pleased to bump into you like this. **(she indicates Jay)** You can have him.

Jay: Liz?

Liz: With my blessing !

Chloe: I ...I don't know what you mean.

Liz: Surely you didn't think I didn't know.

Chloe: Know what ?

Liz: That you were the one he had sex with at my party.

very awkward silence

Leonard I'm sorry ? ,

Jo picks up the phone

Jo: **(into phone)** Yes. - No, i don't think there's anything wrong with the phone Mrs Rimmer Brown but you could try stuf...

Sef grabs phone and slams it down

Liz: **(brightly)** I asked around dear; it didn't take very long to realise it had to be you.

Chloe: Really I ...

Liz: And you don't think I left my office without some security device in operation. I heard all your conversations with Jay. The office was bugged. A weeks worth of very entertaining listening it made up. He's quite smitten.

Chloe: Christ.

(pause)

Leonard Chloe, - perhaps you'd like to ? -

Chloe: **(frosty)** What Leonard ?

Jay: Liz, unless I'm very much mistaken, this is Chloe's husband.

(pause)

Liz: This -

(Jay nods)

You mean him ?

(Jay nods again)

Liz: That one ? Oh dear.

(slight pause)

Oh well ! **(To Sef, flirtatious)** And what do you do ?

Sef smiles moves forward, his mouth opens and closes like a goldfish

Leonard **(shattered)** Is this true Chloe? Are you having an affair with Jay Stern ?

Chloe: No! No I am not having an affair.

Leonard You swear!

Chloe: I swear !

Jay: Christ !

Jo: **(to Liz)** He saves trees.

Liz: **(impressed)** Really ? How simply wonderful.

Jo: By climbing up them and sort of taking ownership.

Liz: Fabulous.

Jo: He stands in the way of Police, the Armed Forces, local landowners with air rifles.

Liz: I think the Eco boys and girls are the modern messiahs I really do.

Sef looks chuffed

Chloe: **(very urgent)** Look we fucked once, once!

Jay: At Liz Sharp's party.

Leonard Christ.

Chloe: That's all, *once* I swear.

Jay: Don't you think its time to come clean ?

Chloe: **(terrified)** What ? What do you mean ?

Jay: (to Leonard) Your wife doesn't have affairs, she has ...encounters.

Leonard Encounters ?

Jay: Yes, hundreds, maybe thousands over the years she has sex with strange men on a fairly regular basis, always at her initiation.

Liz: Really. How er...?

Chloe: (to Jay) How could you ?

Liz: Interesting.

Jay: I think he should know.

Chloe: (rising panic) Don't listen Leonard, he's being vindictive, because I refused to have sex with him twice, he pleaded with me, went down on bended knees, but I said no. So now he's trying to ruin my marriage.

Jay: Yes, I am.

Chloe: You see Leonard ! You see.

Jay: Because I want you for myself.

Leonard Is it true?

Chloe: (taken back by Jay's remark) What ?

Jay: Encounters.

Phone rings

Everybody looks at Chloe. She is dumbstruck. Her mouth opens and closes until at last she manages

Chloe: Yes. It's true.

SCENE 14 **Bella's flat**

Same night, one hour later. Slow music is playing, Liz Sef and Jo are dancing together. Liz is taking turns to smooch first with Jo, then Sef. - Everyone is happy with this arrangement. Each holds a glass of champagne.

Leonard and Chloe are on the balcony. They have both taken off their jackets, Leonard's shirt is undone

Jay stands close by, with a glass of champagne eavesdropping

Chloe: **(in the middle of protracted and furious argument, hissed voice)**...What do you expect me to do Leonard: ? Hurl myself off the balcony with 'adulteress' branded on my tits? I like sex with strangers. I always have done. It is an essential component of my personality, like , well, - you enjoy rugby, someone else.. crosswords. I'm sorry I didn't feel able to share this fact with you Leonard.

Leonard:: Sorry !

Chloe: But maybe that is something in your personality you need to look into.

Leonard:: Christ !

Chloe: **(softly)** Now, please, - lets just leave here...

Leonard: No!

Chloe: ...Leave these dreary people, go home and talk this whole thing through rationally..

Leonard: I'm not leaving here til I've spoken to Bella.

Chloe: Bella ! Ha !

Leonard: What ? What ? Ha ?

Chloe: You *paid* to spend time with her ?

Leonard: Yes.

Chloe: Miss Monosyllable...Miss ~~Pop~~socks...Miss Dirty Fingernails..

Leonard: **(furious)** Don't you dare call her names, do you hear me!

Liz: **(smooching with Jo)** And what do you do little darling ?

Jo: I'm a prison warder.

Liz: No!..Oh how sexy.

Sef: I think that.

Liz: I love Prisoner Cell Block H.

S: Me too ! Me too! Me too !

Liz: Really ? **(she changes and starts smooching with Sef)**

What an amazing coincidence !

Leonard: **(resuming)** Anyway, what do you mean, something in my personality I should look into ?

Chloe: Well you are just the teensiest bit conventional aren't you Leonard ? Straight, predictable 'blokeish' even ordinary !

Leonard: Ordinary, yes. I am ordinary Chloe ! You got it in one, that just about sums me up. An ordinary decent bloke who loved his wife and...

Chloe: Loved ?

Leonard: Was *absolutely faithful* to her.

Chloe: **(shouting)** Don't make me laugh, - faithful ! There are other ways of betraying trust Leonard apart from issues emanating around female and male orifices. And some people, believe it or not might consider these *more important* - What were you doing with Miss Bella, every afternoon for 5 years but committing an act of infidelity ?

Leonard: **(spitting)** Thats...thats....ri...ri...ri.....reasonable, I suppose, a reasonable hypothesis **(struggling)** I've tried to give you everything.

Chloe: Give ! Give !

Leonard: Everything ! A beautiful home...

Chloe: I pay for half of that house...no no..more than half.

Leonard: ..Space to carve out your own career...

Chloe: Space doesn't belong to you Leonard !!

Leonard: And support !

Chloe: You don't have a monopoly on space !

Leonard: And a fabulous sex life..

Chloe splutters for a moment she can't find an answer then -

Chloe: WELL IT ISN'T ENOUGH ! A BEAUTIFUL HOME! A SUCCESSFUL CAREER! AND A FABULOUS SEX LIFE. IS IT !!! ,

Music suddenly stops. Everybody stops and looks at Chloe.

Leonard: Well, it's all too much for me Chloe. Maybe its always been just too much. Yes, you're right, I am an ordinary bloke and maybe that's what I like about Bella, her simple..down to earth ordinariness....

Bella enters. She is utterly transformed ! She has out Chloed Chloe and out Liz Sharped Liz Sharp. She is wearing a tight expensive outfit, glossy stockings, high heels. Her hair is simply and prettily put up. Her face is flawlessly made up. She has an expensive set of suitcases.

Everybody stares gobsmacked

Bella: Right, I'm off. (To Jo) There are the keys, rent book, outstanding council tax bill. Open my

mail..I've no forwarding address..

She makes to leave

Jo:}

Leonard:} Bella! Don't go !

They chase

SCENE 15 **Sef and Liz are now on the balcony. They are tucking into a box of chocolates**

Chloe is sat alone, numb and dumbstruck. Jay close to her watches.

Sef: It's the cruelty of women I find hard to deal with.

 I mean I really loved Bella.

Liz: Did you ?

Sef: Well, maybe not love love, but I thought she enjoyed our intimate conversations as much as I did...

Liz: I wouldn't worry. If a woman's a bit ratty you can put it down to one thing.

Sef: **(chatty)** Yeah ?

Liz: Hormones.

Sef: Right... **(cheering up)** So you don't think I should be offended or anything ?

Liz: I wouldn't give it a moments thought.

Sef: Hormones ! That's a refreshingly non P.C. viewpoint.

Liz: Yeah, - or she's not getting enough.

(slight pause)

Liz: You look as if you were on your way somewhere.

Sef: - A club...

Liz: Oh..

Sef: On my own

Liz brightens

 You look as if...

Liz: No No...straight home to ...

They share a giggle

Sef: You've got a bit of cracknel in your hair. **(He moves forward , takes it out)**

They are close to each other facing each other.

Liz: Oh. **(she searches for a bit of tissue)** You've got a bit of strawberry fondant on your chin..

It looks as if Sef and Liz might kiss, but there is something physically between their legs

Liz bends down and picks up the 2 carrier bags full of Martha's exercise books

 I'll just move...There...

(in moving them she peeps inside and finds a book open) What are they ?

Sef: Oh they're memoirs of a friend of Jo's. a very interesting friend as it happens..

Liz:: Yeah ? (she is flicking through)

(pause, Sef looks at her lustfully)

My God - How many are there ?

Sef: 50 or 60.

Liz: How did Jo get hold of them ?

Sef: Oh, I think they were given her with a view to publication.

SCENE 16 Same evening. 10 minutes later. Park

Bella is struggling with 2 suitcases in high heels. She is half running. She is being hotly pursued by Leonard and Jo.

Bella: (breathless) You know for as long as I can remember I have worked at anything and everything to get money somehow, to save, to hoard, to ...stash away. It was a compulsion with me - I wasn't sure why. I'd always imagined it might be something noble, you know, - adopt a handicapped kid or start my own rest home for poor old folks, or improve myself in some way, pay my way through university or...get some serious I.V.F treatment maybe...

I now realise I wanted money, simply because I wanted money! - (slight pause) And what's so bad about that !! So I am now finally, and not before time going to spend the money I haven't spent my entire life demeaning myself for. I am loaded and don't kid yourself. I am going to spend every last 5p !

She arrives at Park bench where she suddenly stops

Leonard red faced and breathless drops to his knees in an act of involuntary supplication

Leonard: (panting) Bella. I have realised today, now, this very moment *I love you*, I must do otherwise why would I change from Wednesday afternoon to Thursday evening?.

I love you, and simply refuse to believe you don't feel something for me

Bella: (referring to high heels) How do they walk in these things ?

(giggling) Oh Leonard you are silly. You don't love me, - not for one minute, as I said you don't know me. I on the other hand, do know you very well..And I must say you're a nice enough chap, I mean you're selfish and a little boring, but on the whole, I quite enjoyed our Wednesday afternoons together.

Leonard: (hopefully) Did you ?

Bella: (still breathless and excited) You know in most of the advanced lost civilisations, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Aztec, the Incas, even our own English druids, there is evidence of the legend of the Sacred Prostitute.

Leonard: The ... what ?

Bella: It was a cult. The entire male tribe, men and women would 'elect' one woman to become the..

Jo: Sacred Prostitute.

Bella: Or muse. This woman might not be the most beautiful, the cleverest, the richest, - or even the youngest but she would be deemed to be wisest... The men of the tribe, particularly the chiefs or the ancients would visit the Sacred Muse in her temple, she might be masked or fabulously wigged and costumed - here, they'd talk, share wine, a meal, even dance and thenthey would partake in the act of union.

Jo: They'd fuck.

Bella: He would pay, usually in gold but it might be precious gems, livestock, or even land, so that the Sacred Muse became rich and powerful and as rich as the chiefs and in return it was said he received some part of her essence, her 'female soul juice'... there is I believe an old South American Indian word for it still in existence though the concept is lost from modern

languages...And in the ancient matriarchy there is some evidence of a Sacred Boy prostitute, elected only by women and not chosen because of his wisdom but because he had a big cock.

Jo:}

Leonard:} Gross

Bella: That Leonard is what you made me feel like.

Leonard: **(totally confused)** What ? That you had a big...?

Bella: No, like a Sacred Prostitute. That is what I was to you.

Leonard: But we didn't..

Jo: Fuck.

Bella: Well you see you're not my type..

Bella turns to Jo

Bella: I love you

Jo: **(astonished)** Do you ?

Bella: I know you've never fancied me..

Jo: I loved you from the moment I saw you sobbing into your green opaque mop bucket...the saddest woman in the world playing dead.

She goes down on her knees

► You are a goddess. And you can't leave me now because I'm in big trouble. I sprung Martha. They're bound to find out. I think it's best if we leave the country now. Today. Before they put the squeezers on. And we're going to need all that money of yours...Fake passports, new identities.

We'll have to go somewhere really obscure.

And far away.

Together.

Like...

Bella:}

Jo:} South America

Jo gets up. Bella and Jo run off with a suitcase each, laughing.

Leonard is left kneeling in the grass

SCENE 17 **Bella's flat. Balcony. Liz and Sef and Martha's manuscript has gone. Chloe is red eyed, Jay stands close by**

Chloe: Well you've completely ruined my marriage. You realise that ?

Jay: (softly) Yes.

Chloe: You sound happy.

Jay: I am.

Chloe: All that work wasted. - my fabulous survey.

Jay: What makes you think it's wasted...? Anyway I learnt a lot..

(slight pause)

Chloe: You said earlier - ...you said...

Jay: I wanted you for myself, that's true

Chloe: But...

Jay: Oh I don't love you.

Chloe: No ?

Jay: Not even a little bit. Come live with me.

Chloe: (slight pause) I am not in any way going to put a stop to my...

Jay: Encounters.

Chloe: You realise that do you ?

Jay: Of course. It will be interesting. An education for me. Maybe I'll find out about women.

Chloe: Oh I see what this is about...cheap thrills mmmn ? I come home and tell youall about them, and you Mr Author Man feed vicariously like a vulture off my experience.

Jay: Well you can tell me if you want, but I'd really rather you didn't.

Chloe: Oh...(smiling) Right. And you don't love me ?

Jay: (shakes his head) And you don't love me !

Jay turns away

Is Chloe sure about this ?

Jay: Is it me or is the weather about to break?

SCENE 18 Liz Sharp's flat 2 weeks later

Morning. Liz is in her diaphanous nightie, about her are the 50 exercise books from the carrier bag. She is re-reading occasionally making notes.

Jay enters.

Jay: Look, it's about the book.

Liz: What book ?

(Jay looks puzzled)

Oh your book ! Oh yes.

(she looks at the exercise books)

Your book. Yes.

Oh dear !

Jay: **(firmly)** Liz I can't do it.

Liz: **(delighted)** Can't you ?

Jay: No..I.

Liz: Say no more. It would have been lousy anyway.

Jay: Would it ?

Liz: Actually - **(she indicates the exercise books)**

I think I may have found my book. The Xtremis book, the definitive erotic masterpiece for women.

Jay: **(very interested)** Really ?

Liz: **(bubbling over)** Jay. It's fantastic. truly unique, a wholly original voice, a sort of female James Joyce, only sexy.

See (she shows him the book) -

You have to read them in chronological order. They make a set; some of them are really beautiful sensuous poems, other books see - are just her name written over and over, but weaved in and out, it's her life story, and it is so sexy and funny, and written in such beautiful prose, and so strangely presented I mean truly I've never read anything like it.

Jay: Liz that is wonderful.

Liz: And it ends with a sort of prophesy....a satirical short story, almost classical in tone and structure which ends with men falling at the feet of women in these spontaneous acts of worship, **(Jay looks sceptical)** sounds cheesy, but it is written with such ...authority

Jay: Wonderful.

Liz: There is one snag...

Sef enters he is naked except for a tiny towel and a smile.

Liz: Oh darling, - was the water hot enough ? You should have told me you were awake. I'd have brought brekky.

Sef: I told you, you're spoiling me.

Liz: **(glowing)** Jay - I don't think you've met my beloved Sherrie.

Jay: Sherrie?

Liz: Sheridan Emmanuel Francisco.

Sef: Friends call me Sef.

Liz: I can't quite bring myself to call him Sheridan, so he's Sherrie. Isn't it an amazing coincidence?

Jay: Amazing.

Sef: I'll get breakfast for you for once.

Liz: **(jumping up)** No...No..I won't have it

Sef: Really...

Liz: **(very firmly)** Sherrie please go back to bed this minute. I'll be in in 5 minutes with dry fried eggs on dil smoked salmon and a pot of Lady Grey... ~~forget the rest of the breakfast~~

Sef: Oh. Alright.

Sef goes still smiling

Liz: Don't get cold, sweetie. **(calling after)** I mean there's lots of trees out there

Sef: ...Right

Liz: And it looks like rain.

(pause)

(softly to Jay) He has such an extraordinary presence. I find being with him...almost spiritual.

Of course he's insatiable.

Look at me.

I'm exhausted.

(she looks remarkably fresh)

Jay: The ..er ..snag ?

Liz: **(looking in Sef's direction hopefully)** Sorry ?

Jay: You said there was a snag with the book..

Liz: Oh yes, well the author is Martha M'Looley. - the Iceland murderess. She decapitated 12 men.

Jay: Isn't that going to raise a few eyebrows, I mean isn't there a backlash against criminals being seen to profit from their crimes ?

Liz: Oh darling, we all make mistakes. I mean at her trial much was made of her frightening sanity, her articulacy, her coldness. Since her recapture it's become totally apparent to everyone she is totally off her trolley poor sweetheart, she keeps insisting her prophecies in the book have come true, says she saw men falling at women's feet and worshipping them, in the park ! - Anyway I'm going to publish the book with a long preface, a sort of tribute, a grovelling apology.

Jay: Apology...

Liz: Yes to the headless me...

Jay: You don't think that might be viewed as coming a bit late...?

Liz: ...and their poor grieving relatives. I'm going to give them a slice.

Jay: I beg your pardon ?

Liz: Of the profits. (thinks) Sorry.

Jay: I mean I know it's not going to be easy. We're already threatened with the courts. I might have to take it abroad, publish it there and of course it'll cost me a fortune....I mean millions, but I believe it's a truly great book and I'm prepared to sink the entire profits of Xtremis publishing into getting this book into print.

Jay: Fabulous.

Liz: I'll tell you the really good news. She's out of prison Martha M'Looley.

Jay: Is she ?

Liz: She was psychologically reassessed on her recapture and not only was she babbling on about being a prophet, but... and obviously keep this bit quiet before the book launch, talking to Giant Guinea Pigs about their love life.

Jay: Oh dear !

Liz: So in an act of humane compassion she's been moved to White Lodge. - This new secure psychiatric hospital for women. It was an old Abbey built on an ancient layline, rather like Glastonbury, apparently it used to attract pilgrims, it's set in acres of green hills, with brooks and meadows of wild flowers. There's an army of Doctors studying her case. She looks to me as if she's having a ball.

Sef: Liz sweetie..

Liz: Coming Sherrie, coming..

Sound of thunder, torrential rain

SCENE 19 **Park. Some months later. Heavy rain**

Sef, Leonard and Jay are sat on the Park bench. Leonard has an umbrella, Jay has his anorak hood up, Sef has a newspaper over his head.

Leonard: I don't think I ever really loved her.

Sef: Chloe ?

Leonard: Bella. I mean I thought I must do when I discovered I hadn't really loved Chloe.

Jay: A snap decision after ten years.

Sef: But you didn't ?

Leonard: What ?

Sef: Love Bella ?

Leonard: No.

Sef: So what did you pay for then. all those afternoons for 5 years ?

(Leonard shrugs)

Leonard: I don't know.

Jay: I thought you paid for her 'ordinariness', that's what you said.

Leonard: To be honest I found her quite *extraordinary* . And I used to get ...well worked up Tuesday night, wondering if I'd have anything to say to her.

Sef: That's spooky.

Leonard: ♣ So you see, I don't know what I paid her for. And I don't think I ever will....unless....

Sef: Yes...

Leonard: Well, Chloe said something about a beautiful home, a successful career and a fabulous sex life not being enough, - and that made me think and then Bella said something about feeling like a Sacred Muse or goddess and I wonder if being with her was quite a well...(he sounds embarrassed) spiritual experience, you know brought me closer to ...well God.

(pause)

Sef: }

Jay: } **(they both stand)** Well, must be off..

Sef: Oh I got a postcard from them - Jo and Bella, it's not signed or anything, I mean I don't know it's from them. It says 'we've got a little flat above the flower market in Cuzco. We're taking one day at a time but touchwood we're very happy'.

Jay: Fabulous.

Sef: Oh and another thing- they said I should give you this.

(From under his coat he takes out plastic bag, hands it to Leonard)

...Aren't you going to open it ?

Leonard opens it. It is the two shining masks.

Leonard: (sourly) Great.

Sef: I'm sure they meant it well.

Jay: Well (looking at his watch) Adios Amigos.

Leonard: (smirking) Chloe was always a stickler for punctuality.

Jay: She's away this week. she's just clinched a new contract. - a survey for the Anglican Church, 'What do the majority of clergymen believe is the meaning of life ?'.

Leonard: She'll be making some Reverend a happy man tonight then.

Jay: Or confused. I've a nice free week so I'm starting on my book (with irony) sort of definitive religious erotic masterpiece for men and women. I feel quite inspired. (To both) See you. Oh (to Leonard) And thank you.

Leonard: (sourly) Yes. Right. (to Sef) You seem a happy man.

Sef: Yeah. I am. Very.

Leonard: I take it your little problem got sorted out then.

Sef: Oh no. Not at all.

Leonard: No !

Sef: But we're enjoying working the problems out.

Sef goes, leaving Leonard who bins the masks - He walks off then looking around, walks back to the bin, - he takes out the female one and hurries off.

THE END