

THE SEX PARTY

A play by

TERRY JOHNSON

REDUX 4

Enquiries to:

KATIE HAINES

khaines@theagency.co.uk

The Sex Party

CHARACTERS

ALEX	Late 40's, comfortably off, academic.
HETTY	Early 30's, bubbly, ex-dancer, photographer.
GILLY	Mid 40's, handsome, housewife.
JAKE	Late 40's, casual conservative, teacher.
JEFF	Mid 50's, strong-jawed American, business consultant.
MAGDALENA	Mid 40's, Russian, wiry, attractive, wife.
TIM	Early 40's, amiable, actor and phone sales.
CAMILLA	Late 40's, austere, painter, arts and craft supplies.
LUCY	Late 30's, angular, quiet, dignified.

SETTING

The Kitchen. There are bottles and glasses in formation, and a covered buffet. During the action the drinks become increasingly disarrayed and the buffet gets uncovered and demolished.

NOTES

When dialogue lines are un-spaced, the characters are speaking simultaneously.

*The Sex Party*Scene One

8.00pm

Throughout the play, levels of inebriation vary but steadily increase, and people look at their mobile phones a lot.

ALEX and HETTY
GILLY and JAKE

Alex dressed smart casual, Hetty short tartan skirt and blouse. Jake smart jeans, Gilly modest evening dress.

GILLY We're VERY nervous.

ALEX Don't be. Jake!

JAKE Hi.

ALEX Nice to meet you.

GILLY Shitting a brick.

ALEX This is Hetty.

HETTY Hi.

GILLY Hi. Hello.

JAKE Hello. Jake.

HETTY Hello.

ALEX Did you say shitting a brick?

GILLY Yes. A bit.

HETTY So did I. The first time.

The Sex Party

GILLY You shit a brick?

HETTY Well, not literally.

ALEX / GILLY Obviously.

HETTY But, you know.

ALEX Red, white, fizz, beer?

GILLY Fizz!

JAKE A beer, if you've got one.

ALEX It's a Prosecco.

GILLY Prosecco is fine.

ALEX Hetty prefers a prosecco.

GILLY Anything. Honestly. Fill a glass.

ALEX The thing to remember...

GILLY This *is* our first time.

ALEX ... is the thing I messaged you.

GILLY Which thing?

JAKE I've not been privy to any of these messages.

GILLY Yes you have; I showed you them.

ALEX The thing is; you surrender nothing at the door.

GILLY That's what I told him.

ALEX Everything's consensual. Obviously.

The Sex Party

GILLY Obviously.

HETTY That's a given.

GILLY Or someone would go to jail, presumably.

ALEX In this day and age, probably.

Pause.

JAKE Well, in any day and age, one would hope.

GILLY Hopefully. Anyway. Don't expect me to bail you out.

ALEX If you want to sit in the corner and drink wine, you can both just sit in the corner and drink wine.

JAKE Well, we might do a bit more than that, obviously.

GILLY Obviously. Or we wouldn't be here.

JAKE Obviously.

GILLY But I will need a drink. Or three.

JAKE We got here, anyway.

ALEX And you're here as a couple.

JAKE Yes.

ALEX And that's fine.

JAKE The two of us.

GILLY Same old, same old.

JAKE Afraid so.

ALEX Drinks.

The Sex Party

JAKE Cheers.

GILLY You're driving.

JAKE I know.

GILLY I'm drinking; so you're definitely driving because I'm *definitely* drinking.

HETTY Chin chin.

GILLY And what do you do, um... ?

HETTY Hetty.

GILLY Sorry.

HETTY I'm Hetty, and I'm a photographer.

GILLY Well; I'm Gilly and I'm an alcoholic.

JAKE She is, in fact.

GILLY No, I'm not.

ALEX Hetty does Food Porn.

HETTY Not what it sounds like.

JAKE Porn? With food?

ALEX No, no. She gets a commission for... Frosties...

HETTY Well, not Frosties... never Nestlé.

JAKE Conscience.

HETTY Out of my league.

ALEX But some generic cereal...

The Sex Party

HETTY Tesco's Own...

ALEX Tesco's Own Sugary Whatever's... she goes to Tesco's, buys the Frosties...

HETTY The Whatever's.

ALEX Puts them in a bowl, pours the milk on, couple of raspberries...

HETTY Three.

ALEX Three raspberries....

HETTY Or seven. Never even, always odd.

GILLY Sounds fascinating.

ALEX She can make anything look delicious.

HETTY Except curry.

ALEX Apparently.

HETTY The better you light a Dhansak the more it looks like sick.

JAKE Lovely.

HETTY Unless you take the chicken out, run it under the tap and put it back on top, but even then.

JAKE So; who's coming?

ALEX Yes, that's...

GILLY Who else *is* coming? I may not look it but I'm *very* nervous.

ALEX You don't look it.

GILLY I've made a very good effort, I think.

The Sex Party

HETTY You look fabulous.

GILLY Don't you think?

ALEX You look terrific.

JAKE You look fine.

GILLY Don't get too effusive.

JAKE I meant it.

HETTY She looks wonderful.

JAKE That's what I said.

GILLY Well it wasn't, but I do, but I'm very nervous.

ALEX You say that, but why don't I believe you?

Pause.

JAKE And who else?

ALEX Well, there's Eliana and Svet. Very experienced.

GILLY That's a good thing is it?

ALEX He's Yugoslavian originally, she's Italian. They've got a coffee shop.

HETTY I don't know them either.

ALEX Free trade, top notch. They're nice. You'll like them.

GILLY Do they know we're not ... you know...

ALEX Swapping?

The Sex Party

HETTY Don't say swapping!

GILLY Swapping.

HETTY Don't say that word!

ALEX They do. And I'll remind them.

GILLY We're not swappers.

JAKE We're not swingers.

GILLY Don't say that word either.

HETTY I *know*.

GILLY We're neither, we're just...

JAKE Curious.

GILLY No! That's one of those words too, isn't it?

JAKE It's *a* word, yes.

ALEX It *is* a word, yes.

GILLY One of the words you use.

ALEX Well, that's what you technically are.

JAKE Curious, then.

GILLY No! We're just... curious. With a little c. Not as in Curious, you know; with a big C.

JAKE Anyone else?

ALEX Magdalena and Jeff. She's Russian. He's American.

The Sex Party

JAKE Russian? Is she?

GILLY Let's not get *too* curious.

JAKE Whose idea was this?

GILLY What are they like?

ALEX I haven't met them.

GILLY Have you met them?

HETTY I haven't met any of these people.

GILLY So then how do you meet these people?

HETTY He hasn't met them.

GILLY You haven't met them?

ALEX Well, not all of them.

JAKE You mean anyone might rock up?

ALEX Not anyone. We're on a website.

GILLY And?

HETTY You wink at people. And they wink back, or they don't. They tend not to wink back at Alex but they all wink back at me.

ALEX You post an event, they ask for an invite, you ignore them, or invite them.

GILLY But you've never met them?

HETTY People are usually nice.

GILLY Well, they'd need to be.

The Sex Party

HETTY Yes; they would.

GILLY Wouldn't they?

ALEX They will be.

HETTY You get the odd one.

JAKE One what?

GILLY Odd how?

JAKE How odd?

HETTY Oh; you know. One to avoid. It's like anywhere.

ALEX People usually turn out to be good people.

GILLY Yes, but they don't anymore, do they? People are a lot less nice lately.

HETTY I know.

GILLY Suddenly everyone knows everything about things they know nothing about.

ALEX That'll be that pesky internet I've heard tell of.

GILLY My erudition is not trumped by your ignorance.

JAKE That's certainly how it is in our house.

ALEX Our entire culture; dictated by Twitter.

GILLY And you can't even wrap tomorrows chips in it. If all these mad opinions aren't shut down, freedom of speech is done for.

ALEX I don't think you've thought that through.

GILLY I don't have to. It's blindingly obvious.

The Sex Party

ALEX I don't know what I ever saw in you.

JAKE If you see it again; give us a clue.

GILLY Ha. Ha.

HETTY Do we have to be serious? I don't want to be serious.

JAKE Me neither. We'll be not serious together. Anyone else turning up?

ALEX There's a young couple I know; Jake and Rebecca.

GILLY Another Jake!

HETTY Two Jake's.

JAKE Don't get us mixed up.

GILLY I'll try not to.

ALEX Then there's Tim. And Camilla. I know Tim. I don't know Camilla. And then a few maybe's.

GILLY Well, we're not spoilt for choice, are we?

JAKE Not that we intend to do any choosing, darling, do we darling?

GILLY We already chose, didn't we sweetie?

JAKE Yes we did.

GILLY No more choosing.

HETTY I'm not choosy.

ALEX I've noticed.

HETTY Well, I am....

The Sex Party

ALEX She is.

HETTY In fact, I'm *very* choosy. It's just every so often I choose *not* to be.

ALEX Oh, and there's Lucy. A woman I met.

HETTY Random.

ALEX In Coco de Mer.

HETTY Oh well then. Everyone loves a Unicorn.

GILLY A unicorn.

HETTY Unattached single.

GILLY Oh.

JAKE More the merrier, then.

GILLY I love what you're wearing.

HETTY Thank you.

GILLY I didn't really know what to wear.

HETTY You look fabulous.

GILLY Never got dressed to get undressed before. I've been in the wardrobe since mid-afternoon.

HETTY In the wardrobe?

GILLY Walk-in wardrobe.

HETTY Oh, you lucky thing.

JAKE Otherwise known as upstairs.

GILLY Anyway; I finally made up my mind.

The Sex Party

JAKE That's a slight exaggeration. We got as far as the front door.

GILLY I panicked. You were no bloody use. I've got another two outfits in my bag.

HETTY Ooh. Can I see?

ALEX Fashion show!

HETTY You'll be lucky.

ALEX Only if you fancy it.

HETTY Don't put your bossy boots on.

ALEX I thought you liked me in them.

GILLY Righto. Is there a place where I can...?

JAKE You look fine as you are.

ALEX You look fabulous.

HETTY Let me show you the living room. We've gone to town a bit. Fairy grotto in the garden.

ALEX You and your fairy grotto.

HETTY If it gets too loud we'll close the French windows.

GILLY Loud?

HETTY Follow me!

GILLY I'm so bloody nervous.

HETTY I know.

GILLY Comes over me in waves.

The Sex Party

Exit GILLY and HETTY

ALEX Need another?

JAKE Driving.

ALEX Ah.

JAKE Thanks for the invite.

ALEX My pleasure.

JAKE I mean; we never would have.

ALEX I know.

JAKE If you hadn't.

ALEX Which is why I asked.

JAKE You've known Gilly what?

ALEX Oh...

JAKE University.

ALEX Twenty years.

JAKE Did you ever...

ALEX What? Gilly and I?

JAKE Yes.

ALEX Have you asked her that?

JAKE No.

ALEX Then why are you asking me ?

The Sex Party

JAKE Just curious. Small c. What's this?

(A box of twelve Durex sealed in a hard-plastic
supermarket security pack)

ALEX Sainsbury's delivery.

JAKE You didn't nick 'em then?

ALEX It's impossible to open.

JAKE Condoms are safe then; pity about the sex.

ALEX I could take a hammer to it, but I quite like it on the wall. Installation art.

JAKE Are you into that?

ALEX Not really.

JAKE Gilly dragged me to that Saatchi Gallery. Half a cow. Glass box of flies. Posh corniced room with oil on the floor. Black reflection in the oil as deep as the room was high. All a bit creepy, really. I never know where she'll drag me next.

ALEX Welcome.

JAKE Nothing personal.

ALEX No pressure.

JAKE None expected.

ALEX There's another in the fridge, when you need it.

JAKE Thank you. So when did you decide orgies were The Way to Go?

ALEX I had a lodger. Long time ago. She came over all confessional one evening. Told me her District Manager had taken her to a club. Said it was a bit of an eye opener, but she enjoyed "the vibe". So the second time they went was a Wednesday and things were a bit quiet so apparently she and her District Manager put on a show.

The Sex Party

JAKE Put on a show?

ALEX Put a show on. When you're the only ones at it and others are watching, that's... putting on a show.

JAKE She put on a show with her District Manager?

ALEX Yes.

JAKE She didn't think that was a bit off?

ALEX Obviously not. I presume she fancied him. I mean she wasn't after a pay hike or... East Croydon or anything.

JAKE He sounds a bit dubious, though.

ALEX I don't know him.

JAKE I'd say he was chancing his arm.

ALEX Well, right; but this was years ago.

JAKE Ah.

ALEX Before all that.

JAKE Right.

ALEX Back in the day.

JAKE Pats on the bum.

ALEX Mistletoe.

JAKE Stationary cupboard.

ALEX Photocopier.

JAKE Sense of humour.

The Sex Party

ALEX Sense of proportion.

JAKE I mean; that's where the vast majority of us *met*. Before it was entirely random.

ALEX Swipe left?

JAKE Married man.

ALEX So the lodger said; "You're curious, aren't you?" And I said; "Of course I am." And she said "He who desires and acts not breeds pestilence". Well, I couldn't argue with that. So a month later Hetty and I are in the car and we're heading for a club next to a police station in Wednesbury.

JAKE Sounds enticing.

ALEX Little green door at the back of the place. You pay your money, put your wine behind the bar. You get given a towel, and go change in the locker room.

JAKE Any banter?

ALEX Banter?

JAKE Locker room banter.

ALEX It's not that sort of locker room.

JAKE Oh.

ALEX It's not a golf club, it's a...

BOTH ...swingers club.

JAKE Right.

ALEX Besides; it's unisex.

JAKE The locker room?

The Sex Party

ALEX Yes. The men put on the towels. The women change into whatever they like. Lingerie, latex... whatever.

JAKE Doesn't that...

ALEX What?

JAKE Spoil it a bit?

ALEX It *is* a bit Tooting Lido, to be fair. But the club's nice in a West Midland's pub sort of a way. Banquets, little dance floor with a pole. Rooms to play in, rooms with the door closed, rooms with the door ajar, which is code for "come in". Windows you can watch through. Vinyl mattresses.

JAKE Kinky.

ALEX Easy to clean.

JAKE Ah.

ALEX Gruesome plaster grotto at the back, with a jacuzzi.

JAKE Oh, no thanks.

ALEX What?

JAKE Bodily fluids.

ALEX But the reassuring aroma of chlorine.

JAKE That's not good.

ALEX Hygiene's a thing.

JAKE If the water's clean you can't smell the chlorine. If you can smell the chlorine then the chlorine's *working*, so there's stuff in the water it's *working on*.

Pause.

ALEX Really?

The Sex Party

JAKE Really.

ALEX Oh.

JAKE But you're a jacuzzi man?

ALEX Well, I was.

Enter HETTY.

HETTY Man talk?

ALEX Of course.

HETTY We're having girl talk.

ALEX Of course you are.

HETTY And Gilly needs another. My mum called. She sends her love.

ALEX That's nice.

HETTY She likes you. Dad not so much. He thinks you're too old for me.

ALEX Why?

HETTY Because you're two years older than he is.

HETTY kisses ALEX, then kisses JAKE rather more extravagantly. Exit HETTY with prosecco.

ALEX Hetty's a bit old fashioned. In a good way.

JAKE She seems... very nice.

ALEX She is.

JAKE And the...hygiene aspect of all this doesn't bother you at all?

The Sex Party

ALEX People are careful. I mean no-one's *not* careful.

JAKE I was just wondering.

ALEX It won't affect you two.

JAKE No. We certainly won't be clubbing in Wednesbury.

ALEX It's a lot like being down the pub; except you haven't got your clothes on.

JAKE And all this turned you on, did it?

ALEX Well yes and no. It's sexy, but pedestrian. Hieronymus Bosch in Smethwick. Hetty and I found a little alcove with our Sauvignon.

JAKE Sauvignon?

ALEX I'm more a Picpoul man myself.

JAKE I was going to say.

ALEX But Hetty likes a Sauvignon.

JAKE And you're a gentleman.

ALEX I am. It wasn't bad, actually. Graham Norton's. It's dryer than some.

Enter HETTY

HETTY I've lost my bubbles.

ALEX Right there.

JAKE I don't like Graham Norton.

ALEX Don't you? I do.

The Sex Party

HETTY I don't. I think he makes a mockery of Eurovision. Has he taken you through the Green Door? Is that where we are?

JAKE Yes.

HETTY Has he told you about the pvc pole dancers?

JAKE No.

HETTY Tell him about the pvc pole dancers.

ALEX No.

HETTY Two girls, early twenties? Playing on the pole. They couldn't pole dance, they were just mucking about.

ALEX They had on those terrible / pvc nurse's costumes.

HETTY Pvc nurse's costumes. Ten quid on ebay. He liked the one with no knickers on. Didn't you? She was his favourite.

JAKE No knickers?

HETTY She could *not have* cared less.

JAKE That's quite sexy.

HETTY Which is what he said.

ALEX Which is what I said. And then you said;

HETTY Then I said; "Well, if it's turning you on; / have a wank."

ALEX Have a wank.

JAKE You said that?

HETTY And then he said...

The Sex Party

ALEX "I can't just have a wank."

HETTY And I said "Of course you can..."

BOTH "It's a sex club!"

JAKE So whhhat did you....

ALEX So I put down my glass of Graham Norton...

HETTY Dropped his towel and had a wank.

JAKE Did they notice?

ALEX Yes, but they took no notice.

HETTY The tall one tried a bit harder.

ALEX Did an upside down thing and fell on her head.

HETTY Then what happened? What happened then?

ALEX Well... out of the blue.

HETTY We barely knew each other.

ALEX Hetty went down on me.

HETTY Hoorah for Hetty.

ALEX Thank you very much.

HETTY Is this too much information?

JAKE In any other circumstances, yes.

ALEX The couple on the table next to us raise their glasses. My vision goes skew whiff. My pupils dilate or something.

HETTY To cut a long story short...

The Sex Party

JAKE Not on my account.

ALEX Frankly?

HETTY He came like a train.

JAKE Blimey.

ALEX What can I say? Sex in public. Whodathunk it?

HETTY Big grin on his face for the rest of the night.

JAKE Wow.

ALEX It wasn't just the towel I dropped. More like a heavy old greatcoat, caked in mud. Shame, that mud was. That's what dropped off my shoulders that night; my shame. Bit of a life changer, really.

HETTY Thank you, Hetty.

ALEX Thank you, Hetty.

JAKE Well, I look forward to walking out of here a changed man.

ALEX Well, you might.

JAKE Don't expect too much of us.

ALEX Nothing is expected of you.

JAKE Either of us.

Enter GILLY in a more revealing cocktail dress.

GILLY Da da!

HETTY Da da!

GILLY (*Pink Panther*) Dada dada dadadadada!

The Sex Party

ALEX That's terrific.

GILLY It's not too much?

ALEX No.

HETTY Or too little?

GILLY It's *definitely* too little.

JAKE You look great.

GILLY Thank you, kind sir.

JAKE Come here, you.

GILLY Ooh. Forceful.

JAKE kisses GILLY.

HETTY Ahh. Marital bliss.

GILLY That's us.

JAKE Married Alive.

GILLY Charming.

ALEX As long as you're both on the same page.

JAKE We've discussed it, yes.

GILLY We're definitely on the same page.

ALEX Good.

GILLY Different books, same page.

HETTY Page 69.

The Sex Party

GILLY That's a nice page. Jake prefers page 96. That's how we sleep.

Doorbell.

HETTY Ouup.

GILLY Oh my Gaaaahd.

HETTY Here we go. Who's getting it?

ALEX You get it.

HETTY I'll get it.

ALEX Take off your clothes and get it.

HETTY It's not a pizza!

Lights.

The Sex Party

Scene Two

9.00pm

Music and conversation from the living room.

ALEX, JEFF and MAGDALENA

Jeff wears a suit and tie, Magdalena a designer evening dress, with bling, beneath a fur coat or jacket.

JEFF This is nice. You have a nice home. It's a nice crowd.

MAGDALENA Sweetheart; do you have tequila?

ALEX We have gin.

MAGDALENA No; we need some tequila.

ALEX We don't have tequila.

MAGDALENA Is there a shop? We both go. For tequila.

JEFF You don't need tequila.

ALEX We have vodka.

MAGDALENA What sort of vodka?

ALEX I don't know. It's in a skull.

MAGDALENA Then is not real vodka!

ALEX Real enough, I should think.

MAGDALENA I would *LOVE* tequila.

JEFF You don't *need* tequila.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA I have vodka. Skull vodka.

JEFF It's a very nice set up you have here. Well done.

ALEX Thank you.

MAGDALENA You have quirky taste. I have quirky taste. He has boring taste. He's American.

ALEX How did you two meet?

MAGDALENA He was desperate.

JEFF We met in Gdansk.

MAGDALENA He was looking for sex.

JEFF And she wasn't.

MAGDALENA I hate sex.

JEFF She was looking for a husband.

MAGDALENA I found one. Rich. Hoorah. American. Yawn. Do you have olives?

ALEX Yes.

MAGDALENA I like it dirty.

ALEX But you hate sex?

MAGDALENA I *LOVE* sex.

JEFF I'm an extremely lucky man; according to her.

MAGDALENA I was looking for love. But in wrong place; I find him instead. But he loves me. Don't you, darling?

JEFF Yes, I do.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA He hates to share me.

JEFF Breaks my heart.

MAGDALENA But I have to be free.

JEFF And married.

MAGDALENA Free to love.

JEFF She has to be both. Don't you?

MAGDALENA Yes.

JEFF I don't know how you feel Alex, but we feel a couple needs a strong bond if they're going to play. There's nothing casual about being casual. I mean; you've got to know who you're going home with.

MAGDALENA And he is my home. He adores me.

ALEX And you met in Gdansk?

MAGDALENA He won me in a poker game.

JEFF I don't remember it that way.

MAGDALENA How do you remember it?

JEFF I remember it as the night I almost lost a Maserati.

ALEX And what's your business?

JEFF Oh, import / export.

MAGDALENA Do no business with him. DO NOT GIVE HIM DETAILS OF YOUR BANK ACCOUNT. And DO NOT play poker. Unless you can to win me off him. Please. You can try for me. I am very bored with him. But DO NOT BET YOUR GIRLFRIEND. Or you will lose.

JEFF We're not here to play poker.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA Ask him what he import / exports.

ALEX I'm sure he'll tell me if he wants to.

MAGDALENA No. He will tell you a lie.

ALEX Drugs, then.

Pause.

JEFF You got it.

ALEX Drugs?

JEFF That OK?

ALEX Obviously I'd draw the line at people.

MAGDALENA You see? Moral fibres!

Enter HETTY, without her blouse.

HETTY Alright, American Man. Do you mind if I call you that?

JEFF Is it a compliment?

HETTY I don't know yet.

JEFF My name's Jeff.

HETTY Was your Grandad a cowboy?

JEFF No, he was on Wall Street.

HETTY Did he throw himself out of a window?

JEFF He may as well have.

HETTY Can I call you Geoffrey?

The Sex Party

JEFF Just plain old Jeff.

MAGDALENA He will be very friendly, but don't be his friend. Just have sex with him; is best for you.

HETTY Alright. If you insist. Are you coming in, sweet?

ALEX In a minute.

HETTY Are you alright?

ALEX I'm fine.

She kisses him. Takes JEFF's hand.

HETTY Come on then, plain old Jeff. There's a party in the living room that needs livening up.

JEFF How could I refuse?

Exit HETTY and JEFF.

MAGDALENA Your girlfriend is type my husband likes. I am not this.

ALEX Not what?

MAGDALENA I am type husband like him marries. No complaining. Waste of time. When are you going to have sex?

ALEX Oh, eventually.

MAGDALENA Who with, you intend?

ALEX Anyone who'll have me, I suppose.

MAGDALENA Poor little lamb. Too much wolf's clothing I think. I have to have sex now. Would you like?

ALEX Well...

The Sex Party

MAGDELENA Do you have absinthe?

ALEX No.

MAGDELENA No?

ALEX Maybe later.

MAGDALENA Would you like to know my safe words?

ALEX I need to know those, do I?

MAGDELENA Is best

ALEX What are your safe words?

MAGDALENA "Don't stop".

Doorbell.

MAGDALENA I will answer! Whoever is at the door; I will have sex with them.

Exit Magdalena

Lights.

*The Sex Party*Scene Three

10.00pm

ALEX sits drinking.
Enter GILLY, barefoot.

GILLY Well, it's all kicking off in there.

ALEX Are you enjoying it?

GILLY I'm not not.

ALEX Is Jake?

GILLY I think so. I wasn't sure he would.

ALEX Why not?

GILLY You don't know Jake. He can be a bit uptight.

ALEX Should you be keeping an eye on him, or are you deliberately not.?

GILLY Neither. He'll stay in the corner where I left him. It's all a bit of an eye-opener, isn't it? I didn't expect quite so much... enthusiasm.

ALEX But you're enjoying yourselves?

GILLY Yes, thank you. We've enjoyed ourselves already.

ALEX Oh. I missed that.

GILLY Well, you're sitting in the kitchen.

ALEX I'm shy.

GILLY I've noticed. We'll probably enjoy ourselves again later. You can watch.

The Sex Party

Enter TIM.

Tim is dressed a few cool years younger than he is.
Paul Smith flowered shirt and designer jeans.

TIM Wow.

ALEX Wow what?

TIM Wow nothing. Just wow. Do you mind if I roll a spliff?

ALEX You'll have to smoke it in the garden.

TIM Of course.

ALEX There's a pond.

TIM Right.

ALEX Don't fall in it.

TIM Righto.

GILLY How's it going in there?

TIM Magdalena's still at it.

GILLY She's pretty impressive.

ALEX She is.

TIM She *really* likes fucking.

ALEX She certainly does.

GILLY So what are you waiting for?

ALEX A bit less momentum, I think.

TIM Pond.

The Sex Party

Exit TIM.

GILLY Jake's not up for anything other than he and I.

ALEX That's why I said what I said.

GILLY For some reason he still thinks I'm gorgeous.

ALEX You are gorgeous.

GILLY You'd think after 15 years it would've worn off a bit, wouldn't you?

ALEX You have an active sex life, then?

GILLY When we're not attending sex parties?

ALEX When you're not attending sex parties.

GILLY Well yes; we do.

ALEX How many times a week?

GILLY Seven or eight.

ALEX Seven or eight?

GILLY That's quite a lot, is it?

ALEX Yes.

GILLY I thought it was. I can barely get my teeth brushed some days. I bend over the bathroom sink and he's behind me. Are you enjoying *yourself*, sitting in the kitchen?

ALEX I like the kitchen.

GILLY Hetty's a bit of a go-er.

ALEX Yes, she is. On occasion. What's she up to?

The Sex Party

GILLY She was... servicing the American.

ALEX Jolly good.

GILLY She's very bubbly.

ALEX Yes.

GILLY And quite / young.

ALEX Young? She's thirty.

GILLY Don't get tetchy. Have you know her long?

ALEX Years. I was queuing for a visa at The American Embassy. She offered me a jelly baby. I took her to Sheekey's.

GILLY How old was she then?

ALEX Well younger, obviously, as was I. There's a difference between young and too young. Which she isn't. And wasn't.

GILLY Well, she seems a bit...

ALEX What?

GILLY Obedient.

ALEX She enjoys being told what to do. She's not entirely submissive.

GILLY Well, I should hope not.

ALEX She's a dab hand with a leather paddle.

GILLY I don't want to know.

ALEX Once was enough.

GILLY Honestly; your life.

The Sex Party

ALEX Yeh. I wonder where that went.

GILLY We are, aren't we? We're getting old.

ALEX Speak for yourself. Only married people get old.

GILLY Ho. Ho. I mean that's what all this is about really, isn't it?

ALEX I don't think so.

GILLY I do.

TIM (*Off*) Bit of a problem.

ALEX What?

Enter TIM.

TIM Stepped in the pond.

ALEX I warned you about that.

TIM Forgot. It's quite deep for a pond.

GILLY Have you hurt yourself?

TIM Lost my spliff.

GILLY You're sopping wet.

TIM Just from the waist down.

GILLY Take off your trousers.

TIM No, I'm fine.

ALEX Take your trousers off.

TIM I suppose I could.

The Sex Party

GILLY Of course you can.

TIM Wouldn't normally be appropriate, of course.

GILLY But under the circumstances.

TIM Thing is... I don't think Camilla wants to join in. If I walk in there with my trousers off she might think I'm being pushy.

GILLY She seems perfectly happy; throwing in the odd suggestion.

TIM She's a goddess.

GILLY She's pretty confident.

TIM Isn't she? A bloody goddess.

GILLY A bit opinionated, maybe.

TIM She is. She is. Wonderful woman.

ALEX Are you on drugs?

TIM I like drugs.

ALEX I know you do.

TIM You don't like them. I know that. We've talked about that.

ALEX I don't like the way they divorce dickheads like you from reality.

TIM That's what I *do* like about them. You should try some mdma.

GILLY Don't.

ALEX I'd go paranoid. I'd see undercover police everywhere. Then I'd turn into a mushroom.

The Sex Party

TIM All that happens very rarely. Go on. You'll never look back.

ALEX Some people never *get* back.

TIM I do. Invariably. I'm back the next morning.

GILLY And you feel OK?

TIM Well no, actually. I feel shit until Thursday.

ALEX I'm looking you straight in the eye.

TIM Right.

ALEX And you're not really there.

TIM I know. Isn't that great?

ALEX No, it's not great.

TIM Well, I feel great.

ALEX Do you?

TIM Yes.

GILLY *Do you?*

TIM Absolutely.

ALEX Well, you don't look it. I feel like locking you in a bedroom.

TIM How do I look?

ALEX Like a bewildered corpse.

TIM That's EXACTLY it.

He looks at himself in the mirror.

The Sex Party

TIM Bewildered, a bit corpse-like, but fucking immortal, also. Seriously. You should try some. It's not a pattern is it, around this mirror; it's writing. You see; that's the opposite of psychosis. A psychotic would see a pattern and think it's writing. I saw writing and thought it was a pattern. I change. I stay the same. I change. I stay the same. Who wrote that then?

GILLY Leonard Cohen wrote it. He wrote it round Marianne's mirror.

TIM So Long Marianne Marianne?

ALEX Yes.

TIM Wow. So you wrote it round your mirror.

ALEX Well. Someone did.

TIM Cool. I dig it.

GILLY So did I.

ALEX Why do people talk like bloody hippy's when they're on drugs?

TIM I know! They do, don't they. I've noticed that.

ALEX *And* there's something in drugs that makes you talk exclusively about drugs.

TIM And something else that makes you question your entire existence.

GILLY Mopping the kitchen floor has much the same effect on me.

TIM Seriously.

GILLY Seriously.

TIM You're not being serious. I'm being serious. The whole existential question. On the cab ride over here. Why are we here? What's the meaning of life? I know it sounds stupid but it's bloody profound.

The Sex Party

ALEX These are thoughts that lots of people have. They have them when they're NOT on mdma. YOU Tim, only have them when you ARE on mdma.

TIM And it's all-consuming! But at the same time, and here's the thing about mandy, at the same time... you don't give a fuck. About any of it. That's the thing. That's why I take the stuff.

ALEX I see.

TIM You see?

ALEX I do.

TIM But what?

ALEX Well...

TIM You see. I knew there was a but. How did I *know* that?

ALEX Tim; *no one* gives a damn. We question our existence and we don't give a fuck. That's not just you; that's all of us.

GILLY That's a bit cynical.

TIM That's the point; it's impossible to be cynical if you're on a bit of molly-mandy. That's the point I've been trying to make.

GILLY It's very hard to talk to you when your pupils are so big.

TIM Would you like one?

ALEX No, she would not. I've seen her at Christmas.

TIM You know; I never thought I'd find the perfect woman. There's always something they don't like about me. But Camilla's happy with the scotch *and* the pills. She's a bloody goddess. I'm going to ask her if I can take my trousers off.

ALEX You never know your luck.

The Sex Party

Exit TIM.

ALEX He should never have moved to Brighton.

GILLY How many years? You and me?

ALEX Twenty? Since we fucked, you mean?

GILLY No! Since we met.

ALEX Twenty one, two? That was a very emphatic “no”.

GILLY Because we never did.

ALEX Didn't we?

GILLY No, we didn't.

ALEX Yes we did. Back of the wool shop.

GILLY Nope. I sucked you off.

ALEX My head in the cashmere. I thought we fucked.

GILLY I know we didn't because I remember telling myself we wouldn't.

ALEX So why didn't we?

GILLY I was being pretty promiscuous at the time; that's probably why not.

ALEX Story of my Life. Chapter One.

GILLY Is Hetty bi-sexual?

ALEX Why do you ask?

GILLY Because she *snogged me*.

ALEX Did you like that?

The Sex Party

GILLY Jake did. I think. I suppose girls don't count. But is she being herself, or is she being who you want her to be?

ALEX I don't really understand what you're saying but I think I'm being got at.

GILLY Yes you are, so yes; you do.

ALEX Hetty's attitude to sex is simple; anyone in the room who wants it ... deserves it.

GILLY That's hardly simple.

ALEX I mean; she feels that in the pub, frankly. Let alone a party.

GILLY That's insane.

ALEX That's Hetty. She can be very choosy but she prefers to be chosen. She sacrifices her right to choose on the Altar of Choice.

GILLY And you never get jealous?

ALEX Sometimes. But no.

GILLY Jake would. That's why we daren't. Does it not worry you, what people might be saying behind your back?

ALEX Not really. What will *you* say; at your next coffee morning?

GILLY Nothing, obviously. I'm sitting in the kitchen and my dress is in the living room.

Enter HETTY, in her underwear.

HETTY WHAT are you doing in the *kitchen*?

GILLY Gossiping. What are you doing in the living room?

HETTY What happens in the living room / stays in the living room.

The Sex Party

GILLY ... stays in the living room. Like my husband. Who at most parties is invariably to be found *in the kitchen*.

HETTY Well, tonight it's the living room.

GILLY I can't imagine why.

Enter JEFF, barefoot and bare-chested.

JEFF Great party. Good people. Nice ambience.

HETTY That man... has got a very nice dick.

JEFF Thank you.

GILLY What are your criteria?

HETTY Oh, it's either thumbs up or thumbs down, really.

GILLY Size doesn't matter then?

HETTY Good God no; size doesn't matter.

GILLY Size doesn't matter, Alex.

HETTY Size doesn't matter, Greg.

JEFF Jeff.

ALEX Well, I wouldn't know, obviously.

GILLY The only time size matters is if you forget to say size doesn't matter.

HETTY Or when it's toooo big.

GILLY Oh, yes; all those times.

ALEX Please; my ears are burning.

The Sex Party

JEFF May I make a suggestion?

ALEX Go ahead.

GILLY What?

JEFF I think *you* should come into the living room and seduce your husband.

GILLY Why?

JEFF So's I can watch.

Pause.

GILLY Alright, then.

She rises.

GILLY If you touch me he'll chin you.

JEFF I shall sit on the far side of the room. You throw a great party.

ALEX Wait 'til you see the buffet.

Exit GILLY, followed by JEFF.

HETTY Are you cross?

ALEX What about?

HETTY Are you ok?

ALEX I'm fine.

HETTY You're not. I know you're not. Why are you sitting in the kitchen?

ALEX I'm thinking.

HETTY Thinking what?

The Sex Party

ALEX Well, if you must know I was wondering what we were all doing here.

HETTY We're having a party.

ALEX I was being philosophical.

HETTY Why are you being philosophical? You took a Viagra and shaved your scrotum. Why are you being philosophical NOW? What's the matter? I know when something's the matter.

ALEX Nothing's the matter.

HETTY This is what you were like that Christmas. People get merry and you get moribund.

Enter MAGDALENA in severe or kinky underwear.

MAGDALENA Stupid skull is empty. Was good vodka. I know vodka.

ALEX Good, was it?

MAGDALENA Not Russian, but not Polish. You have fucked me yet?

ALEX No. My sincere apologies.

MAGDALENA Sometimes I not even look. Once; I fall asleep; ha! Am too greedy. Not care. Why you not fucking *her*?

ALEX Henrietta and I have all the time in the world.

HETTY That's what he thinks!

MAGDALENA The one with husbandy husband? You should fuck her. Is your party; why not? I know. Not worry. I not have fucked him. But if you want, I will; then you could fuck *her*.

HETTY They seemed happy enough together in the corner.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA No. She not happy. Our husbands; they talk on sofa. Engineering. Electricals. Yawn. She's unhappy woman. Very nice house. Nice people. The one in big armchair a bit bossy. But inventive. And the quiet one is quiet. I think she's here because her boyfriend. Good vodka. Stupid bottle. I think of death very much. We have a house. His house; we have it. In the country of Corn Wall. In the winter we are not there, it gets cold, but we arrive for weekend – below zero. I know; you are Russian you say; but I hate the cold. So, there is an Aga. I call it the Agaaaaagh. You have to crawl to light it and it will not light and I am on hands and knees in a rabbit coat – he says mink but pah – is rabbit. On my knees to light this Agaaaaaah. Then a night and day for the house to warm. But that is not the point I want to say. We sit freezing, only three channels on the television, and slowly house warms up and this is the point I wanted to say. There is one time... a butterfly. And one Christmas, “half the dozen”? They fly in of the summer and then they, I don't know, they hide away and it grows cold and you think they would die, no? A butterfly so cold. You see it hanging on the curtain and you think; dead butterfly. In the bathroom corner, dead butterfly. But no. No, no. You hear; flutter flutter flutter. And the first time you think WHAT ON HELL is that. And then you see. One Christmas; like baubles on the tree but in the air, fluttering around. Was beautiful. I know. You think I'm hard bitch – everyone thinks I'm hard bitch because I like to be fucked but butterflies, these butterflies, they touch my heart. So small, so patient, so pretty. And sometimes in the morning I wake to the flutter and I go to window, and there is lonely butterfly against the glass, flapping to go outside. But outside is cold; I tell it. Inside is warm, outside is freeze to death. But it doesn't know; is desperate to go, God knows where. And I put my hand on window handle and I think I let it go outside where it thinks is life and sun and flowers and other butterflies and butterfly sex – it thinks whole life is out there and inside is nothing. Warm world that is life is the world it doesn't want. World it wants is cold world that kill it.. People think I am hard bitch. And think I don't think. Because I think Russian and talk English. They think I think... not deep...

HETTY They think you're shallow.

MAGDALENA Shallow! Yes, they think, but no. All these thoughts I have from just one butterfly.

HETTY Are you the butterfly?

MAGDALENA You know? I think yes. Once. And will be. You want to fuck me now? It will stop me talking.

The Sex Party

Enter CAMILLA and TIM.
CAMILLA is dressed attractively if austerely in skirt,
blouse and boots. TIM is trouser-less.

CAMILLA Do you have a tumble dryer?

ALEX Next to the fridge.

TIM Thanks.

CAMILLA It's a mystery to me; what I see in you.

TIM You said I've got a lot of potential.

CAMILLA Comic potential, maybe.

ALEX Twiddle the thing and press the blue button.

TIM Right.

Enter GILLY and JAKE. GILLY'S hair is down,
JAKE's shirt unbuttoned.

GILLY It was only a suggestion.

JAKE Yes; but whose?

GILLY Mine.

JAKE To who? To him?

GILLY To you, you numpty.

JAKE Can I get another beer?

CAMILLA May I make an observation?

ALEX Of course.

CAMILLA May I?

The Sex Party

ALEX Yes, you may.

CAMILLA It's just an observation.

ALEX Which suggests quite possible it isn't.

CAMILLA That's all it is.

ALEX I'm intrigued.

CAMILLA There are no black people at this party.

ALEX Ah.

CAMILLA Don't you know any black people?

ALEX Yes, I do.

HETTY Yes; he does. So do I.

CAMILLA They just happen not to be here?

ALEX Lots of people I know happen not to be here. I can't imagine why.

CAMILLA Did you invite any black people?

ALEX No.

CAMILLA So how many black people do you know?

ALEX Lots.

CAMILLA How many?

ALEX Er... Three.

CAMILLA Is that all?

ALEX Plus the pub. How many *should* I know?

The Sex Party

CAMILLA You see; that's a very strange way to talk about people.

ALEX Is it? Was I?

CAMILLA The point is...

ALEX Yes, Ms Kuenssberg; what *is* the point?

CAMILLA Why are there no black people at your party?

MAGDALENA Or Gypsies!

ALEX Gypsies?!

CAMILLA Why not?

MAGDALENA Bad idea. Would steal stuff.

ALEX Which is why I didn't invite any, obviously.

TIM Well, actually; I did the Glastonbury clean-up with some gypsies. They were cool, actually.

HETTY Would anybody like an illegal lapdance?

GILLY Ooh, me!

ALEX Good try Hetty. No thanks. I don't make invites on a quota system.

CAMILLA No black people, no gay people. No lesbains.

GILLY Well, hello.

JAKE You don't count.

GILLY Why not?

JAKE Because you weren't when you got here.

The Sex Party

GILLY Oh.

ALEX So; you seem to be suggesting I'm a racist homophobe?

TIM No; she's not. It's just the way she talks.

CAMILLA Unconsciously, perhaps.

HETTY Well, I don't like the way she talks.

ALEX I know black people. I once saw a gay bloke across the street. I'm even on speaking terms with a trans person!

HETTY Frozen meals man!

ALEX Chap goes in the corner shop. We always say hi.

HETTY Not a chap, though.

ALEX No. Wig and handbag equals woman.

TIM Right. I bet shopping's a bitch.

CAMILLA Test book transphobia.

ALEX That's what I was attempting. But phobia's not the right word, even if I was, which I'm not.

CAMILLA Who are you to say that?

ALEX Someone who's not afraid. Spiders, maybe. People; fears not it. Prejudice maybe, but I'm not that either.

CAMILLA All I'm saying...

ALEX I know what you're saying. And with respect, I'm shutting you down.

TIM Now, now.

The Sex Party

ALEX Down, not up. Look, these things are traditionally straight. I'm straight, so I threw a party, and it's straight.

CAMILLA And white.

ALEX It *happens* to be white, yes.

CAMILLA Just happens to be white.

ALEX So which shall we cancel, me or it?

GILLY You know; I've known Alex half of my life. And he's none of those things.

ALEX I'm really not.

CAMILLA Have I put my foot in it? I have, haven't I? I sometimes smell hypocrisy where there is none. But people don't like straight talking. That's why I like Tim. Tim has no pretence about him. That's why I love Tim. But I do tend to go off on one. So I apologise.

Exit CAMILLA. TIM follows.

TIM It's just the way she talks.

GILLY Jake.

JAKE What?

GILLY Come into the living room.

JAKE Why?

GILLY I've had an idea. All of my own.

She takes HETTY by the hand and leads her out.
JAKE follows. MAGDALENA and ALEX alone.

MAGDALENA So you are swinger or kink? Or maybe voyeur? You are cuck tonight, but what else? You kinky for kitchen?

The Sex Party

ALEX I'm not sure what I am really. What are you?

MAGDALENA I am everything. I am Switch. Sometimes Dom, Sub, Top, Bottom, SM, CNC... CBT. You like CBT?

ALEX What is it?

MAGDALENA To torture cock and balls. But just for fun.

ALEX No. But thanks.

MAGDALENA So what is your thing? You sit in kitchen. You are host. But what is it you *want*?

Ecstatic sounds from the living room. MAGDALENA exits.

MAGDALENA You must ask yourself this, and is necessary also to be honest!

Alex is left alone. Lights.

*The Sex Party*Scene Four

10.15 pm

JAKE and ALEX.

Jake barefoot and bare-chested.

JAKE So; you're in bed with someone. Well, with Gilly.

ALEX Of course.

JAKE You love them, you like them, a one night stand, whatever, whoever. But in my case Gilly, and you're having sex, and there's this voice in your head. "The car won't start. Is it the battery or the alternator? That prick at work; should I placate him or draw the line? Should I cancel Netflix or Now TV? Is Scarlett Johansson pretty?" Or just, you know; "if both sets of parents descend on Sunday, would a barbecue be easier?" It never shuts up.

ALEX I know that voice

JAKE It's not even that annoying; I mean, these are all things that need thinking about. But it dulls the event somewhat.

ALEX And that other voice, too.

JAKE Another voice?

ALEX "Is she into it tonight or is she faking it?"

JAKE Oh, that voice! "Would she like me to slow down or just get it over with? Is this the only woman..."

BOTH I will ever make love to?"

JAKE Constant fucking ear-ache. Anyway. You grow used to that, and eventually... that's what sex is.

ALEX I understand.

The Sex Party

JAKE Until tonight. Until just then. I was having sex with my wife half an hour ago, with that American watching, and whatsisname...

ALEX Tim.

JAKE Playing with himself, and all of a sudden... I was fucking my wife and for the first time in I don't know; forever... that's all I was doing. There were no voices, no inane chattering in my head. In a room full of strangers, it was just... Gilly and me.

ALEX What did I tell you.?

JAKE Not an ounce of privacy and there we were; alone at last.

ALEX Sounds great.

JAKE How bloody paradoxical is that?

ALEX I'm seriously considering taking up counselling full time.

JAKE It was intense.

ALEX Focussed.

JAKE It really was.

ALEX Bit of a life changer, eh?

JAKE You know; I think so.

ALEX Fancy a swap, then?

JAKE Fuck off.

Pause. ALEX gets a drink.

JAKE Did you mean that or were you just...?

ALEX Oh, I was just.

JAKE She and Hetty seem to be getting on.

The Sex Party

ALEX How do you feel about that?

Enter GILLY, hair dishevelled. Dress undone, underwear in hand.

GILLY Someone spilt something.

ALEX Red or white?

GILLY Red.

ALEX Oh fuck. What on? The Persian. Of course. Where else.

ALEX finds the salt and exits.

GILLY Refill, please. Happier now?

JAKE Yes. You?

GILLY Super, thanks.

He fills her glass. GILLY puts her underwear in her handbag.

JAKE So. Are you bisexual from now on?

GILLY Definitely. That OK?

JAKE Fine by me.

Pause.

GILLY You know; you can if you want.

JAKE Can what?

GILLY Whatever. Whoever. I don't mind if you do.

JAKE I don't want to.

The Sex Party

GILLY Do you mind that I don't mind?

JAKE Is that a trick question?

GILLY No. It's a generous one.

JAKE Is it?

GILLY Well if it isn't, what is it?

JAKE It's a very strange question, that's all.

GILLY I'm not being strange, or odd, or devious... I just want you to know that tonight, if you want to whatever, then I'm OK with that. Tonight was on your bucket list, right? Well; here we are. In the bucket.

JAKE And what about you?

GILLY What about me?

JAKE Well, you're in the bucket too.

GILLY Oh you mean, do I want to... whatever?

JAKE Fuck someone else.

GILLY Not... specifically.

JAKE Specifically?

GILLY Particularly. Specifically. Either. Both.

JAKE I love a straight answer.

GILLY If you mean if I, meaning you, did and you were and you looked over your shoulder would I be at it with whoever then no; I wouldn't be.

JAKE Then what's in it for you?

The Sex Party

GILLY I think I'd like to watch. I'd like to see you happy.

JAKE As opposed to when?

GILLY As opposed to hardly ever.

Enter Alex

ALEX Panic's over.

GILLY Jolly good.

Pause.

ALEX There was a pause. Fire pit might need a bit of attention, said Alex.

GILLY Keep the home fires burning.

Exit Alex.

JAKE So I get to be unfaithful and you'd get to watch.

GILLY If you'd *like* that, yes.

JAKE That's exceedingly generous.

GILLY No more than usual. We eat what you fancy, we watch what you want. Jalfrezi; Game of Thrones; these things hold no sway over me, but they are what we choose. All aspects of our co-habitation are an attempt to make you happy. This is our usual mode of existence. It's only the bucket that's different.

JAKE You take no pleasure?

GILLY I take it where I can find it.

JAKE Have *you* got a bucket list?

GILLY No. I've got a fuck-it list. Skydiving? Machu Pichu? Seriously? Dolphins, for Christ's sake. Fuck it.

The Sex Party

JAKE When did you make that up?

GILLY Ironing, at a guess.

JAKE Why haven't I heard it?

GILLY Because you wouldn't have laughed.

JAKE Yes, I would; I just did.

GILLY No, you didn't.

JAKE We can leave if you like.

GILLY I want you to enjoy yourself.

JAKE And if I said you could if you wanted to, would you want to?

GILLY I would if you told me I *had* to.

JAKE Clever answer.

GILLY I thought so.

JAKE Well then; do what you like.

GILLY Oh...

JAKE It's fine by me.

GILLY Let's not have a domestic.

JAKE In the middle of a swingers party? I'm sure that wouldn't be a first.

GILLY Alright, let's go home. Do you want to go home?

JAKE Do you want to fuck Alex?

GILLY Why would I... want to do that?

The Sex Party

JAKE Well, you seem pretty thick.

GILLY We're old friends.

JAKE Are you sure?

GILLY Yes I'm sure. Are you not?

JAKE Would you say no?

GILLY As in "I wouldn't say no?"

JAKE Yes.

GILLY No. I mean yes.

JAKE You wouldn't say no or... no, you would say no.

GILLY I wouldn't say no, I suppose. Is that the same as yes?

JAKE Of course it is.

GILLY It isn't really.

JAKE Yes it is.

GILLY Alright! Yes. I wouldn't say no.

JAKE Thank you. The answer was patently obvious.

GILLY Then why did I hesitate?

JAKE I don't know; why did you?

GILLY I don't know.

Enter ALEX.

The Sex Party

ALEX Blazing nicely.

JAKE Love a good fire-pit.

GILLY You can't have one.

JAKE Why not?

GILLY Your youngest child's a pyromaniac.

ALEX Do you know what? I declare the buffet open.

GILLY Good. I'm ravenous.

Variously, they pick at the buffet.

Enter HETTY and MAGDALENA, both still in underwear.

HETTY We've decided we're going to be lesbians.

MAGDALENA Too many cocks. Too much men.

HETTY More fizz, Mags?

MAGDALENA Mags. I love to be Mags. I have never been called this.

Enter JEFF in underwear.

MAGDALENA Darling; I am Mags from now on. I answer to no other.

JEFF I'll make a note of that.

TIM (OFF) Ooo-ow!

Doorbell.

HETTY I'll get it.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA Hurry back to your Mags; we shall lope together far away. (*To Gilly*) You must come with us. I think you are a lesbian too.

GILLY I used to think I had tendencies, but it was just Elmhurst.

MAGDALENA You, definitely. She definitely!

JAKE I don't think so.

GILLY No, she's right. It's been lovely Jake, but I have to change my life.

MAGDALENA We shall live on Greek island.

GILLY Or in Camden. With cats.

MAGDALENA Lots of little pussies.

JEFF Good riddance to the lot of you; that's what I say.

MAGDALENA Because you are homo-thing.

JEFF I wish I was. The lifestyle would have suited me. But I'm not.

Enter TIM and CAMILLA from the garden. TIM still
trouserless, CAMILLA in bra and skirt.

TIM I put my wine down somewhere.

CAMILLA You don't need it.

TIM No, but it's a mystery.

ALEX holds up a soggy red tea towel.

ALEX Is this it?

TIM No; it was in a glass.

ALEX What's wrong with your hand?

The Sex Party

CAMILLA Into the ice.

TIM Marshmallows. Yum. Ouch.

JAKE Ooh; sugar; nasty.

CAMILLA He'll live.

Enter HETTY with LUCY.

LUCY wears a gown worthy of a BAFTA (not OSCAR) red carpet.

One by one, the room look at her.

HETTY Alex; your new best friend is here.

ALEX Lucy! Hi.

LUCY Hello.

ALEX You came.

LUCY I came. I almost didn't, then I did.

HETTY Can I take your coat?

LUCY Thank you. Yes. I wasn't sure what to bring. I brought this.

ALEX No need. Thank you. Let me introduce you. Jeff, Lucy, Lucy, Jeff. Magdalena, Lucy, Jake...

JAKE My wife.

HETTY Hetty.

GILLY I'm Gilly.

JAKE I said that.

The Sex Party

ALEX Camilla and Tim.

TIM Hi.

LUCY Hello.

CAMILLA Welcome.

ALEX I'd take you through, but the party seems to be in the kitchen.

LUCY All the best parties are.

JEFF Except the ones enjoyed upon the ocean against a sinking Caribbean sun. And may I just say; you look absolutely fabulous.

Pause.

LUCY Thank you. Could I use your bathroom?

ALEX Of course.

HETTY It's upstairs. I'll show you.

LUCY Thank you.

Exit HETTY and LUCY

CAMILLA Tim; eyes back in their sockets, if you don't mind.

TIM Were they? Was I? Sorry.

GILLY She's *very* attractive.

ALEX I thought so. And she's nice.

GILLY I'm sure.

ALEX She's very nice.

GILLY And tall. Jake likes tall women.

JAKE And short ones.

CAMILLA Laboutin.

The Sex Party

TIM More the merrier!

JAKE Alex; you have terrific taste.

ALEX Thank you. I think.

MAGDALENA No, no no. She is man.

ALEX She's what?

MAGDALENA She is man. In a dress.

GILLY You can't say that.

TIM Called Lucy?

ALEX I don't think so.

MAGDALENA A man called Lucy.

ALEX Lucy, yes. I mean I don't think she's... you think?

JEFF Well, is she or isn't she?

Enter HETTY.

HETTY A Man called Lucy?

JAKE Terrible western

GILLY Shush.

ALEX Look, I'm pretty sure she isn't... I mean...

JEFF So where did you meet?

HETTY In Coco de Mere.

JEFF Well then; what did you expect? Are you sure?

MAGDALENA Man.

CAMILLA Trans, I think you'll find.

HETTY Well, how well do you know him?

The Sex Party

GILLY Her?

HETTY Well, whoever he is, she is?

JEFF You have a thing for transsexuals?

GILLY Is that the word?

JEFF What month is it?

ALEX What do you mean, a thing?

CAMILLA I owe you an apology, Alex. And that's not something I often say.

TIM No; that's a first, really.

ALEX I haven't got a thing. Or a thing. Either way, I mean.

GILLY So is he a man in a dress called Lucy or is he *Lucy* in a dress.

JAKE That doesn't make sense.

GILLY I mean there's a difference between *was* and *is*, moron.

HETTY So she's a *woman* in a dress?

MAGDALENA Yes.

HETTY What if she wasn't in a dress?

MAGDALENA Then a man, I think.

TIM Blimey.

JAKE More quiche, vicar?

GILLY But are we supposed to *know*?

ALEX Well presumably, she'd prefer to pass.

GILLY So do we *know* or do we *not* know?

JAKE This is why we can't watch thrillers.

ALEX Alright, I admit; some clarification *would* be welcome. I mean is ...

The Sex Party

TIM She
HETTY She
CAMILLA She.

ALEX Lucy. I mean who *is* she... is a perfectly valid question.

JEFF I'm glad you agree.

MAGDALENA At best parties; there is always a pervert.

HETTY You can't say that!

GILLY You can't say that!

ALEX You can't say that!

MAGDALENA Is not a bad thing. Is a good thing.

Enter LUCY.

LUCY Hello, again.

ALEX Hi, Lucy.

HETTY Hello, Lucy

GILLY Lucy; hi.

JAKE Lucy. Hello.

JEFF Lucy?

TIM. Hiya Luce.

CAMILLA Such a lovely name!

MAGDALENA Lucy, whatever.

Silence.

ALEX Welcome!

Lights.

END OF ACT ONE

*The Sex Party***ACT TWO**Scene One

Continuous.

ALEX Would you like a drink? Let me get you a drink. Have a seat. Take a pew. What would you like? There's well... just about everything.

MAGDALENA There is no tequila.

JEFF Or vodka.

ALEX Fizz?

MAGDALENA Is Prosecco.

LUCY Marvellous. I'd love some.

ALEX I knew it. Lucy's a Prosecco.

They all laugh.

LUCY So.

HETTY So. Welcome.

ALEX Welcome, welcome, welcome.

LUCY Thank you. It probably goes without saying but there *is* something you should all know.

They all speak simultaneously.

GILLY Really?

JAKE Hmm?

TIM What's that then?

CAMILLA I think we know.

JEFF And what might that be?

MAGDALENA We know, darling. we know.

The Sex Party

LUCY This is my first sex party.

GILLY Oh. Us too.

TIM Absolutely. Same for us.

CAMILLA Apparently they're all the rage.

JEFF Well, well.

MAGDALENA We have been to many. Many, many, many.

JAKE And our last.

ALEX Well; the curious are very welcome.

LUCY Thank you. And do you all know each other?

ALEX More or less. I think everyone knows me, at least.

HETTY We're getting to know one another.

GILLY We certainly are.

JAKE She certainly is.

LUCY So you're all... "Swingers".

GILLY Oh, no.

JAKE Nope.

HETTY Hardly.

CAMILLA I'm not, no.

ALEX Guilty.

JEFF Sure.

MAGDALENA Definite. We are international. Copenhagen, South of France; but we love London.

JEFF You said you almost didn't come. So why did you?

LUCY Well... I've always been curious.

HETTY Big c or little c?

The Sex Party

GILLY Big c or little c?

LUCY Oh, strictly lower case. Some of us lead simple, quiet lives. I've always presumed the sex-positive to be a very exotic species.

JEFF Well sure. But are we going to DISCUSS this, or not? I don't mean to be offensive but these affairs are traditionally *heterosexual*.

LUCY Traditionally heterosexual?

JEFF That's how this evening started out; yes.

LUCY And in what way is this evening no longer that?

JEFF Well, that's what I'm asking.

MAGDALENA We throw a party, he says; "Only straight women and men to the party".

JEFF I said no such thing.

MAGDALENA And lesbians, of course. He likes lesbians.

JEFF I have no particular prejudice.

MAGDALENA Good for the goose, good for the gander.

ALEX Are we what *you* expected?

LUCY Well, I hadn't imagined you all in the kitchen. I'd imagined something... livelier.

HETTY We were much livelier earlier.

GILLY You were exceedingly lively.

HETTY I know. Alex thinks I might be a nymphomaniac.

JAKE I think he might be right.

The Sex Party

HETTY Well I'm not really; I just love cocks. (TO JEFF) Nine out of ten. (TO JAKE) Haven't seen yours.

GILLY Seven.

JEFF What is it you love about them?

HETTY What I love *most* about cocks is they NEVER look like they belong to the man they belong to. It's like choosing a dog at Battersea. The man never thinks; well, I'm small and cute so I'll choose the small cute one; no, they want the big jumpy-up one that'll see off burglars. And the tall handsome bloke falls for the pudgy little one, and that's what he's stuck with.

JEFF What's your opinion, Luce?

LUCY I love dogs.

GILLY Do you? I do. We went to Battersea last weekend.

JAKE And the one before that.

HETTY Oh; did it break your heart?

GILLY We've always had a dog. Then Mabel died, so...

HETTY I'd love a dog. I miss my dog.

GILLY You're a dog person.

HETTY Oh, I am.

LUCY So am I.

GILLY I knew you were.

HETTY Alex isn't.

ALEX I'm indifferent. Or allergic. Depends on the dog.

The Sex Party

JAKE I'm a dog person; she puts a bed down for me in the kitchen.

HETTY Are *you* a dog person?

JEFF I thought we were talking about my penis.

CAMILLA We changed the subject.

JEFF Well no; I'm not.

HETTY Oh, I am.

JEFF Why?

HETTY Because I LOVE DOGS.

JEFF I don't like dogs.

LUCY How can you not like dogs?

JEFF What's to like?

LUCY Dogs are loyal, dogs love you unconditionally.

JAKE Woof.

JEFF Well, I don't think they do.

HETTY Oh, they do.

LUCY Yes, they do.

HETTY They really do.

JEFF Dogs want to eat. They follow you to the kitchen because they want to eat. They sit up when you open the cookies; because they want to eat. They chase a rabbit; they want to eat it. They chase a ball for practice because they didn't catch the rabbit. You get home from Iraq; they go crazy; they think you went for food. They lick your face in the hope of vomit. They nuzzle the baby because they're *thinking* about it. Dogs want to eat. That's all dogs want.

The Sex Party

GILLY That is so... I want to say cynical but it's not a good enough word.

HETTY Dogs are THE MOST LOVING creatures.

JEFF Because you *feed* them. Try not feeding them. And don't die alone in the house, because your dog will love you more each meal time.

HETTY My friend had a friend who died. His dog went to the graveyard every day and sat on the grave.

JEFF Because that's where they put the bones!

HETTY I lied. You've got a horrible dick. I planted carrots once. Only one came up. And it was like your dick.

JEFF I'm not saying you didn't love your dog.

HETTY Well, thank you.

JEFF I'm just saying *it* didn't love *you*.

GILLY Well; is there any *need* to say that?

JEFF You provided food, shelter and territorial support. Therefore it was loyal, because not to be so would be a Darwinian error.

LUCY Well, I don't care. I love my dog.

JEFF Because it provides you with an illusory sense of non-aloneness. Of being loved when of course you are not. The evidence for which would surely be your channelling of love in the direction of a fucking dog.

HETTY I was going to suck your root vegetable dick again but now I'm not.

GILLY Neither am I.

ALEX Me neither. Sorry, Jeff. That was a sure thing and you blew it.

The Sex Party

JAKE Were you intending to?

GILLY What?

MAGDALENA Why *are* we in the kitchen?

ALEX Because we're not on Antigua.

MAGDALENA There should be sex, yes? So who would like to fuck?

JEFF *Play*.

MAGDALENA He likes me to say "play".

JEFF The *word* is play.

MAGDALENA (*To Jake*) You should play with her (*Hetty*). (*To Gilly*) And you should play with him (*Alex*). (*To Alex*) I think she would like that very much.

GILLY We're just old friends.

JAKE We'll pass. Thank you.

MAGDALENA But if you let her fuck him you can fuck me. And her. You can fuck all of us.

JEFF Could you keep your damn potty mouth shut for one damned minute.

MAGDALENA Ooph. Macho – man.

MAGDALENA wraps herself in a blanket or puts her fur back on.

CAMILLA Typical cis-male.

TIM I'm one of those, apparently.

JEFF The point I'm trying to make... and I mean no offence, but if we were looking for something transgressive, well... we've done that; we've attended places where anything goes.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA Ah. "Say goodbye to Mr Gnome".

HETTY Who's Mr Gnome? Where did he go?

MAGDALENA You don't want to know. I can never not see that again.

JEFF I'm as liberal as the next man...

LUCY But not when he reaches for your penis.

JEFF You see? We talk the same language.

LUCY I'm not entirely sure that's true.

JEFF I just think it's incumbent on the host to ensure the guests are fully conversant with the inclinations of the other guests and that these things are usually considered *heterosexual* unless otherwise stated.

ALEX Then consider it otherwise stated, and apologise.

LUCY There's no need.

JEFF I'm happy to apologise.

MAGDALENA Always happy to. Never does.

ALEX Please. The buffet. It's a mixed selection of Waitrose and Iceland. I thought that might be an accurate reflection of the guest list. Joking. Not really. Tuck in.

Pause.

HETTY I love your perfume.

LUCY Krigler Oud.

HETTY I hate you.

LUCY It was a gift.

The Sex Party

HETTY It's really unusual. Musky.

LUCY Some find it exotic, others find it taints the very air they breathe.

HETTY Well, I like it.

JEFF If it's me you're alluding to; I don't appreciate that.

ALEX No-one's alluding to anyone.

JEFF But for the record; I am NOT a transphobe.

HETTY He didn't say that.

CAMILLA Oops.

HETTY She didn't. No-one said that. Sorry.

LUCY Perhaps I should go.

HETTY No! Please don't.

ALEX Hetty gets muddled.

HETTY Game of Thrones; clueless.

ALEX A slip of the tongue. Slippery tongue.

CAMILLA Inconsiderate gender identification must be the bane of your life.

LUCY On the slopes of linguistic slippage, I've become as nimble as a chamois.

CAMILLA It must drive you mad. It's insidious, insulting.

LUCY Well; I'm no longer as offended as some insist I have the right to be.

GILLY Me neither.

HETTY Anyway, I'm sorry.

The Sex Party

ALEX The point is; you're welcome here.

CAMILLA Why wouldn't she be?

TIM Hear hear.

JAKE Bottoms up.

MAGDALENA More the merriest.

JEFF (*Raises his glass*)

GILLY Welcome! You're welcome.

LUCY Thank you.

ALEX Whoever you are, and whatever, whoever you want to be, I mean, present...

CAMILLA Shall I get you a spade, Alex?

ALEX Present! That's the bloody word.

Pause. HETTY pulls on a chinese robe.

JAKE Did you catch any of the England Wales?

TIM I didn't; no.

JAKE Thirty-six, twelve apparently.

Pause

LUCY I'm grateful for the acknowledgement Alex; and however awkward, it deserves another. I have not passed. There was a time I dreamt of doing so on a daily basis, but wishing rarely made it so. Some magical times, in a bar, or Selfridges. But never on a bus, or in the Laundromat. The years I dreamed. Then an unthinking cruelty and I'd bid farewell to Carphone Warehouse, hello to Jo Malone. A hidden thought expressed with thoughtless words, and I'd move on to Hotel Chocolat. I searched for the shop floor that best supported my heels. I would stride in hope, or wade through the day's disappointments. Eventually I came to rest behind the counter of Coco de Mer, without a care.

ALEX Which is where we met, he confessed.

The Sex Party

LUCY It was indeed.

ALEX And yes. You passed.

LUCY I did?

ALEX Like a parade.

LUCY Which is ironic. You see; amidst the seductive, selective downlighting of my little erotic emporium I realised I appealed to you, and was glad of your invitation. I didn't realise you'd simply made a mistake. Then again, maybe I have. For which, you'll understand, I may not apologise, for to do so would make my very life a mockery.

ALEX If I made a mistake, it's not one I regret.

MAGDALENA I was once mistaken for transvestite.

LUCY That's not what I am.

CAMILLA Heaven forbid.

LUCY A *cross-dresser* is a man in woman's clothes. Do I *look* like a man in woman's clothes?

Pause.

CAMILLA Certainly not.

HETTY No.

GILLY No.

LUCY I wasn't asking for a show of hands.

JEFF It depends on the lighting, presumably.

LUCY Oh, doesn't it just?

ALEX Jeffrey? May I call you Jeffrey? Mind your p's and q's mate.

The Sex Party

LUCY I understand your confusion.

JEFF That's good, because I'm not at all sure I understand *yours*.

LUCY I'm not confused. I *was*, for many years. Like most kids, I tried on my mother's clothes, only to discover my inner longing could never be satisfied in Marks and Spencers.

TIM I'm a bit confused if truth be known.

CAMILLA What's happening Tim, is certain people are deliberately confusing sexual orientation with gender identity.

JEFF Not me. Sexual orientation, Tim, is determined by a number of factors, such as; are you attracted to men or women, and do you like musicals?

CAMILLA Whereas gender denotes *identity*. Please don't conflate the two.

JEFF *You* ever conflate the two, Luce?

JAKE May I speak for the men here?

GILLY No.

HETTY No.

ALEX No. Please, God.

JAKE No really, I'm genuinely interested. How would you describe yourself?

GILLY Lucy's a woman.

LUCY That's not what he's asking.

CAMILLA But that's what you are, surely?

LUCY Well, yes.

MAGDALENA You want to be a woman? You need head examined.

LUCY I understand your various anxieties...

The Sex Party

JAKE I didn't say I was anxious; what I said was...

ALEX Whatever you said; you don't speak for everyone here.

GILLY He usually does.

JAKE I do not.

GILLY It's more or less your raison d'etre.

LUCY By way of re-assurance...

ALEX You don't need to justify yourself to us. This is not some suburban backwater with pampas grass in the front garden. This is Islington. My house. An inclusive space.

JAKE Great; bring in the gnome.

HETTY Why don't we all stop talking, take some clothes off, and go into the living the room?

LUCY Because Hetty, in my headlong search for a safe space I seem to have created an unsafe one. So let me assuage your fears. I'm sure some of you are concerned I might come on to you. And others are equally eager to know should we play together what toys we might be playing with. Which brings us to the burning question in the forefront of all your minds.

JAKE Which is?

LUCY Does she still have a cock?

Uncomfortable silence.

LUCY Ironically an enquiry made of me with far greater alacrity in the big bad world than it has been here this evening.

JEFF And the answer is?

LUCY Would you like my habitual reply?

JEFF Sure.

The Sex Party

LUCY That it's none of your business. Does anyone have any drugs?

ALEX Sorry, no.

HETTY Not really.

GILLY We don't, no.

JAKE A ciggy a day, on the doorstep..

CAMILLA Not on me, no.

JEFF You do drugs?

MAGDALENA Drugs! Let's have drugs!

MAGDALENA He never buys me drugs.

TIM I do, as a matter of fact. In my trouser pocket.

MAGDALENA Where are your trousers?

TIM In the tumble dryer. Oh, shit.

ALEX Cocaine's in the quiche, or I'd go straight for the heroin in the hummus.

JEFF Under these particular circumstances, is "none of your business" a valid response?

LUCY Certainly. Unless you make it your business, of course.

ALEX It's nobody's business but your own.

JEFF May we at least presume you are attracted to men?

LUCY Not all of them. It's been something of a journey, I'll admit. In my younger days I was occasionally attracted to women. Then I hit the oestrogen and things became increasingly vague. Then came the anti-androgens, which profoundly affected my libido.

GILLY What are they, exactly?

LUCY Pills. One of them makes you lurch on salad and buy handbags. The other makes you HATE Breaking Bad.

The Sex Party

GILLY No, that's the oestrogen. It's such a curse.

JAKE Certainly is.

GILLY Stop it.

JEFF You're saying you swing both ways?

LUCY I'm not sure. No-one has pushed my swing in quite a while. It hangs vertically in the middle of the playground. I sit on it. Wild with expectation.

TIM Disco biscuit. I'd just take a half if I were you.

TIM gives LUCY half a tab.

LUCY That'll do nicely. Thank you.

ALEX Do you *have* to do drugs?

TIM Yes.

JEFF So *do* you still have a cock?

Pause.

ALEX Now, that's enough.

HETTY You can't say things like that.

CAMILLA I was wondering that.

JAKE Fair question.

GILLY Seriously?

TIM Does who have a cock?

MAGDALENA Do *you*, my darling?

ALEX You can't just ASK SOMEONE THAT.

LUCY Well, maybe not most people.

JEFF Well?

HETTY I don't care if you've got one or not. But I LOVE your eye shadow.

The Sex Party

LUCY Charlotte Tilbury.

HETTY I knew it. How do you blend it like that?

LUCY Oh, practice makes perfect.

JEFF I'm only asking on behalf of the group.

LUCY Let's put it this way. I was invited to a sex party. I wasn't going to come, and then I did. I could tell you the reasons I was going to, but am currently clueless. However; let me clarify my *desires* by way of an invite. If any of you are sufficiently curious as to my ownership or otherwise of a "cock"... feel free to find out.

JEFF That's exceedingly generous of you.

LUCY Or you could all take a vote and I could get an Uber.

GILLY No, no.

HETTY No, no.

CAMILLA That would be a shame.

ALEX No, no, no; it's cool.

HETTY It *is* cool. Isn't it?

CAMILLA You are welcome here. End of.

ALEX Hear hear.

HETTY Absolutely.

JAKE Right.

GILLY One hundred percent.

TIM Terrific.

JAKE In any case; it's time we were off.

ALEX Already? Are you going?

JAKE Early start.

The Sex Party

GILLY Do we?

JAKE The kids.

GILLY ...are with your mother.

JAKE In any case.

TIM Should we head off?

CAMILLA No.

GILLY You can go if you want to.

LUCY I'd be happy to leave.

GILLY No. You're staying.

ALEX No, no. You're staying.

HETTY You're definitely staying.

GILLY As am I.

JAKE Alright. We'll stay.

HETTY So, what; are we all going to stay in the kitchen now or what?

JEFF Good question. Alex?

ALEX What?

JEFF Well; it's your kitchen. What do you think?

ALEX I think Hetty's right. We should all move through into the living room.

GILLY Righto.

HETTY Whoopee.

MAGDALENA Not before time! I am a lesbian now; remember.

GILLY Hash tag me too.

The Sex Party

JAKE If you say so.

GILLY What?

JAKE Whatever you say.

CAMILLA Tim. Living room, kitchen or home?

TIM I've got the munchies, actually.

JEFF I might just... smoke a cigarette.

JAKE Watch out for that gnome.

JEFF and JAKE exit to garden

TIM Have you got any Frosties or anything?

ALEX Cheerios.

TIM Cheerios! Wow.

ALEX Over the sink.

TIM Cheerios. Excellent.

HETTY Come on then. Alex?

MAGDALENA You must ignore my husband. He dislikes homosexuals.

LUCY That's not what I am.

MAGDALENA Of course you are, darling. With delusions of grandeur.

HETTY Someone? Anyone?

MAGDALENA Boring kitchen party people...!

Exit MAGDALENA, throwing off her blanket or fur...

The Sex Party

TIM I know what I'd like to know. Not being contentious, but what do you think about the J.K. Rowling thing? Are you on her side or Harry Potter's?

CAMILLA You are twelve years old; do you know that?

HETTY Alex and I were discussing that.

ALEX In passing.

HETTY I don't know what I think but Alex thinks... something. Don't you?

ALEX I think it's complicated.

JEFF Beware of having an opinion, Alex.

LUCY In what way *complicated*?

JEFF And don't fall foul of the pronoun police, because verbal discrimination is a HATE CRIME, remember.

HETTY Well then; don't do it, then you haven't, and it isn't.

LUCY Thank you, Hetty. That's very Islington of you.

TIM I bloody love Islington. Couldn't afford it. And with Brighton; you know; there's the sea and that.

CAMILLA I don't think you've anything further to contribute, Tim.

GILLY Has anyone actually read what she wrote?

HETTY Alex agrees with her. Didn't you?

ALEX Well, up to a point.

GILLY I mean; you go to the bathroom in a restaurant.

LUCY That's a good example.

The Sex Party

GILLY On the door there's a woman. Or a man.

LUCY Or a witty thematic pictogram you have to stare very hard at, and then guess.

GILLY Yes.

LUCY Welcome to my world.

HETTY I identify with the shortest queue.

LUCY Hashtag me too.

JEFF Freedom of speech is the prime concern here.

CAMILLA I agree with you but I don't agree with anything you say.

GILLY But there are things that should not be said.

JEFF That old chestnut?

GILLY The N word!

JEFF What?

HETTY Oh please, let's not.

GILLY Is that a word you'd use?

JEFF In context, of course.

CAMILLA The holocaust?

JAKE The what?

JEFF The holocaust?

CAMILLA Happened.

The Sex Party

HETTY Oh, not the holocaust.

CAMILLA You can't just say it didn't.

JEFF I'm not arguing for the right to dissemble. Quite the opposite. Your political compassion's a clown mask. I ain't wearing it.

LUCY May I ask, if freedom of speech is the issue; what pronoun would you currently use when referring to me?

JEFF I would use the pronoun that reflects the persona you're choosing to project.

LUCY Well, that's nice to know.

JEFF Don't thank me; it's a party. In a more formal situation I might need to ascertain if your request was some ideological game, or a genuine concern regarding your perceived identity.

TIM Wiki-lists; here we go. Agender, Androgynous, Bigender, Cis... that's me, right?

JAKE That's most of us.

LUCY Ha.

TIM Questioning, Variant, Queer, Male, Female...

GILLY That's me. Is that alright?

TIM Pansexual, Pangender, Gender Fluid.

HETTY Eurgh.

TIM Transgender, Non-binary, Neither.

HETTY You can be that as well? You can be Neither?

CAMILLA In Tim's case; less than.

The Sex Party

ALEX Spoilt for choice, really.

LUCY Trust me; that's not how it feels.

TIM Trans Female, Trans Male, Intersex, Other...

ALEX If he scrolls down again he's going in the fire-pit.

TIM Trans Person, Transsexual, Two-spirit.

HETTY Ooh.

LUCY Two-Spirit.

HETTY I'll be that. What is that? Can I be that?

LUCY You can be anything you like.

CAMILLA No. You can be anything you *are*.

JEFF Look; this is not a trans-anything issue.

LUCY It's not a trans-anything issue for you because you ain't one.

JEFF I'm not *saying* you don't exist.

GILLY All I know is I've been assaulted on the tube, belittled by mechanics, harassed in bars and ignored in board meetings. I've given birth twice and until last year I've never been asked my bloody pronouns.

JAKE Seriously, though. If this was Wimbledon.

CAMILLA What?

TIM Right! If this was tennis and you could play tennis, you could probably trounce Gilly here.

JAKE Definitely.

The Sex Party

TIM Do you think that would be entirely fair?

ALEX Oh, shut up, Tim. I mean could you just... shut the fuck up.

JEFF Plenty of nouns and pronouns to choose from.

GILLY Woman.

JEFF You really need hers?

GILLY Alex?

ALEX ... words are words.

GILLY But what do you *think*?

ALEX I agree with Jeff. But I don't agree with anything he says.

Awkward silence.

JEFF There are paths through the woods for a reason.

LUCY A path is just a route well-trodden. There are an infinite number of paths.

JEFF And sooner or later an infinite number of people lost in the woods.

LUCY Or living there.

HETTY Together. Eating nuts and berries. I wish the world was different.

JEFF And I wish Christmas wasn't the colour of Coca-Cola, but it is; and self-identification is a genuine threat to the nuclear family.

CAMILLA The nuclear family is a very dull soap opera.

JAKE Long running, never dull.

ALEX Would anyone like another drink?

JEFF It's important to discuss these things.

The Sex Party

LUCY I agree. A delightful conversation, entirely appropriate to a nice house in Islington with articulate people. But elsewhere, in some dark, late night street, the inarticulate echo of this conversation will get a person just like me; killed.

GILLY I've walked those streets.

LUCY Not in these heels.

GILLY No, in my own. And in flats or trainers. I've quickened my step, I've run.

LUCY And hidden in bus shelters, on occasion.

ALEX I really think we should change the subject.

LUCY Alex is right. Let's talk about this evening! Do you not think your championing of marriage is a little at odds with your lifestyle choice?

JEFF Is that your opinion?

LUCY You really want to know my opinion?

HETTY Yes. I do.

LUCY I think "Swingers" is a very *jolly* word.

ALEX I remember jolly.

HETTY I'm jolly. Aren't I?

LUCY This isn't so much an observation as a pre-conception. You may even consider it a prejudice.

ALEX Well, we wouldn't want that

LUCY Swingers is a jolly word because it's meant to be. It's what *wife-swappers* call themselves.

GILLY We're not swapping.

The Sex Party

LUCY You call yourselves swingers because then you don't have to use the words wife, or swapping. But Wife Swappers is what you are.

GILLY But we're not.

ALEX I haven't got a wife to swap.

LUCY It's an evocative phrase. Redolent of car keys in a Murano glass bowl on an Eames coffee table.

ALEX I blame John Updike.

CAMILLA I blame the hippies.

LUCY Ah... free love.

TIM I'd have been a *great* hippy.

CAMILLA Long haired, beta male sensitives convincing a generation of wide eyed Joni Mitchell wannabees that it was the cool thing to spread their legs.

LUCY That it was hip to hop from bed to bed. That choosing was for losers.

CAMILLA Smoke this, baby.

LUCY Lift that tie-died chiffon, baby.

CAMILLA You can keep your beads on, baby.

LUCY And the married men were furious.

CAMILLA A sea of tie-died pussy begging for it, and there they were, stuck in The Dick Van Dyke Show.

LUCY Cocktail cabinet.

CAMILLA Trips to Disney.

LUCY But how to get laid?

The Sex Party

BOTH Swap the wife!

LUCY And The Swopped became Swingers. It's your ancestry. This is what you're doing here. You're swapping the women.

HETTY I'm not being swapped. I'm doing the swapping.

LUCY That's what you're *meant* to think.

HETTY I'm swapping him. Any takers?

CAMILLA You've been granted the illusion of choice, but this is not of your choosing.

HETTY Well, you speak for yourself.

CAMILLA I'm speaking *for* you.

HETTY Well don't! You're here too.

TIM Ah, touché

CAMILLA You can shut up and grow a pair.

TIM I've got a pair, thank you.

CAMILLA Where are they?

HETTY In your pocket, probably.

ALEX I think either we get the monopoly out or the parties over. Or Jenga. I've got Jenga...

HETTY I've got a much better idea.

HETTY gets up and drops her robe. She goes to LUCY. Kisses her deeply and deliberately.

Enter MAGDALENA, naked.

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA Thank Christ in heaven and about time too. Moody lighting, Alex; is tooo kitchen.

MAGDALENA dims some lights. The room becomes shadowy, half-lit.

MAGDALENA (To TIM) I have not had sex with *you* yet.

MAGDALENA pushes TIM against the fridge and kisses him.

CAMILLA Well, excuse me.

MAGDALENA You want go first? He is better kisser than looks.

CAMILLA I know.

MAGDALENA So kiss!

After a moment CAMILLA kisses TIM intensely.

MAGDALENA Good. (To JAKE) Now your wife must have sex. Is desperate. But with who? With him?

JAKE With me, if it's all the same to you.

GILLY With you, good sir?

JAKE Yes, please.

MAGDALENA You both want, so have.

GILLY Hello husband.

JAKE Hello, wife.

GILLY and JAKE kiss. TIM undresses CAMILLA.
JAKE takes off GILLY'S dress. GILLY unzips JAKE...

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA This is good. She will fuck you, he will fuck her, And then she will fuck him and you will fuck her. Then I shall fuck both of him and maybe her. (To GEOFF) Who you fuck, I have no clue.

ALEX Not over the buffet, please; that's a bit unhygienic.

HETTY Alex, you can be SO bloody vanilla! Come on, then. Living room!

HETTY drags ALEX out of the room.

CAMILLA Right. I think it's time you got precisely what you deserve.

TIM Oh, lummy.

CAMILLA Come on then. If you want it, come get it. I dare you.

CAMILLA strides out of the room. TIM follows.

GILLY Jake?

JAKE Mm?

GILLY Alex and Hetty? I want them to see.

JAKE What?

GILLY Us.

JAKE Us. Right. OK.

JAKE picks up GILLY.

GILLY Oh; you're so strong. What a man. My hero.

He carries her out.

MAGDALENA Ok. Eto ochen' khorosho! This is sex party!

MAGDALENA follows them.

JEFF and LUCY left alone, look at one another.

The Sex Party

JEFF It's nothing personal.

Exit JEFF.

LUCY checks herself in the mirror. Dims the lights, drops her gown, downs a gin. Finds Alex's phone, opens Spotify. Finds and plays *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*. A deep breath and she follows the others.

Lights.

In the darkness we hear laughter and enjoyment from the living room, orgiastic gasps, the odd bottom-slap, words of encouragement, grunts of pleasure, cries of ecstasy...

...and sudden silence.

*The Sex Party*Scene Two

11.30pm

Lights remain dim.

JEFF enters with MAGDALENA by the wrist. They are both naked, carrying any clothes they were wearing when they left the kitchen, having grabbed them.

JEFF We're leaving.

MAGDALENA Because why, because...

JEFF Get dressed.

MAGDALENA I will have bruises.

JEFF That's not all you might have. Put your clothes on.

MAGDALENA You are HOMOPHOBE.

JEFF There is such a thing as SEXUAL HYGIENE.

Enter ALEX, in underwear and HETTY, naked.

HETTY You think I'm fat.

ALEX I don't think you're fat.

HETTY You think I'm stupid.

ALEX I don't think that.

JEFF I apologise.

HETTY I thought the whole point...

ALEX This isn't the moment...

The Sex Party

HETTY ... was for us to have sex!

ALEX ... for a bloody domestic.

JEFF and MAGDALENA are dressing.

JEFF You have my apologies.

ALEX I think on balance...

JEFF We're leaving.

ALEX I think you should leave.

HETTY Why won't you have sex with me?

MAGDALENA I have done nothing!

ALEX You've had more than enough!

JEFF You've done more than enough!

HETTY BUT NOT WITH YOU! It's you I want sex with and we never have sex.

ALEX Oh, share it with the world, why don't you?

ALEX gets dressed, HETTY simmers.
Enter GILLY and JAKE, both naked.

GILLY Well, this was a great idea.

HETTY His idea, not mine.

JAKE Thanks for the invite.

ALEX You're welcome.

GILLY We must do it again sometime.

HETTY Well, you got what you came for.

The Sex Party

GILLY And what would that be?

ALEX Don't you two start.

JAKE gets dressed.
GILLY pours a gin and sulks.

HETTY We go to this ridiculous...

ALEX Ridiculous?

HETTY RIDICULOUS EXTREME, this / COMPLETE CHARADE...

ALEX Could we please just / do this later?

HETTY So that you can jump start your PATHETIC libido...

ALEX You've had far too much to drink!

HETTY ... because you just don't FANCY me!

ALEX So; are you two off?

JEFF Yes, we are.

MAGDALENA No; I'm not.

JEFF Eight minutes.

HETTY I have bent over backwards for you and you won't even TRY.

ALEX You know why?

HETTY Why?

ALEX Because you're so fat, obviously. Nothing to do with our dodgy compatibility or your neediness or my failure to commit.

HETTY You know what?

The Sex Party

ALEX Fuck me?

HETTY Fuck you.

ALEX Fuck you too..

HETTY Well, chance would be a fine thing, wouldn't it?

HETTY gets dressed.

JAKE Will you please get your clothes on.

GILLY Yes, master. Whatever you say, sir.

JAKE Where are the coats?

ALEX Front bedroom.

JAKE And take that look off your face.

ALEX I'll get them.

GILLY What look?

Exit ALEX.

JAKE That look that gets stuck on your face for days on end, as if I'd just shot your dog.

GILLY I was just assaulted.

JAKE You were not just assaulted.

GILLY It was NON-CONSENSUAL.

JAKE How could it be? I'm your husband.

GILLY Oh, so you just presumed?

JAKE We're at a bloody sex party.

The Sex Party

HETTY Are we? I hadn't noticed.

MAGDALENA You turn your back; boys will be boys.

JEFF I wish they would.

GILLY You were out of order!

JAKE Don't blame me for having sex at a sex party!

GILLY We're supposed to be on the same page.

JAKE Your page.

GILLY Our page!

GILLY gets dressed. JAKE phone for an Uber.

Enter TIM, naked, clutching his bits.

TIM Alex? Where's Alex? Bit of a problem in the living room.

Enter CAMILLA, naked and strong; furious.

CAMILLA You sucked her cock!

TIM Well, a bit.

CAMILLA You SUCKED her COCK!

TIM Yes, but... not *OFF*.

CAMILLA Why did you DO THAT?

TIM Well, it was... in my face!

CAMILLA Oh, so obviously....

TIM Seemed rude not to.

The Sex Party

CAMILLA You PUT IT IN YOUR MOUTH.

Enter ALEX with coats.

ALEX I don't know whose is which. I don't care much.

ALEX brightens the lights.

CAMILLA Oh, for Christ's sake.

TIM and CAMILLA get dressed.
Enter LUCY, dressing.

LUCY Party's back in the kitchen, then?

GILLY Lovely evening Alex. Unforgettable.

JAKE If you're going to end a sixteen year marriage, it's nice to do it in public.

GILLY Fine by me.

ALEX Look. Admittedly. These things can sometimes turn a bit wobbly.

GILLY A bit bloody wobbly?

ALEX But at the end of the day; we're all good friends.

JAKE Don't push your luck. And don't touch my wife!

ALEX Consent sought, permission denied, no harm done. That wasn't difficult, was it?

JAKE Consent to punch you in the face, please?

LUCY Denied.

ALEX Thank you.

GILLY Now he asks. Maybe you should have sought consent before you put your fingers in my underwear.

The Sex Party

JAKE You like my fingers in your underwear.

GILLY NOT WHEN MY ATTENTION'S ELSEWHERE! In future keep your fingers to yourself!

JAKE Well, if you must know, Ms Widdecomb; they weren't my fingers.

GILLY They weren't what?

JAKE They were Tim's fingers, as it happens.

GILLY Tim's?!

CAMILLA Tim's?

ALEX Tim's?

TIM Sorry.

ALEX Bloody hell, Tim. CONSENT; for Christ's sake.

TIM I didn't not ask.

GILLY Well, you didn't ask ME.

CAMILLA Or me.

JAKE No, he asked me. He raised his eyebrows as much as to say, and I gave him the nod.

TIM He did give me the nod.

GILLY Who are you to give him the bloody NOD?

JAKE I'm your bloody husband.

ALEX Start on the same page, stay on the same page. Don't just riffle through.

JAKE Riffle through? She's torn out half a chapter.

The Sex Party

ALEX And you've burnt the book, mate..

JAKE Same room sex; that's people in a room having sex, right?!

GILLY Not furtive finger sex.

TIM Was it? Sorry. I just....

CAMILLA Well next time, DON'T.

TIM I won't.

CAMILLA Next time, ASK.

TIM I'll ask.

CAMILLA And don't think ASKING makes everything ok!

TIM Doesn't it?

ALEX Yes.

CAMILLA Not necessarily.

ALEX No; if she says so.

TIM You mean *asking's* not necessarily OK, or...

CAMILLA DON'T TWIST MY WORDS.

TIM I'M TRYING TO UNTWIST THEM.

JAKE He had permission.

GILLY He did not have permission.

CAMILLA There's a word for that.

JAKE *laughs.*

The Sex Party

HETTY Don't say that word.

TIM What word's that?

HETTY PLEASE don't say that word.

ALEX If you say that word I will have to put you in a cab.

CAMILLA Your living room is a crime scene!

ALEX Could we just... please; keep things in perspective.

GILLY Alright, I'm not making that sort of a fuss, but there are boundaries.

JAKE Don't look at me. You're the swinger.

GILLY I'm not a fucking swinger!

Front door slams off.

ALEX I should be saying goodbye.

JAKE What about Alex?

GILLY What about Alex?

JAKE Did *he* have your consent?

GILLY He would have. If you hadn't dragged me away. If you hadn't turned me over and offered me elsewhere!

JAKE But you would have.

GILLY I might have.

JAKE You fully intended to. That's why we came in the first place. Isn't it?

HETTY Is it?

The Sex Party

ALEX No. It was... just a possibility.

GILLY Just one possibility in your Pandora's box of earthly delights.

JAKE Dress it up like a ball pond, it's still a mosh pit.

Disgruntled voices off.

ALEX Look; I must....

Exit ALEX.

JEFF Four minutes.

MAGDALENA I wish I had never met you. This is a deep down thing.

JEFF It's mutual.

MAGDALENA Men ADORE me.

JEFF Not this one.

MAGDALENA I am rat in trap, you think. Not even rat! / I am BAIT FOR YOUR TRAP!

JEFF You meet a woman in a bar in Gdansk: AGREE THE MOTHER FUCKING PRICE. / THAT was my mistake!

MAGDALENA Meet my little Russian doll! You want to fuck my little / Russian whore?!

JEFF I'd re-read the pre-nup if I were you.

She grabs his wallet, pulls money from it.

MAGDALENA You own me? Look; your dead heart. THIS IS WHAT I THINK OF WHAT YOU THINK!

She tears the money up. ALEX returns.

The Sex Party

JEFF That's YOUR fucking money, honey. That's coming straight out of your allowance.

MAGDALENA I HATE YOU, FUCKING RICH MAN.

JAKE Forty five minutes?!

LISA I told you not to drink.

JEFF Still glad you came?

LUCY I had foolishly imagined my enigmatic personality would outweigh the gentle provocation of my presence, and that I would prove the life and soul. I was sadly mistaken.

CAMILLA I think we can forgo the quaint philosophy, thank you very much.

LUCY Rude.

ALEX I think what Camilla means is...

CAMILLA Oh please; yes; explain to me what I mean.

ALEX I wasn't explaining to you, I was explaining to Lucy...

LUCY Then please don't.

ALEX Obviously. No. Mustn't do that.

LUCY Have I done something to offend you?

CAMILLA Can I just ask; what is your sexual orientation?

LUCY I'm a lesbian.

CAMILLA No, you're not.

LUCY I think I am.

CAMILLA Well no, actually you're not.

The Sex Party

LUCY Well, as a matter of fact...

CAMILLA There is no such thing as a trans-lesbian.

JEFF A woman with a penis.

LUCY Why does that BOTHER you so much?

JEFF Because on all levels; linguistic, sociological and biological; it is a complete distortion of reality.

LUCY Whose?

JEFF Mine! And I will not deny it for the sake of your "Identity".

LUCY Because you're too busy denying it for the sake of your own.

MAGDALENA Uber is disappeared.

JEFF Goddammit!

GILLY Thirty minutes.

JAKE Huh.

CAMILLA I hate to have to say it, but this is where Jeff and I find common ground.

LUCY And is your problem with my penis or my lesbian tendencies?

CAMILLA There is no such thing as a lesbian with a penis!

LUCY Well, here she is. If you can't *imagine* her it's not because you can't see her.

CAMILLA My oppression is not yours to fetishise! You can't just bolt a pair of tits on.

The Sex Party

LUCY Well, now here's the thing. My identity is not about any of YOU. It's about ME.

JEFF Who-ever *you* are.

LUCY Who *ever* I am. And you can ignore me, embrace me, or slap my face; but here I am.

JEFF Oh, I'd never hit a woman. With or without. But just because you say you *are* one does not mean that such a thing *EXISTS*.

LUCY And yet it's standing right in front of you.

LUCY puts JEFF'S hand on her breast. He pushes her violently away.

ALEX No.

HETTY Alex!

JAKE Whoa whoa whoa.

GILLY No, no, no, no, no...!

TIM Bloody hell.

CAMILLA No violence!

ALEX and JAKE grab JEFF.

The WOMEN shield LUCY.

MAGDALENA picks up a kitchen knife.

JEFF It's! You finally chose the right pronoun.

MAGDALENA No! Not ever. I tell you! Not me. Not anyone.

MAGDALENA raises the knife.

The MEN huddle behind JEFF.

ALEX Stay back.

HETTY (Screams)

JAKE Now then!

GILLY Don't! Don't!

TIM Put that down!

CAMILLA I said no violence!

The Sex Party

MAGDALENA I cut your balls off.

JEFF Well, there we have it.

MAGDALENA Or you want I stab it in my heart?

JEFF Make a bold choice.

MAGDELENA turns the knife to herself. TIM grabs the knife from MAGDELENA and LUCY takes the knife from her.

LUCY Party's over, sweetie.

They each find their equilibrium.

ALEX Right. That's home-time, I think. It's way past bedtime.

JEFF Your hosting skills leave a lot to be desired.

MAGDALENA Machiavelle!

CAMILLA You ought to be arrested.

JAKE He's lucky he's not unconscious.

GILLY To be honest Alex; you throw a shit party.

ALEX You're right. It was an interesting affair, our first sex party. He served budget Prosecco and soggy nibbles from Iceland, but other than that the host was terrific. That was banter, Jake. What a nice man, though. A maker of mischief. A magisterial libertarian, and a bit of a wanker really. I mean all in all, he ought to be ashamed of himself. And you know what? He is. I am. Satisfied?

Lights.

*The Sex Party*Scene Three

Midnight.

ALEX and GILLY.

JEFF and MAGDALENA dressed to leave.

JEFF It was great.

ALEX You're welcome.

JEFF Sorry if I mouthed off. I like to stay rational in irrational situations, if that makes any sense.

ALEX It was nice to meet you.

MAGDALENA Take our card. This is our number. This my lips. This my pussy.

ALEX Thank you.

JEFF Good night. Bye.

GILLY Bye.

Exit JEFF

MAGDALENA It was rude of me to try and kill my husband.

ALEX Don't mention it.

MAGDALENA It is my heart. I hate my heart. Once I was butterfly. Then I was poker chip. Now I am Holic. Everything-a-holic. You think England is warm? No. As cold as marriage. You drink, you fuck, because only other thing is Harrods. Harrods I dreamed of but is everything and empty. You go to country. You have to crawl on knees to light the Agaaaah. And all the butterflies; frozen.

Exit MAGDALENA.

GILLY Hey ho.

ALEX You do *know*, don't you?

The Sex Party

GILLY Know what?

ALEX It was always you.

GILLY Well, hindsight's a wonderful thing.

ALEX We'd have had kids...

GILLY Overrated.

ALEX Really?

GILLY ... no.

ALEX I honestly think... I might have become a different me.

Enter CAMILLA in her coat.

CAMILLA Where's Tim?

GILLY He's in the garden.

CAMILLA Tim! The car's here.

TIM *(Off)* Righto.

CAMILLA What can I say? It's been a divine evening. And you're lucky I haven't called the police.

ALEX Get home safe.

Exit CAMILLA, enter TIM.

TIM Bye then. I usually apologise before I leave anywhere, just in case. But I think I've done alright tonight. Well, relatively speaking. Sorry.

GILLY Is that an apology?

ALEX Yes.

The Sex Party

TIM Well... yes.

GILLY Nice to have made your acquaintance.

ALEX Great to see you.

CAMILLA (OFF) Tim!

TIM Night, then. I don't know where my shoes are.

Exit TIM.

GILLY You've had a good life.

ALEX If you say so.

GILLY Well, at least you made the most of it.

ALEX Did I? I doubt it. Unfocussed desire has quite undone me. Now I sit in graveyards.

GILLY I used to sit in playgrounds. Now I drop them at Bryanston and renew my gym membership. I'm very fit for a woman of my age.

ALEX Yes you are.

He kisses her.

GILLY Nice.

ALEX We should have an affair.

GILLY We can't. I'm already having one.

ALEX Are you?

GILLY Fifty Shades, I'd imagined. Alan Bennett's what I got.

ALEX So why not with me?

The Sex Party

GILLY Because you wandered off. Chose someone else, then everyone else.

Enter JAKE

JAKE Are you coming or what?

GILLY Coming, of course.

JAKE Thanks for the invite. You must come over for fondue sometime. She does a great fondue.

GILLY Stop it.

JAKE You do. She does. I'm guessing you're not the flower guy. The guy who gives her the flowers that go in the bin. I mean; what does he think she's going to do with them? Dead flowers have that smell; you know? Seriously. Fondue. Anytime. Oh; If you do get it together remember she's bringing up two boys. Tom's a fire-starter and Giles is probably gay but they're good boys and she's bought them up. I just pay the fees and kick a ball about with em, really.

GILLY Please don't.

JAKE (genuinely) I wasn't. They're great boys. Really. Thank you.

He gives her the car keys and leaves.

GILLY So. Bye, then.

ALEX Bye.

Exit GILLY, enter LUCY.

LUCY Hetty's passed out. I tucked her in.

ALEX Thanks.

LUCY Can I help tidy up, or should I fuck off?

ALEX Oh, don't bother. I'll do it.

The Sex Party

ALEX doesn't move. LUCY begins to tidy.

LUCY Shame's a killer, Alex. Shoulders up. Spit spot. I presume this evening was not a fair representation of your entire sex life.

ALEX Well, now you mention it.

LUCY You know; it might look like I'm filling the dishwasher, but in actual fact I'm re-affirming my preferred gender role.

ALEX Sorry.

LUCY No, no. I'm flattered. You sitting there on your fat backside is a beautiful acknowledgment. Though it must be an uncomfortable place to sit, I imagine.

ALEX Where?

LUCY On the fence.

ALEX I'm not on the fence.

LUCY Alex, the fence is so far up your crack there are almost two of you.

ALEX Is this the pronoun thing?

LUCY Maybe.

ALEX I don't want to get into the politics of it.

LUCY Neither of you?

ALEX Words are the shared parameters of our humanity.

LUCY You've not heard some of the words I've heard.

ALEX I mean, a fridge is a fridge. It's not a door.

LUCY Well, neither am I.

The Sex Party

ALEX Which is my point.

LUCY Wakes up in a cold sweat. It was all a dream.

ALEX All I'm saying is... this is a beer, not a gin. If it was gin we would call it gin. How else would we know the difference?

LUCY You could taste it.

Pause.

ALEX Be whoever you like but please; don't purloin the language.

LUCY You said I was welcome.

ALEX You are welcome.

LUCY But your language excludes me; do you see?

ALEX But language is language. And words... are how I *think*.

LUCY Yes. And now, my dear white cis-male friend, you're being asked to think something else ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE. To alter your thinking for the good of someone YOU ARE NOT. Tough one, huh?

Pause

ALEX Tough one.

LUCY Get off that fence Alex, before it slices right through your brain.

Alex smiles.

LUCY I should call an Uber. Uber's can be fun. It's supposed to be sunny tomorrow and if I get to Hampstead Heath early enough I can annoy people at both ponds.

ALEX Would you like some tea?

LUCY I'll put the kettle on.

The Sex Party

LUCY puts the kettle on.

ALEX So why *did* you come here tonight?

LUCY I'm not sure. Death wish?

ALEX But why?

LUCY In one weeks time I shall slide under a general anaesthetic and when I awaken... it'll be gone. Every last ounce of her.

ALEX Her?

LUCY Alright, Susie Dent. Him. To become entirely me, there must be a little less of me. Earl Grey, Jasmine, Lapsang?

ALEX Um...

LUCY Yorkshire.

ALEX So...are you having doubts?

LUCY No, but yesterday I did suddenly stop dead in the lingerie section and realised; from next Thursday I shall be a heterosexual. Zip your lip.

ALEX So this was what? A last hurrah?

LUCY More a field trip. I thought I ought to observe you in your natural habitat.

ALEX Chessington World of Mis- Adventures.

LUCY As a species you're obviously on the brink of extinction. In any case, unless they cancel yet again, I shall confirm. It will have taken me 38 years to arrive in the world the way I should have made my entrance.

ALEX Quite a big step.

LUCY No; just the last of many. Rich Tea or Hob Nob?

ALEX No. Thank you.

The Sex Party

ALEX sits thinking. LUCY strokes the back of his head.

LUCY Don't flinch.

ALEX I didn't flinch.

LUCY You flinched.

Lights.

*The Sex Party*Scene Four

Eight months later.

HETTY, eight months pregnant, comes in from the garden. She is dressed in black. She looks down at the funereal photograph she holds. It is a portrait of TIM. She puts it on the table.

Sombre goodbyes and a door slam off. She wipes her eyes.

Enter ALEX, also in black.

ALEX I'm glad you came.

HETTY Mam loves a wake. She said I should show my face.

They feel awkward together.

ALEX You never phone.

HETTY I don't phone anyone. Honey; it's exhausting. I'm exhausted.

ALEX I thought we were closer than that.

HETTY Were we?

ALEX Well, weren't we?

HETTY I don't know what we were.

ALEX Well, we were good friends.

HETTY We still are.

ALEX Are we?

HETTY Aren't we?

The Sex Party

ALEX We never speak. We have no relationship.

HETTY Have a baby, then get back to me.

ALEX Look, I love you, obviously.

HETTY No you don't. That wasn't who we were.

ALEX Is it mine?

HETTY I don't know.

ALEX Whose is it?

HETTY If I don't know, I don't know. I've narrowed it down.

ALEX Well, that's something.

HETTY I've narrowed it down to six.

ALEX Six? Well, that's...

HETTY I know.

ALEX That's everyone.

HETTY Well?

ALEX Well what?

HETTY I mean so. So what? It was just you or "who cares" in my mind, I think. You weren't up for it so I did all six.

ALEX Tim?

HETTY Poor Tim.

ALEX But Tim.

The Sex Party

HETTY In the garden. Bit of a quickie.

ALEX You're lucky she didn't catch you.

HETTY But why Tim?

ALEX Asthmatic. And Jeff was at death's door, by all accounts.

HETTY Is there anyone who didn't get it?

ALEX Nope.

ALEX moves the portrait to where it will live for a while.

ALEX I didn't know you'd done the room.

HETTY Having been a bit of a slut by about half past ten, I distinctly remember thinking; I'm going to do the room. It's all a bit of a blur.

ALEX You truly are a liberated soul.

HETTY Who owes it all to you.

ALEX Oops.

HETTY ... a daisy.

ALEX So when's the blood test?

HETTY Don't want one.

ALEX I mean; to find out who the father is.

HETTY That's what I don't want. I've thought it through. I've done a lot of thinking. I know you think I don't and I don't much but I can and I have. Long talk with my mum. If they don't sell the house, I can move back in. Mum's cock a hoop. She'd given up hope. Mum and me'll be just fine, thank you.

The Sex Party

Enter LUCY from the garden, in gardening clothes.

LUCY Your roses need dead-heading, Alex. That way you get more roses.

HETTY He knows that. He just can't be bothered.

ALEX If you start gardening there's no end to it. You die, and the lawn needs mowing.

HETTY Alex wants to know who the father is.

LUCY Not guilty.

HETTY Which is a shame, really.

LUCY It is.

ALEX I just think you'd be better off *knowing*.

HETTY Oh, you think?

ALEX Yes; I think so.

HETTY You think YOU'D be better off knowing. Odds well in your favour. You don't want to know who the father is, Alex; you want to know who the father *isn't*.

ALEX That's not fair.

HETTY I've got to go.

LUCY I could put the kettle on.

HETTY Really; I have to go.

ALEX There are things of yours upstairs.

HETTY High heels and lingerie; just what I'll be needing.

The Sex Party

ALEX All sorts of things. I packed them, months ago. Shall I get them?

HETTY Alright, yes. Get them.

ALEX I have not the faintest idea why you would choose to go this alone.

Exit ALEX

LUCY Just because he says he loves you, doesn't mean he doesn't.

HETTY bursts into tears. LUCY holds her.

LUCY When are you due?

HETTY In about ten minutes.

They laugh.

LUCY The one thing I've learned about Alex is; he honestly thinks he doesn't deserve the life he chose. You're making the right choice.

HETTY Am I?

LUCY It's your choice, so yes. What are you afraid of?

HETTY Changing my mind.

LUCY Ah, the last taboo. I think there's only one thing worth learning, and that's how to change our minds.

HETTY Is that why you changed yours?

LUCY I have a friend who teaches 14 year olds. First rehearsal for A Midsummer Night's Dream, there are thirty year-olds in the school hall. "If you only want to play a man, go over there" she says. "If you only want to play a woman, go over there. If you don't care what you play; stay in the middle."

HETTY They stayed In the middle?

LUCY Oh, a sweet trans boy heads one way, two girls head the other. The rest stood in the middle, and applauded. To transition; dictionary definition?

The Sex Party

HETTY To change?

LUCY Or to Go Beyond. Which is maybe a place you can get to by standing very still, just where you belong. I didn't so much change my mind as realise the resolution to all this isn't within us. It's somewhere down the line. The kids'll be OK.

Enter ALEX with a couple of bags.

LUCY Girl talk. Go tend your ivy.

HETTY No. Come sit.

ALEX sits.

HETTY Love is just people high on oxytocin. That's what you once said.

LUCY He said that?

HETTY The meadow vole, high oxytocin, mates for life.

LUCY You said that?

ALEX The prairie vole, much lower levels, a lifetime's promiscuity.

LUCY (To Alex) And how *is* life on the prairie?

ALEX There's a drought. How's the meadow?

HETTY Sunny. Rainy. Different every day.

LUCY puts the kettle on.

LUCY Earl Grey, Jasmine, Lapsang Souchon?

ALEX I don't know. You choose.

LUCY No, Alex. You choose.

END