

The Get Together

by

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PETER, GARY, GEORGINA, PHIL, HARRIET, TIM, URSULA and GRANNY sit on eight chairs that lie in a line across the stage all facing the audience.

PETER is a large guy in his early thirties. He wears a short sleeved shirt, long shorts and sandals. He speaks with an Australian accent.

GARY is a geekish looking guy in his early twenties. He wears a t-shirt with a retro slogan on it.

GEORGINA is twenty. She wears dark jeans and a t-shirt.

PHIL is in his late forties. He wears a shirt and tie.

HARRIET is in her mid forties. She's wearing jeans and a zip up top.

TIM is in his early twenties. He has long hair, jeans and a heavy metal t-shirt.

URSULA is an attractive woman in her mid-thirties. She wears arty clothes; a neckerchief and flowing skirt.

GRANNY is in her 70s. She wears a pleasant cardigan and flowery summer dress.

PETER, GARY, URSULA and GRANNY are in darkness. Nobody speaks.

PHIL is reading the paper. TIM has a large pair of headphones on his head.

GEORGINA is texting and HARRIET is holding a cup of coffee and staring off into the distance thinking. Whenever one of them makes any kind of noise another thinks they're being spoken to and looks up.

TIM laughs at something he's heard in his headphones. HARRIET looks over at him.

HARRIET: Hah?

TIM: Huh?

HARRIET looks expectantly at him.

TIM: Ah. [*Points at his headphones.*]

HARRIET: Oh.

PHIL: Hm?

GEORGINA: [*Looks up from texting.*] Uh?

PHIL: [Shrugs.]
 GEORGINA: [Coughs.]
 TIM: Wha’?
 HARRIET: [Yawns.]
 TIM: Wha’?
 GEORGINA: [Looks up, goes back to her phone.]
 PHIL: [At something he’s read in the paper.] Ach, wja...
 TIM and HARRIET: Eh?

Everyone goes back to their own pursuit.

After a while PHIL puts down his paper. He looks up at the audience.

PHIL: So, um, yeah, it was one day at work, really.
 Writing for a monthly construction magazine is a stable job – as we like to say. There’s not a lot of surprises. Yes, there’s planning scandals, new technologies, new building projects but overall nothing *really* changed in the office. Nothing *really* happened. Apart from on that one occasion.
 I arrived in that morning and bumped into my boss, John, in the corridor. He asked me into his office to talk about this new carbo-cement product I was doing an article on. I started telling him what I’d found out from the manufacturers but as I talked his face started contorting into this weird grimace, kind of like a baby that’s about to cry but instead a man in his fifties with a moustache.
 I mean the guy is into his construction and he’s a big fan of the technology stuff but I’d never seen him react like *that* before. And it just wasn’t that kind of atmosphere in there as well. It was a very reserved, unemotional kind of office. As you’d expect with a construction magazine. We mostly just talked about

construction. We didn't show each other pictures of our kids, we didn't discuss how we were moved by a documentary on TV last night and we didn't break down crying because of a new type of quick dry cement. So I started to suspect that something else was up.

I managed to regain a bit of composure and carried on with the discussion but quickly ran out of things to say about the carbo-cement. I mean there's only a certain amount you can say about cement. Even if you're really, *really* into that kind of thing. So, I panicked and asked him if anything was wrong. That was a big mistake. That was when he really broke down. He fell onto the floor in a heap. When I saw him toppling out of the chair I instinctively leapt out of my seat but didn't get over to him in time to stop him from falling so then was just kind of standing above him not sure what to do next. So I patted him on the head. To which his response was to grab my hand and to whimper into it.

[Shakes his head at the memory of it.]

He told me Sarah had left him. I guessed that must be his wife's name. I didn't get why she'd left. Most of it was about how he didn't know how he could go on, he was worthless without her, what was he going to do, he couldn't even work the sandwich toaster. And...how he'd made a complete fool of himself when she'd told him she was leaving. He'd begged her not to leave apparently. "Begged her on his knees like a fuckin' penguin", I think that was the expression he used.

He made me promise not to let it happen to me. I assured him Harriet wasn't going to leave but that's not what he meant. He meant that when she

inevitably did leave I shouldn't make a fool out of myself begging her to stay.

HARRY:

Well, you don't go into it thinking that you're not going to be huge. That's a thought that creeps up on you very, very slowly. So slowly it's gone past you before you notice it. Y'know?

I mean, I still had the occasional daydream about being in some big Oscar winning Hollywood film but I had never once in all my life dreamed that one day I could be the voice of a chat line for people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Not even in my wildest fantasies.

I was sitting there in the sound booth reading out the lines for this ad for Relaxi-Chats when it struck me that this didn't actually seem out of place. This was my life and I seemed to be fine with it. I read the tagline for the company: "Relaxi-Chats – where we pronounce it constipation" and didn't even blink. I hadn't done a role that involved saying more than "Mr Murphy, your dog is in a coma" in over a year and it didn't even seem like anything was wrong.

What was wrong with me? When had I decided to settle for, well, last place? Not even second best. I was the lowest rung on the ladder and I wasn't even trying to climb.

So I went to see my agent.

I'd been with Alison for about 16 years. And it kind of was like that made it sound: a relationship. And Alison was having an affair with about 50 other clients. She took me for granted. She didn't even look at me any more. Literally. When I walked into her office that day she didn't even glance at me. She was so accustomed to my face she knew it off by heart so she just kept reading CVs. She didn't look at me for

almost the entire time I was there.

I asked the top of her head whether there was anything interesting going on at the moment and all she came up with was an ad for low calorie lettuce. I told her I'd heard there was a role as a woman stuck in a loveless marriage in an RTE drama that was being cast but she said that the part was already gone. She'd sent Cynthia in and she'd got it. I was better off without it though. She told me, in her usual attempt at talking like a media mogul, that it was a "total ass snore". When she'd read the script she'd been "yawning and puking at the same time", apparently.

It hadn't even occurred to her to get me an audition. She didn't think I was into that kind of thing. What, acting? What did she think I was there for?

She didn't realise that was an actual question. She just looked up finally, smiled and asked me how my kids were. "They're fine."

GEORGE:

It wasn't *my* fault that I was pregnant. I mean, I didn't mean to get pregnant so I can't get blamed for what I didn't mean to do, can I?

And I *was* careful. Just not careful *enough*. I mean you can't spend your life worrying about every little thing. You'd never get anywhere. Obviously, in *that* instance, a little thing turned into a big thing. But there were plenty of times when it didn't, so...

[*Thinks better of what she's said.*]

Although not *that* many. Jesus.

I *couldn't* tell my parents about it. That wasn't even an option. Not right away. I had to build up to it. Get everything figured out. I couldn't just blurt it out over breakfast, "Hurry up with that omelette 'cause a human being could come screaming out of my abdomen at any moment."

Even *my* parents, who hadn't had an emotional response to anything in about 15 years, were probably going to flip out when they heard their 20 year old daughter was pregnant. Or their equivalent of flipping out. Dad'd probably frown slightly and say something profound like "Oh." before turning to Mum who'd sigh and fill up the dishwasher. But that'd be them totally freaking out.

Wendy, my friend, said I should cushion the blow. I mean, it's her fault in a way. When you think about it. She put the idea in my head. Otherwise I never would have...

She said I needed to show my parents that I had a plan, that everything was going to be okay. That I could finish college and still take care of this baby and bring it up in a loving and stable family that...

And that's when Wendy, who's a bit slow, realised that there wasn't a loving and stable family because I wasn't actually going out with anyone.

And that was the bigger problem.

[*Takes a deep breath.*]

They were one night stands. I'd just met them out at a nightclub and gone back to their place— their *places*. It was two different occasions. It's not like I'm a total slut. I'm not anybody's after a couple of drinks or anything. I was *completely* pissed when I slept with them. I mean *totally*. Okay?

Besides, I was in college. That's what college is all about. It would have been weird of me not to sleep with lots of—...some—...the *occasional* guy. Everyone would have thought there was something weird going on with me. Like my brother.

TIM: I don't know. How the hell am I supposed to remember every little thing? What am I, a 12 year old

girl who keeps everything in her little diary? Fuck's sake.

It was the same as any other day. A boring waste of everybody's time. Breakfast. College. Labs. Brian hassling me about not shagging some girl in a club the night before. The same shit as usual.

Honestly he's a pain in the ass sometimes. He just can't understand why I don't want to sleep with every girl I see. It's like a personal insult to him. "How could I not want to shag that girl, the jugs were falling out of her?" And she was definitely up for it apparently. He'd asked her if she fancied me just after she'd given him a hand job in the back of a taxi on the way over to Mick's and she'd said she did. Soooooo I missed my chance there. I definitely could have had a hand job too if I'd gone with them. Which would have been very fucking romantic.

But that's what Brian's like. He just can't understand that everyone's not the same as him. *He* wants to make out with a complete stranger by some bins round the back of Burger Joe's so therefore that's what everyone really wants, if they'd only just admit it. Just because that's not my ultimate goal in life he thinks there must be something wrong with me. There's nothing fucking wrong with me. I just don't fancy every single thing with breasts. That doesn't mean that I'm gay. It doesn't.

Look you can't control the way you feel. Sometimes you have, like, certain feelings for somebody but you've just got to control those feelings because obviously you couldn't ever do anything about it.

Or some bullshit like that. It's not a big deal. Let's just-...

Look, it would have been easier if it'd been one of the girls in my *class* that I...y'know...not that I...there wasn't anyone else that...

Anyway, so I finished the bullshit assignment and then after college I went to an old warehouse to practise the tuba for a couple of hours.

[*Shrugs.*]

HARRIET:

Later that evening Phil and I were having dinner. I don't know where the kids were. I started telling Phil about my meeting with Alison. She hadn't sent me in for the TV drama and didn't know anything about the play in the Green Oaks Theatre. I didn't feel like I was at the top of her priorities any more. I felt like I was just a part of the furniture in there. A stapler or something. It seemed like she had given up on my career and if she didn't have any belief in me then how was anyone else going to. I needed to have someone who thought I was worth it and was going to push me rather than the other way around. Which made me think that-

PHIL:

Ummmmm...to be honest I think I'd kind of drifted off. It seemed important to her but I just couldn't focus on what she was saying. I was just thinking about John and what a mess he'd been. It had been quite a shock really, to see this usually cool-headed in-control guy reduced to a sobbing wreck. I was still shaken by the whole thing. As Harry talked I was just imagining him sitting at home by himself crying into a cold sandwich.

But then some part of my brain that was still paying attention heard Harry say...

HARRIET:

...and it might be best if we both just went our separate ways.

PHIL: I felt a bolt of lightning shoot down my body. My attention was suddenly snapped back. I...she couldn't be...What had I just missed?

HARRIET: Phil seemed a bit concerned about this, to be honest I didn't think he'd actually care if I left my agent, so I told him that...I just needed to get out. Make a fresh start. I thought it was for the best. For both of us. It just wasn't working out and it'd be a waste of our time to keep going just for the sake of loyalty. Things had just run their course. Hopefully we'd still be friends though.

PHIL: What was she saying? Things had run their course? That's how she tells me that she wants to leave me? I mean maybe our marriage wasn't a whirlwind of romance every single day but I didn't think it had gotten that bad.

HARRIET: I didn't think he even liked Alison but he really seemed to be shocked by what I was saying. So I asked him what he thought. And that's when he said it. Just out of the blue.

PHIL: I thought back to what John had said. I didn't want to make a fool of myself like he did, did I? So...I agreed. I said...I thought we *should* get a divorce.

HARRIET: He just said it. Like I wouldn't be surprised. Like I wouldn't care. Like it'd just be a confirmation of what I was already thinking or something. I sat there speechless.

PHIL: Harriet didn't say anything. She seemed to want more from me so I tried to think up reasons why I agreed with her, even though I really didn't. I guess I just wanted to make it easier on her, if this is what she needed to do.

But I couldn't really think of anything. We still seemed to get on okay. We didn't argue anyway.

Sex twice a week was actually plenty enough for me. I didn't get why some guys wanted it five times a night. I mean, where did they get the zinc?

And I certainly didn't want to see other people. I was kind of amazed I'd managed to get this one.

The best I could come up with...I mean, I was struggling...and again I was just trying to make it easier for her if this is what she wanted...the best I could come up with was that we didn't play badminton together any more.

HARRIET: Badminton?! He had decided to leave me because we didn't play badminton any more. What?! Did he really love badminton that much? He could have just said something.

Or was that supposed to be some kind of metaphor? I thought sex twice a week was plenty enough for him 'cause of his whole zinc deficiency. But maybe that was just an excuse. Maybe twice a week was all he could bare with me. Maybe he just wanted to try with a younger model. Well, if that's what he wanted...

PHIL: That seemed to upset her. But what did she want me to say? She was the one who was leaving me.

HARRIET: I couldn't reason with him if this was the way he was going to be so I said I'd go and stay in my sister's.

PHIL: I offered to go to a hotel but she insisted. And then there was nothing else to say so she just got up and left me sitting there staring at what was left of my dinner, not knowing whether to finish it or not.

HARRIET: I grabbed my bag and coat trying to hold back the tears as I walked out wondering how long he'd been thinking this. I thought of all the things we'd done over the past couple of months. When we'd been sitting on the couch watching TV was he just thinking

about how he wanted to be somewhere else? When we'd been on holidays in Greece had he looked over at me in a bikini and thought, "God, get her away from me." When I'd lain awake watching him snore a couple of weeks ago had he been dreaming of some other woman?

I went out the front door, closed it behind me, walked down the garden path, opened the gate and then stopped. I turned back and paused, waiting for him to come running through the door telling me he'd made a mistake and begging me to come back.

But he didn't. So I turned away again. And walked into Georgina.

GEORGINA: It scared the shit out of me when I bumped into Mum at the gate. I was thinking hard about everything and didn't see her until she ran into me. She never watches where she's going.

I'd just been walking around for the last couple of hours thinking about everything and wondering what I was going to do. Seeing her there made me feel guilty. Even though I didn't have anything to feel guilty about 'cause I'd done nothing wrong.

I didn't want her asking where I'd been so I decided to just keep the conversation about her. I asked her where she was off to.

HARRIET: I don't know. I guess I didn't want to make it real. If I said it to someone else then it'd really be out there and it'd really be happening. So I couldn't tell her where I was going. But I'm not good at lying. I know, I'm an actor and pretending should come easy to me but I'm still no good at it. So I panicked and told her that I wasn't leaving.

GEORGINA: Even though she was standing at the gate with her bag and coat.

- HARRIET: Which didn't make a lot of sense so I tried changing the subject and asked her where she was going.
- GEORGINA: Even though I was obviously just coming in.
- HARRIET: Which made more sense so I decided to go with that as well and said that I was just back too. From yoga.
- GEORGINA: I didn't want to get into a big discussion of who was where so I just let it drop and walked in the door. When I turned back Mum seemed to be waiting for something.
- HARRIET: I didn't know what to do, George was standing there waiting for me to come in so...I just walked back into the house. She closed the door behind us and I was trapped.
- GEORGINA: Then she just stood there in the hall. Not moving any further. Acting as if she'd never been there before, like it wasn't her own bloody house. If I didn't know her I would have thought she was on drugs or something.
- HARRIET: I looked up to our bedroom where I guessed Phil would be. I couldn't go up there so I followed George into the living room.
- GEORGINA: I have never seen Mum watch so much TV. For an actor she doesn't seem to be into watching actual acting. The two of us sat there watching some sitcom with neither of us laughing. Then Sarah's Hospital came on. This week there was an old woman who was dying of something or other and explaining to her grandson that he wasn't going to see her any more. After a while I looked over and saw that Mum looked kind of upset. About Sarah's Hospital. One of the crappiest shows on TV. I guessed that's why she doesn't watch that much TV if this is how she reacts.
- I asked her if everything was alright. She said that she was fine, she was just tired. I told her to go to

bed if she was tired. (And then I could change the bloody channel.) This seemed like one of the most surprising ideas she'd ever heard but she didn't seem to have a reply so she got up and left.

PHIL: I was sitting on the edge of the bed just staring into space when I heard a knock on the door. I looked up at the clock and saw that I'd been staring at her reading glasses for over 2 hours. I didn't want the kids to see that I'd been upset so I jumped off the bed and looked around for something to pretend to be doing. I just grabbed the first thing to hand.

HARRIET: I didn't know what I'd see when I went into the room. Would he be laughing, crying, asleep? It didn't occur to me that he'd be on the exercise bike though.

PHIL: I was so surprised when Harry walked in I nearly stopped peddling. For a second I thought maybe she'd come back to tell me she'd made a mistake. But that wasn't why she'd returned. Apparently-

HARRIET: It wasn't that easy. To just tell the children. Maybe it was easy for him but-

PHIL: Well, it was hardly easy for me.

HARRIET: Well, I didn't mean...

PHIL: I told her I could tell the kids if she couldn't.

HARRIET: I ignored the dig and just agreed. We'd tell them in the morning.

PHIL: In the meantime she should stay here. I'd sleep on the floor.

HARRIET: I didn't want to sleep in the bed, it didn't seem like our bed any more, so I said that I should take the floor.

PHIL: She couldn't sleep on the floor she had a bad back.

HARRIET: I told him it was fine. I'd sleep on the floor. He needed to work tomorrow.

PHIL: I said it was okay. I'd be fine on the floor.

HARRIET: In the end we both slept on the floor, either side of the bed.

GEORGINA: I felt pretty sick at breakfast.

TIM: Dad was droning on. It seemed like he had something he wanted to say but he couldn't get it out.

HARRIET: [*Raising an eyebrow.*] Well. It wasn't so easy now, was it?

PHIL: It wasn't that I couldn't tell them. I just wanted to find the right way of...I was building up to it slowly. I couldn't just blurt it out. I told them there was something important we needed to talk about.

GEORGINA: Had they found out? How could they know?

PHIL: I told them that their mother and I had been talking.

TIM: Well, that *was* news.

PHIL: And that we had come to a decision.

HARRIET: I just wanted him to get it over with. Just say it and then we could stop pretending.

PHIL: And...we had decided...to...

GEORGINA: But then the phone rang.

HARRIET: Phil said he'd get it and walked out into the hall.

PHIL: It was my mother. She said she had two reasons for calling me.

GRANNY: There was an Arab man at my door. I think he was trying to sell me something. I've told them before I don't want their heathen merchandise but they keep coming round waving their little trinkets at me.

PHIL: I told her for about the fourteenth time that that was the postman and that he was Italian not Arabic which she still didn't seem to believe but she didn't have any counter arguments so instead just pointed out that she didn't like him because he smelt of vinegar.

Her second reason for ringing me was to make arrangements for our anniversary.

I'd completely forgotten about it. It was myself and Harry's 26th wedding anniversary. I'd mentioned something about it to Mother a few weeks before but had forgotten about it since.

GRANNY: Not that I was going to admit that to her. My mother has always made it known that she doesn't approve of Harry. From the first time she met her. She wore hooped earrings to dinner. Only gypsies and yanks wear hooped earrings.

PHIL: She doesn't think Harriet is good enough for me though I don't know where she thinks that I'm the duke of that I need to find a woman of equal standing.

She takes any little imperfection as another mark against Harry so if I told her we hadn't actually made any anniversary plans she'd just take that as further proof that our marriage was a sham. I suppose, she might also have taken the fact that we'd just decided to get divorced as a bit of an indication as well.

Mum took my hesitation as a sign that something was up and started making guesses. Had she run away leaving me to raise the children? Was there another man? Had one of her actor friends turned her gay?

GRANNY: They're all sleeping with each other those theatre types. Harlots and gays.

PHIL: I assured her that everything was fine but she didn't believe me. She started going on about how she'd always known Harry would betray me. I can't stand to hear my mother talking like that about Harry. It really gets on my wick. So. I insisted that we were still very happy together and were definitely having an anniversary dinner and I'd pick her up about 6.

GEORGINA: I was bricking it waiting for Dad to come back. I know I said that they wouldn't even care that I was pregnant

but at that moment I was starting to wonder. Mum looked pretty tense. Maybe I'd underestimated their reaction just a little bit. Maybe they *were* about to lose it? In my head I started going over and over all the reasons why they shouldn't worry, that everything would be fine.

HARRIET: I waited nervously for Phil to return. I heard him having some kind of heated discussion with his mother on the phone, although I couldn't hear what he was saying. Maybe he was telling her. I knew she'd be delighted. At least I wouldn't have to pretend to like her any more.

TIM: What the hell did Dad want? I was going to be late.

GEORGINA: Dad coming back in snapped me out of my thoughts and I just started talking.

PHIL: When I walked back into the room Georgina suddenly blurted out something about everything being under control and that she had a boyfriend and that they were very happy about everything. Which was nice.

GEORGINA: But it turned out that they hadn't found out about...everything. Dad actually wanted to talk about something else.

PHIL: I couldn't meet Harry's eye as I told them. She was going to think this was some ploy to keep her there. But I just couldn't back down with my mother. We'd get round to everything else after. After we'd had...

HARRIET: A dinner party?! What was he talking about. I didn't understand what was going on. First he tells me he wants us to get divorced and now he wants us to throw a dinner party celebrating 26 years of our marriage.

PHIL: I tried to move the conversation on quickly in case Harry said anything so I asked George if she wanted

to bring this fella of hers, since she seemed so keen on him.

TIM: George mumbled something about asking him.

PHIL: Then I felt I shouldn't exclude Tim so I asked if he had anyone he'd like to bring.

TIM: Well...no...I mean...even if there *was* anyone I was hardly going to bring them to dinner at my parents. Not intentionally anyway.

GEORGINA: Tim mumbled something about being late and legged it.

PHIL: I left after Tim.

GEORGINA: I suddenly felt like I was going to be sick so I hurried out as fast as I dared.

HARRIET: Leaving me to wonder what had just happened.

URSULA: Well, it's like any love affair it ebbs and flows. Some days I can't believe how lucky I am, then there'll be times when I just wish I was doing anything else. But I still love it. I guess I'm married to music.

I can play a few instruments. I play the piano, trumpet, cornet, trombone, and occasionally the French horn, my favourite is the tuba though. I don't really know why. Maybe I'm just a sucker for the underdog. It's a lesser loved instrument, not one for fancy solos and trills. It's not many people's dream to play the tuba. That's why those that do pick it love it a little bit more. We're a very exclusive club.

When Tim came to me looking to learn the tuba I could tell that he was really going to put in the effort. There was a kind of shy infatuation for it in his eyes.

He approached me nervously after a concert one night and said that he'd seen me play and fallen in love with the instrument. I was amazed that he could pick out the tuba from the rest of the orchestra. I'd

just been filling out the bass. But that told me that he had an ear for it. So I gave him my number and arranged a time for his first lesson. And I'd been teaching him every week for a couple of years by that stage. He was getting very good. He obviously practised a lot.

TIM: Ursula was a good teacher and I liked the tuba that's all. I didn't tell my family about it because they'd just want to see me playing and stuff. They'd embarrass me in front of...everyone.

It wasn't...a secret. I just didn't tell them about it. And kept my tuba in a locker in college. And only practised in a disused warehouse. That's all. Jesus.

URSULA: Tim turned up that day like every other day. We played through the latest piece he'd been practising. It was progressing well.

GEORGINA: I waited nervously in the café. I'd agreed to meet them individually one an hour later than the other. Hopefully they wouldn't bump into each other on the shift change.

Like I said, I was pretty drunk when I'd gone home with them. Again, individually, just to make that absolutely clear. So I couldn't really remember what they were like. Although I remembered that they were good guys. I mean I knew they weren't mentalists or anything. I wouldn't sleep with a mentalist. Not after that unicyclist guy.

When they arrived I didn't tell them straight away. I wanted to talk to them for a while first. Get to know them a bit.

GARY: Well, okay, yes, um, if I can just say before anything else, if that's okay, that I was really pleased when Georgina texted me. I mean, apart from, obviously,

me being all for equal rights and with that there being equal opportunities for one person to call the other in a reversal of the old order of things, that also I actually really liked her and so was pleased to hear from her because I had not been able to find the time, plus, admittedly, the courage I guess you could say as well, uh, to call her.

GEORGINA: Gary, was a little nervous.

GARY: Yeah, I would have to admit that I was a little anxious. To be honest, although obviously I wanted to change the situation, if Georgina was interested in doing so, uh, with me, I didn't normally go on a lot of *actual* dates.

PETER: Yeah, George, was a decent bird. So, I thought, hey, if she wants to meet up that's cool.

GEORGINA: Peter was older, in his late twenties, and more relaxed. I didn't have to ask too many questions to get him talking about himself.

PETER: But I can understand why she did text me, y'know, I'm a fit guy and a lot of birds are into that. I take care of myself. I eat healthy. Super foods, smoothies, biotonic shit. Which just sorts me out, y'know? It totally sets me up for partying and doing pills at the weekend.

GARY: I told her that I was studying computers, which, as you may have noticed, isn't something that requires a great deal of social interaction and when that interaction is necessary is usually restricted to conversations of a technical nature which was good for me because my nervousness does tend to have the effect of making other people, who are around me, also nervous, as well.

GEORGINA: I didn't say much to them at first. I just listened. Waiting for the right moment and hoping that I didn't

like one more than the other and then that one would turn out not to be the real father.

PETER: It's weird actually. I keep getting these headaches at the moment. Can you be allergic to your brain do you think?

GARY: ...and then this dog starting jumping up at me and barking and I ended up puking all over it. Which stopped the dog barking but lost me the job at the fairground.

PETER: ...like when I was dumping this Swedish bird. I said to her, y'know, "It's not you, it's me. I'm just not into ugly chicks." But that didn't seem to calm her down at all. If anything I think it *contributed* to her losing the tennis final.

GARY: ...I have these, uh, sweaty hands which kind of act up in times of stress and physical strain and sometimes just at random which means that I'm actually medically banned from driving a car without these special kind of gloves because I wouldn't be able to grip the wheel properly, not that I've taken my test because I'm afraid of mirrors. I find the reflections dizzying.

GEORGINA: Listening to them I forgot my fear of liking one more than the other. *Completely.*

I couldn't put it off forever though. So I just said it. They both reacted quite differently when I told them.

GARY: [*Stunned.*] I...what...

PETER: Amazing!

GARY: I just...I didn't mean to— and obviously, I know, it's not the best reaction to that kind of news, but, it's important to understand, that I didn't mean to freak out. I just panicked. I didn't want to be there, in that situation. That wasn't part of the plan and, in fact, up

until that moment I wasn't even aware that there was a plan but it seemed that whatever the plan may have been...a baby wasn't part of it.

PETER: Amazing. I was delighted. A little child. A little *baby*. I'm big into kids. They're great for throwing around the swimming pool and stuff. The height you can get off one of them.

I mean, maybe this wasn't the ideal circumstances but what are, you know? You've just got to make the best of whatever comes your way. And however a life comes into the world it's something to be cherished.

GARY: Obviously, it wasn't actually Georgina's fault, she hadn't gotten pregnant on purpose, and...I really regret shouting that at her in front of the whole café.

PETER: I told George that I was there for her. I wanted to be a part of everything. If she was up for it.

GARY: If I had my time over, well apart from the obvious fact that I would still be the sum of my experiences and would inevitably perform the same actions, but if I could change things, then I would, of course, very much like to have *not* stormed out of the café. Particularly because the door was closed and with all the distress I couldn't grip the handle any more so had to wait for an old man to come and open it for me which made the whole thing a lot more awkward.

GEORGINA: Okay, I mean, yeah, admittedly, I didn't tell Gary about Peter and I didn't tell Peter about Gary. But, y'know, after the way they reacted I started thinking maybe I wouldn't have to.

PHIL: I couldn't concentrate in work that day. I'd been staring at the blinking cursor for an hour when I decided to go and see John, see how he was doing. He

was the only one who knew what I was going through. Maybe things would look brighter if I talked to him.

I didn't expect things to look quite as bright as they did though. When I walked into John's office he seemed fine. He acted like nothing had happened. He was back to his usual self. All business.

[*Impressed.*] We talked about a report I was doing on a company called BPR Construction and he didn't cry once.

I was about to leave when I stopped. I turned and asked John if everything was okay. He told me everything was fine, why shouldn't it be. Because he seemed a little bit upset yesterday I said. He apologised for yesterday and said everything was fine now.

It kind of lifted a bit of the weight off my shoulders. Maybe this wasn't going to be so difficult. If John could recover from the mess he was yesterday then maybe I wouldn't feel so bad either tomorrow. Maybe this was for the best. Maybe single life wouldn't be so bad. I told John that I was glad things weren't looking so bad for him, divorce wasn't the end of the world.

But he assured me that divorce was indeed absolutely the end of the world. Going to court, dividing up all your stuff, where do the kids go. It was awful, awful, awful he said. The reason he was feeling better was because his wife had come back to him.

HARRIET:

I stormed around the supermarket. I was furious with Phil. He tells me he wants to get divorced, acts so contemptuous of me when I hadn't been able to tell George and then it turned out he couldn't do it either. And now I was going around buying food for a roast

dinner to celebrate 26 years of our, apparently, loveless marriage.

I was taking out most of my aggression on the shopping trolley as I pushed it around the aisles dumping ingredients into it with as much force as I dared. I came to the chilled section and was walking towards the beef joints when I glanced down and saw a turkey. I don't know why but I just felt the urge to slap it. So I did. And it felt good. It felt like a real person. So I slapped it again. And again, and again. I was really getting into it when I heard a voice behind me.

It was a girl, well a woman now, from school. We had been best friends back then. But then we lost touch. I hadn't seen her in over twenty years and now we just bump into each other in the local supermarket. While I'm slapping a turkey.

She asked what I was up to these days. I told her I was an actor and she said "ah" like that explained everything. Then she remembered seeing me in an episode of *The Sleeping Detective* a few years before. Had I kept acting since then?

I wanted to show her that I had done more than just play a maid in a cop show. So I told her pretty much everything that had happened since leaving school. It only took a couple of minutes which was quite disappointing. Next thing you know I'd told her about how I was getting divorced but had to have a 26th anniversary dinner party first. I wasn't doing a great job of convincing her I wasn't crazy. Maybe I was crazy.

She said she hoped everything turned out okay and left without exchanging phone numbers or anything. After she'd walked round the corner at the

end of the aisle I noticed that she'd even left her trolley behind in her rush to get away from me.

- TIM: The lesson went well, I think. Ursula had a few pointers for me. I was overemphasising some of the notes in the minuet.
- URSULA: He was really a natural. It sounded like he practised for hours every day.
- TIM: And I kind of messed up the second coda in one of the pieces but Ursula said it was fine, I'd covered for it.
[*Realises he's dropped his façade of disinterest.*]
I think. I don't know. I can't remember. Jesus.
- URSULA: Tim's lessons always seemed to go so fast. Next thing you know my next student was arriving.
- TIM: Next thing you know some prick was arriving.
- URSULA: Colin had only been with me a few weeks but he was showing promise. There's a myth that it can be too late to start learning an instrument but as long as your patient I think everyone can play something. Colin was in his early 40s and was really showing potential. Normally his lesson was on a Monday but he hadn't been able to do it that week so I rearranged it for after Tim's.
- TIM: This guy thought he was fucking great. He came swaggering in making all kinds of comments and jokes, about Ursula. Totally inappropriate stuff. Saying like that Ursula made him want to practise with his instrument. He was a wanker.
- URSULA: Colin's a very funny man. He's quite flirtatious but I think that's just his way.
- TIM: He was definitely into her. What a prick. I bet he'd taken up the tuba just so he could see her. Asshole.

URSULA: Tim packed up his instrument and I walked him to the door. I said I'd see him next week and then started to close the door but just as I did...

TIM: Well, I just...everything was going fine until that dickhead showed up...I just...I had to...I wasn't asking her out on a date I was just...

URSULA: Tim asked me if I wanted to go for dinner sometime. Which caught me by surprise. Tim was ten years younger than me. I didn't think he'd...I told him that I didn't normally date students. But then it turned out that I had misunderstood. I think.

TIM: I was just asking her to *the* dinner. My parents' anniversary dinner. That's all. Jesus. Relax.

URSULA: I was still unsure. I didn't know why Tim would want his tuba teacher there. It seemed a little strange. But then he told me that he wanted me to persuade his parents not to make him give up the tuba, that they said it was distracting him from his real work in college. Well, that really got my goat. It always annoys me when people don't think music is an important part of a person's life. We can't just spend our whole time working. Music is exercise for the soul. If Tim enjoyed playing the tuba then they shouldn't stop him. So I agreed, I said I would go to the dinner and try to talk to them.

TIM: Okay. So it wasn't completely true. But in a way my parents disapproved of me playing the tuba. They didn't *approve* of it anyway. Yeah, they didn't actually know about it but they'd never encouraged me to play the tuba.

Look, it- I was planning to sort everything out later. I just had to meet her outside of...

It was going to be fine. It would have been fine.

PHIL: I waited in the kitchen for Harry to come home. I was trying to think of something I could say which would make her change her mind. But, since I didn't really know what the problem was I didn't know what to say. But then maybe I wouldn't have to. Maybe she would have just changed her mind like John's wife. She'd open the door with tears in her eyes and tell me she was sorry and let's just forget about the whole thing.

HARRIET: I was furious by the time I got home. I'd completely embarrassed myself in front of Stephanie. Now I had to sit through the mortification of this meal.

I hauled the bags up the front garden and then spent a full minute trying to get the front door open which still jammed after I had nagged and nagged Phil about fixing it.

I walked down the hall and into the kitchen only to find him sitting there waiting. Waiting for his dinner. I ignored him, went over to the counter and started unpacking the shopping.

PHIL: She didn't open the door with tears in her eyes and tell me she was sorry. She actually seemed pretty pissed off. I asked if she'd maybe had a think about things.

HARRIET: How could I not have been thinking about it?

PHIL: What I meant was had she...changed her mind?

HARRIET: Had I changed my mind? Surely this wasn't about *me* changing my mind.

PHIL: Umm, which I didn't really understand. Was that one of those women's things like when they want you to *want* to do something rather than just do it.

HARRIET looks at PHIL.

HARRIET: What?

PHIL gives a double take to HARRIET.

PHIL: Well, it's not like I started this.

HARRIET: Fine. Fine. Maybe I had a part in it too.

PHIL: Well, quite a major part really.

HARRIET: Right, if that's the way you want to see it then fine.
But I'm not the one who just decided to quit.

PHIL: [*Confused.*] Well, I've no idea how you can see it like that.

HARRIET: [*Exasperated.*] What?!

PHIL: This is a bit self-serving Harry. You seem to be just arranging the facts to suit yourself.

HARRIET: I'm the one who's arranging the facts to suit myself?
You're the one who's accusing me of starting this.

PHIL: You did start this!

HARRIET: What?! It takes two to tango is that it?!

PHIL: And it just takes one to stop.

HARRIET: Exactly.

PHIL: What?! You're the one who said-

HARRIET: And then Tim came in the door.

PHIL: Neither of us wanted Tim to see that we were fighting so we just acted nonchalant.

TIM: Mum was slapping a turkey and Dad was doing some leg stretches when I came into the room. Which was a bit weird. I was surprised to see Dad there at all. I thought he was supposed to be picking up Gran.

PHIL: I'd completely forgotten about her. She was going to think I'd been kidnapped by an Azerbaijani bushman or something so I hurried out.

HARRIET: Phil ran to his mummy leaving me with Tim. I started peeling potatoes to hide my face from him.

TIM: Mum seemed pretty busy so I told her I didn't want to disturb her but there was going to be someone else for dinner tonight.

HARRIET: Which surprised me. I was about to ask who else was coming but then the doorbell rang and Tim ran out.

GEORGINA: Peter and I walked back towards my house. Peter had suggested coming with me to break the news to my parents. It seemed like a good idea, maybe his enthusiasm would rub off onto my parents and after Wendy's advice about showing them I had everything sorted out I agreed. But I was still dreading it. I had already taken several wrong turnings just to delay our arrival. There was only a certain number of times I could stop to tie my shoelaces though. Eventually we were going to get there.

While we walked Peter was making all kinds of plans. He could get a cot off some guy in work and his sister could send over baby-grows. Meanwhile I was wondering if it turned out the baby wasn't actually his would he be convinced that they looked the same if I just gave it the same haircut as him.

PETER: There was an amazing diet I'd heard about that you could put your baby on and it made it's brain grow faster.

TIM: As I walked to the door I hoped it was Ursula, if I got her alone before everyone else arrived maybe I could kind of tell her that...well, tell her something that would have solved everything. But when I opened the door it wasn't Ursula.

GARY: George's brother opened the door. He looked disappointed to see me. Which I thought wasn't a particularly good start to things.

I had spent the afternoon thinking about everything. I'd come to realise that obviously it wasn't actually Georgina's fault, I was, uh, approximately 50 percent accountable for the current situation, and that it was also, um, very probable that she was as scared about this whole thing as I was. So I had come to

apologise. About earlier. That day. Not the previous, uh, occasion.

It had taken me quite a while to build up the courage to ring the doorbell. Presumably she had, and justifiably so, told her family about what a total bastard I'd been earlier and now they would all want to slit my throat. When I saw her father leaving in the car I thought maybe that was my chance. I hadn't realised that she had a brother.

TIM: He was a strange little nervous looking chap. I presumed he was some religious freak looking for money.

GARY: I thought about backing out but decided I had to go through with this so I asked if Georgina was in.

TIM: That's when I remembered that George had said she might bring someone this evening. I apologised and said she wasn't back yet but that he should come in.

GARY: Well, he didn't seem delighted to see me but he hadn't punched me straight in the face, which under the circumstances would have been totally acceptable if that's what he had in fact chosen to do. Instead he led me into the living room and offered me a drink. Which I turned down, just to be on the safe side, in case this was in fact just a trick and he was trying to poison me, which would I think have been less acceptable, to me, from my point of view.

TIM: I said something like it was good to meet him and he seemed surprised.

GARY: [*Apprehensive.*] Really?

TIM: Uh, yeah.

GARY: So...George told you about me— us, what's happened— what's going on with everything and...the situation.

- TIM: Uh, yeah, she mentioned it yeah. I mean, she didn't really go into details or anything but we got the gist of it.
- GARY: Really? And you're not—...that doesn't—...that's not a problem with you?
- TIM: Um, no. Why would it be?
- GARY: Well, it must be a bit of a shock to have her come home with a, uh, um, uh, plus one, as it were.
- TIM: Well, it's hardly the first time.
- GARY: [*Shocked.*] Really?
- TIM: [*Backtracking, hurriedly.*] Not that there have been loads of them or anything. I don't think. I mean she's not a total slag. Just a...regular amount for a 20 year old. One or two. I guess. But don't worry, none of them are around any more.
- GARY: Which is when the mother walked into the room. She seemed even happier to see me. I was starting to get very worried. I had come here expecting to get hung, drawn and quartered but this was even scarier. This family was crazy. I get their daughter pregnant then freak out about it in a café and they act like it happens every day. What kind of a girl was she?
- PETER: And I also had a mate who knew how to get your baby registered as twins so you could pick up twice as much child support.
- But I could see George was still nervous. I tried to reassure her. I said I was sure her parents would be delighted to become grandparents. Her brother didn't have any kids right.
- GEORGINA: Okay, I said something like that he didn't and he definitely wasn't likely to have any anytime soon. Because, you know, the way he never goes out with anyone. But, I think, and this wasn't my fault because

I didn't say it, I think that Peter took that to mean that Tim was gay. That's just what he read into it not what *I* said. At that point.

PETER: Not that there's anything wrong with being a, y'know, one of them. It's all cool. More birds for us and all.

GEORGINA: As we approached our gate there was a woman coming the other way. I turned to go in but then she turned at the same time.

URSULA: I asked if this was where Tim lived and she told me it was.

GEORGINA: She introduced herself as Ursula and said Tim had invited her for dinner. Tim hadn't said anything about inviting someone but then he doesn't say much. She was like 20 years older than him or something. I didn't think there was any way there was anything romantic going on with them so as we walked into the house I asked her how she knew Tim. Maybe there was something crazy going on with them. Maybe they might act as some kind of distraction from my whole thing. Maybe this wouldn't be so bad. But I didn't get to hear her reply though because at that point...

HARRIET: George came into the room

TIM: and screamed like she'd seen a ghost.

PETER: What the bloody hell was going on?

URSULA: I expected there to be a dead body in the living room or something.

GARY: George stared at me like I was made out of kryptonite. I guessed not everyone was pleased to see me.

GEORGINA: Oh shit.

INTERVAL.

GEORGINA: I didn't know what to do. Why had Gary come here? I thought he wasn't interested. Now they were both in

the same room. How was I going to explain him to Peter? How was I going to explain Peter to him? How was I going to explain any of this to anyone? I didn't even know how to start. So I just stood there not saying anything.

PETER:

I asked George if everything was alright.

GEORGINA:

I said that it was fine that I just thought I'd seen a mouse or something. Then to move things on I introduced everyone. Using just their names. Not their relationships. Peter, Ursula, Mum, Tim and Gary.

HARRIET:

Who were these people?

TIM:

Who was *this* dickhead?

HARRIET:

Did nobody think I might like to get a bit of warning before they invite an endless stream of people round for dinner.

TIM:

Had Ursula invited him along? Was he her boyfriend?

HARRIET:

I invited everyone to sit down.

GEORGINA:

As people rearranged themselves on the couch to make room for Ursula, Peter pulled me aside and quietly asked if...

PETER:

...the little fella was Tim's boyfriend.

GEORGINA:

Well, it was just for the moment, while I sorted everything out. I mean, I didn't want them punching each other in the middle of the living room. So I, kind of, agreed that Gary was Tim's boyfriend. But Peter couldn't say anything about it because they were both still kind of in the closet.

TIM:

Peter sat down beside Gary.

GEORGINA:

I couldn't have them sitting beside each other, how long before they started talking about...everything. I was about to sit down in between them but then Mum asked me to help her get some drinks. I didn't want to leave them alone but I didn't want to make a scene

either so I rushed out to make the drinks and then get back.

HARRIET: In the dining room George started pouring drinks like they were going to evaporate. I asked her what was her rush.

GEORGINA: Nothing.

HARRIET: I told George her boyfriend Gary seemed nice.

GEORGINA: Oh. Good.

HARRIET: She asked me what he'd told us and I said not much so far; he'd just arrived.

GEORGINA: Oh. Good.

HARRIET: Who are those other people?

GEORGINA: I...don't know.

HARRIET: You don't know?

GEORGINA: They're friends of Tim's. I just met them outside.

HARRIET: So I said I'd ask Tim who they were.

GEORGINA: Well, I couldn't let her do that, otherwise they'd realise that Peter was here with me and then they'd wonder who he was and...so I said that she couldn't ask Tim.

HARRIET: Why not?

GEORGINA: Because...I think Peter is Tim's boyfriend and obviously this is a big step for him so we shouldn't make a big deal out of it and we should just act like it's natural.

HARRIET: [*Shocked.*] What?

GEORGINA: Well, it was just kind of half a lie. I mean, I didn't know, maybe Tim was gay so maybe I was telling the truth in a kind of way. Maybe I was making it easier for him to come out.

HARRIET: That broke my heart. On top of everything else. The thought that Tim would feel that he couldn't tell us that he was gay.

- GRANNY: ...at which point I think he was getting ready to cast some of his voodoo magic on me, or whatever they call it in that pagan witchcraft of theirs, so I rushed straight out of that synagogue.
- PHIL: I was driving Mother over in the car. I can't really remember what she was talking about but then she stopped and turned to me and said
- GRANNY: It's not too late to call it off, y'know.
- PHIL: At first, I thought she was talking about the divorce. Maybe she'd heard something or maybe she could just see it in my face. And now she was telling me to fight for my marriage because even though she'd never got on with Harry she knew she was important to me and I should do whatever I could to keep her. But actually she was talking about...
- GRANNY: This sham of a wedding anniversary.
- PHIL: Mother, will you stop talking like that.
- GRANNY: No one would blame you. You married below you.
- PHIL: Mother, for the last time blondes are not a lower class of people.
- HARRIET: I was slightly shell shocked I guess. George picked up the drinks and walked out. I couldn't move for a moment. I stood there trying to think of any clues that I'd missed that Tim was gay.
- GEORGINA: As I came out of the dining room with the tray of drinks I found Gary there waiting for me.
- GARY: I just wanted to get her alone so I could talk to her and apologise for earlier.
- GEORGINA: I quickly closed the dining room door behind me so that Mum couldn't hear. What the hell was Gary doing here?
- GARY: I started trying to apologise. She'd seemed pretty horrified to see me earlier, which was fair enough, so I

didn't expect it to be easy to convince her to forgive me. But actually it was.

GEORGINA: I just wanted him to shut up before Mum came out. I told him it was fine. Everything was okay.

GARY: I didn't know what to say. I felt like I should apologise more but she wouldn't hear it. Instead she told me to make sure not to mention the baby and all to her family because they didn't actually know anything about it—...him—...her—...that yet. I'd thought they'd been remarkably relaxed about the whole thing. What the hell was I going to do now? I nearly fainted when Mrs Green came out of the dining room.

HARRIET: ...to find George and Gary in the hall. I heard George shush Gary as I opened the door.

GEORGINA: Mum asked what was going on, why was I telling Gary to shut up, so I told her that I was just telling Gary about Tim.

GARY: Well, though I'm really not an expert on homosexuality, despite what Barry Nolan in my primary school used to say on the subject, it seemed pretty obvious to me that Tim was gay. But of course I didn't say that to Mrs Green because I was pretty scared of her then.

HARRIET: I asked Gary not to say anything to either of them. It was still a bit of a secret.

GARY: Oh, uhp, yeah, that's...certainly. No problem. Yep.

GEORGINA: And then she took the drinks off me and went into the living room.

GARY: I have to admit that my first instinct was to just run. Georgina's family were probably going to tear me apart when they found out about the baby and everything. But I decided to stick by her this time. If they wanted to pelt me with stones that was fine but I

wasn't leaving. Although I might take off my glasses first.

GEORGINA: I told him it was fine. He should just go. Which would have made things a lot easier for me. But he told me he was going to stay, he wasn't going to let me down again, whenever I needed him he'd be there for me, right by my side.

GARY: I did need to go to the loo first though. My bladder tends to get very active in times of stress and I'd been holding it in for about half an hour now.

GEORGINA: Gary headed upstairs to the bathroom, I turned round to go back into the living room when Mum came out and asked me to get some snacks. Jesus, was she intentionally making it impossible to keep my baby a secret.

HARRIET: I went to check on the dinner while George went back into the dining room.

PETER: George's brother seemed like a nice enough chap. He was a bit quiet. Obviously one of those thinker fellas.

TIM: This Peter guy seemed like a total dick. And that wasn't anything about Ursula. He was just annoying; the way he was sitting there all big and...long haired.

PETER: It was pretty tough making conversation with him and the posh bird so I got up and went for a piss. When I got out into the hall George's dad was coming in with her granny.

GRANNY: ...I mean honestly, they're worse than Chinamen, with their little hands, reaching out and touching you. Disgusting. Trying to steal your purse is what they're really up to.

PHIL: For the fifth time I tried to tell her that the child hadn't been trying to steal from her. It was only two. Then I spotted a tall chap standing in the hall.

- PETER: I introduced myself and said I was here with George. Then headed upstairs to the bog.
- PHIL: So I presumed that was George's boyfriend. It was a natural assumption.
- URSULA: Tim was telling me he thought Peter seemed like a nice guy when his grandmother came in. He got up and helped her to a seat.
- PHIL: I went and found George in the dining room.
- GEORGINA: Dad came in and said he'd just met my boyfriend in the hall. I was distracted and confused. It's not like I do this all the time. I'm not lying to everyone all day long. It's actually quite difficult to keep it all in your head. So when Dad said boyfriend I just presumed he meant Gary.
- PHIL: I thought he said his name was Peter.
- GEORGINA: Oh tits. That was stupid. I'd almost fucked everything up. I managed to keep my cool and bluff my way through it though, I pretended I'd thought he'd said *Tim's* boyfriend. Gary was Tim's boyfriend and Peter was my boyfriend. Well, it had worked the other way around. I mean, okay, that may seem like I was making things worse but it was just one of those things that has to get worse before it gets better. In a kind of a way.
- PHIL: That was quite a shock. I mean I guess I'd suspected for a while that there was something going on with Tim. But I just hadn't thought he was gay.
- GEORGINA: I pretended like it was obvious. I mean I had to, I had to go for broke. So I acted like we'd always known he was gay really.
- PHIL: Oh, yeah, I guess so, I mean, of course.

GEORGINA: But I told Dad not to mention it to Tim or...*[Has to think about it.]*...Gary because I thought Tim was still a bit shy about the whole thing.

PHIL: Right...yeah.

GEORGINA: So now...*[Thinks hard about it.]*...Dad thought Peter was my boyfriend, Mum and Tim thought Gary was my boyfriend, Dad thought Gary was Tim's boyfriend, Mum thought Peter was Tim's boyfriend, and Gary and Peter both thought each other was Tim's boyfriend.

...

Is that right?

GARY: As I left the loo Peter was coming the other way.

PETER and GARY stand and face each other from opposite ends of the stage.

PETER: Oh hi.

GARY: Hi.

Pause.

PETER: How ya doing?

GARY: Good.

Pause.

PETER: Listen mate, George told me all about you guys, I hope that's all right.

GARY: Oh, no, that's fine by me, fine. I'm glad she's letting some people know about everything, in fact. Actually, if we're being frank and honest with each other here, and I fully appreciate, y'know, that you have, with me, I'm not really supposed to say but she told me about you too.

PETER: Oh great. So, no secrets here then, eh?

GARY: Yeah.

PETER: Well, anyway, I just wanted to say that, y'know, I'm totally cool with that kind of thing.

GARY: Oh great, thanks. That means a lot to me because I'm totally into what's going on with you guys too, although, not into it into it, obviously.

PETER: [*Smiles.*] Of course.

GARY: But I just think why not, what's the difference you know. If it were up to me I think you guys should be able to get married and all that kind of stuff.

PETER: Well, yeah, I guess so. But let's not get ahead of ourselves eh?

GARY: Right, of course, sure. Well, maybe sometime down the line.

PETER: Yeah, who knows maybe sometime down the line they'll change the laws and we can have a double wedding, eh?

GARY: Oh sure yeah.

PETER: Well, hey, Tim's a great guy so...

GARY: Yes, yeah, Tim's really nice.

HARRIET: As I left the kitchen Phil came out of the dining room. My stomach tensed at the sight of him.

PHIL: I was still in shock when I bumped into Harry. For a moment I'd even forgot about the whole divorce thing. I asked her if she knew about Tim being gay.

HARRIET: Well, of course.

PHIL: Then why hadn't she told me.

HARRIET: Which I thought was just typical of him. He just didn't communicate properly with people. How could he not have known that his own son was gay?

Admittedly he wasn't actually gay but the point still stood.

Well, okay, I guess I was just being a bit

defensive. And that put Phil on the back foot so he challenged me about why I couldn't tell the kids about the divorce if I was such a master of communication. I was just about to tell him that if *he* wanted a divorce then *he* could tell the kids but then George came out of the dining room.

GEORGINA:

What's going on?

PHIL:

Nothing.

HARRIET:

Uh, let's go in and join the others.

TIM:

When everyone was back in the living room...

GEORGINA:

I'd positioned myself between Peter and Gary this time.

HARRIET:

I raised my glass and said cheers.

PETER:

I thought it was a good opportunity to ask them what the secret to a great marriage was.

PHIL:

I was halfway through mumbling something about communication when Harry got up to check on the dinner again.

TIM:

What, did she think the dinner was going to run away or something?

PETER:

As she left she told George to lay the table.

GEORGINA protests the injustice wordlessly.

GARY:

When George protested Peter said something about him hoping her kid doesn't treat her the way she treated her mother.

TIM:

George stormed out, I said I'd give her a hand and followed her.

URSULA:

Tim's father, Phil, was sitting to my left so I thought it was as good a time as any to broach the subject of Tim's tuba playing.

- PHIL: I was still a little dazed and was trying to adjust to everything when this woman who I hadn't even really registered turned to me.
- URSULA: So, Mr Green, I know it's a little strange for me to be here.
- PHIL: Oh, no, it's fine. You're most welcome. Um...who are...
- URSULA: Obviously I'm here to discuss the whole thing with Tim.
- PHIL: Oh right. Right. Okay. Good. That's good. We're always open to listening to...You're a friend of his are you?
- URSULA: Well, in a way, I suppose, but primarily I'm his tuba teacher. [*Notices Phil's confusion.*]
You know about all this right?
- PHIL: Well, I'm not sure about the specifics of all the roles...I've heard of bears. But...
- URSULA: R-ight.
- PHIL: God, I really felt like I'd just dipped my toe in the water of my son's homosexuality and now I was being dragged into the rapids by this strange woman. I wondered what the others were talking about.
- GRANNY: They're all the same that lot. I've never met one who didn't have one eye on my purse and one down my top. I'm surprised they can even hold my library card straight.
- PETER: The old dear was talking to myself and the little Gary fella. She was coming out with all kinds of stuff. She seemed to pretty much hate every race of people except her own.
- GRANNY: And you try telling that to the police, they just won't listen. But they're all Hindus these days anyway, aren't they?

- GARY: We tried to placate her without actually agreeing with anything she said. It was quite tricky.
- GRANNY: It's a genetic defect. It's been proven. They have weak knees. That's why they lost the war and have never won the long jump.
- GARY and PETER make non-committal noises.*
- TIM: In the dining room I tried to get some information about Ursula and this Peter guy. Just so that I knew exactly what was going on with them. Not because I was jealous of...I was unsure if they had actually come together and just wanted to clear it up.
- GEORGINA: Tim started asking about Peter. What the hell was I going to tell *him*? I couldn't very well say that Peter was *his* boyfriend. He definitely would have seen through that. But then it seemed like Tim thought that Peter had come with Ursula. So...it was kind of his own fault. I mean, he made the assumption, I just allowed him to do that. That doesn't count as an actual lie. Besides I thought he'd invited her, whoever she was, so if he didn't know who she was bringing then it wasn't my fault.
- PHIL: I didn't have a clue who this woman *was*. I'd just found out my son was gay and it seemed like she now wanted to fill me in on every little detail about it.
- URSULA: Well, that's what I've come to talk to you about. Now, I know it's not really what you might want for Tim – it's not the most glamorous thing in the world – but I don't think you should discourage Tim from pursuing what he wants. You may not be aware but Tim is actually really good at it.
- PHIL: [*Taken aback.*] Oh right. Uh. That's good.

URSULA: I know it may seem like a simple instrument to you but it's actually very complicated. Tim just has a natural ability with it. He knows how it works. I know it's a cliché but he does actually treat it like it's a part of himself.

PHIL: Well, doesn't everyone?

URSULA: No. Believe me I've taught hundreds. Tim is one of the most promising pupils I've ever had.

PHIL: Wait, sorry, I hope this isn't too personal but...how exactly do you *teach* them? I mean without going into all the...details.

URSULA: Just like anyone else really. A half hour lesson every week and then they go off and practise.

PHIL: R-ight. I just wouldn't think you'd need lessons.

URSULA: Well, it may seem easy to the lay-person but it's actually very technically demanding. To do it right. Anyone could just blow into the thing and get a noise out of it.

PHIL looks disturbed by this image.

GRANNY: Well, I never agreed with it. Right from the start. She's an actor. They're just not the right kind of people.

GARY: Um, yeah. Well, I guess they can be different sometimes.

GRANNY: They're all having affairs with each other the whole time. And they don't even see anything wrong with it. Low moral character, you see. It comes from hanging out with the gays.

GARY: [*Looks at Peter.*] Oh well, I don't know about that, um, Mrs Green. I mean I, personally, and you're entitled to your own opinion, of course, wouldn't think of gay people as having any lack of morals, per se.

- PETER: Yeah, that's right, Gary. Maybe you've had some bad experiences in the past, Mrs Green, but you should try to keep an open mind about these things. You never know you may find that someone close to you is gay.
- GRANNY: Oh no. I'd know. I'd smell it off them.
- PETER: We were saved by Georgie's mum coming and calling us in for dinner.
- GARY: As we walked out I tried to show some solidarity with Peter and said something along the lines of her being a bit full on.
- PETER: Yeah, don't listen to her mate. Old people can have old fashioned views sometimes.
- GARY: Yeah, it's best to just ignore it, eh?
- PETER: Exactly mate, exactly. Don't pay any attention to her.
- PHIL: Then came the whole thing with the seating.
- HARRIET: Well, I just wanted to show that we were comfortable with everyone being there. So as they came in I told Peter to sit down beside Tim and Gary to sit beside George. Then I went out to bring in more plates.
- PHIL: When Ursula and I walked in I saw that Tim was sitting beside Peter and George was sitting beside Gary. I wanted to make sure everyone felt comfortable and everything so I suggested maybe Peter should swap with Gary. Then I went out to get some plates of food.
- HARRIET: I came back in to find that they'd swapped seats. Peter said that Phil had moved them. I nearly screamed. Why the hell was he doing this? Just to piss me off? I went back out into the hall to find Phil coming the other way.
- PHIL: She seemed furious about something.
- HARRIET: Why did you move them around? Does *everything* have to be your way?

PHIL: No, I just thought it'd be...easier like this.
 HARRIET: Easier? How?
 PHIL: Just to have people sitting beside their "partners".
 HARRIET: But now they're not!
 PHIL: What? No, now they are!
 HARRIET: *No, they're not!*
 PHIL: Look...
 GEORGINA: Dad came back in and pointed at the table.

PHIL points at an imaginary table.

TIM: Then Mum just said
 HARRIET: Exactly.
 URSULA: And they walked back out again.
 GEORGINA: I guess I kind of started to wonder if maybe something was going on, but I didn't really think about it too much because I kind of had my own problems to deal with.
 PHIL: Back in the hall Harry and I agreed to try to just get through the rest of the evening civilly although we could see that neither of us really meant it.
 TIM: When Mum and Dad had come back in and sat down seeming to have resolved whatever was going on, Granny spoke up. She looked around the table and then asked
 GRANNY: Who are these people?
 GEORGINA: My heart nearly stopped.
 TIM: I saw Mum looking at me.
 HARRIET: I didn't want Tim to have to talk about it if he didn't want to.
 TIM: While Dad looked at Ursula.
 PHIL: I didn't want to have to go through the whole thing again.

TIM: I couldn't have the whole thing come out. Not yet.
Not in front of this guy.

GARY: Was this the moment?

GEORGINA: I tried to think of something witty to say which would diffuse the situation and move things on but all I could think was, "oh shit, oh shit, oh shit."

URSULA: Nobody said anything for about ten seconds.

PETER: I was about to introduce myself when Georgie's Mum cut in.

HARRIET: It doesn't matter who they are, they're all very welcome.

TIM, GEORGINA, PHIL and GARY breath a sigh of relief.

PETER: This looks great Mrs Green.

HARRIET: Thanks Peter. So good to have everyone here. Very nice. Very welcome.

PHIL: Yeah, absolutely. Everyone's very welcome.
Whatever their sex-uh...very welcome.

HARRIET: So, Peter, what do you do? Are you a student too?

PETER: Oh no, I'm an electrician.

HARRIET: Oh great.
[To TIM.] Very handy to have around the house.

TIM: Uh, yeah, I suppose so.
[To URSULA.] If you like that kind of thing.

PHIL: [Confused.] Who doesn't like electricity?

HARRIET: [To PETER.] So where did you guys meet then?

PETER: Oh just in a nightclub.

HARRIET: Oh, of course, of course. It's very big the nightlife, isn't it?

PETER: Yeah, I guess so. I just like to unwind at the weekend, y'know?

URSULA: Oh absolutely.
 [*Significantly to PHIL.*] Enjoyment is very important in a person's life.

PHIL: Uh, yeah, that's true. In private.

HARRIET: [*To TIM.*] Yes, it's very important that people should be able to relax and just be themselves.

PHIL: [*To TIM, not wanting to be outdone.*] Yes. Whatever's going on in a person's life they should feel comfortable enough with their family to be open about it.

TIM looks nervously at URSULA.

TIM: Uh, yeah.

PETER: That's true.
 [*To GEORGINA.*] If there's anything you want to...

GARY: Peter seemed determined to get George to talk about the baby which I was a little alarmed by.

GEORGINA: So how are you Granny?

GRANNY: Grinning and bearing it dear.

GEORGINA: Right, good.

PETER: You're sure you don't want to-

GEORGINA: So has anyone seen that new Argentinean film?

GARY: [*Helping to change the subject.*] Oh no, yeah, I've heard that's good actually, well, just, I've read in the reviews, not from actual people that I know who've seen it. Uh, we could go if you like.

GEORGINA: [*Stone faced.*] Oh. Yes. Good.

PETER: [*Slightly surprised.*] Oh, great, yeah, let's all four of us go then.

TIM: All four of them he said. I couldn't believe he'd just invited himself and Ursula along. What was wrong with this guy? Did he just love barging in on everyone's...stuff all the time.

GARY: Oh great, yeah, if you like.
 PETER: [To GEORGINA.] That okay?
 GEORGINA: Yes. That sounds fine.
 PETER: Sound good to you Tim?
 TIM: Oh, you want me to come as well do you?
 PETER: [Confused.] Yeah, of course. All four of us.
 TIM: What? What was he talking about?
 GEORGINA: Great then. Well, that's settled-
 TIM: Which four?
 PETER: You and Gary, and George and me.
 GEORGINA: Great. So-
 TIM: [Puzzled, disdainful.] Don't you want Ursula to come?
 PETER: [Equally puzzled.] Uh, sure, yeah, if she likes.
 GEORGINA: Yes, let's all go. Good. So-
 URSULA: Oh, I wouldn't like to intrude.
 PETER: Hey, why not, the more the merrier.
 TIM: I couldn't believe Ursula was just an afterthought to him.
 GEORGINA: [Changing the subject.] So...to the happy couple.

Everyone gives assent.

PHIL: Uh, thanks very much.
 PETER: Go on, give her a kiss.
 HARRIET: Oh no, that's...we don't...
 PHIL: Harry's not into public displays of affection.
 HARRIET: I'm not into...? Tst. [Raises her eyes.]
 PETER: Go on, it's just a kiss.
 GEORGINA: Yeah, go on.

PHIL and HARRIET look extremely bashful.

PHIL: I couldn't look at Harry.
 HARRIET: My insides froze.

PHIL: Uh...no we needn't...let's just get on with...

PETER: You have to. It's the law.

TIM: [*Sniping.*] Well, they don't *have to* if they don't want to.

GEORGINA: Is something wrong?

HARRIET: Nothing.

PHIL: No, nothing's wrong.

PHIL and HARRIET glance at each other.

PHIL: She seemed like a complete stranger. Like an alien had been put in my wife's place. Or maybe that's just what I told myself.

HARRIET: I got a sudden flash of the first time we'd kissed. On our fourth date. Both of us had been too nervous to do anything up till then. And in fact it happened by accident. Phil had walked me to my car, he'd leaned over to open the door for me and I thought he was going to kiss me and...
And the last time we'd kissed. Properly. When George had been in that car accident a couple of years before. Phil found us in the emergency room and...

PETER: Snog! Snog! Snog!

HARRIET and PHIL turn to each other and take a deep breath.

They slowly lean in for a kiss.

Just before they reach each other GRANNY interrupts.

GRANNY: Oooh. I need to go to the loo. I think something in the food disagreed with me. Timothy help me up will you?

TIM: I got up and helped Granny out of the room but just as the door was closing behind us I heard Ursula.

URSULA: So...Tim has really been coming along.

- TIM: I couldn't let go of Granny so had to keep moving out of the room knowing that it could all come spilling out while I wasn't there.
- PHIL: Harry started to ask what Tim was coming along with but I quickly cut her off. I really didn't want to start into that again.
- TIM: I tried to hurry Granny up the stairs but she was moving pretty slowly. I craned to hear what they were saying back in the dining room but couldn't make it out.
- URSULA: I suggested that maybe Phil and Harry would like to come and watch some time and Phil acted like I'd suggested they watch him kill a goat.
- PHIL: No, no, that's alright. We're fine.
- HARRIET: I couldn't understand why Phil was being so rude. I tried again to ask what they were talking about but Phil interrupted me.
- PHIL: [*To HARRIET.*] No, *we're fine.*
- HARRIET: Well, I'll decide what I want to-
- PHIL: Really, we don't want to go into it.
- URSULA: How could he just have no interest in his son's life like that?
- PHIL: Which is when I remembered Gary was sitting there. I didn't want to offend him or make him think I was homophobic or something.
- GARY: Mr Green started talking to me but I had no idea what he was saying.
- PHIL: It's not that we wouldn't be interested. It's more that we...think it might be a little strange. Us watching. Not the actual doing of it. That's perfectly normal. And good. In it's own way.
- GARY: O-kay. Good.
- ...
- Sorry, I'm not really sure what you're-

URSULA: Well, if you'll excuse me, I personally don't think it'd be "a little strange" for you to want to see your son doing something that he loves.

PHIL: [*Emphatic.*] No. Now, I consider myself a very liberal man but I'm sorry, I just, personally, would not be interested in seeing my son doing someone that he loves. And that's not a bigoted thing. I wouldn't want to see my daughter doing it either.

URSULA: Well, I think that's a shame.
[*Pause.*]
Maybe when Tim gets back he could just give us a short demonstration.

PHIL: Not in front of my mother!

TIM: I left Granny at the loo and ran down the stairs back to the dining room hoping I wasn't too late.

HARRIET: What *are* you talking about?

GEORGINA: Tim burst into the room and started jabbering about playing a game after dinner.

TIM: It was the only thing I could think of.

GEORGINA: Then Peter suggested

PETER: What about the Ultimate Drinking Game?

TIM: [*Sniping.*] We're not going to play the Ultimate Drinking Game.

PETER: Why not? My family always plays it at Christmas.

TIM: Well, that explains a lot.

HARRIET: I couldn't believe how Tim was acting towards his boyfriend. I thought maybe they'd had a fight or something.

PHIL: Relieved as I was that Tim was back in the room fully clothed I started to worry about my mother.

TIM: She's fine. I'll go back up when she's ready.

PHIL: You can't just leave her there.

HARRIET: She'll be fine.

PHIL: She's an old woman.

HARRIET: Oh, she just does it to get attention.

PHIL: [*Forcing a smile.*] What, be old?

HARRIET: [*Forcing a smile.*] You know what I mean.

PHIL: No, I honestly haven't a clue what you mean.

GARY: Then Peter said he thought Tim should go up and check on his grandmother and Tim nearly bit his head off.

TIM: Oh do you. Fascinating.

HARRIET: If I couldn't fix my own relationship I thought maybe I could fix Tim's so I told him to help me clear the plates.

TIM: What?

Fine.

GARY: Tim started picking up the plates.

PETER: Uh, I'm not actually finished yet mate.

HARRIET: In the kitchen I asked Tim if anything was up.

TIM: Nothing.

HARRIET: Why are you being so rude to Peter? What's he done?

TIM: Nothing.

PETER: Things seemed to be getting a bit weird and I wasn't exactly sure what was going on, which doesn't usually worry me, but I was starting to get...thinking?

GEORGINA: After Tim and Mum left the room Peter turned and asked me if we could go outside for a second.

GARY: He'd been pushing George to tell everyone about the baby during the meal, which I thought was a bit out of line, considering, y'know, everything that we'd said earlier, and now he was asking to talk to her outside.

GEORGINA: I agreed to go outside before Peter said something in front of everyone else. I brought him up to my bedroom so no one could overhear us.

- PETER: When the door was closed she told me that she wasn't ready to tell her family yet. I told her that was fine but she wasn't really listening so she launched into all the reasons she couldn't say anything.
- GEORGINA: I wanted to pass my exams first, I should wait until I knew what sex the baby was, I needed to take a look at the economic climate.
- PETER: So I told her again that it was fine. She should tell them whenever she was ready, that's not what I wanted to talk to her about.
- GEORGINA: Instead he said that he wanted to discuss the two of us becoming a proper couple.
- HARRIET: Look, whatever it is between you and Peter, I'm sure you can work it out.
- TIM: We don't need to work it out.
- HARRIET: Just go and apologise to him.
- TIM: Fine, in a sec.
- PHIL: I was left with just Gary and Ursula. I tried to make small talk with Gary but he excused himself and left. Leaving me with her.
- URSULA: We sat in silence.
- GEORGINA: Peter put his arm around my waist. I was tired and I couldn't even think any more. Maybe this made sense. Maybe I was thinking about things too much. Maybe I should just go with the flow.
But then there was a knock on the door and I jumped back.
- PETER: The door opened and it was Gary.
- GARY: Although I could initially perceive that there was in fact something a little unusual going on between them I couldn't actually tell what it was. Was he telling her

to tell her parents again? Or were they discussing him and Tim?

PETER: He was kind of interrupting the moment. So I made some subtle hints to clear off.

GARY: Peter told me to clear off 'cause he was about to "deploy his helichopper tongue-ship". I presumed that meant get some advice.

GEORGINA: Gary said that he was just coming up to say that he thought he should go, if that was okay, as far as I was concerned, myself.

PETER: Why would he need permission from *her* to leave?

GEORGINA: I didn't actually...I wasn't making a choice. I just thought it'd be easier for the time being if Gary left. So I told him that was fine. And I'd see him soon.

GARY: Right. Um. Seeya.

GEORGINA: Gary left and closed the door behind him.

PETER: Now, where were we?

HARRIET: Tim was spending as much time as he could rinsing the plates to put off going and apologising to Peter. I told him that that was enough and he should go and talk to Peter now.

TIM: Right. Fine.

HARRIET: As Tim left Gary came in. He thanked me for dinner and told me that he had to go so I said I'd get his coat for him.

PHIL: After what seemed like an hour of silent agony Tim came back in. He didn't stay long though he just asked where Peter was. I told him he was talking to George,

TIM: My sister? What's he doing talking to *her*?

PHIL: Tim looked totally perplexed by this and then left.

HARRIET: Tim passed myself and Gary as we got Gary's jacket from the coat hooks in the hall. Gary's jacket was underneath several others and as I lifted it out something fell out of the pocket. It was a ring box.

GARY: Oh. That's...just...I wouldn't...

HARRIET: Gary, is this what I think it is?

PETER: I put my arm around George again.

GEORGINA: Maybe this isn't the best idea just now. We should think about things.

PETER: Nah. I don't really like thinking about things.

GEORGINA: And then he kissed me.

TIM: I opened George's bedroom door to find Peter kissing her. I was stunned. I expected them to spin around guiltily but neither seemed to notice me, so I just closed the door again. I couldn't believe it. This guy had come here as Ursula's date or whatever and within an hour he's snogging my sister. Well, I wasn't going to let him get away with that. I ran back down the stairs.

GARY: Mrs Green picked up the ring box.

HARRIET: I didn't know you guys had been seeing each other that long.

GARY: Well, we haven't really...It was just in light of- um, well...I was just thinking about...

PHIL: I played with my spoon as I waited with Ursula. I tried to think of something to say but couldn't think of anything that might not turn the conversation back to...Tim's...activities. It seemed like it was all that this woman wanted to talk about. I'd compliment her scarf and she'd tell me she used it to gag people or I'd ask her if she had difficulty finding the house and

she'd tell me she used have a sado-masochistic sex dungeon near here or something. Luckily Tim came back in and asked to talk to her outside.

HARRIET: Well, good luck.

GARY: Thanks. Um, I'm not sure I'm actually going to-

HARRIET: Maybe you should talk to Phil first, I'm sure he'd like that.

GARY: Oh. Okay. Well, but, I wasn't actually-

HARRIET: He's very protective of his family so...

He's a good man really. You should talk to him.

URSULA: Tim rushed me through the hall past Gary and his mother up the stairs and onto the landing. He was about to go into one of the rooms when I stopped him. He seemed pissed off and I didn't know what about.

TIM: I just want to show you something.

URSULA: What?

TIM: Just- you have to see what's going on in my sister's room.

URSULA: I'm not going barging into your sister's room! What's going on?

TIM: It's-

URSULA: Just tell me.

TIM: Okay. But I'm not being a rat. I-...It's-...

Peter is in there kissing George.

Pause.

URSULA: So?

TIM: [*Aghast.*] So?! What do you mean *so*?

PHIL: Now I was left all on my own. I got up to see where everyone had got to. I went out into the hall where I found Harry having some kind of conference with Gary. When she saw me she whispered something in

his ear and then went into the living room. I asked Gary what was going on?

GARY: Hi. Mr Green. Um, I just- your wife- well, that is, I...wanted to talk to you about something.

PHIL: Right.

GARY: I'd like to talk to you about, well, um, y'know, *a certain lady*, and the current situation with her.

PHIL: Had Harry just told him about the divorce? She tells *this* guy before she tells the children. It seemed like her behaviour was getting stranger and stranger.

GARY: [*Nervously.*] Mrs Green was saying...well, I know that you're very protective of your family, and rightly so, if I can say, and, I know it may seem like someone's going to be around forever, but obviously situations change and people need to go out on their own and make their own way in the world, and when these things change it can be good to have someone to go through the changes with, to do- to share responsibilities and stuff. And. I want to do the right thing here so...

[*Quickly.*] I'd like to ask for your permission to ask her to marry me.

PHIL: [*Appalled.*] You want to what?!

GARY's face drops.

TIM: I couldn't believe what I was hearing. She didn't seem to care. I'd just told her her boyfriend was cheating on her and she didn't give a shit. So I tried saying it again, maybe she'd misheard me.

URSULA: Um. Good.

TIM: Good?!

URSULA: Well, that's...nice for them.

TIM: What?! What?!

URSULA: Tim, calm down. There's nothing wrong with it. Your sister's a very attractive girl. She's going to have lots of guys pursuing her. It's only natural. You can't be so protective.

TIM: But...he's...what about you?

URSULA: What about me?
Look, Tim, I don't know if I should have come here tonight. To be honest your family is a little strange, I've never met a man who's more revolted by music, and I don't know if I should really get involved with whatever's going on with all of you. I'm sorry if you have to give up the tuba. I hope you can convince your parents to change their mind but maybe for now we should just-

TIM: And that's when I kissed her.

PHIL: Are you insane?

GARY: Well, I was just thinking I should probably ask your permission first. I know it's old fashioned but...

PHIL: Has everyone gone completely mental? How on earth did you get it into your crazy little head that it would be in any way okay for you to marry my...we're not even...Besides, how old are you?! And what about, for God's sake, what about Tim?!

GARY: [*Crushed.*] What about him?

PHIL: Well, he's-...shouldn't you be-...
Fine! Fine! Forget it! Go ahead. I don't care any more.

GARY: Um. Okay. Thanks, thanks very much.

PHIL: Now, if you don't mind very much Gary, I'm going to talk to the woman who is, as of last I heard, *still* my wife!

GARY: Okay.

HARRIET: I was staring at our wedding photo thinking about that moment when Phil had asked me to marry him. We'd been so young. We still were. Then Phil came storming into the room.

PHIL: Do you know what that guy just said to me?

HARRIET: Yeah, it's exciting isn't it?

PHIL: Oh great! So you've already discussed this have you? And you're agreeing to it?

HARRIET: Well, it's not really my decision.

PHIL: What?! How can it not be your...? This is madness.

HARRIET: Well, it's a *bit* sudden but...

PHIL: A *bit* sudden? Surely this is completely out of the fucking blue! You've just met the guy. Haven't you?

HARRIET: Please, calm down Phil. You always get so overprotective.

PHIL: Well excuse me for having *some* feelings! Obviously it takes you no time at all to wipe the slate clean.

HARRIET: What?!

PHIL: And what about Tim?!

HARRIET: What's it got to do with Tim?

PHIL: [*Speechless.*] Ah!-...nothing apparently.

URSULA: And then Tim let me go. He started to apologise but I couldn't hear him. I honestly had had no idea. I wondered how long he'd felt like this. I...There was just such an age gap between us it hadn't even occurred to me. It wasn't right. What would people think? Did he really think that I could...And then I kissed him.

PETER: I came out onto the landing to find Tim and Ursula kissing.

TIM: I spun around to find Peter there.

PETER: This didn't make sense. I'd thought he was going out with the little-

- URSULA: And then Tim punched him.
- TIM: Well, I thought, at that stage, that he was going out with Ursula. He'd just discovered me kissing her so I hit him out of self defence really.
- PETER: It caught me by surprise but didn't actually hurt that much because he'd hit me on the forehead. Then he jumped at me and swung his arm around my neck.
- GARY: I took a deep breath. It was now or never. I just had to get it over with. It was the right thing to do. George's parents knew about the ring now and if I didn't go through with it I'd look like even more of an idiot. So I started walking slowly up the stairs to George's bedroom trying to think of what, without of course completely ruining the, in many ways, most significant moment of my life, I was going to say, to her. I didn't get very far, either mentally or physically, though, because Tim and Peter came tumbling down the stairs on top of me.
- HARRIET: Phil and I were building up to a shouting match when we heard a crash in the hall. Phil went over and opened the door just in time for Tim and Peter to come crashing through it into the living room.
- GEORGINA: We ran down the stairs to find them tumbling around the room
- GARY: fighting each other.
- URSULA: They crashed into a little side table smashing the top off it.
- PHIL: Peter pushed Tim into the chest of drawers but Tim jumped back on him sending them flying over the sofa.
- HARRIET: We shouted at them to stop.
- GEORGINA: But they kept wrestling.

URSULA: Until they each got one of their feet caught in the coal scuttle.

PHIL: Which made fighting very awkward as they were trapped facing the opposite direction to each other.

GARY: They struggled to maintain their balance while at the same time taking swings at each other with neither managing to hit.

HARRIET: Eventually they ground to a halt. And Phil asked

PHIL: What the hell is going on?

TIM: [*Sighs.*] I kissed Ursula.

EVERYONE: What?

PHIL: But...that didn't really explain anything. So we searched around for how we'd got to this situation; everyone desperately confessing their own secrets not being able to hold on to the guilt any more.

PETER + GARY: George is pregnant!

EVERYONE: What?!

GEORGINA: Sorry.

PHIL: Wow. That's, uh, quite a surprise George. But it's okay. You know that whatever happens your mother and I will be here for you. Right Harry?

HARRIET: [*Blurting it out.*] No! We're getting divorced!

EVERYONE: What?!

GEORGINA: Why?

HARRIET: It's complicated. We just...it's hard to...

TIM: My parents aren't making me give up the tuba!

EVERYONE: What?!

URSULA: [*Confused.*] What?

GARY: That doesn't really explain anything.

...

Does it?

TIM: Ursula is my tuba teacher.

PHIL: Oooooooh.

EVERYONE looks at PHIL.

PHIL: Sorry. I thought that was a metaphor.
 URSULA: A metaphor? For what?
 PHIL: I...uh...[*Makes some bizarre hand movements.*]
 GARY: That looks more like a trombone.
 GEORGINA: I don't know who the father of my baby is!
 EVERYONE: What?!
 PETER + GARY: But...
 GEORGINA: It's either Peter or Gary!
 PETER + GARY: [*Disbelieving.*] What?! But he's gay!
 HARRIET: George! I can't believe you'd cheat on your boyfriend like that!
 PHIL: And with your brother's boyfriend!
 HARRIET: What?
 TIM: I'm in love with her.
 PETER: With your sister?!
 TIM: No. With Ursula. There. If that means that you have to punch my head off then that's fine. Go ahead.
 PETER: Why would I want to...Is that why you attacked me? Jesus, I don't care mate. Be my guest.
 TIM: Oh. Yes. I forgot you two have an open relationship.
 PETER: *Which* two?
 TIM: Wait a second.
 [Turns to PHIL.] My what?
 PHIL: [*Can't keep up.*] Your what?
 GEORGINA: Okay! I lied to everyone about Tim being gay.
 TIM: I'm gay?!
 PETER: He's not gay?!
 PHIL + HARRIET: I don't want a divorce-
 What?!...
 You've changed your mind?...
 What?

PHIL: Changed my mind? I never wanted a...I was just agreeing with you because I didn't want to look like an idiot.

HARRIET: Agreeing with me? I was just agreeing with you. You were the one who...oh forget it.

PHIL and HARRIET kiss.

Pause as everyone waits to see if there are any more revelations.

URSULA: Okay! When I was ten I started the rumour that Katie Wilson had contracted diphtheria from kissing her dog.
Sorry.
I've never told anyone that.

PETER: And the party wrapped up soon after that. It wasn't a late one to be honest. Everyone was pretty tired after all that. My head was exhausted.

HARRIET and PHIL hold hands.

PHIL: We walked Ursula to the door. I apologised again for how I'd reacted earlier.

TIM: I apologised for lying to her.

URSULA: That's alright.

HARRIET: She thanked us for dinner and I told her that if she came back we'd try not to act so crazy next time. Then I suggested Phil and I go back inside and leave Tim and Ursula to say goodbye but before we could Tim said that it was fine and stepped forward, put an arm around her waist and kissed her.

GEORGINA: I sat on the sofa. I couldn't look at them. Would they hate me? Had I totally fucked up this baby's chances

of knowing it's real father. Were they going to start fighting now?

GARY: Um. I guess we should take a DNA test.

PETER: Yeah, cool. To be honest with you mate nothing was really going on between me and George but I *was* kind of interested in giving things a go. Were you?

GARY: Yeah. Ummmmmmmmmm, some...thing...like that. But maybe we should leave that kind of stuff till after the DNA results.

PETER: Yeah, let George take time to think about things.

GARY: Yeah.

Does that sound okay to you George?

GEORGINA: [*Smiles.*] It did.

HARRIET: After Gary and Peter left, George came and joined us in the kitchen.

PHIL: We just sat there in silence.

TIM: We weren't like some kind of fucking wonder family from then on in who shared all their stupid emotions with each other and everything

HARRIET: but for that moment we were together as you always dreamed of being. I looked at my beautiful daughter and

GEORGINA: reached out and took my hand. Then Dad put his arm around Tim. And it seemed like everything was going to be alright and maybe my family wasn't so bad after all. And maybe I would have cried but

PHIL: then I remembered that

GRANNY: I was still on the loo!

THE END.