

For Better or For Worse

For Better or For Worse

*For Better or For Worse* was first performed online through the COVID-19 pandemic on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with the following cast and creative team in order of appearance:

Richard	Alexander Millington
Brian	Jamie Dunn
Clare	Naomi Phillips
Michelle	Heather Maskill
Woman	Helen Millington
Man	Jonah Rose

<i>Director</i>	Helen Millington
<i>Producers</i>	Split Infinitive Theatre Dramatist Guild of America

Characters  
Richard  
Brian  
Clare  
Michelle  
Woman  
Man

(/) indicates that the next character cuts in on the dialogue.  
(...) indicates a sentence trailing off.

*This text went to press after the performance and so may vary from the original production due to edits which were made following the production. Stage directions are not prescriptive but are there as a guide based on the original concept of the production prior to the pandemic.*

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Richard        So, she's agreed to just twenty-five percent of the current savings rather than the original fifty she was pushing for.

Brian         Damn right.

Richard        But she still wants the car.

*Silence.*

Brian         Fine.

Richard        Good, I'll put that the car is a yes. Erm, she has agreed for you have the gym equipment, if she gets to keep the dinner service and all the electrical kitchen and bathroom appliances such as the coffee machine, food processor, shower unit.

Brian         The shower unit?

Richard        Apparently, it's very difficult to get a good shower nowadays.

Brian         Fine, alright, what else?

*Silence.*

Richard        She wants the house.

Brian         What?

Richard        She says if she doesn't get the house then she won't agree to anything, and if this goes to court then she'll fight for no less than fifty percent of everything.

Brian         On what grounds? No! No, she can't have the house! I paid for that house. It is entirely paid for with my money. All she did was furnish it to look like some second rate casino penthouse. No, she can't have it. On what grounds does she think I'm going to give up the house?

*Silence.*

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*Brian enters, carrying Clare in his arms. They are both a little drunk and laughing together before they collapse on the bed. They are both semi-smartly dressed, Brian in smart jeans and a button-through shirt, Clare in a summery dress.*

Clare            I love you Mr Brian.

Brian           I love you Mrs Brian.

*They kiss before falling apart laughing again.*

Clare           In sickness, in health.

Brian           For poorer and poorer!

Clare           For better or for worse.

Brian           Till the end of time!

Clare           You may now kiss your bride.

*They kiss again. As they do so, the kiss becomes more passionate and they begin to take off Brian's shirt and belt. As they struggle, he pulls away to do it himself and then he kicks off his shoes. Clare stands up next to the bed, placing one leg on the mattress to reveal her leg. They pause, staring at each other, she begins to lift the bottom of her dress over her leg to reveal a wedding garter. She tries to stay serious and sexy but ends up giggling, dropping her dress down again. He moves over to her slowly and kisses her while trying to undo her dress.*

Clare           Here, let me.

*She removes her dress and he moves in to kiss her again. He unclips her bra.*

Brian           Get into that bed.

*She smiles, removing her bra completely and gets under the covers. He removes the rest of his clothes and climbs in from the bottom of the bed sheets, stopping halfway up to perform oral sex on her. She begins to moan quietly.*

Clare           Oh. Oh god.

*As Clare fidgets in the bed from the pleasure, Brian's legs can be seen hanging out of the bed, occasionally moving, possibly as one foot scratches the other due to an itch.*

Wait, wait. Stop for a second.

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Brian's head can be seen to lift from under the sheets.

Brian           What's the matter?

Clare            Do you think we're going too fast?

Brian *crawls up to the top of the bed covers.*

Brian           What?

Clare            Are we doing the right the thing, are we moving too fast?

*He lifts up his left hand gesturing to his wedding ring.*

Brian           It's not exactly our first time. Besides, we're married now, how much longer do you want to wait?

Clare            That's what I mean. The marriage. Have we rushed things do you think? Are we moving too fast? It's only been...

Brian           Clare.

Clare            Do we even know each other, really?

Brian           I love you.

*Pause. She smiles at him.*

Clare            I love you too.

Brian           Then that's all I need to know that you are the one I want to spend the rest of my life with. Everything else? Well, we've got the rest of our lives to learn the rest about one another.

Clare            For better or for worse?

Brian            For better or for worse.

*They begin to kiss again. Slowly, Brian starts to lift the cover over his head again as he moves down her body.*

Clare            What about kids?

Brian            What about kids?

Clare *lifts up the covers looking down at him.*

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Clare Do you want them?

Brian You're gonna have to let me finish down here first before we know that.

Clare Do you want them or not? Cause, I don't want them.

Brian *appears again from under the covers.*

Brian I never really thought about. I guess I always imagined I might have a son or something when I got older.

Clare I don't want a kid. I don't like them; I don't want one.

Brian Ok, that's fine. We won't have one.

Clare I'm serious. I don't ever want one. If you think, at some point in your life, you might want one, then you are with the wrong woman.

Brian Ok, that's fine, we won't have one.

Clare You don't understand. What are you going to do, if in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, you suddenly want one, or wish we had one? You don't know you'll never want one, what do we do when that happens?

Brian We'll get a dog.

Clare I'm being serious Brian!

Brian How do you know you won't change your mind in the future?

Clare I just know. I never wanted one.

Brian But how do you know that in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, you won't change your mind?

Clare I just know.

Brian Then so do I. Seriously, if I need some small thing giving me constant love, we'll get a dog. You promise me, that when I have a need for unconditional love, we can get a dog, then I promise you I won't ever ask for a kid.

Clare What kind of dog?

Brian A big one.

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Clare *raises her hands with just a small gap between them as if signalling small. Brian holds her hands and slowly starts to separate them, making the gap larger.*

Bigger the better, something you can really get a hold of.

Clare Oh really?

Brian *attempts once again to try and get the mood back to where it was by kissing her neck.*

And what about living arrangements?

Brian What about them?

Clare I'm not living here forever.

Brian What's wrong with it?

Clare *moves away from him.*

Clare Nothing. It's very nice of your parents to have gone away for the weekend for a luxury spa trip in the Lake District to give us some privacy after our wedding. God forbid they let us have their spa weekend as a present.

Brian It was already booked in their name.

Clare Brian, I am not living with your parents now that I am your wife. Christ, we did do this too fast.

Brian It's only till we get a place of our own. Look, tomorrow we'll go around some of the agencies and start looking for a place of our own.

Clare Tomorrow's Sunday.

Brian The day after then. Whatever we need to sort we will sort.

Clare With what money?

Brian We'll just have to pull together a little bit. Couple of months here, tops, then we'll be out. I promise you. My first promise to you as your husband, I will provide us with a place of our own before Christmas. Trust me, we've got the rest of our lives to worry about these things. Let's just try and enjoy our first night together as husband and wife.

Clare Alright. I love you.

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Brian I love you too.

Clare But tomorrow, we're talking about *everything*.

Brian Everything.

*Clare reaches down under the bed sheets to touch Brian, who jumps with pleasant surprise as she reaches his penis. Her hand begins to move, the gestures getting slightly faster as she continues to talk. Brian's breaths also get shorter and faster as he tries to talk.*

Clare Promise?

Brian Oh god.

Clare Promise we'll talk about it tomorrow.

Brian I promise.

Clare What do you promise.

Brian That we'll talk. We'll talk tomorrow.

Clare And we'll start looking for a place of our own.

Brian On Monday. Monday, we get... fuck. Monday we'll go to the... the estate agents.  
I promise.

*Clare's arm stops moving suddenly and she smiles at him. He looks surprised that she stopped and smiles frustratedly back at her.*

Clare Good.

Brian Oh no you don't.

Clare Don't what?

Brian Come here you.

*Brian climbs on top of Clare. Clare giggles as he kisses her body and touches her. They begin to have sex; Clare's legs can be seen lifting around Brian's body from under the sheets. Brian's movements start to become irregular.*

Clare You alright?

Brian Yeah.

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*Brian is clearly in some form of pain but trying to keep going, while Clare is looking concerned yet slightly out of breath as she tries to enjoy it.*

Clare           What's wrong?

Brian           Fucking cramp.

Clare           Then stop.

Brian           No, it'll go in a minute.

Clare           Roll over.

Brian           What?

Clare           On your back, quickly.

*Brian rolls onto his back, Clare then gets on top of him and they continue for a moment. Brian fairly quickly seems to have stopped trying.*

Clare           Gone?

Brian           Fucking cramp! Of all nights.

Clare           It's alright. We can try again in a little bit.

*She pulls up the duvet and cuddles up next to him.*

                  You're amazing.

Brian           Be even more amazing if we'd finished.

Clare           It doesn't matter to me. I love you.

Brian           I love you too.

*Clare cuddles up close to him and closes her eyes.*

Clare           I can't wait to spend the rest of my life with you.

Brian           Me neither.

*He kisses her on the head. There is a short pause before Clare's hand starts moving under the covers again. Brian begins to moan as she continues where she left off.*

Clare           Is that nice?

Brian            Yeah. It's not very fair on you though.

Clare            I've got two hands

*He smiles. They both begin to breathe deeply as Clare begins masturbating herself too..*

Brian            I'll have to owe you one.

Clare            Promise?

Brian            Oh... God...

Clare            Promise?

Brian            Fuck...

Clare            Promise me.

Brian *climaxes.*

Brian            I promise.

Clare *climaxes also, though a few seconds later.*

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*Clare is sitting on a sofa looking at her tablet, occasionally typing on it and then scrolling, typing and scrolling. Brian enters in a shirt and tie, as if back from work. He walks behind her and kisses her head. He watches as she uses her tablet. (Below details taken from [www.investorguide.com](http://www.investorguide.com) 10 Proven Ways on How to Get Rich Quick).*

Clare            Hey hun.

Brian            Evening.

Clare            How was your day?

Brian            What are you looking at?

Clare            Trying to find a way to "Get Rich Quick".

Brian            Any positives?

Clare            Hmm?

Brian            Any positive searches?

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Clare Top ten on Google so far: Start up a business.

Brian Need money to do it.

Clare Invest in real estate.

Brian Need money to do it.

Clare Invest in the stock market.

Brian Need to know about the stock market, and need money to do it.

Clare Design a new product?

*Pause as they both think.*

Brian Not a definite no.

Clare Rent out property.

Brian It's taken us long enough to find this place to rent for ourselves, we're not subletting it to someone else.

Clare Ooo, make a viral video!

Brian How does that even make you money?

Clare Make it viral, get sponsors and then they basically pay you for your future videos... I think.

Brian So make lots of viral videos?

Clare We'll say maybe then. Number seven, "say YES to difficult assignments"

Brian Bullshit! Customer asked me today to find her an outfit she said she bought from us a few years ago. Long story short, after fifteen minutes of me searching our database for her, it was an outfit she bought from us in 1956! Saying "yes" when she gave me this assignment made me nothing but pissy!

Clare Couldn't find it?

Brian Oh I found it. I showed her how to use eBay, found the dress, right size, right colour, even at a good price.

Clare Did you show her how to get it?

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Brian She didn't want to buy it, she just wanted to check the design on the sleeve!  
Saying yes to difficult assignments gets you nowhere. Next.

Clare Erm, choose tax free savings and investments.

Brian Need money.

Clare Publish a book?

Brian About?

*Pause.*

Clare Maybe pile.

Brian What are we going to write about?

Clare And number ten... oh I'm not even going to read that one.

Brian You've read the previous nine nuggets of hope. Come on let me see... oh yeah,  
sod that!

Clare So our options are design a new product, make a viral video and publish a  
book.

*Silence.*

Brian We're not the most creative of people.

Clare No. Bugger.

Brian Well, worth a look I suppose.

*Brian goes to exit the stage, still talking as he walks.*

Guess we'll just have to sell our bodies then.

Clare Have we got much to offer?

Brian *Offstage.* We're still in good nick aren't we?

Clare You might be, I certainly don't feel it. Stretch marks, cellulite, fat arse.

Brian I've got love handles and a hairy back. I was still good enough for you.

Clare *To herself.* That's cause I've got stretch marks and a fat arse.

Brian *re-enters the stage wearing just his boxers, his shirt and jeans over his shoulder as he poses for Clare.*

Brian           Are you saying you wouldn't pay for this?

Clare           Well...

Brian           Thank you very much.

*He begins to put his clothes on. Clare continues searching on her tablet.*

Clare           We're not selling our bodies. We're too far gone for that.

Brian           I'd pay for a go on you.

Clare           I'm sure there's a compliment in that somewhere.

Brian           Are you saying that if Robert Redford knocked on our door right now and offered us a million pounds for one night with you, you wouldn't take it?

Clare           I'm saying I'm not Demi Moore in 1993 and Robert Redford isn't knocking on our door. Anyway, are you saying you *would* pimp me out?

Brian           For a million pounds.

Clare           Do I not get a say in this? Besides, who says I'm the one who has to be pimped out anyway, what if Robert Redford wants you for a million pounds?

Brian           1993 Robert Redford or 2019 Robert Redford?

Clare           It's 2019 now and so is Bobby.

Brian           Can I keep my eyes closed?

Clare           Nope. Eyes open, he's on top and you have to look like you're enjoying it.

Brian           Yeah, I don't think I could do it with a guy that old. '93 Redford though.

Clare           '93 Redford sure, but it's 2019 or nothing.

Brian           Fine.

*Silence.*

Clare           So, putting prostituting ourselves to one side for the moment, how was your day?

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Brian Fine. Usual. Still hate it.

Clare Well, until we find a better option.

Brian I know, I know.

Clare We'll have another hunt later on.

Brian How about your day?

Clare Tidied up, washed up, got stuff in for tea.

Brian What we having?

Clare Pasta bake.

Brian Oh, cool.

Clare Unless you want to go out and buy something?

Brian No, pasta bake sounds nice. Thank you. Love you.

Clare Yeah.

Brian I'll go get it started.

Clare That's more like it.

*He gives her a little kiss as he gets up to leave.*

Clare I love you too.

*She goes back to looking at her tablet.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*They are both sitting at a table in a restaurant. Neither of them speaks for some time, it's awkward.*

Clare I'm so sorry, I've got to ask. It's Brian, right?

Brian Yeah, Brian.

Clare Sorry. I'm just really no good with names. I'd rather keep checking with you than get it wrong, or call you by an ex's names, or even like just saying 'you'.  
Sorry.

Brian           It's alright, I'm no good with names either, Susan.

*Pause. They both laugh.*

Clare.

Clare           I'm sorry, I'm not very good at the whole first dates thing.

Brian           Don't worry about it, no one is. Look, let's just start with what we know. Mike said you're a carer?

Clare           Not quite, I'm hoping to be. I'm doing a course at the college. Try and get my level 1 and 2 done then I can start.

Brian           Why not do them at a uni?

Clare           Need the college levels first. Thought I'd have sorted it all by now. You know, when you're a kid and you look up at your parents thinking they're so amazing. Now I'm that age and, well, just thought I'd have my shit together by now. Never thought I'd be starting a college course at this point in my life.

Brian           You're not exactly retirement age.

Clare           I know but come on, 30 and just starting at college.

Brian           At least you're doing something, you know what you want to do.

Clare           Yeah, wiping shit off the arses of old people.

Brian           Nice.

Clare           I'm sorry. Particularly while we're eating. I just don't know what I want to do, just what I don't want to do. At least I know there will always be care work available once I'm trained. What about you? They didn't say what you did.

Brian           Cause there's nothing worth telling. I'm currently on a part-time, zero-hour contract at the packing factory. Unsociable hours, shitty conditions, but good pay and plenty of overtime. Not exactly safe career prospects with me I'm afraid.

Clare           So, that's what Mike and Susie meant about us having things in common. Both as bad as each other with no hope for survival.

*They both laugh together. They have finally relaxed and sit smiling at each other for a moment.*

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Brian            That's the first natural smile I've seen you make all evening.

*She smiles again.*

Clare            You're my first proper date.

Brian            First ever?

Clare            I've never really done dates before. Usually I'd just meet people at parties, or at college and we'd just sort of, hang out. Didn't know people even still did dates like this anymore.

Brian            What can I say, I'm old before my time. Look if you'd rather...

Clare            What?

Brian            Let's just hang out instead. We can go back to yours and watch a film or something? Give you the home advantage.

Clare            Haven't even got pudding and you're already inviting yourself back to mine.

Brian            Well alright, if you wanna buy me an ice cream on the way home, I won't say no.

*Silence as they smile at one another.*

Clare            Alright.

Brian            Alright?

Clare            You get the bill, and I'll get you an ice cream on the way back to my place.

Brian            Yeah?

Clare            But an ice cream is all you're going to get tonight.

Brian            Can it be a 99?

Clare            You'll be lucky if it's anything better than a choc ice.

Brian            Ooo, you're cruel mistress.

Clare            Call me your mistress on our first date and you'll see how cruel I can be.

Brian            Is that a promise?

Clare            One ice cream. Nothing else.

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Brian Yes, mistress.

Clare Just get the bill.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Clare is sitting alone in a waiting room, formally dressed. She looks to have been crying. She starts to cry again and rummages through her handbag for some tissues. She searches every compartment but can't find one. She goes through each of her pockets but can't find one. She sniffs hard, wiping her face. After a little while, Michelle appears, dressed very smartly.*

Michelle Sorry for the wait Mrs Cooper, I had a client on the phone who just wouldn't back down. They soon did once I... well, I suppose that's why you're here, to see what I can do. Well, would you like to come through?

*Michelle stands to one side as if to let Clare enter the office. Clare takes a few moments before she eventually stands up, she tries to force a smile.*

Clare Thank you.

*They both exit.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Clare enters the stage first.*

Clare Come on, before they all melt!

*Brian follows, holding an open box of Twister ice lollies. He has one in his hand that he continues to eat through the scene.*

Brian I'm coming, I couldn't get my shoes off.

Clare Don't worry about that, I don't mind.

Brian You sure you don't want one?

Clare I'm sure. Come on, the kitchen's through there.

*Brian makes his way offstage the opposite side. Clare leans against the sofa as she takes her shoes off.*

Brian *Offstage.* Which drawer?

Clare Doesn't matter!

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Brian            You've got Ben & Jerry's!

Clare            You made your choice.

Brian *re-enters.*

Brian            You never said you already had ice cream in though.

Clare            You never asked.

Brian            You play a sneaky game, Miss Wilde.

Clare            I play the only way I know Mr...Brian?

Brian            Mr Brian?

Clare            I said I was no good with names, you're lucky I remembered Brian. It is Brian isn't it?

Brian            I remembered your last name.

Clare            Well, I'm sorry. What was yours again?

Brian            Never actually said.

Clare            You too play a sneaky game, Mr Brian.

Brian            It's Cooper.

Clare            Mr Cooper, I think I prefer Mr Brian.

*There's an awkward silence as they look at each other from a distance. They want to kiss.*

Clare            I'm afraid I don't really have much of a film collection.

Brian            Ok?

Clare            You said earlier, we could just hang out and watch a film.

Brian            Oh right, yeah. It doesn't matter. I'm easy.

Clare            I bet.

*Pause as they smile at one another.*

Brian            Well, there's always the telly.

Clare            I haven't got a telly.

Brian           Then what were we going to watch films on?

Clare            I've got a tablet. It's got a few films downloaded on it.

*She picks up her tablet from down the side of the sofa. She offers it to him. After a moment he moves forward and takes it. She sits down on the sofa and he sits beside her, not too close to start with.*

Anything on it you like?

Brian           Fan of horror?

Clare           Not usually, I get a little scared when I'm alone.

Brian           You're not alone tonight.

Clare           Not sure if that's a good thing or not.

Brian           I think it's good.

*They look at one another, still wanting to kiss, but don't. She points at the tablet.*

Clare           That one's quite good.

Brian           Looks good to me. So what's the best way to set this thing up?

Clare           Oh, here.

*She takes the tablet from him and places it on the side table. She stacks up some books and rests the tablet on it. It is positioned so that it is only really clearly visible for one person.*

Brian           You don't tend to watch many films with people here do you?

Clare           What do you mean?

*He leans exaggeratedly over so he can see the screen. He is pushed up close to her. She smiles.*

I guess you'll just have to cuddle up close then won't you. I'll turn down the lights, you get comfortable.

*Clare goes to turn down the lights as Brian lays down on the sofa. They then position themselves both on the sofa, both facing the tablet, cuddled up close together. The sound of the film starts playing and their faces are lit by the tablet. He looks at her. She looks and he turns away to watch the film. He smiles. She turns back to the film, smiling to herself. He looks at her again, she turns, he turns away, they both smile and watch the film. He turns to look at*

*her, as he does, she turns also. They want to kiss. They do. It starts off gentle for a moment before suddenly becoming more passionate. After a moment Clare pulls away.*

Clare            I don't have sex on a first date.

Brian           You said you've never had a first date before.

Clare           No, well, I haven't. But still, just so you know.

Brian           That's fine. We don't have to do anything you don't want to.

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*The sound of the credits from the film can be heard. Only Clare's face can now be seen in the light, she is breathing heavily, occasionally raising her hands to her face before lowering them again. Her eyes closed tight, then wide open. The film credits end and the light from the tablet brightens. Brian has his head and hands under Clare's dress. She climaxes and shortly after Brian comes up from under the dress. Clare is still struggling to catch her breath. Brian looks particularly proud of himself. He looks at her, then the tablet, and back to her.*

Brian           That was a good film.

*She looks at him, smiles, then suddenly gets on top of him and kisses him.*

Clare           My god that was amazing. What about you?

Brian           Don't worry about it.

Clare           What?

Brian           I get enough out of just doing that to you.

Clare           Fuck off.

Brian           Really, I don't mind. I'm alright. You'll just have to owe me one.

*She giggles and kisses him again.*

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*They both lie in bed, Brian is slightly panting, but Clare appears a little concerned and annoyed.*

Clare           You alright?

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Brian            Yeah, sorry, I just couldn't hold on any longer.

Clare            Oh.

Brian            I don't mind if you want to sort yourself out.

Clare            Thanks. Happy fucking anniversary.

*Clare gets up, frustrated, grabs a dressing gown and exits. Brian watches as she leaves.*

Brian            Fucks sake.

*He throws back the covers, grabs his underwear off of the floor, puts them on and follows her.*

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*There is a Woman sitting at a bar with a drink in her hand. She is a little older than middle aged, in a low cut dress and is wearing bright red lipstick. Brian rushes on, wearing what is clearly a cheap suit with battered shoes. He looks around for a moment before spotting the Woman and goes over to her.*

Brian            I'm so sorry I'm late, I got caught up at work, and then traffic getting here, not to mention trying to find a parking spot. Even when I did find a spot I...

*She does not look impressed with his excuses or his appearance.*

I'm Mike by the way.

*Silence.*

You must be.

Woman          What did you say your job was?

Brian            I'm a doctor. Surgeon. Paediatric Surgeon.

Woman          Right.

Brian            I was in theatre this afternoon you see, but there were some complications and next thing I know its five o'clock and I've still gotta stitch the little bugger up.

*He laughs awkwardly. She doesn't. She finishes her drink in one.*

Would you like me to get you another?

Woman          Let's just get out of here and get this done shall we?

Brian           Right.

*She gets up and exits, Brian quickly following her.*

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Michelle       I am aware of course why you have contacted me Mrs Cooper, and believe me, I do appreciate your call. I must say to start with, that what we are going to do will not be easy. It will not be pleasant, it will not be painless, stones will be thrown, and we will throw them back, harder and faster. More to the point, this will not be cheap. I shall of course do my best to make your settlement worthwhile and have my fees recovered from your husband, rather than out of your own pocket, however I cannot make that promise at this stage.

Now, I must ask: are you sure this is the road you wish to go down? I only ask because, this may also not be as swift as you may be hoping, it could drag on. Have you considered couples counselling at all? I can recommend some excellent therapists, counsellors, healers, even psychologists or psychiatrists depending on how deep the issues sit.

Tell me, Mrs Cooper, are there children involved? I only ask because, though in some cases it can certainly add leverage, it can make things a lot messier when it comes down to the real nitty gritty.

Clare           We don't have any children.

Michelle       Good. Leverage is always useful, but it's always a nightmare trying to get children to sit quietly in a court room while lawyers are yelling blind at mummy and daddy.

Clare           Will we have to go to court?

Michelle       Not necessarily, but it is a possibility. At this stage, you still haven't really told me anything. He might totally agree with everything you say and agree that you deserve everything you ask for. But how often do men ever really accept they've ever done anything wrong. They play the victim so well while acting as the predator.

Now, you said on the phone to my secretary that you want a divorce on grounds of adultery. Is that correct?

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Clare            Yes.

Michelle        So he's been sleeping with another woman?

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian is sitting alone on the sofa, looking at the tablet. After a little while Clare comes in and snuggles up close to him on the sofa, closing her eyes as if going to sleep. Her first responses are a little delayed as if she is half asleep.*

Clare            Struggling to sleep?

Brian            Yeah, just couldn't switch off.

Clare            What you looking at?

Brian            Trying to find a way out of the shop.

Clare            Any jobs around?

Brian            Depends what you mean by job.

*She opens her eyes and looks at the tablet.*

Clare            What are you looking at?

Brian            I was just seeing how easy it would be to do, that's all.

Clare            For you or for me?

Brian            For me. What do you think?

*She sits up.*

Clare            Do you think you could do it? Really?

Brian            I dunno.

*Pause.*

How would you feel about it?

Clare            I don't know.

*Pause.*

I really don't know, I mean... I don't know.

Brian I was only looking.

Clare Ok.

Brian I haven't actually signed us up to anything yet.

Clare Ok.

Brian You know, I haven't put in any personal details or anything, nothing has been entered.

Clare Right.

Brian If you say no, that's fine. I'll stop looking this second and we'll say no more about it. It was just an idea that's all.

*Silence.*

Clare What did you find out?

*He shows her the tablet, swiping and tapping as he does.*

Brian Well, these sites sort of facilitate it. You sign up with one of these and they help you find the work.

Clare Is there much call for it round here?

Brian Well, I won't know that until I sign up to one of them. It lets you look at the other members of the site who are sellers, but none of the buyers.

Clare So it's like eBay?

Brian More Compare The Market. You see, you can scroll through and see the different skills of each seller, specialisms, services and so on.

Clare Prices?

Brian Again, I think I'd have to create an account to find that out. I presume I'd have to start out on a lower rate as a newbie, until I get to know the ropes, like you with your care jobs.

Clare This is not the same!

Brian I know, I know. I was just trying to make a comparison to something.

Clare *scrolls through the websites while Brian still holds the tablet.*

Clare            So what...services would you offer?

Brian            From what I can gather, when you sign up you can tick the boxes of the stuff you offer.

Clare            So, what would you offer?

Brian            Most guys on here offer drinks, dinner dates, accompanying to corporate events.

Clare            Sex?

Brian            None of the sites actually specify sex actually, in fact, most of the ones that do mention it, state that sex is not a service that is offered with their agents.

Clare            Agents?

Brian            It's what they call the...erm... men.

Clare            Like spies?

Brian            No, like agency work. It's basically all it is. They put up my profile with a list of skills and services offered. An employer, client, person, whatever, will then choose the candidate that is right for the job.

Clare            Job?

Brian            Job, event, date, meal, you know what I mean. Then the site takes a cut of the money for its own services of advertising you.

*Silence.*

Clare            No sex?

Brian            That's what it says.

*Silence.*

Clare            You say you've got to sign up first, before you can find out how much you would charge?

Brian            I think so. Certainly nothing is listed for me to view as a guest.

*Pause.*

I can create a fake account. Fake email, fake name and everything, if we just wanted to look.

*Pause.*

Clare           Ok.

Brian           Ok?

\*\*\*\*\*

*Clare is laying on the bed, her make up is slightly smudged and she is in her 'going out' clothes. She also has a paper party hat on her head. Brian quietly enters the room. They are both a little drunk, Clare more so than Brian. Clare throws her arms straight up in the air as he enters.*

Clare           Congratulations!

Brian           Sshh! You'll wake mum and dad.

Clare           *Whispering.* Congratulations!

Brian           Thank you.

*He goes over to the bed, kisses her, then collapses on the floor next to the bed. He sits up leaning against the bed frame as Clare fidgets round so her face is nearer his.*

Clare           Never again will you have to come home stinking of God knows what from packing random shit.

Brian           Nope. From Monday I'll come home smelling like perfume and old women.

Clare           Mmm, I love the smell of old women.

Brian           Weirdo.

*She kisses him.*

And in a few weeks you'll have your level one from college.

*She cringes and groans.*

Clare           Don't ruin the moment.

Brian           Come on, you'll pass it. We both know you will.

For Better or For Worse

Clare Meh.

Brian You will.

Clare We'll see. Anyway, tonight is all about you! You've handed in your notice, you've had one final blow out with your factory pals, now it's on to pastures new!

Brian You make it sound as if I'll never see any of them again. If it wasn't for Mike and Susie we wouldn't have met.

Clare That's very true.

*She leans in to kiss him again.*

Speaking of which, do you know what today is?

Brian I do.

Clare No you don't. What is it?

Brian Today is six months since our first date.

Clare You do know what today is!

Brian It was also the first time I...

Clare Sshhhh. Naughty.

Brian And this time next week will mark six months since the first time we...

Clare *kisses him passionately.*

Clare And I think we should celebrate all of these events.

Brian I couldn't agree more.

*He quickly gets up off the floor and begins taking off his socks and belt, he may continue undressing through the scene. Clare roles over on the bed, staring at the ceiling.*

Clare Who was the blonde lad tonight?

Brian Which blonde lad?

Clare The one that gave you that hug just as we were leaving. He'd been watching you all night.

For Better or For Worse

Brian Jealous.

Clare Don't be stupid, I just thought it was a little creepy how he spent all night looking at you and then when everyone else gave you a handshake or pat on the back as we left, he gave you a full on hug.

Brian That's Michael.

Clare He always been like that?

Brian Yeah. We had a thing for a little bit, but it fizzled out. Think he probably still fancies me a bit, but there just wasn't any spark.

Clare A thing?

Clare *sits up on the bed, Brian stops getting undressed.*

What kind of thing?

Brian A thing. You know. We fooled around a bit. Went out a few times for drinks and... stuff.

Clare What do you mean you fooled around?

Brian Well, like we do.

Clare You like guys?

Brian Yeah. And girls. Is that gonna be a problem?

Clare Erm. No, I guess not. I just didn't know.

Brian Ok.

Brian *climbs on the bed and starts kissing Clare but she no longer seems to be in the mood. She pulls away.*

Clare Sorry, just to clarify. Did you sleep with him? With Michael?

Brian Yeah.

Clare Right. Have you slept with a lot of men?

Brian A few. Have you?

Clare Well, yeah, but...

For Better or For Worse

Brian            There we go then.

Clare            You just never said.

Brian            I didn't think I had to, you haven't told me all your previous partners.

Clare            Well no, I guess not.

Brian *tries to kiss her again.*

                    Do you want to sleep with guys now?

Brian            Not right this second, I thought that was obvious.

Clare            You know what I mean.

*She sits up on the bed, causing him to sit up also.*

Brian            No, I don't know what you mean.

Clare            Do you still like men?

Brian            Yes.

Clare            Even though you're with me?

Brian            Yes.

Clare            Do you think about other men?

Brian            Sometimes.

Clare            When you're with me?

Brian            Sometimes.

Clare            Oh my god!

Brian            I'm joking, I'm joking. No, when I'm with you, I think about you. Look, when you're with me, do you think about other guys?

Clare            No.

Brian            There we go then. You are who I fancy, you are the one I'm with. Yes, I've been with guys, but I've also been with girls and it's you I'm with now, and it's you I plan on staying with.

For Better or For Worse

Clare Really?

Brian Yes. I love you.

Clare What?

*Pause.*

Brian I said, I love you.

*Pause.*

Clare I love you too.

*She kisses him, holding him close to her.*

Brian I've been wanting to tell you for about a month.

Clare Me too. I love you.

Brian I love you.

*They kiss.*

If you want to have the ex-partners chat that's fine. I want to share everything with you. Better or worse, I want to tell you everything and I want to know everything about you.

Clare I want to share everything with you. I don't want to spend a single day away from you.

*She kisses him.*

And that's not just the alcohol talking. I really, really love you.

Brian Really?

Clare Really.

Brian Then why don't we?

Clare Why don't we what?

Brian Not spend a single day away from one another?

Clare What do you mean?

For Better or For Worse

Brian        Marry me.

Clare        What?

Brian        Clare, marry me.

*Pause.*

Clare        Ok.

Brian        Ok?

Clare        Ok.

Brian        Ok.

Clare        Ok!

Brian        Ok!

Clare        Ok!

Brian        *Whispering.* Ok.

*He gestures to his parents' room, shushing.*

Clare        Ok.

*They stare at each other for a moment, smiling. They kiss.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare        We need ground rules.

Brian        Ok. Like what?

Clare        Well, firstly...

Brian        Yeah?

Clare        I don't know.

Brian        Ok, let's start with no real names, no real contact details, we'll get a burner phone to use.

Clare        Yes, I like it.

Brian        What name then?

For Better or For Worse

Clare Clive?

Brian Clive?

Clare It's what my parents were going to call me if I was a boy?

Brian Clive?

Clare What then?

Brian What about Mike?

Clare Mike? As in Mike and Susie, Mike?

Brian He brought us together. He might as well help us stay afloat.

Clare Alright, Mike it is. Are you happy to see men and women?

Brian I don't see why not, might as well utilise the market?

Clare I don't want any of them coming here.

Brian Strictly public places.

Clare Public places?

Brian Bars, restaurants, cinemas.

Clare Are there even going to be many people round here interested?

Brian I dunno, I mean, I can put down that I can travel? Then it'll open it up to the cities I guess?

Clare What about sex?

*Pause.*

Brian What would you prefer?

Clare Well, it's your body.

Brian I know, but you're my wife.

Clare Would you want to?

Brian None of this is really a question of wanting to.

Clare But what if they asked?

For Better or For Worse

Brian Well, the site says they don't offer those sorts of services.

Clare But what if they ask?

Brian They ask?

Clare If you are on a date or in a bar or something and they ask? Not done through the website, not through the agency, they offer you cash and ask you then and there to go back to their place for sex. Would you do it?

Brian Not if you didn't want me to.

Clare That's not what I'm asking.

Brian I don't know.

Clare If you were at the door of a beautiful woman's bedroom after a nice evening, after a few drinks and she offered to double your money to fuck her, would you do it? Would you take her money? Would you want to take her money?

Brian Yes.

*Pause.*

I would want to take the money. But as I said, you are my wife and if you don't want it to go that far then I won't.

*Clare looks heartbroken, she holds back tears but continues with the conversation.*

Clare Ok.

Brian It might never even come to that. We don't know how many people expect or even want that much from these things.

Clare No, but we need to make up our minds now before we get to that point. If you sleep with them, I don't want to know.

Brian Clare, I don't have to sleep with anyone.

Clare If it means more money. Money is the only reason we're doing this right? So why limit the intake before we've even begun?

Brian Clare...

For Better or For Worse

Clare           Just tell me they want to go on to another bar or something, or that it's late and you're going to stay at a hotel rather than drive back. I just don't want to know, ok.

Brian           Clare...

Clare           I don't want to find out, that's all I ask.

Brian           Ok.

Clare           And for the love of god, make sure you're safe.

Brian           Of course.

Clare           And if you don't, for whatever reason... get tested before you come anywhere near me.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian is waiting at a bar, he has a drink in his hand. A Man enters from offstage, clearly in a rush and out of breath, he looks around and spots Brian at the bar.*

Man            Hi, hello.

Brian           Hey.

Man            Hi, sorry, are you Mike?

Brian           Adam?

Man            Yes, hi. So sorry, the traffic, and then parking!

Brian           Don't worry about, I know what it's like round here.

Man            Yes, well. Hello.

Brian           Just take a breath. Do you want a drink?

Man            Thank you, yes, no, I mean, shouldn't I...? Aren't I meant to buy you the drink?

Brian           Not necessarily. I can buy you drinks if you prefer, it'll just get added onto your bill at the end. So I guess, right now it doesn't really matter.

Man            Oh, I see.

For Better or For Worse

Brian           It's more about appearances. Would you rather be seen buying me a drink, or have a drink bought for you?

Man             Oh, erm, well, since I've kept you waiting, I'll be happy to be seen buying you the drink.

Brian           Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian is outside a hotel room door with the Woman with the red lipstick.*

Brian           Well, I've had a wonderful time this evening.

Woman          It's not about whether *you* enjoyed it or not.

Brian           No, I'm sorry, I simply meant...

Woman          And the night's not over yet.

Brian           Oh.

Woman          You looked ridiculous tonight, with your cheap suit and tired old shoes. I told you to be dressed for a formal meal, for a very important meal with my executive team. Luckily for you they didn't seem to clock on to your bullshit. A doctor? Really? Was that the best you could come up with?

Brian           I chose something I already knew a little bit about in case I needed...

Woman          You'd have made a better argument for an eccentric billionaire the way you babbled on.

Brian           I'm sorry.

Woman          Thankfully they didn't take much notice of you in the end, I might as well have gone on my own.

Brian           I'm sorry. I guess I'll...

Woman          No you won't. You've got to make it up to me now.

Brian           How do you mean?

Woman          I said, the night's not over yet.

For Better or For Worse

Brian Oh, I don't really...

Woman This is your first time, isn't it?

Brian Well...

Woman For Christ sake! Look, I'll make it easy for you. In that room I have more money locked in the safe than you are likely to make within a year of doing this. Join me inside and give me what I hired you for and you'll be able to buy yourself a better suit for your next job.

Brian I don't...

Woman I'm not waiting out here for you to make up your mind, come in or don't, it's your choice, just don't expect a glowing review if you choose the latter.

*The Woman enters the room. Brian gets out his mobile phone, sends a message, puts it back in his pocket, then follows the Woman.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Clare is sitting alone on the sofa in her pyjamas or scruffy clothes. Her phone goes off, she looks at it. She reads her message and throws the phone away from her. She squeezes a cushion and begins to cry.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Look, Mr Cooper, I need you to be honest with me here. I refuse to go into battle blind. I need to know what has happened. Is she correct with her accusation of adultery as grounds for divorce?

*Pause.*

Brian Is that all she's said? No other details?

Richard That's all I've been told. Brian, have you been sleeping with someone else while you have been married?

Brian Yes.

Richard Right.

*Richard begins to start taking some notes.*

How many people?

Brian I don't know.

Richard You don't know?

Brian I haven't been keeping track.

Richard Do you have a rough figure?

Brian A few.

Richard A few? How many is a few? Half a dozen? Two dozen? Are we talking about tens or thousands?

Brian Maybe three hundred.

Richard Three hundred different women?

Brian Men and women.

Richard Mr Cooper, I do think we may struggle with this case, particularly if your wife has any proof of these infidelities. If I may say so, I think we are quite fortunate regarding her demands so far. She would have every right to take you for half of everything you have and then still have a bloody good chance of getting more. Never have I represented a man with so much against him.

Brian Are you quite done?

*Pause.*

Right. Yes, I have slept with other people, and yes she is aware of it. She is aware of all of them, she will no doubt have proof for all of them, but we had an agreement.

Richard What sort of agreement?

*Silence.*

Mr Cooper. Brian!

Brian I'm an escort! Alright? I'm a fucking rent boy.

*Pause.*

That's the only reason why we have the things we do. The house, the car, the fucking shower unit. It was all paid for by me selling myself so that she didn't want for anything! Do you think I'm happy about it? That I'm proud of it?

*Pause.*

Richard      Are you?

Brian        I worked as a packer when we met. I was a packer in a factory. Then I worked in a shop. Every month we struggled. I promised her on our wedding night that I would provide for her, for us. That I'd find us a house and that I'd look after us. I did that, I did that because of what I chose to do. I might not go around telling my family how I afford to buy all their Christmas presents each year, and maybe I didn't describe to them how hard some businessman from London buggered me when I paid off my parents' mortgage. I didn't tell anyone when I was crying in the doctors waiting room the first time I was given the all clear from an AIDS test from sleeping with some rich junky slut from Newcastle, I certainly didn't tell Clare that that Geordie was the reason she got a new car for her birthday. Am I proud of what I do? How many other people can say they've supported their family as much?

\*\*\*\*\*

Brian        I've got a message!

Clare        What?

Brian        I've got a message, on the site!

Clare        What does it say?

Brian        I'm looking for a handsome gentleman Thursday night to attend an important business meeting / formal meal. You will dress formally and talk about your work. Your job must be something that would be highly regarded but must also be something you can hold a conversation on should it be required of you. You will meet me at 18:30 and be available until the early hours of the morning, for which I shall make a payment of three hundred and fifty pounds into your account. I shall confirm further details on your receipt. The Red Vixen.

Clare        She sounds like an old hag.

For Better or For Worse

Brian Three hundred and fifty quid for one nights work though.

Clare Well if you want to do it.

Brian It's just a meal with some pompous boss types I reckon. I might say I'm doctor.

Clare What do you know about being a doctor?

Brian Well, it's better than saying I work in a shop.

Clare She says you need to be able to talk about your work. What are you gonna talk about?

Brian I've retained some bits from stuff you said you do on your courses. And all the episodes of Holby you've made me watch.

Clare Fine. Reply to her, see what happens.

Brian If you don't want me to, I don't have to.

*Pause.*

Clare No, you're right. We need the money. Just...

Brian What?

Clare Don't tell if me you...

Brian I know.

Clare And don't get emotional. I can handle it if it's just going to be a cold, empty transaction, even if you do have to have sex with them, but don't get emotional. Please.

Brian Ok.

Clare Promise me. Don't see the same one more than two or three times, don't get emotional, don't... don't fall in love with someone.

Brian I won't. I promise. Clare, I love you. I'm only doing this for the money, so we can finally be happy.

Clare Yeah.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michelle So, how often would he go out with these people?

Clare It varied. Sometimes he might get a few different people through a week, other times he might just get one big job at a weekend.

Michelle And how many times would he have sex with these customers, do you know?

Clare I don't know.

Michelle Half of them maybe? Three quarters?

Clare I don't know!

Michelle Mrs Cooper, I need to know what we're dealing with here so I can put together a settlement plan to pass on to Mr Cooper's solicitor. Speaking of which, have you made any motion towards your husband that you are seeking a divorce?

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare I hate you! I hate you!

Brian Clare, calm down!

Clare I fucking hate you! I never want to see you again!

Brian Please listen to me, Clare, please.

Clare Don't you dare fucking come near me. Don't touch me. I want you out. I want you out right now. Get out! I never want you in my house again!

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare Not in so many words.

Michelle Good, at least we'll have the first move then. We don't want him suddenly tapping accounts and claiming he can't afford to give you anything.

Clare *begins rustling through her handbag, pulling papers out as she talks.*

Clare I've got bank statements with me. You always see on TV the lawyers saying about bank statements, these are last months.

Michelle That's brilliant. Anything like this, just so he can't wiggle out of anything is perfect. Now, Mrs Cooper, do you have any proof we can use against your husband regarding these claimed infidelities?

For Better or For Worse

Clare I've got all the account details, the email address, the phone he uses. He showed me everything when we set up the account as a way of keeping it open and honest.

Michelle So, you knew about the account from the start?

Clare Yes, we set it up together, sort of.

Michelle Right. So you knew he had an account?

Clare Yes.

Michelle You knew he was meeting people, men and women?

Clare Yes.

Michelle And you knew he was having sex with them?

Clare Well, not all of them.

Michelle But some of them?

Clare The sites don't condone people having sex for money, or at least can't be seen to. Customers tend to offer that at the meetings, cash in hand or bank transfer, as to not go through the site. I told him if he did this I didn't want to find out about it, just to tell me he would be home later than planned.

Michelle So you told him explicitly not to sleep with other people?

Clare Yes.

Michelle Mrs Cooper, I need you to be honest with me, did you tell him not to sleep with these people or that you didn't want to find out if he had?

Clare What different does it make?

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard So, she said you could sleep with these people, if they offered you money?

Brian As long as I didn't tell her, she just said she didn't want to find out. We set out the rules at the beginning, she agreed to them, she decided on most of them.

Richard What rules?

For Better or For Worse

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare           Number one: I don't want to know you've been sleeping with anyone.

Brian           Ok.

Clare           Don't interrupt me, just let me get through these or I'll forget them.

Brian           Sorry.

Clare           Number two: If you do sleep with anyone, you are safe and are tested regularly. You do not sleep with me until you know you are clean.

Number three: You don't see the same person more than three times. More than three meetings can lead to emotions, particularly if you... but I won't know about that.

Four: You go to them. You do not invite anyone you meet on these sites round here. I will not have anyone else in this house.

Five: All correspondence are done via the fake email and the burner phone, you do not tell them your real name, you do not tell them anything about you, or us. You are untraceable.

Six: No one is to know about this, neither of us tell anyone.

Seven: This isn't forever. We get enough saved up to look after ourselves then we stop. We get normal jobs, and we move on.

Brian           Once we've got enough saved up, we'll invest or save or something, it's just a means to an end. I promise.

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard        So how much did you set as your target? How much would have been enough to settle down with?

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare           We never really set a limit. We were never really certain about how much it was going to bring in.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brian I suppose we should have set a limit really. But once the reviews started adding up on the site and I was getting more requests... You get some people you see, usually older customers, they want a whole weekend with you. You can charge so much, and the extra you get for the sex, it's cash in hand so it doesn't go through the site's admin, it's basically tax free.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michelle I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare Sorry. Well it just got out of hand I guess. He didn't want to turn down the money and I didn't want to tell him to stop. He was coming home with so much. We stopped renting and bought our own place, within a year we'd pretty much paid off the mortgage.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brian I promised her I could provide for us. There was always something we wanted so I just kept saying to myself "one more job".

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare I wanted him to be the one to say he was stopping. I didn't want to ask. I wanted him to make that choice, but he never would.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michelle &

Richard So what was the final straw?

*Silence.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Clare is sitting in the dark on the sofa in her pyjamas. She is looking at the tablet, scrolling as she does. After a short period of time, Brian enters with an overnight bag.*

Brian Clare? What you doing up already?

Clare *does not look at him while she speaks.*

Clare Couldn't sleep.

For Better or For Worse

Brian           Have you been up all night?

Clare            Must have been.

Brian            How was your weekend? Did you go out with Susie on Friday?

Clare            No.

Brian            I'm shattered.

*He sits down next to her and kisses her on the head, she doesn't respond other than possibly moving away from him slightly.*

                    She cancel again, or you just change your mind?

Clare            How was your weekend?

Brian            Tiring. It was just non-stop, business lunch then a dinner in the evening. Saturday was nice though, just chilling a little bit. Journey back was a bitch though.

Clare            Would have thought you'd have found some short cuts by now.

Brian            What do you mean?

*She drops the tablet down on the sofa and gets up. She goes to his bag and starts going through it.*

                    What are you doing?

Clare            Where is it?

Brian            Where's what? Clare, what's going on?

Clare            The phone. Where is it?

Brian            What phone?

Clare            The burner phone, where's your fucking pimp phone!

Brian            What the fuck's got into you?

*Clare locates the phone in the bag and starts going through it. Shortly after scrolling through messages she looks at him and begins to cry.*

                    What?

*She throws the phone at him. He looks at it.*

What?

Clare Read it. Read the last fucking message!

*Brian is hesitant, but does so.*

Brian Thanks for a great... another great weekend, hope you enjoyed the extra tip this time. I can't wait for the next time so...

Clare Read it!

Brian I get to taste your sweet cock again. I love hearing you scream my name when you cum, maybe next time I'll scream Brian for you.

Clare Finish it.

*Silence.*

Finish it!

Brian Love you hun.

*Clare grabs clothes from the bag and throws them at Brian.*

Clare And you fucking said it back! Didn't you! Didn't you!

Brian Yes, I said it back. It doesn't mean anything, Clare. It's expected, they pay for a good time, hearing that is part of it.

Clare And she calls you Brian?! No fucking names we said. No fucking names!

*Brian defends himself as more clothes come flying his way.*

Brian I'm sorry, I forgot. Clare, please. I'm sorry. It just slipped out on one of the evenings, I got confused and it just slipped out.

Clare You promised!

Brian It wasn't on purpose, I didn't mean it. I'm sorry.

*He approaches her in an attempt to calm her down. He holds her arms. She struggles but eventually seems to settle. She drops the clothes and just looks at him, crying.*

Clare How many times?

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Brian        What?

Clare        How many times... have you seen her?

Brian        What?

Clare        How many times have you fucked her?

*Silence.*

How many fucking times?!

*Silence.*

Alright.

*She moves back round to the sofa and picks up the tablet.*

Since you can't seem to keep count. Eighteen! Eighteen times you've seen her!  
Seven times with her! Twelve times with him! Ten times with him, ten with her,  
six with her, eight with him!

*She throws the tablet at him.*

*Silence.*

No names, no emotion, and no more than three. You promised.

Brian        Clare.

Clare        Get out.

Brian        Clare.

Clare        Get out!

Brian        Please.

Clare        I hate you! I hate you!

Brian        Clare, calm down!

Clare        I fucking hate you! I never want to see you again!

Brian        Please listen to me, Clare, please.

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Clare Don't you dare fucking come near me. Don't touch me. I want you out. I want you out right now. Get out! I never want you in my house again!

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Why did you break the rules?

*Pause.*

Brian You build a rapport with these people, a sort of relationship, a false one but still. It gets difficult to keep track of who you've told what to. I never gave them much information about my real life, never told them about Clare or anything that could cause them to track me down. But the more you see them, the more time they want to spend with you, the more money you'll get from one engagement.

Richard The more you'll have sex with them?

*Silence.*

Did you ever meet any of these people for your own pleasure? By that I mean did you ever not get paid for these.... Engagements?

*Silence.*

Did you ever have sex for your own pleasure?

*Silence.*

Mr Cooper, do you still meet with clients for money?

Brian Yes.

Richard Using a percentage, how many of these meetings are paid for and how many do you do for free?

Brian There's only one person I meet regularly for free.

Richard Does your wife know about them?

Brian I don't think so. I don't know.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian and the Man are laid together naked in bed, both laughing as if one has just told a joke. As the laughing starts to subside the Man climbs out of bed, picks up his trousers off the floor and gets his wallet out of his pocket.*

Brian           And you go and spoil it all by saying something stupid like, “how much, whore?”

*Brian laughs jokingly but the Man looks a little guilty.*

I’m joking, I’m joking.

Man            I just don’t want to forget, or have you need to remind me.

Brian           I know, I’m only kidding, seriously, I don’t mind.

Man            Here, look...

*He tucks some money into Brian’s trousers, also located on the floor.*

All done, no more needs to be said about it.

Brian           Well, thank you. Now get back over here so I can earn it.

*The Man returns to the bed, climbing under the sheets. They both begin kissing and touching one another. The Man speaks between kisses and touches.*

Man            Do you know what today is?

Brian           What’s today?

Man            Today is our tenth meet. Bit of an occasion really. Don’t think I’ve ever got to a tenth date with anyone before.

*Brian stops kissing him, he seems genuinely surprised and confused.*

Brian           Has it really been ten?

Man            Yeah. Not sure how many months we’ve been going but, ten dates.

Brian           Wow.

Man            Is everything alright?

Brian           Yeah, I’m fine. Sorry.

*The Man starts kissing Brian again, but Brian just lays there.*

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Man           Are you sure you're alright? Was it something I said?

Brian *tries to snap out of it but although he continues, he is no longer quite as enthusiastic.*

Brian           Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine, it's nothing. I guess this calls for something a little bit special then.

Man           What?

Brian           Roll over.

*The Man roles onto his stomach as Brian lifts the covers and begins rimming the Man who quickly starts grabbing at the pillow with pleasure. This eventually leads to sex.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Brian *climbs out of the bed; the Man appears asleep. Brian goes over to his trousers, removes the money that was put in them and returns it to the Man's wallet. The Man begins to wake.*

Man           *Half asleep.* What are doing?

Brian           Call it an anniversary gift. Go back to sleep.

Man           I love you.

*Silence.*

                  Come back to bed.

Brian           Coming.

Brian *returns to the bed; the Man cuddles up to him.*

Man           Can we spend the day together?

Brian           Sure.

Man           I'll add it to the account.

Brian           Don't worry about it.

Brian *cuddles up with the Man.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare *runs on stage screaming with excitement with a letter in her hand. Brian is running behind her, excited but also confused.*

Clare I got it! I got it!

Brian Got what?

Clare I got the job!!

Brian What job?

Clare I told you, I went for that interview a couple of weeks ago. For the private care home. Well, they offered me the job!

Brian That's amazing! Congratulations!

*They embrace.*

I'm so proud of you.

Clare This is so amazing, I'm so excited. And because it's a private home, the pay is so much better than the standard NHS ones. Finally, we can start to move on and support ourselves with a bit more security.

Brian Yeah.

*Pause.*

What do you mean by more security?

Clare Well, now we'll have this money coming in, you'll be able to stop... you know, escorting.

Brian Why? I mean, yes you'll be getting a wage in and that's amazing, that's what you always wanted but, are you going to be bringing in as much as I do?

Clare Maybe not quite as much as you, but it's going to be a salary, with a contract. I'm not going to be selling my body for the money.

Brian So what, you want me to stop now, just because you've got a job as a carer? Tell me, could your job have got us this house? Could your job have got us the cars? The holiday last summer? The furniture, the TV, the shower unit? I earn more in one week than your new job will probably pay you for a month.

Clare But we've got all those things now, we don't need any more...stuff! The mortgage is paid, the credit cards are long gone. Why do you need to earn so much still? We said this was just until we had everything sorted, until we had a

house and didn't have to worry about anything. We're there, we've been here for months. This job will easily support the outgoings we have and if you really want to get yourself a job to feel like you're still bringing something into the pot then great, do it.

Brian I have a job.

Clare You're a fucking gigolo. It's not a job!

*Silence.*

Brian You don't even need a job with the money I'm bringing in. You didn't need to go to that interview.

Clare What?

Brian You don't need to be looking for work.

Clare I want to work. I want to provide with you. I want to be able to look people in the eye and tell them the truth about what I do for a job, for a career. What is it you tell people you do? Oh yeah, you don't do you, because you're too fucking ashamed.

Brian I don't tell people because of you. If anyone is ashamed it's you.

Clare And what if I am? Can you blame me? Can you blame me for not wanting to tell my parents that my husband, the man they're proud to call their son-in-law, supports their little girl by sucking guys cocks for money? By letting rich women tie him up and fuck him while I sit at home in tears because I haven't seen him for days! Can you blame me for not telling my friends that the real reason I don't want to go out isn't because I have stomach cramps but is actually because I'm sat at home, frozen in fear as to whether or not I will receive *that* text that means you're staying in someone else's bed?

*Silence.*

You're right, I don't want to tell people that. But I do... I do want to be able to tell people that the job my husband does makes me proud, that the way he supports me, makes me feel so special, and loved, and wanted. But I don't get to do that. I can't do that, while you do this.

*Silence.*

Brian            Clare

*Brian's phone starts ringing, he resists looking at it for a moment before he gives in. He looks at it, then back at Clare. She turns her back on him. He answers it and exits.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian and Richard are sitting on one side of a boardroom meeting table. Richard is looking over papers. Michelle and Clare enter. Michelle shakes hands with both Richard and Brian before taking a seat opposite Richard. Clare stands awkwardly while the formalities occur before seating herself next to Michelle. During the opening remarks Michelle is getting her papers from her briefcase.*

Michelle        Just to confirm, my client and I are very much hoping we can come to a conclusion this afternoon. I think I speak for all parties when I say, none of us want this going to court.

Richard        Agreed.

Michelle        Has your client seen our latest proposal?

Richard        He has.

Michelle        Myself and Mrs Cooper, both feel this is a very generous settlement when considering the embarrassment that taking this to court may bring.

Brian            For you perhaps.

Clare            I'm sorry. Have you told your parents how you've supported us since we got married?

Brian            At least I *did* support us!

Clare            By humiliating yourself.

Michelle        Mrs Cooper, please. I suggest your client keeps his comments to himself during this meeting otherwise my client and I will refuse to negotiate any further.

Brian            I thought negotiations were done.

Richard        Brian!

- Brian            Sorry.
- Richard         We have read through your revisions and yes, generally, we do find them quite agreeable. There is, however, still the matter of the house.
- Michelle        My client has spent the past five years, decorating the house, choosing all the furnishings herself with little to no support from Mr Cooper, spending many of her nights alone in the house while Mr Cooper has been away...working. Mrs Cooper has spent a lot of time and money making this house a home for herself.
- Brian            My money.
- Michelle        Nevertheless, she is the one who has done this.
- Richard         I appreciate the time and effort your client has put into making this house comfortable for her. However, as my client has pointed out, this was all made possible due to his financial input, without which, the house itself would not be in either of their possession.
- Michelle        Nevertheless it *is* in their possession, though your client's absence in the property has demonstrated a lack of commitment to living in it.
- Richard         It does not matter how present Mr Cooper has been with regard to living within the property, it does not change the fact he financed its purchase as well as its furnishings.
- Michelle        Look, we can go around in circles all day debating this, the fact does not change that your client's infidelity is the cause of the relationship breakdown, due to this my client feels it is only fair that she is compensated for this breakdown.
- Brian            She wants this divorce, she is the one instigating the breakdown, not me.
- Clare            If you had stuck to the rules you agreed to, then I wouldn't have been driven to needing a divorce! I watched every week as you went out to have meetings and dates with these people, you didn't even know, and have sex with them! I tried to make this work, I tried to take the financial burden away from you by getting a job, and you wouldn't stop, I tried to be there for you when you got back but you always sent messages saying you weren't coming home. I tried, Brian, I tried.

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Brian           And you think I didn't?

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare            What's all this?

*Brian is standing on the opposite side of the stage to Clare. He is dressed in a smart, well fitted suit. He has in his arms a dress box with a bunch of flowers on top of it.*

Brian            I thought we'd go out for dinner tonight.

Clare            Oh. I haven't really got anything to wear.

Brian            That's what this is.

*Pause.*

                  Don't you want to come and have a look?

Clare            Ok. Sure.

*She moves closer to him. He thrusts the box forward. She takes the box, but then her hands are too full to open it. He takes it back. She takes the flowers off the top to get in, but then the flowers are too large and her arms are full again. The movements become more awkward as it goes on. She eventually puts down the flowers and opens the box. She lifts out the dress to reveal a very fancy, floor length dress. She looks impressed by the dress, but not the gesture.*

Brian            I checked the labels of some of your other dresses, it should fit just right.

*Pause.*

                  And I got you some shoes too, didn't want you to worry about anything not matching.

*Pause.*

                  Do you like it?

*Pause.*

                  What do you think?

Clare            It's beautiful. Thank you.

*She puts the dress back in the box and puts the lid back on it. She puts the box on the table with the flowers so neither of them are holding anything.*

Why?

Brian        Why what?

Clare        Why? Why have you done this? Why now?

Brian        I know I haven't been home much recently with bookings and everything, so I've taken the weekend off and thought we could go out tonight. Maybe get away for a night or two. Just spend a bit more time together, like we used to.

Clare        Like we used to?

Brian        Yeah.

*Silence.*

Clare        Do you remember what last weekend was?

*Silence.*

You don't remember what last weekend was?

Brian        Should I?

Clare        You shit.

Brian        What?

Clare        It was our anniversary. It was our fucking anniversary.

Brian        I asked you last week if you minded me going away last weekend and you said you didn't mind.

Clare        I said, do what you want. I shouldn't have to remind you of our fucking anniversary. I shouldn't have to tell you, not to work on our fucking anniversary. You came home, after doing Christ knows what, came home and told me to "finish myself off".

Brian        Is that what this is about? The fact I came before you?

Clare        No Brian! It is not about whether I came or not! It is about you spending our anniversary fucking any man or woman that will pay you. It is about the fact you

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are never home, you never ask about my day, you're never here to take the bins out. This is about the fact you don't care anymore!

*Silence.*

Brian Clare

Clare I love you Brian, I don't know why I do, but I do. And I want you back.

Brian I'm right here.

Clare No. No. I want you back, Brian. I want you here.

*She approaches him slowly, she might touch him in some way, hold his hand, brush his arm, etc.*

I miss my husband. I miss feeling his love for me.

Brian I do love you.

Clare It doesn't feel like it!

*Pause.*

When was the last time we sat and watched a film together? When was the last time we went out for a meal? When was the last time you held me in your arms until we fell asleep?

Brian We can do all of that still. We've got all weekend to do all of those things. I got you this dress so we could

Clare One weekend won't bring you back.

Brian What do you want me to do?

*Silence.*

Clare Do you really not know?

*Silence. He knows, but he doesn't want to say.*

Right. Goodnight.

Brian What do you want me to do?!

Clare I'm going to bed.

Clare *exits*. Brian's *phone vibrates in his pocket, he looks at it, looks toward Clare. He responds to the message and grabs the bunch of flowers.*

Brian I'm going out.

*A few moments pass before Clare walks back on stage in tears.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare The amount of nights I spent crying, waiting for you to return, waiting for you to make the gesture to stop.

Brian You never asked.

Clare If I did, would you have?

*Pause.*

Richard I think we're getting a little off track here.

Michelle I tend to agree. May I suggest, simply to keep emotions to one side for a moment, that the two of you wait outside for myself and Mr Smythe to negotiate a little further. See if we can't come to some form of fair arrangement.

*Pause.*

Brian Alright.

Clare Ok.

*The two of them stand up to leave. They move to a waiting room area and sit as far apart from one another as possible. Richard and Michelle can no longer be seen or heard. There is a long awkward silence.*

Clare Can I...

Brian What?

Clare Never mind.

*Pause.*

Clare I just need to know.

Brian What?

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Clare I don't want to fight, I just, need to know.

*Pause.*

How many of the rules did you break?

\*\*\*\*\*

*Brian and the Man are walking together. As the scene goes on, the Man should get closer and closer to Brian until they are touching, maybe holding hands or linking arms.*

Man Wow, so this is where you live?

Brian That red brick on the left, that's the one.

Man You going to give me the grand tour?

Brian Sorry, wish I could but...

Man Boyfriend home.

Brian Not exactly.

Man Sorry, I don't mean to pry. It's none of my business.

Brian It's alright. It's my wife.

Man Wife?

Brian Who will be home.

Man Oh, I didn't realise you were... again, none of my business. I just assumed...

Brian It's fine.

Man What's it like? Being married?

*Pause.*

Sorry, again. Don't need to tell me anything.

Brian It's fine, really. Erm. It's good, I guess.

Man I always wanted to get married. Not exactly the traditional fairy tale dream but, just a nice chap, nice suits each, in front of my friends and family. Nothing too big, but nice.

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Brian        We eloped.

Man         You didn't?

Brian        Yup. Ran off, didn't tell anyone till we came back.

Man         That's amazing, that's brilliant. I'd love to be able to do that. I guess I'm just too much of an attention whore. I'd want to be seen by people.

Brian        It was nice. We loved it.

Man         What lead you to this then?

Brian        Money, or lack of. Pays well.

Man         Don't need to tell me.

Brian        When was the last time I charged?

Man         I'm only messing. I'd still happily pay if it meant spending more time with you.

*Pause.*

How does she feel about it?

Brian        We tend not to talk about it too much.

*Silence.*

It was meant to just be a short term thing but, the years go by and here we are. We don't talk too much anymore. We haven't spoken for a long time, not properly talked, listened, discussed.

Man         I listen.

Brian        I know, but... it doesn't matter.

Man         What?

Brian        I like spending time with you, I really do. I wouldn't keep seeing you if I didn't.

Brian *begins to well up as he talks.*

I miss her. I love her so much, but I don't know how to show her anymore.

*The Man appears a little hurt by this revelation but keeps talking.*

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Man Why don't you stop? House like that, you can't be that hard up, not anymore.

Brian I don't know. Things have got so bad at home. I look to this just to get away from being at home. Doing this is what has pushed us apart, but I fear if I stop it'll just be too little too late. Then where am I? Stuck at home, looking for a way to get away from each other.

Man You could leave her. I'll take you in. Then we'd get to spend more time together, wouldn't need to book it in.

*Pause.*

I love you Brian.

*Silence.*

I know you don't love me, but I think we could be happy. I'd like it if we could spend more time together.

*Silence.*

Brian I'm sorry. I love my wife. It's not what it was, it's not what I wish it was, but I still love her. I don't know what I'd do without her.

*Distance starts to grow between the two of them.*

I do like you, and I enjoy the time we spend together, but as a friend.

Man What about the sex?

Brian The sex is great but, it's just sex. Don't get me wrong, you're great, it's really great, but that's all it is to me.

Man Right.

Brian I'm sorry.

Man It's not your fault. It's my own fault. I shouldn't have got attached.

Brian I was never looking for an emotional connection, it's just a job, it was just a job. I just liked you. We got on. But that's all.

Man It's fine. I shouldn't have...I'm sorry, I've...

Brian No, I'm sorry, do you want me to take you home?

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Man I'm fine, I've just remembered I've got some work stuff to get sorted for later.  
I'll get going.

Brian I didn't mean...

Man It's fine. Look, I'll... erm... I'll text you. Bye.

*The Man has already started walking away.*

Brian Bye.

*Brian walks away in the opposite direction.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Clare I don't want to fight, I just, need to know.

*Pause.*

How many of the rules did you break?

*Pause.*

Brian No one else ever found out.

*Clare looks as if she is about to cry, she smiles and nods.*

Clare Thank you.

Brian Have the house.

Clare What?

Brian You deserve it way more than I do.

Clare Are you sure?

Brian Take it.

Clare Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brian I, Brian Henry Cooper, take thee, Clare Mary Wilde, to be my lawful wedded wife, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, till death parts us.

For Better or For Worse

Clare I, Clare Mary Wilde, take thee, Brian Henry Cooper, to be my lawful wedded husband, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, till death parts us.

*They smile at each other for a moment before gently kissing one another. They smile ecstatically.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Through the remaining dialogue, Brian and Clare remain silent, looking at one another, neither of them quite smiling, neither of them quite crying. They only break eye contact when they are asked to sign something, before returning to gazing at each other. Gradually, the lights fade on the scene, leaving Brian and Clare the last thing seen on stage before complete black out.*

Michelle So we're in agreement about the car.

Richard Agreed, but all maintenance then moves to be the responsibility of Mrs Cooper.

Michelle Seems fair.

Richard Mr Cooper maintains the right to remove his items from the property anytime within the following ninety days without confrontation. Removing items including, but not limited to, the gym equipment, the larger of the televisions, the sound system, the spare room's king sized bed, the furniture he bought for the living area and the guitars. On completion, he shall relinquish all sets of keys to your client.

Michelle My client reserves the right to check what is being removed from the house in case there are any belongings of hers.

Richard I'm sure Mr Cooper isn't going to be attempting anything underhand. Are you?

Michelle Purely a precaution.

Richard Do you agree?

Michelle And the issue of the house has now been resolved.

Richard And the financials have been agreed on.

Michelle So, we just need your signature here. And initial here. And here.

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Richard      And yours just here. And initial here, and here.

Michelle     And again, here. And initial here. And here.

Richard     And yours again.

*Blackout.*