

Act 2.

Same room. Darkness. The sound of a shredding machine. Then silence. Lights up. Karl lies on the sofa. Sophie is sitting very still, bolt upright in a chair. Tony is anxiously, slightly roughly, but not violently, tying her wrists to the arms of the chair.

Sophie Tony, please stop, this isn't funny.

Tony It's not meant to be.

(He tightens the knot, she winces).

Please sit still, Sophie, I'm trying *not* to hurt you!

Sophie Tony don't do this. Karl needs help! Let me help him. Look I'm not going to run off!

Tony No, you're not – that's why I'm tying you up – loosely. I'll take it off in a minute. - I'm not holding you against your will – well I am, but only for a minute. I just want you to listen. I want everybody to keep still, stop talking and listen! Like him! At least he's shut up at last! *(pause).*

Sophie Tony, I promise you I had no idea he was going to say those things!

Tony Yeah, right: I'm sure you didn't exchange two words about me all the way here. *(beat)* How could you, Sophie? – I trusted you. And then you bring this - Karl! - this churl into my home and suddenly I'm being interrogated! It makes me sick – you make me sick – both of you!

He walks over the shredder, picks up a piece of paper, reads it, then feeds it in.

The truth according to British Telecom!

Karl emits a soft moan.

Sophie Tony...

Tony Please ...

Sophie He needs a doctor. *(she tries to undo the tie)*

Tony Sit still! – Look, I don't want to have to restrain you... - properly, I mean.... So please sit still! - I'll have a look at him.

(He goes over and inspects Karl's head)

It's OK, there's no blood - well, hardly any. I've put a small bandage on. He'll be fine. I didn't hit him hard. If it makes you feel better I'll call the surgery, they know where I live. *(he picks up a phone, dials and carries on speaking to Sophie)* – I just wanted to shut him up. He talks too much your .. 'partner'.. *(puts the phone down)* – Engaged. I'll try again in a minute.

Karl begins to stir.

Karl Sophie...

Sophie Karl...

Tony He's all right! – Look... - I'll get him some water.

Brings Karl a glass of water, sits him slowly upright.

'Partner' indeed! - What's wrong with 'girlfriend', 'boyfriend'? or 'lover'? – 'mistress', even!? - 'Partner'? - Too vague, for a start! (*Gesturing at Karl*) He accused me of hiding behind words, well that's a word to hide behind! – A word for people who can't commit themselves to a real status, you know what I mean?

(Sophie is silent)

I mean 'business partner' makes sense, it has legal status: - you know where you stand. But 'partner' - for a love affair? Well what does it mean? I mean what 'part' of you is he working with? In what capacity? Karl... - The churl...

Karl Jesus, my head...

Sophie He needs a doctor! Now!

Tony I've had enough of being ordered around in my own home! I'm *trying* to get him a bloody doctor! They don't just come at the drop of a hat these days. You have to be practically dead before they take you seriously! (*to Karl*) And you're going to feel a total lemon when the doctor comes and you tell him you've just got a headache.

Sophie For chrissake, Tony – you hit him!

Tony I know. I know. I broke my snow-globe... I just wanted him to listen for a minute. He won't stop, won't let you get a word in edgeways. How do you bear him?! Firing all those bloody questions at you! Like a machine gun! You can't hear yourself think!

Karl I'm sorry.

Tony What?

Karl I'm sorry... - if I made you angry...

Sophie Tony... just let us leave.

Tony No. not yet.

Sophie Please...

Tony You haven't finished tidying up! - And I haven't finished shredding! – I'll try the surgery again... (*He dials while still shredding very small pieces of paper*). Another British Telecom bill! (*reads it then begins shredding it*) A hundred and twenty six quid a quarter – for domestic use: what am I? The Speaking Clock? – “The time sponsored by Tony Morris is...” - Still Engaged. (*puts phone down*). - Actually (*gesturing at Karl*) he jokes about identity theft, but you can tell a lot about a person from their telephone bill: the people they ring, when they ring them - can't tell 'why' though: now *that would* be interesting! If they put *that* on the bill! - '9.28. p.m. July 11, Guildford, 5 minutes 14 seconds, £2.13 pence – gave mistress quick call behind wife's back! ' - Even you'd shred that, Karl, wouldn't you?

Karl I don't have a shredder.

Tony Ah no, I forgot: you're the man with nothing to hide! I tell you what! While we're waiting for the doctor, let's see you prove it, let's see *you* answer a few questions!

Sophie Tony, stop this...

Tony I haven't started yet!

Karl (To *Sophie*) I'm all right.

Sophie You need help!

Karl I'm all right! Don't fuss.

Tony There, you see? Look, I'll take him to A and E after we've finished. Taxi service! Even wait with him! How about that?

Karl I don't need to go to A and E, and I don't need a doctor.

Tony Oh now there I can't agree: you *should* at least get checked out, Sophie's right. I'll take you when we've finished.

Karl Finished what?

Tony Answering my questions. You asked me some: now it's my turn.

Karl I need a cigarette.

Tony Right then. What to ask? Not so easy when you're put on the spot! I mean we don't even know each other, do we? Not that that stopped you asking me questions! All right then! Something that means a lot to you. - Sophie! Your relationship with the woman you love. - Or say you love. - Do you love her?

Karl Of course I do.

Tony Of course you do. Well that's good. That's as it should be between people who've lived together for...? How many years? (*silence*) - Well?

Sophie Fifteen.

Karl Off and On.

Tony Off and on. What does that mean?

Sophie It means sometimes we lived together and sometimes we didn't.

Tony - And sometimes you loved her and sometimes you didn't.

Karl I always loved her.

Tony And you always *will* love her? No, that's not a fair question. I retract that. No-one can say how they will feel in the future. The important point is you love her now. And you wouldn't be unfaithful to her. (*silence*) Well?

Karl I would try not to be... (*Karl and Sophie exchange looks*) - Again.

Tony 'Again'! Ah well now we're getting somewhere! You'd try not to 'again'! So you were once?

Karl Depends what you mean by unfaithful.

Tony What do you *think* I mean by 'unfaithful'? How many meanings has the word 'unfaithful' got?

Sophie Tony I don't like this ---

Tony No, it's unpleasant isn't it? (*To Karl*) Well? - What was her name, this lover of yours?

Karl What does it matter what her name was?

Tony Oh, I'm sorry, am I digging up bad memories? I wouldn't want to open old wounds. Sophie, I'm sorry if this is painful for you, but Karl insists on honesty!

Karl Between friends!

Tony And I'm not your friend?

Karl Not last time I checked.

Tony But that didn't stop you being honest to me, now did it?

Karl That was different: that was trying to help you.

Tony What, by shitting on me?

Sophie (*deadpan*) Fiona.

They both turn to look at her.

That was her name. – the most recent one.

Karl Sophie –

Sophie - Or am I out of date already?

Karl What are you doing?

Tony She's telling the truth. Isn't that right, Sophie?

Sophie And before that - Sandy.

Tony Ha!

Sophie – but she wasn't serious.

Karl None of them were. You know that.

Sophie Except Laura. That lasted a year.

Karl That was... It didn't mean anything.

Tony It must've meant something, or it wouldn't have lasted a year. Or was it just sex? Come on, you can tell us.

Karl It's none of your business.

Tony I'm making it my business – the way you made my life your business! So what was it? Good old-fashioned lust? A one-night stand that went on a year? What?

Sophie Actually, Tony - we both had affairs.

Tony What?

Karl Sophie don't...

Sophie We've been together a long time, Tony, things happen. If you love each other you just - move on - isn't that the phrase, Karl?

Tony Forgive and forget, eh? How tolerant!

Karl What would you know about tolerance?

Tony What would I know? What would I know? A lot, actually: I tolerate you! I tolerate you coming into my house and tearing me apart in front of your 'partner'! – someone who, incidentally, I trusted; someone who brought you into my house! You with your bullshit affairs and your bullshit rock group and your bullshit guitaring! (*To Sophie*) So this is the man you want to live with for the rest of your life, is it Sophie? This is the man you want to be the father of your children? This bloke who says he loves you while he fucks other women.

Karl I don't f ... – sleep with other women.

Tony Yes you do. We just had a list!

Karl I mean, not all at the same time.

Tony Oh well that's very systematic of you! Very orderly. Very sequential.

Karl - You heard what Sophie said! These things happen. People grow apart.

Tony -And then conveniently fall back together again when it suits you.

Karl We've apologised to each other! It's nothing to do with you! – Look, can we just forget all this. I'm sorry if I upset you.

Tony - 'if you upset me? Oh yeah: the new form of apology: make it sound as if the offence is a matter of opinion: 'I'm sorry if you *think* I cut your head off with a carving knife..' Well, you certainly *did* upset me!

Karl I said I'm sorry.

Tony Yeah but you're not. You're not sorry at all. You're not any of the things you say you are. You're not clever. You're not kind. You're not anything. You just like hurting people... - Making me out as some kind of basket-case! I'm *not* mad. Sophie knows I'm not. - I know what mad people are like. I don't dribble. I don't sit in a corner mumbling. Spilling my food. I go out. I shop. I talk a lot of sense. More than you! You ask Sophie. Don't I, Sophie? Sophie's been here a lot without you. Cleaned my flat brilliantly from top to toe. We get on, don't we Soph? So don't paint me as some kind of lunatic. I won't be painted as a lunatic.

Sophie We're not painting you as a lunatic, Tony.

Pause.

Tony Maybe I'm a bit .. eccentric. I accept that.

Karl That was the word Sophie used... - about you: she never said you were mad.

Tony So you *were* talking behind my back.

Sophie Everyone talks behind everyone's back, Tony, it's what makes us human.

Karl Sophie's always been kind about you. It was me who said things. I take it back.

Tony (*expressionless*) Oh yeah? (*Looks at Sophie*)

Karl She said you were 'sweet', if you must know.

Tony Really?

Karl Said the hoarding was.. what was it? - a minor eccentricity.'

Tony Yeah, well, as I say, I can be a bit eccentric...

Pause.

Sophie Tony...- I think we should leave now.

Pause.

Tony But you can't take it back. (*beat*) Once you've said something, you can take back the words, but the thought's out there forever. You think I'm a lunatic, think I should be locked up just because I don't keep my room tidy.

Sophie He doesn't...

Tony Don't lie!

Sophie I'm not lying... please.

Tony Anyway, how would you know what he thinks – eh? Tell me that!

Sophie What do you mean?

Tony How can you possibly know what he thinks of me? You don't even know what he thinks of *you* – this 'partner' of yours! How do you know he loves you? How do you know he hasn't got his eye on the next girl already?

Sophie I know he loves me.

Tony Got a funny way of showing it: fucking other women.

Karl I told you: I don't have other women.

Tony 'Fuck' other women, I said. I'm not interested in whether you 'have' other women. You *fuck* other women.

Karl For god's sake ---

Tony - Oh! for God, is it? Well that really is selfless – devoted - religious, even! ‘Karl, the man who fucks for God!’ – well I’ll tell you what, Karl: he created the universe on his own: I think he can get his leg over without your help! - No, Karl, you don’t fuck for god’s sake..! You fuck for yourself! Because that’s what you are – a fucker! - A fucker who fucks people up and then fucks off!

Goes over to Karl.

Karl... Karl the churl! You’re lucky I only hit you once! (*In his face*) You’re lucky I’m *not* angry anymore. Jesus, I know people who who’d sit you here and beat you ‘til you begged them. – Oh don’t worry - I wouldn’t waste my energy..! Anyway... - torture doesn’t work. – I saw it in a documentary on Pol Pot. Do you know why?

(Karl shakes his head)

- Because people will say anything under duress – just to stop the pain. So it follows that when they confess under torture, the information might be rubbish. So you might as well not torture them in the first place. ‘Course that’s not why people torture people, is it Sophie?

Sophie (Expressionless) Isn’t it?

Tony They’re not interested in getting the truth from them. No, they torture people because actually they enjoy hurting them: they might say they’re doing it for some cause or other, but actually they just enjoy inflicting pain. - Like you wanting to hurt me. - Well maybe not you, Sophie; but him! And he says he wants to help me!? Help me! I ask you! Help me by –(*turns to Karl*) - what was it?

Karl What was what?

Tony That phrase you used? - Some clever bloody phrase ---

Karl ‘Exposure therapy’.

Tony Exposure therapy! Exactly!. Looked it up, did you? Looked *me* up on Wikipedia? I bet you did. I bet you look everything up on Wiki-fucking-pedia! What can’t be looked up on Wikipedia isn’t worth knowing for people like you, is it, Karl! Well, I tell you what: (*he goes to computer and punches in something on keyboard*) - I’ll look *you* up and I’ll tell you what I think! - Karl I’m sorry I don’t know your surname?!

Karl Jacobs.

Tony Jacobs... Good Jewish name. Noble race. Put up with a lot. You’re letting them down, Karl - even as I Google you... - Karl Jacobs: rock star... rock star... rock - star!- Nope! I can’t see you anywhere..... No entries at all in under 0.76 seconds! Not even in good old Wikipedia! Ah, unless you’re Karl Jacobs, professor of bio-genetics at Stanford University, California? No, I didn’t think so either. Hold on, wait! Yes! You *are* on Facebook! Karl Jacobs is on Facebook! Is that you?

Karl Yes. No. - I don’t know.

Tony What? You do know or you don’t know if you’re on Facebook?

Karl Yes, I’m on Facebook. But it may not be me.

Tony What? You might not be you? Now where have I heard that before?

Karl People with the same name, I mean.

Tony Well I tell you what, Karl: let's not even bother to look, shall we? Because, truth is, I don't give a flying fuck whether you're on Facebook or not! I'm sorry to sound indifferent, but I'm just being honest, and honesty is always the best policy!

Sophie gets one arm free from the chair.