

SWINGING

Cast of characters:

Sonia married to
Will
Ingrid married to
Nigel
Geraldine married to
Ivo
Nancy married to
Gareth

Setting:

Saturday evening in suburbia
Nancy and Gareth's house in Paradise Close
Outside the front door and the front room

Props:

A table set upstage centre
On the table are arranged 2 sets of playing-cards: 4 Kings and 4 Queens face
down
A pair of fluffy handcuffs

Sound effects:

Party music (from the next room)

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Sonia and **Will** enter together and stop outside 'the front door'.

Sonia Go on then, Will. Ring the bell.

Will Right.

Will does not move.

Sonia Getting cold feet?

Will (*unconvincing*) No.

Sonia Well then?

Will If you're so keen, Sonia, you ring the bell.

Sonia Okay. I will.

Sonia does not move.

Will }
} (*together*) Listen, if you'd rather –
Sonia }

Sonia Rather what?

Will If you'd rather forget all about it, I'd understand. I know it's a big step for someone like you.

Sonia Meaning what exactly?

Will Well, you've never been exactly 'adventurous' when it comes to this sort of thing.

Sonia You're not suggesting I'm the one with inhibitions, are you? It wasn't me who used to insist on turning off the lights.

Will That was twenty-two years ago. Besides, you said doing it in the dark was romantic.

Sonia It's not romantic coming to bed in your bed-socks.

Will I feel the cold. You know I do.

Sonia Listen, there's no shame in it. You're shy. A bit prudish. You always have been. But please don't pretend it's me. I'm still up for it.

Will Are you?

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Sonia (unconvincing) Yes. I am. Very much.

Will Right then.

Will steps forward and is about to ring the bell when **Gareth** opens the front door.

Gareth Ah, Will, Sonia. There you are. I'd begun to wonder if you'd had second thoughts.

Will }

Sonia }

(together) No, no. Not at all.

Gareth Everyone's here. By 'everyone', I mean Ingrid and Nigel, and Geraldine and Ivo. You met them all at the Edens' leaving party, didn't you?

Will I spoke to Nigel and Ivo.

Sonia And I talked to Ingrid and Geraldine.

Gareth It was that sort of party, wasn't it? Men on one side of the room, women on the other. Well, you'll certainly have a chance to put that right tonight. We're all delighted you've decided to give our 'mixed doubles' evenings a try. Especially now that Adam and Eve have left the neighbourhood. Sorry. Our little joke. We used to call the Edens 'Adam' and 'Eve'. Now they've gone, we're in need of new blood. Figuratively speaking, Sonia. This is Paradise Close, not Transylvania.

Nancy enters.

Ah. Here she is. My lovely wife, Nancy.

Nancy Good evening, Sonia. (appraising) And you must be the husband.

Gareth Now, Will, Sonia – it's all very simple. Drinks and nibbles next door. We spend a little time 'getting to know each other' and then, when you're ready, you come in here and take a card. Kings on the left, Queens on the right. So, Will, you'll come in and take a King – the King of Clubs, say – and then later you'll find who has the Queen of Clubs. And you, Sonia –

Nancy (interrupting) I think they have the idea, Gareth.

Gareth So. I take my card like this (takes card), look at it and then hide it away until all the cards have gone. There's only one rule. What goes on in the bedroom, stays in the bedroom. Come with me, Will. I'll introduce you to Ingrid and Geraldine.

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Gareth and Will exit.

Sonia I have to admit I'm a bit nervous.

Nancy Really? Why's that?

Sonia I've never attended a wife-swapping party before.

Nancy (*severe*) This is not a wife-swapping party, Sonia. This is swinging. The whole concept of 'wife-swapping' is too suburban for words. Too 'Ruislip'. Too 'androcentric'. (*explanatory*) 'Andro' meaning 'Male'. This is not about facilitating the male need for multiple partners. It's about empowering couples - and particularly women. Opening them up to changes and possibilities. Allowing them to enjoy the breadth of experience traditionally denied them by a patriarchal society.

Nigel enters.

That's right, isn't it, Nigel? I was telling Sonia. This evening's all about empowerment.

Nigel Oh, yes, Nancy. Absolutely.

Nancy takes a card and exits.

Hi. I'm Nigel. Ingrid's husband.

Sonia I'm Will's wife.

Nigel We didn't meet at the Edens' party, did we? We're going to miss them at 'mixed doubles', you know. Adam and Eve were our stalwarts. I doubt if they'll find anything similar in Budleigh Salterton.

Sonia (*agreeing*) I doubt if they will.

Nigel (*sudden*) You see I'm searching for my inner sex god. It needs to be released. I'm a firm believer in Tantric sex. Have you ever seen the erotic sculptures at Khajuraho?

Sonia I can't say I have.

Nigel No, neither have I. That's why I come here. Every month. Religiously.

Sonia And?

Nigel Nothing yet. My sex god's in there somewhere. I know it is. Maybe you'll be the one to set it free?

Ivo enters.

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Ah, Ivo. Have you met Sonia?

Ivo Hello, I'm Geraldine's husband.

Nigel takes a card and exits.

Nigel's been telling you about the search for his inner sex god, I suppose?

Sonia Yes.

Ivo My guess it's deep in hiding and most unlikely to be found in Paradise Close. What about you, Sonia? What are you searching for?

Sonia I want to enjoy the breadth of experience traditionally denied me by a patriarchal society.

Ivo You've had one of Nancy's lectures?

Sonia Yes.

Ivo In my experience Nancy's all talk. By the time she's finished telling you about it, there's no time to do anything. Which suits me fine as it happens.

Sonia Does it?

Ivo If you're hoping to spice up your sex life, Sonia, I'm not the answer, I'm afraid. I'm a hopelessly romantic monogamist.

Sonia Then why - ?

Ivo Geraldine is the only woman in my life but she has her fads. Pottery, astrology, geology. Her latest one is 'femdom'. Female domination. It's her new enthusiasm. She likes the kit, I think. Anyway. I don't fit the bill. Love songs, bouquets and sweet endearments have no place in the world of the dominatrix. Don't worry. It'll pass. Geraldine's fads always do. In the meantime -

Sonia Yes?

Ivo It's fine. If I draw Nancy, it's talk, talk, talk. Ingrid is as unenthusiastic as I am. Last time she and I had a very happy time playing Scrabble. And if I draw Geraldine - which does sometimes happen - we simply go home and drink cocoa.

Ingrid enters.

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Here she is. The Emmanuelle of Paradise Close. I'm going to take my card and leave you two to plot your evening's erotic adventures.

Ivo exits.

Pause.

- Ingrid** This is a bit embarrassing, Sonia, but I wonder if I could ask you about your husband.
- Sonia** Will? What would you like to know?
- Ingrid** Is he very 'keen' on sex.
- Sonia** Well –
- Ingrid** Because I'm not. I only come here because of Nigel. I don't like being left alone in the house. Nigel's on this quest, you see.
- Sonia** His inner sex god?
- Ingrid** Exactly. I don't mind sex but I can't say I've ever really wanted it. It's mostly something Nigel does to me six or seven times a week. More often than that on holiday, of course.
- Sonia** Oh.
- Ingrid** It doesn't bother me. And it doesn't take very long. How about you?
- Sonia** It's silly. Will and I are in a bit of fix. There were a couple of occasions when Will wanted sex and I didn't – I've been really busy at work – and I think he felt piqued. The next time I wanted sex, Will said he didn't feel like it which irritated me because frankly I didn't believe him. So the next time he wanted sex, I – Well. There we are. We're now in the situation where neither of us will admit to the other that we want sex. Which means we don't have it.
- Ingrid** But you'd like it?
- Sonia** With Will I would.
- Ingrid** But not with anyone else?
- Sonia** No, I don't think so.
- Ingrid** The one to avoid is Gareth. He enjoys 'experimenting'. Gareth can find folds and nooks and crannies you never dreamt you had.

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Sonia That sounds rather repellent.

Ingrid Oh, it is. And thoroughly exhausting.

Will enters.

Ah, well. Better take a card and hope for the best, I suppose.

Ingrid takes a card and exits.

Will How's it going? You look a little –

Sonia Oh, fine. Yes, fine. How about you?

Will I'm trying to escape from Geraldine. She keeps trapping me in a corner and talking about pain and humiliation and power exchange. It's freaking me out a little if I'm honest.

Sonia You never know, Will. You might enjoy it. Sorry. I was joking. But look on the bright side. There's only a one-in-four chance you'll be paired with Geraldine.

Will That's true. And, after all, what's the worst that can happen?

Sonia Probably best not to think about that.

Geraldine enters.

Geraldine There you are, Willy. I hope you haven't been hiding from me.

Sonia I think I'll go and umm –

Sonia exits.

Will You should know, Geraldine, that I have a very low pain threshold.

Geraldine Don't worry about that, Willy. With a little bit of 'training' and 'discipline' we'll raise it sky high. Now, which card shall I take? This one, I think.

Geraldine takes a card and exits.

Gareth enters and goes to the table.

Gareth What's left? A King and a Queen. Have you taken your card, Will?

Will takes a card and looks at it.

I'm guessing the last one's Sonia's. I'll go and find her.

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Gareth exits.

Pause.

Sonia enters.

Will Come for your card?

Sonia Yes.

Sonia takes her card and looks at it.

Will Well. What did you get?

Sonia You first.

Will No, you.

Sonia Say it together.

Will } King of Hearts.

Sonia } Queen of Spades.

Will Sorry, I didn't –

Sonia No, nor did I.

Will Shall we – ?

Sonia Yes. Let's.

Beat.

Will } King of Spades.

Sonia } Queen of Hearts.

Will (*quickly*) Once more?

Sonia Okay.

Will } King of Hearts.

Sonia } Queen of Hearts.

Will Again.

Sonia To make certain.

Sonia and **Will** both look at their cards again.

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Sonia and **Will** look up together.

Will } King of Hearts.
}
Sonia } Queen of Hearts.
Will Yes. That's right. We seem to have been paired together.
Sonia We do, don't we? How odd. And not at all the purpose of the exercise.
Will No. Well. Never mind.
Sonia Exactly. Never mind.
Will Shall we – ?
Sonia Yes. Let's.
Will Bye, everyone
Sonia Bye.

Exit **Sonia** and **Will**.

Enter **Geraldine** holding a pair of handcuffs.

Geraldine Willy! Willy? Where are you, Willy?

Enter **Gareth**.

Gareth Sonia! Sonia?
Geraldine They seem to have gone.
Gareth What a shame. I was quite looking forward to fresh flesh.
Geraldine Yes. That's right. So was I.

Geraldine and **Gareth** look at each other. **Geraldine** holds up the handcuffs. **Gareth** holds out his hands. **Geraldine** puts on the handcuffs. Less than enthusiastically **Geraldine** and **Gareth** exit together.

THE END