

MATCH & MIX

Cast of characters

Henry, married to Caroline

Caroline, married to Henry

Alisdair, Caroline's ex

Florence, Henry's ex

(all within the same age range, for example, late-30s to late-40s)

Setting

Henry & Caroline's flat

Sound effects

Doorbell

Properties

Bunch of flowers

Box of chocolates

Bottle of wine

G&T

Glass of mineral water

The living-room. Stage right to the kitchen/dining-room. Stage left to the front door.

Caroline and Henry are waiting for their guests to arrive.

Caroline (*musings*) I'm just wondering ...

Henry What?

Caroline Sorry?

Henry What are you 'just wondering'?

Caroline If they'll like each other.

Henry Alisdair and Flo? Of course they will.

Caroline Will they?

Henry No idea – but if they don't, there's nothing we can do about it.

Caroline Are we being very 'smug-married', do you think?

Henry Trying to fix up Flo and Alisdair? Yes, we are. Very 'smug-married'.

Caroline Then why ...?

Henry This whole match-making malarkey was your idea, Caroline.

Caroline I thought it was yours.

Henry No.

Caroline If you say so, Henry.

Henry There's nothing to fret about it. Alisdair and Flo are both adults. They're both single. They're both lonely ...

Caroline Are they?

Henry Lonely? Of course they are.

Caroline If you say so.

Henry The point is they'll either fall into each other's arms ...

Caroline ... or they'll tear each other's throats out.

Henry Well, yes. There is that possibility. In any case, it should be quite amusing.

Caroline Don't be so heartless, Henry.

Henry Heartless? Me?

SFX: The doorbell rings.

Caroline crosses to the front door. Henry follows her.

Caroline opens the front door. Alisdair is standing there with a bunch of flowers and a box of chocolates.

Alisdair Hello, Caroline.

Caroline Hello, Al.

There's a moment when it looks as if they are going to kiss each other on the cheek, but they don't. Instead Alisdair hands Caroline the bunch of flowers.

Henry *(stepping forward)* Alisdair, hello. I'm Henry.

Alisdair Henry. Yes, of course.

A moment when it looks as if they're going to shake hands, but they don't. Instead Alisdair gives Henry the box of chocolates which he accepts briefly before handing it to Caroline

Henry Good to meet you at last, Alisdair. I've heard a lot about you.

Alisdair Have you?

Henry Not really. But it's what people say, isn't it?

SFX: The doorbell rings again.

Caroline opens the front door. Florence is standing there with a bottle of wine.

Florence *(looking past Caroline to Henry)* Hello, Henry.

Caroline You must be Florence.

Florence And you must be Carolyn.

Caroline *(correcting)* Caroline.

Henry steps forward and kisses Florence on both cheeks.

Florence *(holding out the wine)* Something for you.

Henry *(taking the bottle & looking at the label)* Barolo? You remembered?

Florence Of course.

Henry Come on in. *(moving further into the lounge)* What would everyone like to drink?

Caroline Florence. This is Alisdair.

Florence and Alisdair acknowledge each other, but say nothing.

Henry A G&T, Flo?

Florence Naturally.

Henry Alisdair?

Alisdair I'll have something non-alcoholic.

Henry Non-alcoholic? Are you driving?

Caroline Al doesn't drink.

Henry I see. *(beat)* Caroline, could you help me to ...?

Henry indicates to Caroline that they should leave Alisdair and Florence on their own. Henry exits.

Caroline *(to Alisdair)* Badoit, lemon, no ice?

Alisdair Thank you.

Caroline exits.

A short silence.

Florence Well, then, Alisdair ...

Alisdair Yes?

Florence I think we're supposed to talk to each other, aren't we?

Alisdair Are we?

Florence Well, we can't just sit here saying nothing.

Alisdair Can't we?

Florence Okay. Fine.

The silence resumes.

Florence *(finally)* How do you know Henry and Carolyn?

Alisdair Caroline.

Florence Okay, Caroline. How do you know Henry and Caroline?

Alisdair Caroline and I were engaged. *(correcting himself)* Very nearly engaged.

Florence Very nearly?

Alisdair Long story.

Florence Go on. *(beat)* She dumped you?

Alisdair I wouldn't put it like that.
Florence How would you put it?
Alisdair I'd prefer not to talk about it.
Florence Okay. Fine.

The silence resumes.

Florence Henry dumped me.
Alisdair I see.
Florence He said he'd met someone else.
Alisdair Caroline?
Florence Yes.

Henry re-enters with a G&T which he gives to Florence

Henry You know, the two of you have something in common.
Florence Oh, yes. What's that?
Henry You're both Scottish.
Florence Scottish? Really?

Henry exits.

Florence So, Alisdair. You're Scottish ...
Alisdair My grandfather was Scottish. I'm not. What about you?
Florence I've been to Edinburgh twice. Maybe three times. But that's it.
Alisdair Then that's something we do have in common.
Florence What?
Alisdair Neither of us is Scottish.

A brief smile.

Florence Why don't you drink?
Alisdair I don't like the taste.
Florence You're not a vegan, are you?
Alisdair Why do you want to know?

Florence Just trying to make conversation. *(beat)* I'm not keen on them myself.

Alisdair Them?

Florence Vegans. Vegetarians. Calorie counters ...

Alisdair Anyone else?

Florence Fitness freaks. Tree huggers. Do-gooders ...

Alisdair Is there anyone you do like?

Caroline re-enters with a glass of Badoit which she gives to Alisdair.

Caroline How are you two getting on?

Florence We've established that neither of us is Scottish.

Caroline *(puzzled)* Oh. Well that's something, isn't it? I'll leave you to it, shall I?

Caroline exits. A brief pause before Alisdair follows her.

Another brief pause before Henry re-enters.

Florence What a pompous bore!

Henry Alisdair? Is he? All I know is that he and Caroline were once engaged.

Florence Very nearly engaged.

Henry What?

Florence Doesn't matter. Long story apparently. But what on earth did she see in him?

Henry Who knows? It's odd what attracts people to one another, isn't it?

Florence Yes. Very. *(beat)* Henry?

Henry What?

Florence You haven't told her yet, have you?

Henry I will.

Florence When?

Henry Soon.

Florence How soon?

Henry Very soon.

Florence This evening?

Henry Yes, Flo. This evening.

Caroline enters.

Caroline Dinner is served.

Henry Shall we ...?

Florence exits and Henry follows.

A brief pause and Alisdair re-enters.

Alisdair What a dreadful woman!

Caroline Florence? Is she?

Alisdair Loud. Blousy. Bigoted ...

Caroline But she must have something. She and Henry were an item for quite some time.

Alisdair All I can say is that he's well out of it. *(beat)* Caroline ...

Caroline I know what you're going to ask, Al, and the answer is no, not yet. But I will. When the time's right.

Alisdair And when will that be?

Caroline Soon. Very soon. I promise.

Alisdair This evening?

Caroline *(suddenly decisive)* Yes, Al. This evening.

Caroline and Alisdair briefly embrace and then exit.

Pause.

Henry *(off)* A drop more Barolo, anyone? The bottle needs finishing off. Florence? Caroline?

Florence *(off)* No, thank you, Henry.

Beat.

Caroline *(off)* Does anyone have room for cheese? Gorgonzola? Goat? Yarg? Alisdair? Henry?

Alisdair *(off)* No, thank you, Caroline.

Pause.

Caroline and Florence re-enter.

Caroline I'm sorry the vegetables were a bit over-cooked.

Florence They were slightly soggy.

Caroline And the soufflé failed to do whatever soufflés are supposed to do.

Florence Soufflés are always tricky.

Caroline They are, aren't they?

Henry and Alisdair re-enter.

Henry You're sure you won't have a nightcap, Alisdair? No, of course not. Silly of me.

Alisdair and Florence find themselves standing in front of each other. Both turn away. An awkward pause.

Alisdair Right then. I'll say goodnight. Goodnight, Henry, *(to Caroline with a meaningful look)* Good night, Caroline.

Alisdair exits.

Florence I should be going, too. Good night, Carolyn. *(to Henry with a meaningful look)* Good night, Henry.

Florence exits.

Henry That went well, didn't it?

Caroline You are joking?

Henry Of course I am. They hated each other. You must admit Alisdair's hard work.

Caroline At least he's not loud.

Henry Meaning ...?

Caroline What on earth did you ever see in her?

Beat.

Henry Caroline ...

Caroline Yes, Henry?

Henry I don't know how to put this.

Caroline Don't you?

Henry I think we ...

Caroline Need to talk?

Henry Yes.

Caroline Yes, Henry. I think we do. I really think we do.

THE END