

**A QUESTION OF BALANCE**

A one-act play

by Michael J Barry

The Counting House  
Dodington  
Nether Stowey  
Bridgwater  
Somerset TA5 1LE  
01278-733100  
michaelis@perceptivecreation.co.uk

Copyright © 2008 Michael Barry.  
(v4.3)

**CAST:**

JOHN - about 25, regional newspaper journalist.

MAUREEN - about 20, teacher trainee doing teaching practice

ANN - about 21, university student.

**SET:**

Lounge and bedroom of small, rented flat, which includes a small bathroom (off) and kitchenette (off). It isn't impressive, but nor is it student grot. Outside the front door is room to walk to a down-stage corner and stand in a pool of light (as if under a street-lamp).

Scene changes should be as near instantaneous as possible - a blink of the lights or something similar. The pace should be as little interrupted as possible. If coffee cups need clearing or characters need repositioning, it is suggested these be manoeuvred as far as possible during the action rather than in scene changes.

**TIME:**

Present day.

Running time approx. 1 hour

**ENDING OF PLAY:**

Feedback to initial drafts of this play showed that everyone had different ideas as to how it should end - and every reading of every version led to fresh demands for a new ending. The one constant factor that emerged was a willingness to discuss the issues positively.

Accordingly, rather than impose an artificial choice, as writer, on a situation that could clearly end in different ways, one of which would be selected in reality on the basis of very minor subtleties - I then provided a version with all four of the most logical endings - so that the performing company could themselves select the ending they felt to be most appropriate for them. Or the choice could be left to the audience - and a short additional speech to them by John was included, so that they could vote on and select the ending the majority felt was the right one for them.

Needless to say this satisfied no-one and I was accused of "copping-out" as a writer. I have therefore reverted to an early ending as providing a properly pessimistic view of life - but leave the other three endings as an appendix for the curious, or for use as specified above!

SCENE 1 - MORNING; JOHN'S FLAT IN A PROVINCIAL TOWN.

A LETTER IS PUT THROUGH THE LETTER-BOX. AN ALARM RINGS IN THE BEDROOM.

MAUREEN LOOSENS HERSELF FROM JOHN'S SLEEPING EMBRACE, GETS UP AND STARTS WHAT IS OBVIOUSLY A WELL-SET MORNING ROUTINE: HOUSECOAT, SLIPPERS, RADIO 4 ON, BRIEF VISIT TO BATHROOM, KETTLE ON, CLEAR TABLE AND SET LETTER ONTO TABLE, WAKE JOHN AND DRAG HIM OUT OF BED, GET COFFEE, GET DRESSED, PUT ON TOAST AND BACON, HURRY JOHN ETC.

A FAIR AMOUNT OF THIS COULD BE DONE BEFORE THE HOUSELIGHTS GO.

MAUREEN: Come on, lazy bones. Why can't you ever get up.

JOHN: Oooh! You beast. You know I'm fragile!

HE SITS UP AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. MAUREEN RETURNS TO KITCHEN.

MAUREEN John! Coffee's ready. (PAUSE) Are you coming to get it?

JOHN: Maureen, be kind to me. be human, just once - and bring the bloody coffee here. My legs are still asleep.

SHE DOES SO

MAUREEN: That language of yours! I'll never dare introduce you to my parents! And NO cigarettes! Ten a day and you've twice the chance of heart disease...

JOHN: (MIMICING) And as for the amount you drink...!

MAUREEN: All right, all right! See if I care. Go on, kill yourself.

SHE RETURNS TO BREAKFAST PREPARATIONS. JOHN GETS UP.

JOHN: Did you ever hear of a journalist who wasn't trying to kill himself? Alcohol, tobacco and coffee beans - and maybe printer's ink. That's what makes a newspaper. (MUSING) And of course - guts, integrity, grit...

MAUREEN: I thought you wanted to be a serious writer?

JOHN: I will be. What do I mean I will be? I am!

MAUREEN: You know, I can't really see you as a family man - in spite of all you say.

JOHN: Maureen my lovely - you have a heart of gold, but it's just too early in the morning to start the shock treatment. Anyway I thought you were getting used to "living in sin" to use your mother's quaint phrase! After all, it's only during your teaching practice.

MAUREEN: And only until I've got you to the altar steps, lover-boy!

JOHN: You'll need a shot-gun for that!

MAUREEN: I'll buy one! I still have some principles, you know. And even a cynic like you should be able to remember what principles are about.

JOHN: Oh I used to know all about principles -in my active Catholic days.

MAUREEN: I thought there was a human being in there somewhere.

JOHN: Principles are the result of brainwashing and therefore give you hang-ups - Christ! I can smell bacon; how can you?

MAUREEN: You must start the day with something to eat!

JOHN: Start the day with something, certainly - but TO EAT! Yuck! That's how you get puppy fat.

MAUREEN: Don't be rude. I'm just voluptuous.

JOHN: Voluptuous! That's rich! You can't be voluptuous and have principles. Not your principles, anyway.

MAUREEN: Oh, don't get at me, John. Please.

JOHN: Then come here and let me show you my principles.

MAUREEN: There isn't time, lover-boy.

JOHN: You mean it's sinful in the morning. More sinful, that is. That's one of your principles, isn't it?

MAUREEN (HEADING TO KITCHEN): There's a letter for you in here.

JOHN: Gas, tax or phone?

MAUREEN: Sorry?

JOHN: Don't be. They're not. They're gannets. Beaks open all the time.

MAUREEN: It's handwritten. From Brighton.

JOHN: (TO HIMSELF) Ann!

MAUREEN: Probably one of your ex-girlfriends!

JOHN (TO HIMSELF): Ex! Oh dear, oh dear.

MAUREEN: Come on! It's ready.

JOHN ENTERS LOUNGE, OPENS LETTER.

JOHN: I can't wait! Yummy-yummy-yum. All-bran. Is that what you're teaching your little brats today - how to keep regular? Or what?

MAUREEN: No, stupid. It all depends on Miss Jameson. But I know we're going swimming this afternoon.

JOHN: So all the little boys can ogle your beautiful body and discover how awful it's going to be to have both a sex drive and principles!

MAUREEN: Not at all! They're all far too well bred for all that.

JOHN: Or too hung-up already!

MAUREEN: Eat your cereal and I'll get the eggs fried.

JOHN: (GROANS) No - no more! Bacon's quite enough! Bacon's MORE than quite enough.  
(PAUSE - JOHN FOLDING LETTER UP).

MAUREEN: Who's the letter from?

JOHN: (SIMULTANEOUS) When does term end incidentally?

MAUREEN GIVES HIM A PLATE OF BACON AND MUSHROOMS AND SITS HERSELF TO EAT.

MAUREEN: On Friday. Why?

JOHN: Oh, just wondering. Just wondering when I can go back to my lonely breakfast of black coffee.

MAUREEN: You want to get rid of me?

JOHN: No, no, not at all. It's just my digestive juices asking for a holiday.

MAUREEN: Well, you're out of luck, sunshine. I'm only planning on going home for Easter weekend. I've some projects for next term to work on, and I can do that better here.

JOHN: Oh!

MAUREEN: And I can keep an eye on you, too. You don't mind, do you?

JOHN: No, no. Of course not. My stomach'll cope.

HE RISES AND COMPLETES HIS DRESSING.

MAUREEN: You haven't had any toast.

JOHN: I'm not fit enough yet. More coffee would be nice, though. You must realize I need breaking in slowly. Domesticity is a man's gilded cage. Or was it a gelded cage?

MAUREEN: And who's the bird? You? Cheer up, honey! I've not shut the cage door on you yet. Hang on, I'll walk with you to the bus.

SHE STARTS TO GET HER SCHOOL THINGS TOGETHER.

JOHN: No, I must taxi today. I'm interviewing a guy who's written a book about whisky.

MAUREEN: Sounds like a labour of love!

JOHN: Best way to start the day. Hope he's got some samples! Hope he's easier to do than that guy yesterday! I couldn't understand half what HE was on about! Then he turns out to be an old friend of the Editor's! Just my luck!

MAUREEN: What was his subject?

JOHN: Oh - psychologist, of sorts. I'm sure the "ologies" have a place in life, but give me a good old political power-struggle any time. That I can understand.

MAUREEN: Thinking of standing for the Council or something?

JOHN: Christ, no! I don't want to sublimate my sex drive to that extent. Not to any extent. No - but writing about power games. That's what I call fun.

MAUREEN: You don't mean I've met the only journalist who doesn't want to write a novel? Amazing!

JOHN: I am really, aren't I? I never realized before. So are my principles - as you may remember!

MAUREEN: You are - filthy! And anyway I shouldn't think they are amazing - I suspect they're very ordinary, really!

JOHN:                    Touche! Damn, I've run out of fags.

MAUREEN:               (PUTS ARM ROUND HIM): Do you good to abstain for ten minutes. Good practice for when you give them up. You'll live longer too - which suits me fine.

JOHN:                    You have a lovely way with words. You'll be a good catch for someone one day.

MAUREEN:                Why do you think I'm here!

                          HE KISSES HER, THEN TURNS AT DOOR

JOHN:                    Oh, I forgot to say. That letter was from an old friend. She wants to come and stay for a while. She's arriving tomorrow. You'll like her. See you tonight.

                          HE BLOWS A KISS AND EXITS BY THE FRONT DOOR.

SCENE 2 - LATE AFTERNOON NEXT DAY.

                          JOHN OPENS THE DOOR TO ANN. WITHOUT A WORD THEY KISS PASSIONATELY.

JOHN:                    Wow! What nostalgia! Great to see you. Come on in.

ANN:                     My letter arrived alright?

JOHN:                    Yesterday.

ANN:                     My God - five days - that's quick - for third class! How've you been?

JOHN:                    Well - as ever. You too by the look of it. And dare I say - more feminine?

ANN:                     Two inches actually. That's the pill for you.

JOHN:                    Great! Fantastic!

ANN:                     I'm OK. Overworked, of course.

JOHN:                    Your mission in life.

ANN: Finals are going to be a big bore.

JOHN: No time for the beloved drama?

ANN: Not as much as I'd like. One production last term. But it all takes so much time! So much effort to wind people up. Miss me?

JOHN: Yes! (THEY KISS AGAIN) Oh, yes! A chap needs an intellectual passion in life.

ANN: If not two or three. I do appreciate your enthusiasm though. You have to be one of the few people I know who make one feel wanted and worthwhile.

JOHN: That's because you are wanted and you are worthwhile. More than I'll ever be. No - OK - don't say it! Coffee?

ANN: Oh, yes please. Long coach trips are exhausting.

ANN SEES SOME OF MAUREEN'S CLOTHES.

ANN: Oh ho! Did I speak but in jest? What do we have here then? Looks like a case for Cherchez-la-femme Footer of the Yard!

JOHN: Oh Christ! So much for breaking things to you gently.

ANN: I'll just sit down quietly - and you can tell me the worst. Remember I'm fragile, have a weak heart and a Victorian upbringing!

JOHN: Well, it's not that bad - I think, anyway. But I am a man - so you might...

ANN: Well, go easy on me. I left my smelling salts at home.

JOHN: What I mean is - I think I already have your - express permission.

ANN: You don't need my permission for anything. Nor I yours.

JOHN: We are compatible! We agreed we were both totally free when apart - with the one proviso, that because of the times we live in - we should be very sensible if we wished to come together again.

ANN: In a nutshell! No possessing. (PAUSE) So?

JOHN: Milk, no sugar? So! Well - so, my admin. capabilities aren't too good. Your letter was a bit sudden, and ....

ANN: But not unexpected?

JOHN: No, far from it. Look: bull and horns time. An ex-girlfriend from teenage years - a Platonic relationship....

ANN: Ecstasy in the mutual contemplation of the ideal?

JOHN: No! We didn't get that far!

ANN: Poor Plato! What a boring life he must have had.

JOHN: Anyway - she started teaching practice here a couple of months ago. I put her up - and - well, Plato succumbed to Eros.

ANN: It's been known to happen.

JOHN: So - I thought - maybe in a typical male chauvinist way: she's a teacher and will go home during the holidays. You're a student and will only be here during the holidays.

ANN: So life will be bliss with a varied diet changing six times a year! You are working on your Catholic hangups!

JOHN: Absolutely! You said I was free - so I took you at your word.

ANN: So you are. And you were - "sensible"?

JOHN: Oh yes - Maureen was a virgin.

ANN: A rare commodity! You were once!

JOHN: Don't remind me! It was awful! Anyway - I had my doubts. I mean - not your intentions - but the only precedence in the Western world for - long-term mating is one to one.

ANN: The monotony of monogamy.

JOHN: That too. Well, I risked it.

ANN: And me?

JOHN: Well - without getting all carried away about it - no change!

ANN: Sounds romantic! You still want? - me? Or - even (dare I mention it?) - love?

JOHN: No change! As before.

ANN: OK. Good enough. And I must admit to using my freedom too.

JOHN: Oh! (TAKEN ABACK - THINKS ABOUT IT; IT DOESN'T HURT) OK. Fair enough. I can handle that. Good, I'm glad. Was it fun?

ANN: It was - an epic weekend. Left me sore but smiling for weeks after. AND it was exceedingly "safe". I had your interests at heart. What about "her" - the other woman?

JOHN: Well, she's a treasure really. Too "good" for me. Very different from you.

ANN: I'm good for you.

JOHN: You miss the irony!

ANN: No, I didn't. And why not? It makes sense - the old Marxist "thesis plus antithesis"!

JOHN: Making synthesis!

ANN: Only in this case "syn-thesis" is spelt with an i not a y! What's her sign?

JOHN: I don't believe it! You're not into that crap, are you?

ANN: It's not crap. There are interesting statistics. And yes - I am into it.

JOHN: Well, I don't..yes, I do. Pisces.

ANN: Of course! It's a water sign, you see.

JOHN: Is it? What are you?

ANN: A dangerous, scorching fire sign. You've picked a good combination.

JOHN: She's nice.

ANN: Unlike me!

JOHN: Or me! You'll get on with her - well, I hope you'll get on with her - if you don't mind her not being your intellectual equal?

ANN: Piss off! You're the arrogant partner, not me!

JOHN: No, I'm not! And I'm certainly not your intellectual equal, come to that - and you cope with that quite well.

ANN: You're better endowed than me, that's why! I'm a push-over for quality performance, as you know.

JOHN: Oh yes! Oh, that's how I want to be appreciated. It makes the prospect of Hell worthwhile!

ANN: Oh, John! I thought you were through all that?

JOHN: Oh, forget it. Anyway, I've told Maureen that you're coming, but I'm not sure what to do now.

ANN: Why not?

JOHN: Well, she's not going home, after all. She's staying here for the holidays.

ANN: Bloody hell! Well, I'm not staying here to be celibate. I've a lot of tension stored up, which needs releasing. And if you're not going to do it, I'll find someone else who can.

JOHN: I can - and will! So stay put, while I ponder on't. "Town Man in Love Nest Tangle"!

ANN: Title for your auto-biography? Well, think quick, Casanova, while I've still got coffee left. (PAUSE) Do you love her?

JOHN: Oh - I reckon I don't even know what love is, yet. I mean I've thought about it. Do YOU think you can love two people at once?

ANN: Absolutely certain of it. Love is for sharing - not rationing.

JOHN: Yes, right - I agree. So - yes, I do - I mean, IF I love, not just desire - as well as "loving" you too.

ANN: We aren't naturally monogamous. Well, you and I certainly aren't. Others just let "society" brainwash them into it.

JOHN: Anyway - the trouble is - I can't hurt her. I mean it's too easy to hurt her. I spend my time doing it.

ANN: With me here, sounds like she'll be hurt anyway. So I go?

JOHN: No! You're very important to me too. I can't really compare you. You're almost polar opposites. It's most inconsistent of me.

ANN: You think so?

JOHN: Balance? Yes - maybe. Alternating between extremes preferably - rather than picking a grey in the middle. I was brought up to be grey.

ANN: In the middle?

JOHN: (SMILING) All over.

ANN: So - you want us both?

JOHN: Yes.

ANN: And I want both too, I think - I mean, you and my freedom.

JOHN: What a pity troilism doesn't work.

ANN: What's troilism?

JOHN: Well - a menage a trois. Three's company, not a crowd.

ANN: Well, why not?

JOHN: Why not? Oh, come on Ann. It's a fantasy. In other words, a communal hangup. Verboten.

ANN: Look John - I wouldn't mind. I assume she'd find three in a bed too kinky to handle - but I don't mind a shift system. Alternate nights or something.

JOHN: Fan-tas-y! Male chauvinist dreamland.

ANN: You forget, you dumbo - I don't have your hangups. I'm normal! What used to be called "free-thinking"! And anyway, fantasy isn't just a male prerogative. I certainly have a few of my own. For a start I might fancy Maureen myself!

JOHN: Look - I just couldn't handle it. The guilt. I couldn't!! Christ, Maureen would go berserck! But me - it's not just hangups or brainwashing - perhaps it's feminist conditioning - that natural male desires are ipso facto wrong, evil - that God made a mistake in designing men; that WE'RE really the second-class citizens - because we lack integration... all that, you know.

ANN: Deary me! We are being sensitive and vulnerable! But yes - I know what you mean. Anyway - don't feel guilty. I know you well enough to know you're absolutely not a chauvinist. In fact I think I can say you'd do the same for me if the situation were reversed.

JOHN: (PONDERERS) Would I? Can't see it myself - but who knows - maybe. Try it anyway. I don't think it would worry me at all. Trouble is one can never be sure until you test it out in fact.

ANN: Well - let's try it this way round first. I can put my non-possessive theories to the test - and get enough sleep to do my revision properly while I'm here.

JOHN: And have your tensions released as well! "Local Reporter in Steamy Sex Romp!" Pity I'm not a vicar!

A KEY IS HEARD IN THE FRONT DOOR.

JOHN: Christ! Maureen! Listen Ann - thanks, my love. Give me tonight with Maureen to bring her round?

ANN: O.K. Kiss?

JOHN: Bless you. Love you! (THEY KISS BRIEFLY)

ANN: Can I have it in writing?

SCENE 3 - NIGHT

JOHN AND MAUREEN ARE GOING TO BED. ANN IS GETTING INTO A SLEEPING-BAG IN THE LIVING-ROOM.

MAUREEN: She's nice, Ann.

JOHN: Yes. I'm glad you like her.

MAUREEN: (PAUSE) Was she your girl-friend?

JOHN: Why do you ask?

MAUREEN: I want to know. Do you mind?

JOHN: You're not jealous are you?

MAUREEN: Did you sleep with her?

JOHN: (PAUSE) I - have done. Yes. Is that especially important to you?

MAUREEN: I don't know. Maybe I am jealous... a bit.

JOHN: Why? We don't own each other you know ... you and I.

HE CLIMBS INTO BED.

MAUREEN: Maybe I'm just an old-fashioned girl at heart.

JOHN: Yes. (PAUSE) I do - love you, you know.

MAUREEN: Do you? Really?

JOHN: Really.

MAUREEN: (ALSO CLIMBING INTO BED AND CLASPING HIM IMPETUOUSLY) And I love you. (SHE KISSES HIM). When did it end?

JOHN: No, listen, this is important, Maureen. You DO know that I love you; really love you; here and now?

MAUREEN: I'm glad. I wouldn't let you do what you did to me, if you didn't love me.

JOHN: (HESITANT) Well - remember that - because you might not like the next bit so much. (PAUSE) It didn't end.

MAUREEN: How do you mean?

JOHN: I never told you because I didn't want to hurt you. I must admit, I thought there'd never be any need to tell you.

MAUREEN: What do you mean?

JOHN: It hasn't ended. Ann and I have been together for about eighteen months. We only meet during university holidays.

MAUREEN: Well, why... why didn't you...?

JOHN: I know. I should have told you. But I started loving you - and wanting you. I suppose I was a coward. But I wanted us to come together - and I'VE certainly not regretted it.

MAUREEN: Oh, no! No! (SHE TURNS OVER CRYING)

JOHN: Listen, my love. Please listen - and try to understand. That love can be shared. I don't believe - in possessive - obsessive relationships. Neither does Ann. She's happy that I've found you as well. It really is possible to love more than one person at once - and for different reasons.

MAUREEN: That's just selfish.

JOHN: No - it's not. It's simple truth. I love you - because you're one of the kindest, warmest people I know. But I love Ann too. She fulfils - other needs in me. She's complementary to you.

MAUREEN: Don't compare me with her.

JOHN: I'm not comp... (SIGHS) Well - I am sorry it's happened like this. I wish you'd realize it's just your preconceptions that are hurting you. If only you could open your mind a little - and see how limiting your sense of love is.

MAUREEN: Limiting! You just don't begin to know!

JOHN: You want to turn me into a possession - a sort of pet animal to have around the house.

MAUREEN: I don't! Really I don't! But I am the way I am. I really thought we could be happy together.

JOHN: So we can.

MAUREEN: That's why I let you make love to me. YOU don't understand - not ME! You don't understand that - virginity - can be - precious. That making love - is a - TOTAL giving. To one person - one only. To me loving is serious. You just want to screw women.

JOHN: No - that's unfair.

MAUREEN: No, it's true. (PAUSE) What are you going to do? You want me to go - now you've finished with me?

JOHN: No, my love. I haven't "finished" with you. I told you: I love you - and need you. I meant it.

MAUREEN: So show it.

JOHN: I love you both - and I don't want to lose either of you.

MAUREEN: I'm not going to share you.

JOHN: Couldn't you try?

MAUREEN: You don't mean it?

JOHN: But why not? You said you liked Ann. Why must you have me so exclusively?

MAUREEN: Oh God! You can't be serious? You want a harem?

JOHN: Just the two people I love - and only while Ann's on holiday. I can't send her away now.

MAUREEN: You mean all three of us in bed together?

JOHN: Not if - no, no - but alternate nights or something.

MAUREEN: (BURSTS INTO TEARS) No, no, no! How could you? Oh, I hate you. You've spoiled everything. Nothing'll be the same now.

JOHN LIES BACK. MAUREEN CRIES TO HERSELF MISERABLY.

SCENE 4 - NEXT MORNING.

THE ALARM GOES. MAUREEN IS AWAKE ANYWAY BUT IGNORES IT. JOHN SLOWLY STRUGGLES UP, TURNS IT OFF, GETS OUT OF BED. HE PAUSES FOR A MOMENT, THEN KISSES MAUREEN LIGHTLY. SHE SHUTS HER EYES, PRETENDING TO BE ASLEEP. THEN JOHN HEADS FOR THE BATHROOM DOOR. MAUREEN OPENS HER EYES, TIRED AND DRAWN.

MAUREEN: John!

JOHN: (TURNING) Yes?

MAUREEN: Alright!

JOHN: (PAUSE) Thank-you.

HE GOES INTO BATHROOM. MAUREEN STRUGGLES UP PAINFULLY, GETS INTO HER DRESSING-GOWN, CROSSES THROUGH LIVING-ROOM TO KITCHEN. SHE IGNORES ANN.

JOHN EMERGES FROM BATHROOM AND STARTS DRESSING. WHILE HE DOES SO, HE WANDERS INTO LIVING-ROOM. ANN IS STRETCHING.

JOHN: Did you sleep alright there?

ANN: Sure! Once I'd put some woolly socks on.

JOHN: It's quite a good sofa for sleeping on - that. It's more comfortable than most beds.

ANN: Sleep on it a lot yourself, do you?

JOHN SMILES. MAUREEN APPEARS AT KITCHEN DOOR, PAUSES FOR A MOMENT, THEN HEADS BACK TO BEDROOM.

MAUREEN: Kettle's on - if anyone wants coffee.

TRYING TO CONTROL HERSELF, SHE  
GOES INTO BATHROOM. JOHN AND ANN  
LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

JOHN: It's OK - she's agreed. She'll probably  
find it a bit difficult to start with -  
but she's a good sort. She'll recover her  
good humour quite quickly, I should think.

ANN: Good for her.

JOHN: Coffee?

ANN: Please.

JOHN GOES INTO KITCHEN. ANN GETS  
UP AND STARTS TO PULL ON HER  
JEANS AND JUMPER. JOHN APPEARS  
IN KITCHEN DOOR, HOLDING SUGAR  
BOWL, AND WATCHES HER -  
REMEMBERING HER BODY WITH  
PLEASURE. ANN SEES HIM, PAUSES  
FOR A MOMENT, THEN SMILES  
HERSELF.

ANN: Milk, no sugar - remember!

JOHN: Oh - er - yes. Er - I.... right!

JOHN RETURNS INTO KICHEN AS  
MAUREEN REAPPEARS, DRESSED, FROM  
BATHROOM, FINDS HER SHOES,  
CROSSES INTO LIVING-ROOM. JOHN  
BRINGS OUT COFFEE FOR ANN AND  
GIVES IT TO HER.

ANN: Thanks.

MAUREEN: I get my own, do I?

JOHN: Er - no. No - I'm just doing it.

MAUREEN: Oh, good. Thank-you.

JOHN RETURNS TO KICHEN AS  
MAUREEN FUSSES AROUND GETTING  
BOOKS TOGETHER FOR SCHOOL.

ANN: What do you do, Maureen?

MAUREEN: Teach. (CALLING OFF TO JOHN) If you don't get a move on, John, we'll be late.

JOHN: Coffee coming up.

JOHN RETURNS WITH TWO MORE  
COFFEES. GIVES ONE TO MAUREEN.

JOHN: (JOKINGLY) No full English breakfast today?

MAUREEN: There isn't time to cook for three. You'll have to get something at work.

JOHN: No problem.

MAUREEN: You better show her where everything is.

JOHN: Oh yes - of course. Er - Ann...

JOHN AND ANN GO INTO KITCHEN.  
LEFT ALONE FOR A MOMENT, MAUREEN  
NEARLY BREAKS DOWN - BUT  
CONTROLS HERSELF FROM THIS  
LUXURY AND TURNS TO CHECK SHE  
HAS ALL SHE NEEDS.

JOHN: (OFF) Cereals etc. here - things like bread, cheese and so on - over here. And all the usual things, plus veggies, in the fridge. Oh - and plenty of bacon and eggs and stuff too.

ANN: (RETURNING) That's marvellous. More than enough. I'll put my share in the pot of course - while I'm here.

JOHN: Oh don't worry about that. My treat.

MAUREEN: She might as well, John. Three can't eat as cheaply as two, you know.

ANN AND JOHN THINK THIS IS  
HILARIOUS AND FALL ABOUT.  
FORTUNATELY MAUREEN SEES IT TOO  
AND JOINS IN, ALBEIT  
RELUCTANTLY.

ANN: What about a library?

JOHN: Just up the road - by the shops. It's new  
- and has a very good reference  
department.

ANN: Great! Just what I need.

JOHN: They're very helpful too.

ANN: And I can use this table to work on?

MAUREEN: (IMPATIENTLY) Come on, John.

JOHN: Yes - OK. Yes - of course you can. Oh -  
key!

ANN: Got one! From last time.

MAUREEN: That's why I had to get one cut.

JOHN: (AS MAUREEN TURNS AND GOES THROUGH FRONT  
DOOR) OK - see you later. Alright?

ANN: Yes - fine.

THEY KISS BRIEFLY AS MAUREEN  
TURNS AT THE DOOR AND SEES THEM.  
THEY SEE HER. MOMENT'S FREEZE.

SCENE 5 - EVENING.

MAUREEN IS IRONING JUST INSIDE  
THE BEDROOM DOOR (SHE CAN SET IT  
UP AT START OF SCENE). JOHN AND  
ANN ENTER BY FRONT DOOR.

JOHN: Maureen?

MAUREEN: What?

JOHN: We've got you a lager. OK?

MAUREEN: (SILENCE)

JOHN: Are you ironing?

MAUREEN: Doesn't do itself.

ANN: Do you want a hand?

MAUREEN: No thanks. I take it you wanted these washed?

ANN: You needn't have done them. I can wash my own, you know.

MAUREEN: Well, John can't.

JOHN: (TRIES NOT TO BE DEFENSIVE) Well, sit down. Coffee, I think. I can make coffee. And Mike Batt - I've only discovered him in the last couple of months.

HE PUTS ON A CD OF "ZERO ZERO"  
TRACK: "LOVE MAKES YOU CRAZY".

ANN: Don't know him. Enlighten me. My thirst for knowledge is only surpassed by my thirst for lust and good brandy.

JOHN: Wrong! You can't have a thirst for lust! Lust is a thirst.

ANN: Pedant. And wrong yourself. Lust is a hunger, not a thirst.

JOHN: Well - all I can say is - it's nice, whatever it is!

ANN: Sounds interesting!

JOHN: Lust is very interesting. So's brandy!

ANN: No - you fool. The music.

JOHN: "Interesting" is an intellectual cop-out.

ANN: Agreed - let's say I'm reserving judgment until I've heard more. But I like it.

JOHN: Maureen - lager - or would you prefer coffee?

HE ENTERS BEDROOM WITH CAN AND GLASS.

MAUREEN: Lager please. If you can spare the time.

JOHN: Of course I can spare the time. How're you doing? Come and join us.

MAUREEN: About tonight. You only have one spare blanket that I can see.

JOHN: Oh!

MAUREEN: And no spare pillows.

JOHN: Well....

ANN: I don't need a pillow.

MAUREEN: That's very kind of you.... considering.  
(PAUSE) So what do I sleep in?

JOHN: Well, do you mind a sleeping-bag?

MAUREEN: Do I have a choice?

ANN: Christ! Look, if....

JOHN: No! (PAUSE) You used a sleeping-bag when you first came here. If you wrap the blanket round it, you should be quite comfortable. You didn't complain before.

MAUREEN: I'll let you know in the morning. Well, I suppose I'd better clear out of the bedroom, as you'll be wanting....

SHE BURSTS INTO TEARS.

JOHN: Maureen, my love!

MAUREEN: Don't touch me! I'm alright. But I'd like to go to bed now please.

JOHN: Yes, of course.

ANN WASHES OUT THE MUGS, AND  
MOVES HER CASE INTO THE BEDROOM.  
JOHN MAKES UP THE BLANKET,  
PILLOW AND SLEEPING-BAG.

ANN: I've been in some situations in my time, but...!

JOHN: Just keep your seat-belt on for a day or two. We might just avoid blood-shed!

ANN: It'll play havoc with your Catholic conscience, all this!

JOHN: My ex-Catholic conscience!

ANN: Do you a world of good!

MAUREEN RETURNS FROM BATHROOM.  
JOHN TAKES OFF THE CD.

JOHN: I've made it up. You'll sleep OK here.

MAUREEN: (GETTING IN) I won't sleep at all.

JOHN: My love - I'm sorry about... But please try. I'm sure you won't find it so bad really.

MAUREEN: It's all so - so wrong.

JOHN: No, not wrong - just different. Please try. I don't want to have to - choose between you.

SHE'S TRYING NOT TO CRY. HE KISSES HER LIGHTLY AND GOES INTO THE BEDROOM, SHUTTING THE DOOR. MAUREEN IS LEFT PROPPED UP, STARING AFTER HIM.

IN THE BEDROOM, ANN EMERGES FROM THE BATHROOM, READY FOR BED. SHE AND JOHN EMBRACE PASSIONATELY FOR THE FIRST TIME.

MAUREEN'S SHOULDERS START SHAKING AND SHE BURIES HER HEAD IN HER HANDS, REALLY LETTING THE TEARS GO AT LAST.

JOHN AND ANN BREAK TO LOOK AT EACH OTHER - OBVIOUSLY TOGETHER, OBVIOUSLY ONE. JOHN TENDERLY STROKES HER CHEEK WITH HIS HAND.

SLOW FADE TO SCENE-CHANGE LIGHTS.

SCENE 6 - THREE DAYS LATER - EVENING

MAUREEN IS WORKING AT THE TABLE, THINKING HARD, CROSSING THINGS OUT, FINDING IT HARD GOING.

JOHN IS IN THE KITCHEN. ANN IS  
JUST COMING OUT OF THE BEDROOM  
WITH A BOOK IN HER HAND. SHE  
PAUSES BY THE TABLE.

ANN: Another project! You are industrious.

MAUREEN: Yes.

ANN: What are you tackling this time?

MAUREEN: (PAUSE - THEN RELUCTANTLY) It's about work.

ANN: And?

MAUREEN: And what?

ANN: Look - make an effort, Maureen. I am another human being!

MAUREEN: And what?

ANN: And - do you have a problem with it? I see you've crossed out a lot of it.

MAUREEN: Yes - that's because I'm not too sure of some of it yet.

ANN: Why not?

MAUREEN: Well - I'm a bit lost on it. If you MUST know.

ANN: Yes. I would like to know. It would interest me. I would like to know more about what you do.

MAUREEN: Well - it's not so easy. I mean - you know - to be sure. Especially when things keep changing.

ANN: What sort of things? In particular?

JOHN ENTERS FROM KITCHEN.

MAUREEN: It's a sign of our generation's culture, I suppose.

JOHN: Post-modern Youth - that's us!

MAUREEN: I mean, it used to be important - to DO a job. Well - to HOLD a job.

ANN: You mean, to develop a career?

MAUREEN: No, not really. That's one of the changes possibly. But developing a career for us means - changing jobs - moving on.

JOHN: What's wrong with that?

MAUREEN: Nothing. Well - I don't know - I mean, perhaps there is something wrong with that. This is where I get confused.

ANN: But why?

MAUREEN: Well - if developing a career means changing jobs, then it must reduce loyalty. People get less loyal - not just to their employers (and for some reason the very idea of that sounds somehow dirty today) - but even to the basic success of the business they're running together.

ANN: And you think that's wrong?

MAUREEN: Don't you? I certainly thought the reverse was right - when it was the fashion - for our parents and grand-parents. But I don't know that I can explain why?

ANN: Try.

MAUREEN: Well - doesn't pursuing a personal career erode a shared sense of purpose - increase self-seeking? I think it all adds up to promote selfishness.

JOHN: What a load of crap!

ANN: John! That's not fair.

JOHN: Not fair! What do you mean? Maureen is well over 30 years out of date, and you say it's not fair to point it out?

ANN: No she's not - she's considering the historical perspective. She's just said so!

MAUREEN: Thirty years out of date? What do you... Are you saying being selfish is now the in-thing?

JOHN: No, of course I'm not - that's your choice of word, not mine. You're just putting your own blinkered view on history and writing it off. You'll be promoting the idea of mediaeval Romantic Love next.

ANN: Maybe YOUR view of history is blinkered. Just because something has changed doesn't mean that progress has occurred!

JOHN: Rubbish. Change occurs because people want it. And that's progress! Anyway - even if my view were contentious, at least I'm paid to take a stance. A teacher isn't.

MAUREEN: Look, instead of just being such a clever dick, why not say what you've got to say so that I can understand it.

JOHN: "Be true to yourself" - that's what I'm saying. It's probably a quote from your precious Bible. Parable of talents or something!

MAUREEN: Meaning what, smarty-pants?

JOHN: Meaning you have a responsibility to develop your own skills, your own personality, your own talents, your own - character. No one else is going to do it for you. And you're blowing it - wasting life - if YOU don't do it.

MAUREEN: Well - even if that IS true - you can still do it and have loyalty to ....

JOHN: Rubbish Maureen. You just don't begin to think straight. How someone like you gets to teach the next generations, I don't know...

ANN: John! For heaven's sake...

MAUREEN: No - let him finish.

JOHN: ...you're just feeding them what your grandparents thought. We have moved on, you know. And you - the teachers - are supposed to take the next generation that little bit further beyond this one. You're not even on the starting-blocks!

MAUREEN: And you are I suppose?

JOHN: At least I'm living in the present.

MAUREEN: Yes - scribbling superficial tittle-tattle that'll be... that'll be - forgotten - disappear - tomorrow - which is all it deserves!

JOHN: Which is exactly why I might change it - develop my career into something more worthwhile. That proves my point.

ANN: Come on - shut up - both of you.

JOHN: What's the point of loyalty to something you might not completely believe in? Think, Maureen!

MAUREEN: And you keep out of it. It's nothing to do with you.

JOHN: Leave her alone. It's not her fault - this is OUR argument.

MAUREEN: At least I'm doing something worthwhile.

JOHN: Worthwhile!! Christ! "At least I'm doing something worthwhile"!!

MAUREEN: And that's typical of you - sneering like a little boy when you've run out of steam.

JOHN: God - you're turning into a right old - school-marm!

MAUREEN: Well, at least I've got some values to be proud of. Unlike you. And I'm certainly not going to compromise them for a... a - would-be yuppie gigolo, like you.

JOHN APPLAUDS IN SNEERING SLOW  
HAND-CLAP.

ANN: Come on, you two. Let's have some peace and quiet. This is stupid!

JOHN: Christ, Maureen! You're something out of the Dark Ages!

ANN: John! Stop it. Maureen - it's just not worth....

MAUREEN: Oh leave me alone. I can do without YOU interfering. Go on - both of you. Go to bed and leave me be.

ANN: But I'm on the sofa tonight.

MAUREEN: No, you're not - I've claimed it. I want to be on my own. You're the two who share these amazing modern values - so go and do what really interests you - go and fuck yourselves silly!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 7 - A FEW DAYS LATER - EVENING

THE ATMOSPHERE IS JOLLIER THAN SO FAR. MORE SIDELIGHTS ON, SOME BACKGROUND RADIO 2. MAUREEN AND ANN ARE EMPTYING A BOTTLE OF WINE. MAUREEN IS MENDING, ANN HAS SOME OPEN BOOKS AROUND HER.

MAUREEN: Oh I don't mind really. Teaching primary children is nice. They're lovely. Just big babies, really. I'll miss them now term's over.

ANN: I couldn't do it. I don't really like kids I suppose.

MAUREEN: Not even your own?

ANN: Them least of all.

MAUREEN: You don't mean it?

ANN: I do. I'll probably get myself sterilized one day. Motherhood would destroy me.

MAUREEN: Oh, no - you mustn't do that. I'm sure you'll change.

ANN: I doubt it. I take it you want your own?

MAUREEN: Oh yes - more than anything! I'd be really happy with one of my own.

ANN: Well - chac'un a son gout, as the experts usually say. And goo sounds about right for discussing babies. So it's marriage you want?

MAUREEN: Yes. Marriage - with lots of babies.

ANN: You can have babies without being married, you know.

MAUREEN: Oh no - well, I mean, you need the security.

ANN: Marriage isn't necessarily secure - as lots of women - and, let's be fair, men - have discovered to their cost. It's only secure if your partner is a willing prisoner.

MAUREEN: (NOT COMPREHENDING) Prisoner? Well - it's usually - well, I don't know. It CAN work out.

ANN: But equally, we now have the freedom to opt for alternative approaches. Lots of women are single parents - and many from choice. Lots work AND have babies.

MAUREEN: No - that's not right. You can't be happy like that.

ANN: It does give you more freedom - and IF you only have one life, you need freedom to make the best of it. (PAUSE) Anyway - talking of happiness, you're looking a bit happier than you were when I first arrived?

MAUREEN: Yes! well, I suppose I am. I don't think I agree with it any more than I did though.

ANN: So - what's changed?

MAUREEN: Oh, I don't know. Maybe I've realized that - well, all that side of things, it really isn't so important.

ANN: Sex?

MAUREEN: Yes. It's nice - but not really - necessary. To me anyway. Do you know what I mean?

ANN: It sounds very much like repressing yourself to me! But I have to recognize that I'm probably an abnormally randy specimen of womanhood - so I suppose I can't judge.

MAUREEN: Well, I'm really quite surprised - but apart from those first few nights, it's really not bothering me much. I don't think, well maybe, that I'd really mind who John slept with - as long as he still loved me.

ANN: Which he does. And I can see why.

MAUREEN: Yes - he says so. But I think he means something else. It's all a bit complicated for me. I'm a simple soul really. Not intellectual, like you.

ANN: Oh, Christ!

MAUREEN: Well, anyway. I might be old-fashioned - but I do believe in the way I was brought up. I know it's right. The values my parents believed in - they really are right - not superficial things that go out of date. I mean - I have thought about it.

ANN PUTS AN ARM ROUND HER AND  
GIVES HER A KISS.

ANN: Anyway - as long as you're not miserable because I'm here any more?

MAUREEN: Oh, no! Not at all. I like you too - that helps doesn't it? It's nice having you around. It's easier to talk to another woman, somehow. Whenever I talk with John - somehow we don't actually say much.

ANN: Maybe you and I should set up house together! Who needs men after all?

KEY IN OUTSIDE DOOR. MAUREEN LAUGHS AT THE TIMING.

MAUREEN: Absolutely! Who needs men?

ANN: And here's our Lord and Master to give us the answer.

JOHN: That sounds like an ominous question!

ANN: No - just our bit of fun.

MAUREEN: Sounds a bit like those bible texts - you know, the ones that go over the bed. "Behold, thy Master cometh!"

JOHN: That's enough sauce from you, my girl! You're supposed to be innocent.

HE KISSES BOTH IN TURN, CHECKS THE EMPTY WINE BOTTLE, OFFERS THEM A CAN OF BEER, WHICH THEY DON'T WANT, AND POURS ONE FOR HIMSELF.

MAUREEN: So I was - once. (SINGS) "But alas, alas, I long in vain; I ne'er shall be a maid again". Sad really.

JOHN: Never look back. Be positive. Drink up. Look to the future. It's all ours!

ANN: I'll drink to that. To making the future happen my way. To pro-action.

MAUREEN: (GIGGLING) Well - I'll drink to - Pro-creation!

JOHN: Oh my God! Well I'll drink to a word beginning with "Pro" - meaning the creation of new moral structures and the final shedding of nasty hangups that screw people up.

ANN AND MAUREEN CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY, SO LAUGHING THEY ALL DRINK.

FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 8 - A FEW DAYS LATER - MORNING.

JOHN AND MAUREEN ARE LYING IN  
BED TOGETHER CONTENTEDLY.  
THEY'VE JUST MADE LOVE.

ANN, LIT BY AN ANGLEPOISE, IS  
PROPPED UP ON THE COUCH IN A  
SLEEPING-BAG TRYING TO  
CONCENTRATE ON A BOOK OF  
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

SHE IS SMOKING, HAS A CUP OF  
COFFEE BESIDE HER, AND IS  
FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO  
CONCENTRATE. HER GLANCE WANDERS  
TO THE BEDROOM DOOR NOW AND  
AGAIN.

MAUREEN:                   That was good.

JOHN:                       For me too!

MAUREEN:                   It hurt a little though.

JOHN:                       Hurt! You're joking!

MAUREEN:                   It's alright. It wasn't much. Do you love  
me?

JOHN:                       Er - yes. You're funny - but lovely!

MAUREEN:                   And I love you.

JOHN:                       It's nice to see you happy again.

MAUREEN:                   You make me happy.

JOHN:                       Let's stay that way.

MAUREEN:                   I do like Ann, you know. You've got good  
taste.

JOHN:                       Of course! So do you! (HE KISSES HER) A  
balanced life!

MAUREEN:                   You'll come to a bad end one day. Mark my  
words!

JOHN: I'll mark something else if you don't watch out.

HE POUNCES ON HER AND KISSES HER PASSIONATELY. THE ALARM GOES OFF - AND JOHN TRIES TO SILENCE IT WITHOUT BREAKING HIS CLINCH. IT FALLS OFF ON TO THE FLOOR. HE SWEARS AND MAUREEN SCREAMS WITH LAUGHTER.

ANN HEARS ALL THIS - AND ATTACKED BY SUDDEN JEALOUSY, SHE SHUTS HER EYES TIGHT, LIFTS HER FACE WITH THE PAIN AND TRIES TO CALM HERSELF.

MAUREEN: HOUSECOAT, SLIPPERS, BATHROOM. EBULLIENTLY, JOHN IN UNDERPANTS DASHES THROUGH THE LIVING-ROOM TO THE KITCHEN, PUTS THE KETTLE ON AND DASHES BACK.

JOHN: Rise and shi-ine!

HE STARTS DRESSING ENERGETICALLY, CROSSING WITH MAUREEN TO ACCESS THE BATHROOM. MAUREEN, MORE OR LESS DRESSED, HAPPILY AND CONFIDENTLY HEADS FOR THE KITCHEN.

MAUREEN: Wakey-wakey, sleepy-head!

ANN SINKS VISIBLY INTO THE PROTECTION OF HER SLEEPING-BAG. SHE IS FEELING VERY RAW AND BRUISED.

JOHN AND MAUREEN ALMOST COLLIDE IN THE LIVING-ROOM - AND BURST OUT LAUGHING.

JOHN: Right! I actually feel like one of your full English breakfasts today, my love.

MAUREEN: That's funny - you actually look like one, too! OK - I'll just get my shoes on and then you shall have it. You too, Ann?

ANN: Just coffee.

MAUREEN: Oh go on - treat yourself! It does wonders for you, starting the day with...

JOHN: Careful what you say...!

MAUREEN: ...with a full stomach! You are crude, John!

ANN: Well, sorry - but I can't face it.

JOHN: You'll disappoint her if you don't eat her mansize breakfast, you know.

ANN: Christ! Look - I just want a cup of black coffee. OK?

MAUREEN RETURNS TO THE KITCHEN

JOHN: Are you alright?

ANN: I'm fine. I'm just not hungry.

JOHN: Are you sure. You don't...

ANN: Look - bloody leave me be, will you. For the third time, I just want bloody coffee.

JOHN: OK! OK! Control it! I hear you.

MAUREEN: Here you are love. I'll get you some aspirin.

ANN: I don't need any aspirin.

MAUREEN: It does help, you know.

ANN: For Christ's sake, Maureen. I don't want aspirin; it's not "that time of the month"; there's nothing wrong with me - I just want some peace and quiet.

SILENCE. JOHN AND MAUREEN LOOK AT EACH OTHER QUESTIONINGLY.

SCENE 9 - MIDDAY, THE SAME DAY

ANN IS WORKING AT THE DINING-ROOM TABLE, WRITING AN ESSAY AND DRINKING COFFEE. THE OUTSIDE DOOR OPENS AND JOHN ENTERS.

JOHN: Hello!

ANN: Hi! What brings you back at this premature hour?

JOHN: How's it going?

ANN: So, so!

JOHN: A masterly analysis of the cultural dangers of former Eastern-block Socialism espousing Western free-market principles?

ANN: Subtly disguised as a searing attack on decades of British government deathblows to individual cultural sensitivity!

JOHN: To be serialized for the serious by the New Statesman!

ANN: Headed (STRESSING "WITHER") "Wither Art?" - question-mark (no H in "wither").

JOHN: Oh - subtle! And filmed for the masses by Steven Thing Soderbergh...

ANN: With the title "Sex, Yet More Lies, and TV Reality Shows"! (PAUSE) It's a winner! So - what brings you back? I thought you never had time for lunch here.

JOHN: Not usually. Today's an exception. Fancy pie, beans and chips a la maison?

ANN: I've eaten worse.

JOHN KISSES HER.

ANN: That's nice. Do I deserve it?

JOHN: You want we should have just desserts? What's wrong with pie, beans and chips?

ANN: I don't make a habit of asking - but: do you love me?

JOHN: You need to ask?

ANN: Would I believe the answer? Why have you come back now?

JOHN: Come to bed.

ANN: Good heavens! Well - love watcheth not the clock. I never could say no to a fate worse than death. Lead on! I shall not resist.

JOHN LEADS HER THROUGH TO THE BEDROOM, TURNS TO HER, STARTS UNDOING HER BLOUSE, THEN KISSES HER.

SHE RESPONDS, THEN SUDDENLY CLINGS TO HIM WITH UNACCOUSTOMED PASSION, PUTTING HER HEAD ON HIS SHOULDER.

HE LIFTS HER HEAD UP SO HE CAN SEE HER EYES.

JOHN: You're crying! Why? Come and sit down and tell me about it.

HE SITS AGAINST THE HEAD OF THE BED, SO SHE CAN SIT IN FRONT OF HIM AND LEAN BACK AGAINST HIM.

JOHN: Why were you so miserable this morning?

ANN: Oh, dear. I'm not used to being a silly, weak female. It's all a new experience.

JOHN: Don't fight it - if that's what you feel, go with it. Tell me about it?

ANN: I didn't want to tell you. I thought it would just go away. In fact, I didn't really believe it - that it was possible.

JOHN: Didn't believe what?

ANN: That I could be jealous.

JOHN: Jealous? Of Maureen and me?

ANN: Yes - I'm surprised too.

JOHN: I never realized.

ANN: I'm sorry, John. Really. It's funny. I suppose I'm the old-fashioned one, not Maureen. After all my theorizing too!

JOHN: But I don't understand. Is it ...is it bad? Does it hurt - Maureen and I being together?

ANN: Yes, it does. I've fought it, because the next stage is possessiveness.

JOHN: Shit! So - what? What do you want? Or don't you know?

ANN: It's still a bit new to me - loving someone so much. It's not really me. Do you still want me - after telling you all that?

JOHN: More than ever.

ANN: But Maureen as well?

JOHN: If possible, yes.

ANN: I've come to some conclusions. I don't think you're going to like them. I'm sorry - but I've had to recognize that I've changed.

JOHN: Oh dear, you're going to turn us all upside down.

ANN: I'm afraid so. The facts are - I love you - and I can't, any longer, share you - not even next term. It's costing me too much. Dear John, I'm sorry - but it's all or nothing.

JOHN: Well, at least you're honest.

ANN: I also think - if you don't mind me selling myself a little - that your affinity for me is better founded than your feeling for Maureen. In the long-term we'll work much better. And once next term is finished, I'd be prepared to come and live with you.

JOHN: How can you be so sure?

ANN: Because you're developing and changing - we all are, I know, but in your case, you'll go on gaining self-confidence, self-reliance. You just won't need the same sort of - mothering? that Maureen represents for you.

JOHN: Christ! The claws are out now.

ANN: No - don't misunderstand me. That's too easy. I like her anyway - in a different scenario I could probably settle down with her myself - well why not ? - as you say, we're very complementary to each other. But the point is, I can see why you feel you need her.

JOHN: Look, I'm just attracted to her. I haven't analysed any deep-felt need or anything.

ANN: But it's there! It's ducking the issue of making a genuine - emotional commitment - by spreading yourself across two people. But it's also having someone around you can persuade yourself you're cleverer than - in order to boost your own confidence.

JOHN: Oh come on! I don't feel that about...!

ANN: Not consciously, of course not...

JOHN: Not at all. For Christ's sake! Anyway - what next?

ANN: Oh dear - well, you and I are at least equal to start with - on the same wave-length - with similar interests - similar level of sexuality. It's just so obvious.

JOHN: Look, I don't find it...

ANN: And I'm changing too. In time my - rough edges will round off - and my aggression quieten down.

JOHN: I can't wait!

ANN: John, please - be constructive - help me. Don't keep taking things personally!  
(PAUSE) .../

.../ A one-to-one commitment has got to be much more humanizing - if you're prepared to make the effort and not duck out of the way of - of the pain that goes with change.

JOHN: (COLDLY, DEFENSIVELY) I think you're losing me.

ANN: One-to-one with me - is going to be a much more efficient way of - realizing your full potential, getting somewhere as a human being. (BIG) It just needs the commitment - a commitment to match mine (MISERABLY TRAILING OFF) - which is why I'm putting myself on the line and saying all this.

SHE TURNS AWAY AND TO RELEASE HER TENSION PICKS UP SOMETHING AND HURLS IT FORCEFULLY INTO THE SOFA.

JOHN: (FLOUNDERING) I - I'm -sorry. I'm grateful. Truly, Ann. I don't begin to deserve this. (REACHES FOR HER HAND). But you're asking a lot of me - if you're right in what you say, a lot - to change so much so quickly. Maybe in time.

ANN: Of course it'll take time. That's where we can help each other. I can just see the direction a bit more clearly than you. You will see it though. You'll improve with age. Men usually do.

JOHN: But - you're asking me to send Maureen away?

ANN: She'll survive. She's much more committed to the idea of a man - any man - and a family, a secure house and home. She'll find it easily.

More to the point, what she wants is not the same as what you want. You know it. All the time, you're both clashing. I've sat and watched it. You'll make her much more miserable if you leave a break until you can't stand it any more.

JOHN: (RELUCTANTLY) I don't know. Maybe.

ANN: You do know. Be honest with yourself.

JOHN: Oh all right - you're right. As usual!

ANN: Oh, don't be bitter about it, John.  
(PAUSE) You still have the option of sending me away instead.

JOHN: But how long will I satisfy you?

ANN: We have the potential. Let's develop our relationship properly. It has tremendous possibilities. (SHE SNUGGLES UP TO HIM). Please!

JOHN: (SIGHS) I suppose - life with Maureen IS comforting.

ANN: But - I'll get better at that - we'll both get better at fulfilling...

JOHN: I know. (PAUSE) How soon?

ANN: Soon.

JOHN: Oh God, I hate hurting.

ANN: You're already doing it.

HE TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS  
PROPERLY, AND THEY HOLD ON TO  
EACH OTHER, TAKING COMFORT FROM  
EACH OTHER.

JOHN: I need some time, you know. I can't go in cold, like this. I need to let all this - sink in.

ANN BREAKS AWAY

ANN: (DEADPAN) Yes.

SHE GETS OFF THE BED AND CROSSES  
TO DOOR.

ANN: I'll get some food ready.

SCENE 10 - THAT NIGHT.

JOHN IS STRETCHED OUT ON THE SOFA LISTENING TO "ZERO ZERO", ANN IN AN ARM-CHAIR WITH A BOOK IS WATCHING JOHN (WHO IS THINKING). MAUREEN TROTS BETWEEN BATHROOM AND BEDROOM WITH WASHING AND IRONING.

SHE COMES BACK IN FROM THE BEDROOM HOLDING UP ONE OF JOHN'S SHIRTS.

MAUREEN: Look at this shirt! There is a limit to economy, don't you think?

ANN: If you're rich.

MAUREEN: John. You do need a new shirt, you know.  
(PAUSE) Shall I get you one tomorrow?  
(PAUSE) What's wrong with him?

ANN: (RISING) Meditating, I think. Coffee?

MAUREEN: Oh! Looks more like dozing off to me! Yes, please. Middle-age will suit him - don't you think? By the way I washed your jeans for you.

ANN: (GIVES MAUREEN A CUDDLE AND A KISS) You're a treasure.

MAUREEN: I am really. I'll hang them up. They'll be dry by the morning.

ANN: I sketched out that project on what money's all about, for your kids, by the way.

MAUREEN: Oh that's nice of you. Thanks. I'll look at it in a moment. You know, it's nice living with another woman. Who needs men, really? They're only trouble, aren't they?

ANN: (SMILES, GIVES HER ANOTHER KISS AND HEADS FOR KITCHEN) Too right! Coffee, John?

HE STIRS AND LOOKS ROUND.

JOHN: Oh - yes please.

HE RISES AS MAUREEN RETURNS TO  
BEDROOM. HE FOLLOWS HER.

JOHN: All right, my love?

MAUREEN: Yes thanks, nearly finished this lot.

HE PUTS HIS ARMS ROUND HER.

JOHN: Fancy another night of it tonight?

MAUREEN: What? Two in a row? Ann'll never agree to that?

JOHN: Yes she will. Anyway I want to talk to you.

MAUREEN: So do I. I've got a secret to tell you.

JOHN: Have you? Then put that down and come over here.

HE SITS AGAINST HEADBOARD. MAUREEN LIES HER HEAD ON HIS CHEST.

MAUREEN: This is nice. I never get the chance to talk to you when I'm doing ironing and things.

JOHN: So you've got a secret, have you? Is it a nice one?

MAUREEN: Oh yes - well I think so. I only found out today.

JOHN: What is it?

MAUREEN: I hope you'll be pleased too.

JOHN: Tell me then! The suspense is killing me!

MAUREEN: You're going to be a dad! (STUNNED PAUSE). You are pleased, aren't you?

JOHN: Er - I don't know. Are you sure?

MAUREEN: Yes, absolutely.

JOHN: Christ Almighty!

MAUREEN: I bet it'll be a boy. He'll look just like you. Still, we won't hold that against him. Oh, it's lovely. I feel so happy.

JOHN: Maureen, dear Maureen - I'm glad you're happy - but where does it leave us?

MAUREEN: How do you mean?

JOHN: Well - Ann?

MAUREEN: Ann? I don't understand.

JOHN: Well - can we - I mean, do you see us carrying on together as we are, or - oh Christ!

MAUREEN: But it's me you love, isn't it?

JOHN: Well yes - but...

MAUREEN: I mean, I wasn't sure at first, but I am now.

JOHN: Sure of what?

MAUREEN: But surely you don't need to ask. I'm going to have your baby!

JOHN: So?

MAUREEN: (GETTING IRRITATED) Well, it's obvious, isn't it? We'll get married and have a proper home.

JOHN: But Ann?

MAUREEN: Well, she can come and visit us. As a friend. And you can talk then - I know I don't talk as well as she does. But that's not everything, is it - talking?

JOHN: Oh, Christ!

ANN COMES OUT OF KITCHEN WITH THREE COFFEE MUGS ON A TRAY. SHE SEES THE PARTLY-CLOSED DOOR, UNDERSTANDS ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND HESITATES OVER WHAT TO DO WITH THE COFFEE.

MAUREEN: (PUSHING HIM TO AGREE) That's the only way, John. You must see that? I mean, I've my parents to tell too.

JOHN SUDDENLY GETS UP OFF THE BED AND HEADS FOR THE LIVING-ROOM DOOR. HE GRABS HIS CIGARETTES AND MATCHES.

MAUREEN: John, what are you doing? Where are you going? John - for God's sake, face up to it. For once.

ANN: John? What's the matter?

MAUREEN: Don't leave, John. (WEAKENING) Please! Don't go! Not now!

JOHN HEADS FOR THE FRONT DOOR, GRABBING A JACKET ON THE WAY, AND EXITS.

[IF OFFERING OPTION OF ENDING TO AUDIENCE, JOHN MOVES INTO A POOL OF LIGHT IN A DOWNSTAGE CORNER, LIGHTS A FAG, INHALES DEEPLY AND TRIES TO SUBSIDE].

MAUREEN, AT THE BEDROOM DOOR, BURSTS INTO TEARS. ANN CROSSES TO HER AND LEADS HER TO THE SOFA.

ANN: What's wrong, Maureen? Here, come here! Have a tissue. Now calm down, and tell me what happened.

MAUREEN: I don't know - I don't know why he went off like that. I thought he'd be happy. I thought he loved me and would be happy when I told him.

ANN: Oh God! Told him what?

MAUREEN: About the baby. I'm pregnant. And I was happy about it - but he just got up and went off. He just won't face up to what is right for him - for us. Oh, sorry, Ann. I shouldn't be talking to you like this.

ANN: You're sure about the baby?

MAUREEN: Yes!

ANN: What else did you say to him. (MAUREEN BLOWS HER NOSE) Did you talk about marriage?

MAUREEN: Well, only because he didn't understand.

ANN: Didn't understand! Christ! How ingenuous can you get, Maureen? Oh - shit!! (PAUSE - SHE SITS BACK AND THINKS)

**[IF AUDIENCE CHOICE OF ENDING OPTION APPLIES CUT TO APPENDIX HERE. IF COMPANY CHOICE OF ENDING, THEN GO TO PG 53 FOR ENDINGS 2,3,4. WHAT FOLLOWS IS WRITER'S CHOICE IF ONLY ONE ALLOWED - VIZ ENDING 1]**

ANN DOESN'T LIKE DOING THIS BUT IT OBVIOUSLY HAS TO BE DONE. SHE POURS THEM EACH A GOOD DRINK. SHE NEEDS HERS - AND SHE THINKS MAUREEN WILL NEED THE OTHER ONE.

ANN: Look Maureen - stretch your mind a little. Is marriage really that necessary?

MAUREEN: Yes!

ANN: Why?

MAUREEN: I've told you. I can't have a baby without being married.

ANN: Of course you can. And we both know it's the baby you really want.

MAUREEN: No, it's not.

ANN: A home - and security?

MAUREEN: Well - yes.

ANN: Well - you can have those without a husband.

MAUREEN: Oh, come on Ann. Would you be a one-parent family?

ANN: I wouldn't be a parent, full stop! But it can be done - and it's much easier now than it's ever been.

MAUREEN: Why?

ANN: Because there's all sorts of help available: social security, tax relief, children's allowances and so on. Then John would help support you too. You could work and have someone in during the day - or use a creche.

MAUREEN: I couldn't do that. I'd need to be with the baby.

ANN: You know you like teaching. You shouldn't give it up - not after training for it. You could do it part-time at least. The point is it's really not that difficult.

MAUREEN: But why should I? John should marry me.

ANN: You know he doesn't love you, don't you?

MAUREEN: He does - he said so.

ANN: But not really. He likes - being looked after. He likes having someone to do his cooking and washing - which is degrading for both of you. And yes, he likes your warmth - but that's not loving. And ultimately your mutual affection will die. It has no firm foundations - and close proximity will destroy it.

MAUREEN: No - I don't believe...

MAUREEN IS DISTRAUGHT AND IN TEARS. ANN CAN'T HAND OUT ANY MORE - SHE'S GROUND TO A HALT. MAUREEN HAS WON BY HER WEAKNESS. AFTER A PAUSE, ANN MAKES UP HER MIND SUDDENLY.

ANN: Come on ducky - back to bed with you.

MAUREEN: What's going to happen, Ann? Will he come back?

ANN: I expect so.

MAUREEN: I couldn't go through all this on my own - and I could never have an abortion. I think I'd rather die first.

ANN: There'll be no need for that. John - knows where his responsibilities lie. Come on.

MAUREEN: I can't sleep after all this.

ANN: You will - I'll give you one of my sleeping pills. Come on - up you get.

ANN SEES MAUREEN INTO THE BEDROOM AND GETS HER STARTED GOING TO BED. WHEN SHE GOES INTO THE BATHROOM, ANN RAPIDLY THROWS HER FEW BELONGINGS INTO HER CASE AND PUTS IT INTO THE LIVING-ROOM.

WHEN MAUREEN RETURNS, ANN HELPS HER INTO BED, GIVES HER A PILL, GIVES HER A KISS AND A CUDDLE, THEN LEAVES HER, SHUTTING THE DOOR.

IN THE LIVING-ROOM, SHE PUTS ON "ZERO, ZERO" SOFTLY, COMPLETES HER PACKING, THEN SITS TO WRITE A NOTE TO JOHN.

THEN SHE PICKS UP HER CASE, AN APPLE AND A HALF PACKET OF BISCUITS, TAKES A FINAL LOOK ROUND, THEN LEAVES BY THE FRONT DOOR.

THERE IS A PAUSE, THEN JOHN ENTERS BY THE FRONT DOOR. HE LOOKS AT THE SOFA FOR ANN - UNCOMPREHENDING. THEN HE SEES THE NOTE UNDER THE TABLE-LAMP. HE READS IT.

HIS SUPPORT HAS GONE - HE'S ON HIS OWN, HOIST BY HIS OWN PETARD. HE SUBSIDES INTO A CHAIR, TOO EXHAUSTED TO FEEL OR REGISTER PAIN.

MAUREEN HEARS HIM, GETS OUT OF  
BED AND ENTERS LIVING-ROOM. SHE  
UNDERSTANDS ANN'S ABSENCE  
IMMEDIATELY. AND APPRECIATES HOW  
RIGHT IT IS. SHE PUTS ON THE  
KETTLE.

SHE COMES BACK INTO LIVING-ROOM,  
GOES BEHIND JOHN AND EASES HIS  
JACKET OFF, HANGS IT UP, RETURNS  
TO THE KITCHEN, THEN COMES BACK  
AGAIN WITH A PLATE OF BISCUITS.  
BACK INTO KITCHEN, THIS TIME  
RETURNING WITH A CUP OF  
SOMETHING HOT.

SHE PUTS IT IN FRONT OF HIM,  
THEN SITS IN THE ARMCHAIR AND  
PICKS UP SOME MENDING.

AFTER A MOMENT: -

FADE TO BLACK

**END**

**APPENDIX: CHOICE OF ENDINGS IF OPTIONS WANTED.  
IF CHOICE IS TO BE LEFT TO AUDIENCE THEN:**

JOHN STEPS FORWARD TO AUDIENCE.

JOHN:

Life is a messy business. The more you go for it, the more you try to get out of it, to fulfil yourself, to put yourself on the line, to make it work your way - the messier it gets.

I sometimes think that if there is a point in life, then it's about failing - at least, about trying - and failing. That if you actually succeed, achieve, have it easy, get there - then life has probably let you down! It's just a hunch, mind you - we won't ever know until we've "moved on" to whatever follows, I suppose.

Anyway - about this noble effort of ours to generate more overall happiness than would otherwise be possible: it's getting messy - know what I mean? And if anyone dares say I've made my bed and must lie in it - they'll get thrown out! OK?

Anyway this is so messy that everyone is bound to have different ideas as to how it should end.

The way I see it, there are four potential endings to this story - and in deference to your particular values, I'm going to let you choose the ending that suits you best. Which means I'm putting our lives in your hands!

I could end up with Ann; I could end up with Maureen; maybe I could be lucky and carry on living with both; or, finally, maybe it would be better for me - and for the girls - if I sort myself out on my own, and they go off together!

So - we're now going to take a quick show of hands and the three of us will decide which looks like the majority vote.

So - how many think I should end up with Ann? (ASSESS VOTE). OK - hands down - and how many think I should stay with Maureen? (ASSESS VOTE). How many think our little menage a trois is a good solution and think it should continue? Yeah - good on yer! (ASSESS VOTE).

And finally - how many for the girls to get together and leave me on my own? (ASSESS VOTE). I'll see you lot after, you bastards! OK - thank-you. This is the way you voted:-

IF NEED BE THE THREE CONFER  
QUICKLY AND MAKE A DECISION.  
THEN THEY ACT IT, WITHOUT  
TELLING AUDIENCE WHICH IT IS.

#### **FIRST SECTION COMMON TO ALL FOUR ENDINGS**

JOHN LEAVES THE STAGE.

ANN DOESN'T LIKE DOING THIS -BUT  
IT OBVIOUSLY HAS TO BE DONE. SHE  
POURS THEM EACH A GOOD DRINK.  
SHE NEEDS HERS - AND SHE THINKS  
MAUREEN WILL NEED THE OTHER ONE.

ANN: Look Maureen - stretch your mind a little.  
Is marriage really that necessary?

MAUREEN: Yes!

ANN: Why?

MAUREEN: I've told you. I can't have a baby without  
being married.

ANN: Of course you can. And we both know it's  
the baby you really want.

MAUREEN: No - it's not.

ANN: A home - and security?

MAUREEN: Well - yes.

ANN: Well - you can have those without a  
husband.

MAUREEN: Oh, come on Ann. Would you be a one-parent family?

ANN: I wouldn't be a parent, full stop! But it can be done - and it's much easier now than it's ever been.

MAUREEN: Why?

ANN: Because there's all sorts of help available: social security, tax relief, children's allowances and so on. Then John would help support you too. You could work and have someone in during the day - or use a creche.

MAUREEN: I couldn't do that. I'd need to be with the baby.

ANN: You know you like teaching. You shouldn't give it up - not after training for it. You could do it part-time at least. The point is - it's really not that difficult.

MAUREEN: But why should I? John should marry me.

ANN: You know he doesn't love you, don't you?

MAUREEN: He does - he said so.

ANN: But not really. He likes - being looked after. he likes having someone to do his cooking and washing - which is degrading for both of you. And - yes, he likes your warmth - but that's not loving. And ultimately your mutual affection will die. It has - no firm foundations - and close proximity will destroy it.

MAUREEN: No - I don't believe...

**END OF SECTION COMMON TO ALL FOUR ENDINGS**

**ENDINGS TWO, THREE AND FOUR CONTINUE WITH A FURTHER COMMON SECTION**

ANN: It will - I promise you. You'll be reduced to a skivvy - an unpaid housekeeper. There'll be no real communication between you - there's little enough for you to talk about at the moment. What do you think it'll be like in five years time? Nothing! Silence! Silence - and hate! It'll destroy you - both of you.

MAUREEN: You're - you're just being - it's not true..

ANN: John needs conversation, dialogue, stimulation, mental and emotional - or he freezes up. You'll end up killing him - just for the sake of a cosy nest! You don't even want him for sex, remember! "It's not important. I wouldn't mind who he slept with"?

MAUREEN: But it's right - sex isn't everything..

ANN: You don't need marriage, Maureen. Not with John anyway. You need a baby and security. You've got the one - and you've got the strength to get the other - either by making it for yourself or getting another man. There are plenty - hundreds out there who'd be delighted to get you - whether you've got a baby or not.

**END OF SECTION COMMON TO ENDINGS TWO, THREE AND FOUR**

**ENDING TWO: ANN AND JOHN:**

ANN: You just really don't have to - don't have to -

MAUREEN: Don't have to what?

ANN: Don't have to - deprive me of the one thing I want - my only need.

MAUREEN: John.

ANN: Yes. Not babies, not home, not security - just John.

IT'S ANN WHO IS CRYING NOW.  
MAUREEN IS AGONIZED. SHE'S NEVER  
HAD TO RISE TO A DECISION LIKE  
THIS BEFORE. IT'S NOT EASY.

MAUREEN: Oooh! Oh Ann! I don't even know what to do.

ANN: (HATING HERSELF) You go home. Tell your parents. Be tough with them. It was a mistake - but you've decided you want to keep it. It's your life. Finish your training. See - see the Social Security and the Education Authorities at home. It's worth the cost to see a solicitor because he'll be on your side from the start and will tell you all the help you can get. Discuss the problem.

(TRYING TO STOP HERSELF CRYING). They'll all help you find the answers. Don't live at home unless you really want to. It's not necessary - but parents can make good baby-sitters. On the other hand, some councils run nurseries.

And you can get money for rent - or a mortgage - money for a child-minder - money to continue your training. Decide what you want - and get it.

MAUREEN: But John -?

ANN: I'll tell him.

MAUREEN: There is a late train. I suppose I -

ANN: I'll help you pack.

THEY START GETTING MAUREEN'S  
THINGS TOGETHER. ANN PHONES FOR  
A TAXI. THEN JOHN ENTERS.

MAUREEN: John!

JOHN: You're going? I'm sorry love - but it must be.

MAUREEN: I - yes - we discussed it.

JOHN: Both of you.

ANN: What?

JOHN: I'm sorry - but it has to be. I need to be alone - sort myself out.

ANN: But John - be realistic. You agreed - you know I'm right.

JOHN: It's not as simple as that.

HE STARTS PUTTING ANN'S THINGS TOGETHER.

ANN: But we've worked it out - Maureen's agreed!

JOHN: Look - I thought this could work and it hasn't. It's no-one's fault. But I'm not making impossible decisions like this at gun-point.

ANN: But we've already done it!

JOHN: I don't care what you've done, Ann. I haven't yet - worked out my decision - what I want. I don't know about the future at the moment. And right now I don't care.

MAUREEN: (AT FRONT DOOR) Taxi's here!

JOHN: There's a late London train too, isn't there?

RELUCTANTLY ANN FINALIZES COLLECTING HER THINGS TOGETHER.

JOHN: I'm sorry Maureen. You've been good for me - and I hope you aren't too bitter about this. I was about to try and make a break - earlier - but your news about the baby beat me to it. I will support it - make sure you're not short of money - that sort of thing. Take him - or her! - off your hands from time to time, if you want.

MAUREEN: We'll see!

JOHN: I mean it - seriously! Ask me for any help - OK? Don't be proud or anything. I will do what I can. And if you'll let me - I'll be your friend - for life! I hope you won't cut yourself off from me, because I'm not - because of this.

MAUREEN: OK. I'll not - I'll keep in touch. Lover-boy! (KISSES HIM)

JOHN: You'll find someone much better than me. All that warmth and affection of yours - they'll be fighting to get hold of you.

MAUREEN SMILES - NEARLY CRIES - DOESN'T - THEN PICKS UP HER BAG AND LEAVES BY FRONT DOOR.

JOHN: Got everything? Good. You may be right, Ann. I don't know. It's too much all at once. I'm not ready - for this level of commitment yet. I still need - my - freedom. You've grown ahead of me. Matured - into wanting to possess?! OK - I know. But I suspect you'd despise me, if I sold myself to you. We've both got a lot to work out.

ANN: But John - it's all so simple now.

JOHN: Simple, maybe. But not "now" - maybe in the future. I don't intend to let you escape. It's just a breathing space. To think.

ANN: Ok! OK! Oh shit!

SHE STARTS TO GO - BUT JOHN RESTRAINS HER AND KISSES HER. SHE BREAKS AWAY AND LEAVES. HE SHUTS THE DOOR - NOT WITHOUT RELIEF.

HE TURNS ON "ZERO, ZERO", TURNS OFF MAIN LIGHTS, GOES INTO BEDROOM, STARTS GOING TO BED.

TIME PASSES: THE CD TURNS ITSELF OFF. JOHN SLEEPS, LIT ONLY BY A STRAY MOONBEAM.

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS. ANN  
ENTERS, PUTS HER BAG DOWN,  
UNDRESSES IN THE LIVING-ROOM,  
THEN SLIPS INTO THE BEDROOM AND  
GETS INTO BED WITH JOHN.

HE COMES TO, SEES HER, LAUGHS  
GENTLY AND TAKES HER IN HIS  
ARMS. THEY SETTLE DOWN TOGETHER.

FADE TO BLACK

**END OF ENDING TWO.**

**ENDING 3: ANN AND MAUREEN.**

**ENDING 4: ANN, MAUREEN AND JOHN**

MAUREEN: But I don't need hundreds!

ANN: (SMILING) Well - one then. Come to that  
why one even? Why not a woman?

MAUREEN: A woman!

ANN: Yes - why not? I could probably have my  
arm twisted to look after you - in return  
for having you look after me!

MAUREEN: You're joking!

ANN: Not really! (PUTTING HER ARM ROUND  
MAUREEN, WHO ACTUALLY FINDS IT QUITE  
NATURAL TO LEAN AGAINST ANN). We're much  
more compatible - you and I - than either  
of us is with John. Men have their uses -  
but not enough to compensate for the  
heart-ache they cause. Most of them aren't  
really up to living with a woman. Real  
commitment's just not natural for them.  
Never will be.

MAUREEN: Yes - I must admit - there does seem to be  
an uphill feeling to it all.

ANN: Whereas we would get on - DO get on -  
surprisingly well together. And what you  
want from life is completely compatible  
with what I want from life.

MAUREEN: (CHUCKLES) It sounds quite tempting! John would be absolutely - furious! But - what about - I mean, what about -

ANN: Go on - say it - out loud!

MAUREEN: Sex! (GIGGLES)

ANN: I don't mind - take it or leave it. Have a man in now and again. Or give it a try together and see what you think. It's YOUR life, ducky. You'd do whatever you wanted.

MAUREEN: It sounds like it might be a lot less hassle.

ANN: Well, there's no need to be making major decisions right now - let's just make a small and tentative start. Come and sleep now and we'll look at things in more detail in the cold, morning light.

ANN PUTS ON "ZERO, ZERO". THEY GO INTO BEDROOM, START GOING TO BED. THEY GET INTO BED TOGETHER WITH MUCH GIGGLING FROM MAUREEN - AND SNUGGLE UP CLOSE TOGETHER, BEDROOM DOOR AJAR.

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS GENTLY. JOHN PEERS IN, SEES THE COAST IS CLEAR. HE GOES TO THE TABLE, SCRIBBLES A QUICK NOTE, PICKS UP A FEW BASIC BELONGINGS (WALLET, BRIEFCASE, ADDRESS BOOK ETC) - THEN A THOUGHT STRIKES HIM.

HE TIPTOES TO THE BEDROOM DOOR AND PEERS IN. HE SEES THE GIRLS TOGETHER. AFTER A MOMENT HE COMES BACK INTO THE LIVING-ROOM TO PONDER ON WHAT HE'S SEEN.

AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO, HE SMILES, SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS AND...

**ENDING 3:** ...PICKS UP THE PHONE AND DIALS A NUMBER. WHEN IT ANSWERS:

JOHN:

Hi - it's me. (PAUSE) Hello - you! Listen  
- I rather need a bed for a night (PAUSE)  
or two. Can you - (PAUSE) I hoped you  
might say that. Especially that latter  
bit! Bless you! (PAUSE) I'll explain when  
I see you. Twenty minutes? See you.

HE PICKS UP HIS ESSENTIALS AND  
LEAVES BY THE FRONT DOOR.  
THE GIRLS DON'T HEAR HIM.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

**END OF ENDING THREE.**

**ENDING FOUR:**

...THEN HE SEES THE SLEEPING-BAG  
ON THE SOFA IN FRONT OF HIM.  
"WHY NOT" HE THINKS. HE PICKS IT  
UP, MEASURES HIS LENGTH IN IT,  
LAYS IT ON THE SOFA AND STARTS  
TO UNDRESS.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

**END OF ENDING FOUR.**

Copyright © 2008 Michael Barry