



The Interview: A play script that illustrates hegemonic masculinity, masculine capital and heteronormativity

SEXTANT-Sexualities, Masculinities & Decolonialities

2023, Vol. 1(1) 123-192

© The Author(s) 2023

UCD School of Social Policy,

Social Work and Social Justice

University College Dublin

Julia Appleby¹

University College Dublin

Abstract

The Interview is a play script that tells the story of disgraced British Conservative politician, Harry Bright. Harry's shameful actions of the previous week has led him to organise an interview with the top broadcaster of the country, the BBC, in order to explain his actions. The play takes place in real time, one hour before the interview. The plot incorporates a range of characters entering, exiting, and impacting Harry: his grown-up children Felicity and Sam, his shrewd advisor Simone, his terrifying ex-wife Anita, and his new girlfriend Emily. Chaos ensues as the other characters respond to his actions whilst also creating more obstacles for Harry. The play is informed by the study of masculinities; the plot and relationships explore the theme of power through examining hegemonic masculinity, masculine capital and heteronormativity. The other characters highlight gender roles, the plurality of masculinity, and white, straight cis-male privilege. *The Interview* draws on a range of other topics from masculinity studies including men's health, male friendship, the Manosphere, misogyny, homophobia, stigmatisation and fatherhood.

Key words

Hegemonic Masculinity; Heteronormativity; Masculine Capital; Manosphere; Privilege

¹ Corresponding Author: Appleby, Julia
Email: juliaappleby2@gmail.com

The Interview

Harry Bright

Anita Bright

Felicity Bright

Sam Bright

Simone Roberts

Emily Baker

/ = indicates an interruption

... = indicates a short pause (actors can choose how to play this)

An upper-middle class English accent is essential.

A bleak mid-winter afternoon, in a well-to-do kitchen dining room. It is impeccably clean and fully stocked.. Felicity, 21, potters in the kitchen. She spreads some peanut butter on toast. A door bell.

Felicity:

Coming!!

She re-enters with Simone, 43, an assertive woman. Felicity puts away the peanut butter and finishes her toast.

Felicity:

Tea?

Pause.

Gin?

Simone smirks. Felicity prepares a gin and tonic, meticulously. Simone is particular and precise with her words.

Simone:

I presume he is here.

Felicity:

Upstairs.

A long silence. They sip their beverages.

He's actually very calm.

Simone:

I bet he is.

...

He always is with these things. Let's just hope we can keep matters calm.

Felicity:

So you're not going to lose the plot with him –he thinks you will /

Simone:

Oh god yes. But my anger tends to fuel him into a very productive mode. Unlike your mother's anger.

Felicity:

Yeah. He gets weird when mum is angry.

Simone:

So, how is uni?

Felicity:

Good yea. Only one term left.

Simone:

What's next?

Felicity:

Gap year. Probably.

...

Then find a job. Somehow.

Simone:

Well I'm sure your father could sort you out with some gig.

...

If he hasn't burnt every fucking bridge in the nation with his mind-blowing fuck-ology.

Silence.

Felicity:

Yes well. We'll just have to wait and see what's going to happen.

Silence.

I could change my name.

Simone:

Well if you intend to go into politics too, that would be a stupid idea. They'll find it out. They always find it out.

...

Owning it. Own all the dirt and grime that you will inevitably collect. It can always be spun. But get caught in a lie. That's a hard and sticky hole to crawl out of. Stickier for women too.

Harry enters unexpectedly. He is 56, well groomed, charismatic, cheeky chap.

Harry:

Well that must mean an easy solution to this little situation.

....

I haven't been *caught* in a lieee.

...

I've been ca-uuught in an act!

He gestures a smile to test the waters. Simone finishes her drink.

Simone:

You know, Harry. Before you, I used to drink wine. Lovely, fruity, Pinot Grigio wine. I used to have a boyfriend. A big teddy-bear bundle of kindness. I used to sleep. For 8 hours a night. I would practice yoga. Only once a month, but I still did it.

...

And now. Now, I spend every living moment worrying about your stupid, ludicrous career. On tenterhooks as to what you will do next.

...

You will never be prime minister. Not after this. WHAT.

...

In god. Buddha. Dalai Lama. Mother Theresa. And Jesus Christ. Were you thinking?

A long, extended silence. An electric energy is felt.

Harry:

Which, par-tic-ul-ar, element of all of this are we discussing... right now?

Simone:

Which particular element?

...

Which particular element?

...

Which. Particular. Element?

...

How about the element that drove you to contact the BBC and invite them to your obnoxiously, oversized, elephant home to discuss the other cleverly curated elements that occurred last Thursday night?

...

WHY? WHY? WHY? We could've swept it under the rug. We could've fu-dooshed it out the back window. There were so many things we could have done.

Harry gets the landline.

Harry:

Look, I will ring up and cancel /

Simone tears the landline out of hand and drops it in a jug of lemonade.

Simone:

No, no, no, no, no. This interview is happening, Harold, whether you, or I, or poor little Felicity over here likes it or not.

Harry:

But you just –

Simone:

You, are trending on Twitter.

There are over 500 memes made about, you.

You are on the cover of every tabloid.

Do you, understand, what I am saying Harry?

...

Harry:

Well. Your tone is suggesting to me that the interview is occurring.

Simone:

Your intuition for once seems to be working. Congratulations. Now.

...

Take that stupid tie off, and get into the blue, m&s sweater.

Harry:

Which one?

Felicity:

I'll get it.

She exits.

Simone:

You know you've probably destroyed her entire future.

Harry:

That's a dash dramatic.

Simone takes her phone out and refuses to look at Harry. Silence.

Harry:

Coffee?

Simone:

I wouldn't drink coffee if I were you.

Harry:

Why not?

Simone:

Coffee is essentially a laxative, Harry. And your bowel isn't exactly tickety-boo.

Harry:

My bowel is in the prime of its life. I'm as healthy as a fiddle.

Simone:

You are joking right? When was the last time you went to a doctor?

He proceeds to boil a kettle and prepare a French press. Simone lights a cigarette.

Harry:

Don't need a doctor, waste of money. I can't have coffee but you can stink my house up? That hardly seems fair. Or logical.

Simone:

At this point displaying all your vices could in fact win you some sympathy.

Harry:

I see. So you're smoking on purpose?

Simone glances at him, and gestures yes.

Simone:

What brought you to do this, Harry, I mean really!

Harry:

Well Philip Sykes from the BBC /

Simone:

Yes I know who Sykes is.

Harry:

Well he rang, late last night, and he just seemed to think it would be a brilliant way to redeem myself. To explain why I did what I did /

Simone:

You continue to amaze me, Harry. You are so easily manipulated, it's terrifying. I actually worry for the people of England if you do become prime minister. And not because you'll do something stupid like you did on Boxing Day. But because if Putin rings you up and says it would be a good idea for you both to elope, you probably would.

Felicity re-enters with the sweater.

Felicity:

Here.

Harry:

Splendid! Great choice. I never really understood the 'politician costume', you know that's why I needed a woman advisor. Finish making the coffee for Simone, Fi, will you.

She takes her father's instruction. Harry puts the sweater on.

Harry:

Lovely.

Simone:

Yes perfect. Strong colour, powerful but sensitive. Exactly what we want. I knew this would work.

Felicity:

Is colour really that important?

Simone:

Oh god yes. I mean if we chose green, I could guarantee you there would be a two-page spread /

Harry:

What? Really? Green? Why does that even matter?

Simone:

Don't get me started on the semiotics of green, Harry, we will be here all day. You know the Daily Mail revealed that the 'Male peacock' in Westminster is on the rise – we need to keep you looking fresh Harold.

Felicity hands Simone coffee.

Right, now that you look alright. Ish. You will need to put a comb through your hair. Then we can begin to look at the mock questions. I had Emmett /

Felicity:

Who's Emmett?

Simone:

My fabulous assistant. Anyway he's been looking into interviews for me since you told me this morning and taking down and emailing me updates of all possible questions.

An entrance from the hallway is heard.

Sam:

Helloooo! Anyone home?

Sam, 26, boisterous, handsome, and energetic fills the room.

Very solemn mood in here. Simone, dashing as ever.

He gives the women hugs and shakes his father's hand and proceeds to pour coffee for himself.

Simone:

If only your father could have more of your charm, sweet Samuel.

Sam:

Ah where do you think I got it from?

Harry:

That's m'boy.

Felicity:

Why are you here, Sam?

Sam's voice is very loud.

Sam:

I presume we're reconvened to discuss the excellent choices by my dear father.

Harry:

No need for sarcasm, Sam. Why exactly are you here?

Sam:

Am I not allowed to visit the family home?

Felicity:

Christmas is over, Sam. What do you want? Or are you here to give some of your whopper advice? I'm sure you're used to finding good excuses to messes that you've caused. Why don't you advise our father how to dig himself out of this hole.

Sam:

I'm sensing some hostility here, that. We can address later. Perhaps.

Simone:

Sam, you are wasting our time, can you tell us why you're here?

Sam starts to pace the room. The other's eyes follow him intensely around the room.

Sam:

So... I thought I should probably tell you this. Just in case the interviewer asks. Just in case they know. I didn't want you to be caught off / guard.

Simone:

What have you done?

Sam:

It's not exactly what I've done, more so what has happened. To me.

...

Not by choice. Or by will.

...

I got fired from the firm.

Silence.

Simone:

When?

Sam:

Mid-December.

Harry:

Why are you only telling us now? Does your mother know? This will put her in the grave. How could you let this happen, Sam? You are 26 and jobless, what were you planning to do? I pulled a lot of favours to get you into Pipers, this is such an embarrass / ment

Sam:

Ok dad. I don't really think you can be the one telling me that 'I'm the disappointment

Simone:

Well, you certainly learnt something from your father.

Pause.

Right well at least you've told us. Why did they let you go?

Sam:

They said it was because of 'performance issues,' I don't even know what that really means /

Felicity:

Incompetency is what it really means, Sam.

Sam:

Yeah well I think it was more to do with how much banter I was at the Christmas story so you can piss off, Felicity.

Simone:

Banter? What do you mean by banter, Samuel?

Sam:

Well I may have had a touch too much to drink which maaay also have influenced their decision...

Harry:

Jesus Christ, Samuel, what kind of pathetic excuse of a man are you? Can't even hold a drink let alone keep a job!

Felicity:

You actually make it easy to be the favourite.

Sam:

Shut up! Just because you're the fucking favourite doesn't mean you're in any way a pleasant person. You are genuinely the driest girl I have ever met, and I actually feel sorry for you. If there is anyone in this fucked up family we should worry about its you with your pathetic femi-nazi-sm, and vegetarian anorexia like / genuinely fuck off, Felicity.

Harry:

Do not speak / to your sister like that. It's just simply not the time.

Felicity:

You're just jealous because I have opinions and a voice of my own whereas all you are is a ... a... a Chad with a pretty face who can't keep a job!

Harry chuckles at this. Felicity and Sam note this.

Sam:

How do the two of you even know what a Chad is?

Harry busies himself.

Felicity:

I watched the Channel 4 documentary with you, you gobshite

Sam:

Yeah but Da / d didn't

Simone:

PLEASE SHUT IT, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.

...

We have just over a half hour till Anne Chambers is here, and this little domestic is not going to solve anything.

...

I don't think they will bring it up. But if they do, your excuse is emotional. The split between you and Anita really affected him. But, you are being proactive in supporting your son. Etc.

Harry:

I'm really going to need to know what's in the etc, Simone.

Simone:

Incompetency really does run in this bloody family.

Felicity:

I personally disagree.

Lighting another cigarette –

Simone:

Yes, possibly comes with having a penis.

Sam:

I am so sick of being given out to because I'm a man, just beca /

Simone:

Okay. I do not have the energy to nurse your damaged male ego, so I'm going to ask you to be quiet until you're asked to speak.

Sam:

I can't imagine Jeff Besos getting treated like / this

Felicity:

Are you seriously comparing yourself to Besos?

Simone:

I swear to god one more word, I'm gone Harry.

Harry:

Kids, be quiet.

Sam gets a packet of custard creams and proceeds to eat the entire packet.

Simone:

Alright. After sifting through Emmet's questions I've prepared the most likely ones Chambers will ask. We don't have enough time to go through all of them but if we can get the main points into your head, I am hoping they will carry you through.

She takes out an iPad.

Harry:

Sounds simple enough.

Simone:

I will need you to focus, Harry. It might seem simple but you have to stick with what I tell you. You must not go off on your own, please just put all the initiative you so love to use and put it away for the next two hours.

Harry:

Right ok. I'm all yours. Hit me.

Simone:

I'm not going to hit you, Harry.

Harry:

With the first question. Not physically, Christ.

Simone:

This is exactly what I mean

Harry:

Right I get you. Give me the vocab I need.

Simone:

Question one. How are you feeling?

Silence

I will need you to give an answer.

Harry:

Is this a trick question?

Simone:

Answer the goddamn question Harry.

Harry:

Ok, ok. I am great Anne, how are you?

Simone:

Wrong!

Harry:

How on earth is that wrong?

Simone:

Great? Have you no remorse?

Harry:

Okay.. well yes I see your point.

Sam:

God you are good Simone!

Simone:

Right! I can't focus in here.

She lights another cigarette.

Let's do a loop of the garden. We need to get the oxygen flowing. Come on!

Harry:

Right-io, where's my mackintosh?

Simone goes to exit.

Simone:

You won't need it, come along. Hurry!

Harry follows her, swiftly.

Silence.

Sam:

Sorry for calling you a nazi. And dry.

Silence.

And pathetic.

Silence.

I didn't mean it.

Felicity:

Then why did you say it Sam?

Pause

Sam:

I don't know...

Felicity:

Well I think you do know.

Sam:

Stop trying to analyse me Felicity, I don't know why I said it, I was just angry.

...

And embarrassed.

Felicity:

Well I suppose I should apologise for calling you incompetent.

...

How could you let that happen Sam? What's going on? And why didn't you tell us sooner?

Sam:

Because I was embarrassed. I haven't told anyone!

Felicity:

You could have told me.

Sam:

Felicity, you are literally brilliant at everything. You wouldn't understand.

Felicity:

It's not easy being brilliant at everything Sam.

...

You know, the thing is, you'll get away with it /

Sam:

What do you mean? Dad is clearly fuming, and I actually think I might emigrate before mum finds out /

Felicity:

They won't stay mad at you for long. They never do. What's the longest mum hasn't spoken to you?

Sam:

Eh.. I dunno.. a few days?

Felicity:

When I decided to study politics in Oxford, not business in East Anglia, mum didn't speak to me for three weeks /

Sam:

Ok, I think that is probably an exaggeration

Felicity:

How would you know, you weren't here!

Silence.

It was awful. I was so lonely. That's why I'm so perfect Sam, I don't want them to not love me /

Sam:

That's so silly Felicity, that doesn't even make sense /

Felicity:

I know! And do you know what makes it even harder? Seeing them and their mistakes and their flaws spread across page six.

Sam:

Yes well, it did make coming here slightly easier

...

He's so fucked isn't he?

Felicity:

Maybe Simone can fix it?

Sam:

Possibly. But highly unlikely.

Felicity:

You look bigger

Sam:

I've been hitting the gym a lot.

Felicity:

Don't get too big, then you really will be a Chad.

They both laugh. Sounds of Simone and Harry re-entering.

Harry:

Ok once more!

Simone:

How are you feeling, Mr. Bright?

Harry:

I am feeling positive, thank you.

They re-enter the room.

Simone:

Perfect!

...

Great. You two are still here.

Harry:

That was a brilliant idea! I can really feel the oxygen being pumped all over, can't you?

Simone:

Mmm

Harry:

You know, Sam, you should really be keeping an eye on your weight, mid-20s is really when the beer belly starts to come out /

Sam:

Eh it's called bulking dad?

Felicity:

Maybe Sam and I should go upstairs, let you two focus in peace.

Simone:

What a brilliant idea.

Felicity:

Come on Sam /

Doorbell rings. They all freeze. A loud knock. They freeze more.

Harry:

She's early, she's fucking early!! The FUUck-ing cow, what am /

Keys are heard unlocking the door. The door slams shut. We know these heeled footsteps.

Felicity:

It's not Anne, it's mummy.

Anita enters, 53. Her presence is felt in every corner. She is dolled up to the nines, this is classic Anita. Her face says more than she does. Her designer bag lands on the island.

Anita:

I don't know whether to be utterly mortified or ecstatic that everyone can. Finally. Understand the idiocy that I have had to endure being married to this deplorable man.

Harry:

Really? 25 years of marriage and idiocy is the word you use to describe it?

Anita:

Harold, since I left you I have had to endure countless articles and that nickname. That bloody nickname. And no one knew about what I had to go through being married to you

Harry:

You earned that nickname sweetheart, I would have thought a woman like you would be proud of being called 'The /

Anita:

Fifi make mummy a g and t. /

Sam:

Can I have one too? /

Simone:

Make that three. /

Harry:

Can I have /

Simone:

No.

Anita:

I'm sure you'll be amused to hear that we're reclaiming my nickname! In my next collection. I'm not quite sure how you intend to reclaim your discrepancies, but I am veryyyy much looking forward to seeing what you

and Simone cook up because I don't believe our discrepancies quite equate.

...

Am I wrong in assuming that, Ms. Roberts?

Simone:

No you are not. Unfortunately.

Harry:

What are you doing here?

Felicity hands them each, excluding Harry, a gin and tonic with raspberries.

Anita:

This is my house too, Harold.

Harry:

Anita, please for the love of god, why are you here?

Simone:

Out of all respect, Anita, you are wasting our time. And I'm pretty sure you are aware we are under some time pressure.

Anita:

Oh yes, I believe Anne Chambers is on her way. I'm only dropping by to retrieve my loafers.

Harry:

How do you know about the interview?

Anita:

It's all over the papers, Harry. Sure, hasn't everyone decided to watch the infamous Harry Bright explain himself, instead of watching the rugby.

She laughs at this.

Why is Sam here?

Silence.

Harry:

Obviously, to support... his father. And to at least attempt to look like a family. Unlike the "Whore of the Cotswolds" over here

Anita:

Charming Harry. Was it you who came up with my other innovative nickname too?

Harry:

Blame blame blame. You always put everything that goes wrong on me. Take some fucking responsibility for heaven's sake. A slapper is what you are /

Felicity:

Dad! /

Simone:

Harry, please, this is not the time.

Anita:

No hold on a second. I don't believe you. Why is Sam here?

...

Samuel, why are you here?

Sam:

To be here for daddy. Like he said.

Anita's anger slowly and physically gets larger

Anita:

You're lying.

...

Felicity.

...

Felicity, why is Sam here?

Felicity:

Mum. This isn't my /

Silence.

Anita goes and pours more gin into her glass and sits on a high stool.

Anita:

Well I'm not leaving until I'm told.

Simone:

Oh please, Anita, woman to woman. Please do this for me. Just go home.

...

Businesswoman to businesswoman.

Anita:

Fuck off Simone. Do you honestly believe your career equates to mine?

Simone is taken aback.

I am not leaving. Until I am told, why my son has come to visit his, beloved father. It is highly out of character.

Silence.

Sam:

Fuck it / I've been let go.

Harry:

Don't Sam...

Pause. Anita finishes her drink. So does Simone.

Anita:

I assume one of the leading law firms in the country hasn't gone bankrupt.

Silence.

Why?

...

Why did they let you go? Samuel.

Silence. Louder:

Why did they let you go?

Felicity why did they let him go?

Felicity!

Spits out

Felicity:

Incompetency. Fuck, / I mean performance issues

Sam:

You whore. SLUT!

Felicity:

I'm sorry I didn't mean. I'm sorry.

She begins to quietly sob.

Sam:

I'm really sorry mum. I'm going to apply for lots of new jobs, and it won't happen again, I swear, I know where I went wrong and /

Anita:

When did this happen?

Pause.

Sam:

December.

Anita:

When were you planning to enlighten us with this information?

Sam:

Soon I swear! I just didn't want to ruin Christmas and you've been so upset lately with every /

Anita:

I don't know what you are talking about. I've been fine. I've been busy. You know Sam, some people in the world have a lot going on for them, we have busy lives. We have lots of people to see and business to attend to.

...

I have not been upset.

...

I have been busy.

Sam:

No I know I know, I just didn't want to make you... 'busier'.

Harry:

Sam, I think... Just be quiet.

Anita:

I should start writing a list.

...

So I can keep up with all the embarrassments that make up my family. Which to go first though? My shambolic ex-husband and his crippling career? My 'incompetent' son? Or my daughter?

Felicity:

What? Why am I an embarrass –

Anita:

Oh give over sweetie, we all know you're a lesbian.

Pause.

Felicity:

Firstly, I am not a, lesbian. And secondly that shouldn't be an embarrassment. How can you actually equate me to them?

Harry:

Look none of this is the issue at hand here /

Felicity:

My mother just called me an embarrassment because of my supposed sexuality! Is this not the 21st century? You're actually going to brush it off?

Anita:

Oh calm down Felicity! Honest to god, you're acting like I called you fat. I was joking. Lots of lesbians turn out great, you know there are so many ways to have children now and one can still live a normal life, as a homosexual. And it's great that it's only one of you. (*Laughing*) God I don't know what I would do if my boy was also one.

Felicity:

You are a ticking time bomb. How have you not already been cancelled?

Felicity leaves.

Simone:

Right.

...

Sam.

....

Anita.

...

I think you should both leave and discuss all of this family matter. Else-where. We are under massive time pressure and we can reconvene on these matters / later.

Anita:

No, Sam can stay. I don't want to look at you. Any of you for that matter.

She opens a kitchen drawer and takes out a lavish pair of loafers.

Oh I have missed these.

She turns to exit and we hear keys in the door. From the hallway –

Emily:

Harry? Harry, are you home? I really think you should reconsider all of this, it's probably not too late to canc /

Emily enters. An attractive, smart, youthful thirty-seven-year-old Londoner. Startled. Avoiding at all costs, eye contact with Anita.

Anita:

She has a key already? Wow, one moves fast!

Pause

Emily:

Someone has been smoking?

...

Shall I light a candle? Surely, we don't want that smell when the interviewer arrives.

Anita:

I'm sure Simone is all over it. She's very skilled at her job.

Emily:

Oh I know, she's very talented.

Simone:

Well let's all stop sucking my cock. Anita you were leaving.

Anita:

Well. Do you know what? I just realised I am probably over the limit, so I must order a taxi. Samuel, sweetheart, will you call for one.

Sam:

Yep.

He takes out his phone.

Anita:

Simone, darling. Another g&t, I'm sure you need it.

Simone:

Oh, I really don't think we have time for another drink, I'm sure the taxi will be here any minute.

Anita proceeds to make the drinks.

Anita:

Nonsense, we live very far out, it could be half an hour till it comes. I'll make you a double, you sound tense - it doesn't suit you.

Harry:

Can I please have one?

Simone:

I actually don't care anymore. Make poor Bitsy one too for all I fuck-ing care.

Anita:

Who is Bitsy? Do you have a child? That's another layer to this fun little story.

Emily:

Oh no, a dog. A Bichon. I didn't bring her with me today. Just in case background noise or whatever.

Anita:

You'll have one Emma, blackberries or raspberries?

...

Or both?

Emily:

Oh em, yes, no. I'm fine. Thank you though.

Anita:

Was that a no?

Emily:

Yes.

Anita:

Yes, it was a no?

Emily:

Yes.

Anita:

Aren't you a journalist?

Emily:

Yes.

Anita:

Fascinating.

She hands out the gin and tonics. They all take a big gulp.

Well, isn't this nice.

...

How long until the taxi sweetheart?

...

Sam?

He is still on his phone.

Sam:

Oh sorry, I got distracted. I'll order it now. Uber ok?

Anita:

Yes. Sweetheart.

...

I'm beginning to understand the term 'performance issues' in a whole new light now.

Harry:

Leave it, Anita.

Emily:

What?

Anita:

Our son has been let go.

Emily:

Oh.

....

Anita:

'Performance Issues'

...

Apple doesn't fall too far does it Harold? /

Emily:

Is Felicity not here?

Anita:

She's in a strop upstairs.

Emily:

Oh what's the matter?

Sam:

Mummy called her a lesbian. Taxi will be here in five.

Silence.

Anita:

You must have lots of lesbian friends.

Emily:

Oh. Eh. A few.

...

What about you?

Anita:

None.

Simone:

Right, well, I think talk of all sexual preferences needs to end here. Harry, we really need to get a move on. Let's see where you've decided to set up the interview space.

Simone and Harry leave. Harry gives Emily an apologetic look.

Anita:

How long Sammy?

Sam:

Three minutes

An extended, painful silence.

Emily:

So Sam, any girls on the scene?

Sam:

No. Not really.

Anita:

What does not really mean?

Sam:

It means not exactly.

Anita:

That still doesn't explain it Samuel

Frustrated now –

Sam:

Not officially. I go on dates. But I don't have a 'girlfriend' if that's what you want to know!

Emily:

Sorry, I didn't mean to /

Anita:

No, no it's a valid question. Maybe if you had a woman in your life you may not be so willing to throw a job away.

Sam:

Firstly, I have plenty of options in that department, I don't want to be weighed down, yet. And secondly, I didn't throw a job away mum. (*Beat*) It just didn't work out /

Anita:

Well what's the plan? What jobs have you applied for?

Pause.

Sam:

So I've updated my CV, and I watched this video on YouTube and it was honestly so helpful / ul

Anita:

You must be kidding Sam, you haven't applied for anything!

Sam:

No but, this friend of mine is on *Made in Chelsea*, and he thinks he could get me a slot.

Anita:

What are you on about Sam? What is *Made in Chelsea*, you're into antiques now, are you?

Sam:

No mum! It's not an antique show, it's this programme on tv about people living in Chelsea /

Anita:

You don't live in Chelsea

Sam:

Mum, will you just listen, that doesn't matter. It's just, like, all these like these 20-year-olds /

Anita:

You're 26, not 20

Sam:

I meant like these people in their 20s who are basically, living their lives, and it's like super popular. And you can get, I think it's £300 per episode.

Anita:

So that's what, the equivalent of an hour's work in *Pipers*?

Sam:

Yeah but like, there's an episode every week, and the point is you can get lots of other work through it. Working with really big brands and stuff, like my friend just got a big deal with this protein company, it's so sick.

Anita:

Right, well I'm really struggling to understand the concept of this *Making in Chelsea* /

Sam:

It's called *Made in Chelsea* mum /

Anita:

Chelsea is so crass /

Sam:

It's actually a really amazing opportunity.

Anita:

So it's essentially a documentary?

Sam:

Yeah. Like, I suppose one would call it a Reality Documentary

Pause.

Anita:

Oh.

...

It's a reality show?

Sam:

Well kind of.

Anita glances at Emily, who's face confirms it is a reality show.

Anita:

Sam. I am going to make this very clear to you. My son, is not going to be on a reality television programme.

Sam:

Bu /

Anita:

It is not an acceptable job for a 26-year-old man. You will get a proper job with your law degree. You will have a salary. You will buy a house. And you will marry a nice girl and have beautiful children. You will not squander yourself by sojourning as a wannabe college delinquent in this pathetic social moratorium. How did you think this was in any way acceptable? This discussion will go no further.

There is an immense stare off between Anita and Sam. Sam returns to his phone like a scolded puppy.

Silence.

Anita:

What newspaper do you work for Emma?

Emily:

The Times.

Anita:

Oh good, none of those grotesque tabloids. I'm quite glad to hear that.

Emily:

I did start in the Daily Mail. But I moved on from there fairly promptly.

Anita:

I'm sure you did. Hideous group of thugs.

Emily:

Yes well, I'm glad to not have anything to do with them anymore.

Amused -

Anita:

Oh not for long sweetheart, they will hear about the two of you soon enough, mark my words.

Emily is alarmed.

Oh, I won't tell! I didn't get the apartment in the south of France for nothing.

Laughs.

They'll find it out. They always find it out.

Emily becomes more alarmed.

You know, I never thought they would find out about Johannes and I. But they did and I'm sure you've had much joy reading the articles about 'The Abominable Adulteress,' I bet you thought you'll never be like that witch. But sweetheart, they'll find a name for you too. You'd be very silly to think you're different to me.

...

I once was too a doe-eyed Tinkerbell, But the media, the newspapers, Twitter; they'll scrape every good part of you away, layer by layer until all you're left with, is a man named Harry.

Emily:

Well I'll just try to ignore them /

Anita:

And how do you plan on doing that?

She laughs.

Sam:

Mum it's outside.

Anita:

Smashing. Tata everyone. *(to offstage)* - Bubye Simone. Good luck Harold.

...

Emily, it was a pleasure to finally meet you. Fully, clothed.

She grabs her handbag, her loafers, she looks at her son –

I'll be in touch.

She leaves. Harry re-enters.

Harry:

Thank God she's gone. I'm so sorry sweetie –

Simone re-enters, unknown to Harry and Emily. She assesses the conversation from afar.

Emily:

It's fine, it's fine. She got my name right eventually. Look Harry, I really need to speak to you –

Harry:

Of course, but can't it wait till after the Chambers interview?

Emily becomes more urgent.

Emily:

No, not really, I really, actually need to speak to you, right now.

Harry:

Alright, Samuel go check on your sister.

He exits, with the packet of custard creams.

God, he's such a disappointment. Do you think he's eating his feelings?
I've heard that's a thing. I hope he's not gay, I can cope with Fifi, that's
manageable but / Sam

Emily:

Harry can / I

Harry:

What is it darling, you seem all worked up /

Simone:

Right! Harry, tragically, we don't have enough time for me to try one on
one questions. We need to do a vocal and physical warm-up. But first will
you go sit in there and read through your explanation.

...

Buzz words are at the end. Repeat them 8 times, and I'll be in, in a
minute. Remember posture, strong but relaxed shoulder, man spread but
don't overly man spread. Balance is key.

Harry:

Can I just have a private moment with my girlfriend?

Simone:

No Harry, you cannot.

Silence.

Harry:

Right. Right ok. Suppose I gave up my autonomy years ago. I wonder does Trump or Musk get bossed around like this.

He leaves.

Emily:

Simone, I really need to speak to him. It's quite urgent. I respect that this interview is really important too but –

Simone:

Look Emily, whatever it is, it can wait /

Emily:

No it really can't. The interviewer might bring it up, they always find out, they find out everything. You know that best, don't you?

Simone:

How far along are you?

Emily:

What?

Angry now -

Simone:

Well you're clearly pregnant. How far?

Emily:

I, eh, about six weeks.

Silence.

Simone:

Look. Tell him after. There is no need to tell him anything right now. It will just muddle him up.

Emily:

I really need to tell him now.

Simone:

No you do not. Telling him this right now, will fuck him over, monstrously. He needs to focus on the matter at hand. This will send him flying and he won't be able to focus on Anne's questions and he'll forget my buzz words.

...

You, him, your offspring is a situation we shall negotiate later, but for right now he needs to fix the mess he created last Thursday night. That is what is most important right now.

Emily:

But what if they know about me? And this

She gestures to her womb

If they do know, and they do ask, it'll be even worse if he doesn't know.

Simone:

Who have you told?

Pause.

Emily:

A couple of my close friends know.

Silence.

Simone:

Right. We'll have to risk it –

Emily:

I really think we need to tell /

Simone:

No we do not. Just let me do my job and trust me on this Emily. Tell him after, I promise, it is the right choice.

Emily:

But Simone, if they do ask, and he doesn't know I don't think I could actually cope –

Harry re-enters, unknown.

Simone:

Well it's a risk you're going to have to take.

Harry:

Risk? Risk what?

Simone:

Oh. Just driving out now in case she bumps into Anne in the driveway. I think it would be best if Emily were to leave. She might ask who owns the fuchsia mini cooper.

Harry:

Oh pish posh, we can say it's Felicity's. Emily, why don't you just stay upstairs /

Simone:

No Harry, firstly your daughter doesn't even have a driving licence – so having an unused car sit in the driveway is sort of the kind of image we are attempting to avoid.

Harry:

That stuff hardly matters, Simone. Now I have a question about one of your buzz words, well I suppose with the explanation altogether - medical - condition – Really? Is that what we are going with? It does seem highly unlikely and unseemly.

Simone:

Yes, Harry. Sympathy is your only friend right now.

Harry:

Yes, well I'm sure I won't have any friends after this, this explanation makes me look like a buffoon, Simone.

Simone:

Harry, you don't have any friends /

Harry:

Em, who do you think I was with last Thursday?

Simone:

They're hardly friends, Harry.

Harry:

They are my buddies. I have friends,

To Emily

You've met them sure.

Emily:

Yeah, they're lovely. But Harry, can we please go up / stairs for a moment?

Simone:

Now! I don't believe you have repeated the buzzwords eight times, so go on, back inside.

He turns to leave /

Emily:

WAIT! /

Simone:

Emily, don't/

Emily:

I have to.

Simone:

No you don't. Just / wait

Harry:

What is it?

Simone:

Harry please, trust me, block your ears. Don't listen to her. If I mean anything to you, you will block your ears.

Emily:

Please just, Simone, will you piss off.

Simone:

No, I will not piss off. Harry, I will leave this house right this moment if you don't go back into that room.

Harry looks from woman to woman.

Harry:

Look Emily, love muffin, I think I am actually okay not knowing what it is you have to say.

...

Can this not wait until later?

Emily:

No, Harry it can't. I'm pregnant.

Harry is still. Simone leaves the house, slamming the door.

Harry:

When you say you're pregnant do you mean you're... pregnant or.../

Emily:

What other meaning of the word is there, Harry?

Harry:

WHY? WHY DID YOU TELL ME? WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE NOT JUST FUCKING LISTENED TO SIMONE?

Emily:

EXCUSE ME? WHY COULDN'T HAVE I LISTENED TO THE BLOODY HELP?
THAT'S ALL SHE IS, SHE'S JUST AN EMPLOYEE HARRY.

...

I am your girlfriend. And the mother of your next child.

Harry:

My next child.

...

My. Next child.

....

I'M NOT HAVING ANOTHER NEXT CHILD. Are you joking? On what planet am I having another child? I am 58! I am the next prime minister. I am not raising another spoilt, good for nothing, waste of time.

Emily:

How can you say that?

...

Do you not love me?

Harry:

That's a stupid question.

...

Do you love me? Because it's not very bloody obvious right now, telling me this while my career, everything I've worked for is on the line. It's selfish, you're being a self-centred, manipulative cow. This interview could be the end of me... after what happened last week /

Emily:

That's not my fault /

Harry:

I'm not saying it's your fault /

Emily:

Well it certainly feels like it.

His voice gets gradually higher pitched.

Harry:

SEE! Hormones! Hormones! This is what you'll deal with! For the next nine months. Fucking hormones. It won't end there either. It'll just continue, the stress will continue, it'll get worse and worse and worse and worse and OOP MENOPAUSE!! AND THEN YOU'LL BE FULL OF THE FUCKING FUN TIMES /

Emily:

Is that all I am? Fun times? Why don't you just call me Christine Keeler!

Harry:

Oh come on, you know you mean a lot to me, Emily. But I can't have this child with you. I won't have this child with you. And quite frankly, this interview is more important than this conversation, right now.

Emily:

Is that your way of telling me to piss off?

Harry:

Yes.

Pause.

She goes to leave.

Emily:

I met Anne Chambers once, a couple of years ago. She's going to annihilate you, and it's going to be easy for her. Your ex-wife is more of a man than you are, Harry.

...

You're ruined. And it won't end with this interview. It will just get worse and worse and worse and OOP menopause.

...

Goodbye, Harry.

She leaves.

Harry deflates to the ground. He stares. He stands. He pours a glass of gin. Sips. Doorbell -

Harry:

Well fuck. Here's to a crappy career, Harold.

He knocks it back, doorbell again, he takes another swig from the bottle, he exits. From offstage

What on earth /

Simone:

I saw she left.

They re-enter.

Harry:

I think it's over.

Simone:

Awesome, where are the buzzwords? You're going to have to brush your teeth. You've also stained your shirt; you'll need to change /

Harry:

Simone, stop. Slow down. This is all too much /

Simone:

You see! I told her this is what would happen. Why can't everyone just understand I am right, I am always right I will always know the solution. Can we all just agree, in going forward, to listen to Simone.

Harry:

I always listen to you.

Simone:

Did you cover your ears? I think not.

Harry:

Well it wasn't exactly an easy situation to be put in, Simone.

Simone:

None of it is easy, Harry. Not one bit of it, is ever easy.

Pause.

Harry:

What am I going to do Sim? I can't have another child.

Simone:

No you cannot. But you're going to have to.

Harry:

You're not serious?

Simone:

Harry, there's no going back. She can't get rid of it; it will get out. And can you imagine that? Not just a mistress but a mistress with an abortion? No Harry, you will have this child, you will love this child, and this child will be your goddamn redemption for being such a foolish gobshite.

Harry:

Don't call her a mistress. She's my girlfriend.

Simone:

You know, you're very lucky that the news of you having a 'girlfriend' isn't out yet.

Harry:

How is it going to look? Having another child at my age?

Simone:

We'll reignite the family man persona, make you the David Beckham of the political world. I can see it now, 'Harry Bright juggles fatherhood with a prosperous political trajectory!' or 'Bright New Beginnings for Harry'. God, I should've chosen journalism.

Harry:

Sim, I don't think I can go ahead with this interview. I think I'll really screw it up.

Simone:

You're going to have to. She is going to be here in ten minutes or less.

Harry:

Why can't we just text Anne now? Call her? Say a family emergency /

Simone:

No Harry. The whole country is waiting for this live interview. They've made their cucumber sandwiches, they've boiled their kettles, and they have their popcorn popped. They are ready to hear what you have to say after that incident. You can't go back now.

Harry:

Please Sim. What if I just throw myself down the stairs? I don't mind if I get a broken arm!

Simone:

Harry, you're not ruined yet, and just please if you trust me, I will guide you through this but you have to listen to me please.

Harry:

Sim, I can't, I really can't. I'm not doing it –

He takes out his mobile and proceeds to make a call.

Simone:

HARRY! DON'T YOU DARE!

She goes to grab the phone, he tries to keep her away, she chases him around the kitchen island.

HARRY PLEASE, I BEG OF YOU, YOU ARE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT.

He stops trying to make the call.

Harry:

SIM, PLEASE LISTEN TO ME; I WILL FUCK THIS UP YOU KNOW I WILL

She slowly gets closer to him.

Simone:

Not with me by your side Harry.

She grabs the phone out of his hand.

Harry, I can make you the next prime minister but just please listen to me

–

Harry:

I've gone too far this time Sim / one

She snatches the phone back.

Simone:

OH HARRY JUST TRUST /

Harry cuts across her with an aggressive, forceful kiss. They're interrupted – by the sound of Felicity and Sam.

Felicity:

DAD!!!!!!!!!

Felicity and Sam bound down the stairs into the kitchen, Felicity holds a laptop. Simone and Harry disperse.

Harry:

What is it sweetie?

Felicity:

Do not call me sweetie, you creep.

She slams the laptop on the counter.

Harry:

What is it now?

Sam:

Dad.. how is it even possible? Like you had a wife, and now a girlfriend? I thought Incels were losers who don't have sex?

Simone storms over to Felicity's laptop.

Harry:

What are you on about, Sam? We do not have time for this tomfoolery.

Simone:

Oh Harry...

Harry:

What is it?! Have they got more pictures or something?

Sam:

No dad, it has nothing to do with Thursday.

Felicity:

The Guardian have just released an article alleging you are an incel.

...

They claim that you have been active in multiple blogs and forums in the Manosphere.

Sam:

Swallowed the RedPill and all that.

Harry:

I am not an 'Incel'.

Simone:

Harry, how are you this much of an idiot? Do you not understand the internet? CottswoldHarry63. That was the innovative pseudonym you decided on?

Harry:

Oh right yes, God, it took me a moment to understand what you were all on about. Sure, all that stuff is just for fun, it's hardly damaging.

Felicity:

Damaging? It's disgraceful, you have a daughter! How.. how could /

Simone:

Look! Let's not be dramatic about this, Harry is right. This is easily covered over; they have no hard evidence that it is him on these forums.

Felicity:

But it is him? You were the one that said don't get caught in a lie, Simone!

...

Why not own it? Own your disgusting misogyny, I'm sure that will get you lots of voters in this backwards country!

Harry:

Would you stop with the dramatics, Felicity, I'm hardly a reincarnate Robert Bly, it's just some online humour/

Sam:

Who?

Felicity:

HUMOUR? You think this is funny? How long have you been doing this? Before or after you had a daughter?

Sam:

It says 'CottswoldHarry63's activity started with liking comments on the notorious internet community The Red Pill Reddit in March 2021.'

Felicity has moved away from them, looking at family photographs on the wall.

Simone:

Was that around Anita's affair?

Harry:

Oh I can't remember, can we please just focus on the important matter, Simone? Anne Chambers will be here any minute.

Simone:

I am going to do some damage control.

She goes to leave whilst calling someone.

Does anyone else know anything about this Harry? Any of your 'buddies'?

Harry:

God no.

Simone:

Are you certain?

Harry:

Yes! Certain! We talk about rugby and oh I don't know...

Simone:

Right.

Simone leaves.

Sam (laughing):

God Dad, you are some twat, the stuff you were liking and comment /

Harry:

Oh shut up Samuel, I need the pair of you to leave now, this is a very important interview for your father.

Felicity:

Father. Huh. I don't think you have quite earned that title.

She smashes a photo frame on the ground.

Silence.

Harry:

Do not disrespect me like that Felicity.

Felicity:

I will do whatever I goddamn like. You're a pig. I will never respect you again.

Felicity smashes another photo frame. Felicity goes to grab another but is stopped by her father grabbing her wrists and flinging her to the ground.

Harry:

You will stop right now, Felicity. I have been an excellent father to you, you are spoilt rotten, and you have an outstanding education thanks to me. You're a righteous, uptight waste of space.

Felicity (Laughing):

Does that make you feel better? Putting me down, putting women down, helps you, doesn't it? Exercising the little power you have left by throwing me to the ground?

Her laughter turns into frantic sobs.

Nothing's going to save you now 'Daddy'.

She goes to the cupboard and takes out jars of condiments and throws food on the floor.

But how about, instead of a big performance. The big, beautiful performance you and Simone have orchestrated. Why don't you be you – the real you – the real Harold Alexander Bright!

She opens the peanut butter and scoops it out with her claws, goes to her father and smears it all down his shirt –

Look!! There, that looks more like it!

She spreads it across his face.

Much more authentic. You see, daddy, this is what the people really want

–

She gets deep red gooseberry jam and smears that on her canvas.

They want the truth. So give it to them!

She gets the bottle of gin and pours it over him till it's empty.

Perfect.

...

Just perfect.

....

And accurate too! Isn't it?

No one responds. She laughs. She cries.

This is the real you, dad. That's all the people want. The goddamn truth.

She leaves.

Sam:

Dad... how... how did this happen? I don't know how to be... to be...

Sam leaves.

Simone re-enters.

Harry:

I can't do this. Bloody hell. How am I going to do this?!

Simone:

Anne called. Her car broke down. We rearranged the interview for this evening in the Hilton in town.

Harry's body sinks and then grows.

Harry:

Right. Good. Great. Superb. And the online stuff?

Simone:

Simple. Deny, and if they manage to track the IP, we have two possible perpetrators.

Harry:

The cleaner and the gardener?

They both smirk.

Simone pours them both another drink.

Simone:

A beautiful new girlfriend. A child on the way. A scheming, already disgraced ex-wife with two spoilt, greedy, resentful children. In fact, Mr. Bright, I need not spin any webs this time, the world has protected you once more.

They cheers.

Now let's get you cleaned up and smash this interview.

Harry (*standing up with confidence and determination*)

Right-o! God Sim, I'm like a cat with nine lives!

Simone:

No Harry. You're just a man.

The End.

Appendix:

Albee, E. (1962) *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* New York: Penguin Books.

BBC News (2019) Prince Andrew & the Epstein Scandal: The Newsnight Interview - BBC News. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtBS8COhhhM> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Carr, M. (2013) *On Raftery's Hill*. London: Bloomsbury. Available at: <https://go.exlibris.link/bQ17lzbj> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Courtenay, W.H. (2000) 'Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health', *Social Science & Medicine*, 50(10), pp. 1385–1401.

Daily Mail Reporter (2013) 'Secrets of the "male peacock" politicians', *Mail Online*, 13 October. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2470319/Male-peacock-politicians-men-rule-obsessed-make-up.html> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Ging, D. (2019) 'Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere', *Men and masculinities*, 22(4), pp. 638–657.

Gregory, A. and Milner, S. (2011) 'What is "New" about Fatherhood?: The Social Construction of Fatherhood in France and the UK', *Men and Masculinities*, 14(5), pp. 588–606.

Ingraham, C. (2004) 'Introduction: Thinking Straight', in *Thinking Straight: The Power, Promise and Paradox of Heterosexuality*. Florence, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 1–11.

Kaufman, M. (1994) 'Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power', in *Theorizing Masculinities*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., pp. 142–164.

Koenig, R. (2017) 'Adulting, but With Your College Crowd', *The New York Times*, 24 March. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/realestate/adulting-instant-community-with-the-college-crowd.html> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Love, D. (2013) *Inside Red Pill, The Weird New Cult For Men Who Don't Understand Women*, *Business Insider*. Available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-red-pill-reddit-2013-8> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Pinter, H. (2014) *Betrayal*. London: Bloomsbury.

Real Stories (2021) Fatal Fitness: Dying For a Six Pack | Reggie Yates Extreme | Real Stories. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jR0GtSeV084> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Channel 4 Documentaries (2022) UNTOLD: The Secret World of Incels | Channel 4 Documentaries. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kReeoKoOvZI> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).

Vasquez del Aguila, E. (2014) 'The Early Years: Becoming a Man and Masculine Capital', in *Being a Man in a Transnational World*. Routledge, pp. 77–100.