

One-way Battle of the Sexes

Or, How Men Get Away With It

By Ian Kennedy, for Daniel Liao
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This play was written at short notice for Ian's friend Daniel Liao, to be performed at Daniel's leaving party (Munich 2006), by his mates in the flat he shares with his girlfriend, with only one rehearsal. For these reasons, it's simple and meant to be fun to perform. The brief was 'A comedy that's gonna take around 5 minutes to perform and will involve no more than 4 people, about the differences between men and women, about the differences in our thinking and the misunderstandings between the two sexes.'

Characters

Angela

Frustrated in a static relationship, Angela is afraid to throw away what she has but is frustrated with her boyfriend Markus.

Markus

Ania's boyfriend takes his life with her for granted too much and fails to see things from Angela's point of view.

Maria

Angela's oldest friend is an outspoken lesbian who likes to put people on the spot, often just to tease them.

Alex

Markus' old mate is a layabout who's always looking for a way out of paying for things.

Scene: Angela & Markus' flat

(Toilet flushes. Markus comes out and ambles across the living room, lazing into the sofa and putting the TV on by remote. He tucks into a packet of crisps. Angela comes in by the front door with a bag of shopping, which she takes to the kitchen and unpacks. Markus' mobile goes off.)

Angela: Can you give me a hand with these! Maria will be here in a minute...

Markus: Be there in a sec, my phone's ringing... *(he answers it)* Hey how you doing Alex! Where are you man... Champions' League is on in ten minutes, you're not missing this man!

Angela: Please Markus!

Markus: You're joking! Nah, not in a million years – she'd never go with you... nah I don't believe you... Well bring her round here then, prove it... Huh, is that right! – alright then, you're on – I'll be there in a minute. She better still be there! ... We'll see, we'll see...

(Markus hangs up and gets up, heading for the door.)

Angela: Can you do the freezer things?

Markus: Just gotta nip out – Alex is pretending he's pulled the girl we both fancied the pants off all through school, and I won't believe him till I see it! – Oh, you don't mind if he comes over for the football do you?

Angela: Markus! You promised that me and Maria could have the flat to ourselves tonight!

Markus: Did I?

Angela: Yes!

Markus: No no, I meant tomorrow night didn't I. Tonight's football night, you know that.

Angela: You didn't say anything about it!

Markus: Well why don't you guys use the bedroom and do one of your makeovers, you don't need the TV do you...

Angela: We were gonna watch a DVD!

Markus: Hey it's alright baby - you can borrow the laptop, I won't mind. Love you, bye!

(Markus opens the door to go. Maria has just arrived outside and was about to press the doorbell)

Angela & Maria: Markus!!

Maria: Perfect timing! I didn't know you were a psychic!

Markus: Uh – Maria – hi – she's right there. See you!

(Markus slips out. Maria goes in.)

Angela: Oh I can't believe this! Every time-! He's supposed to be helping me put this shopping away!

Maria: I don't know why you put up with men. They're all as bad you know.

Angela: Yeah, as you're always telling me – but we can't all be lesbians, Maria! *(Teases)* Love to, but you know it's really not my thing.

(Maria puts a hand on Angela's arm)

Maria: You've still never tried it...!

Angela: Well if I ever want to I know who to call don't I... Martina Navratilova! *(They laugh)*

Maria: Alright, alright... Here, let me help with that...

(Maria helps with the last of the shopping)

Maria: So what's he done now?

Angela: It's just one thing after another... I think we've talked about it and then he goes and does it again. Going through my handbag, leaving his dirty washing everywhere, leaving taps running...

Maria: Leaving the toilet seat up, not helping with the cooking and cleaning... been there, done that, and believe me honey, they never change! They'll say whatever it takes to keep you happy and then just carry on. Do yourself a favour – dump the lot of them and make a stand!

- Angela: I can't be like you, Maria... sadly! *(They laugh)*
(The front door opens. Markus and Alex come in, beers in hand.)
- Maria: *(To Markus)* Maria tells me you're still not helping her out around the house! After all your promises!
- Angela: Maria!!
- Markus: Well I think that's just typical – telling you before she tells me. She knows she can always talk to me.
- Angela: Ha! As if!
- Alex: Well if it isn't Maria the militant lesbian... bored of yelling at girls, are you? Gotta wade into everyone else's private lives to make up for the fact you're not getting any these days!
- Maria: I get an orgasm every night – do you know what one of those is?
- Alex: Hate to tell you Maria, but vibrators don't count!
- Maria: You're just jealous cos you don't know how to satisfy a woman and you're too scared to ask...
- Alex: Ha! You don't know what you're talking about! Do you know who I'm with at the moment? Claudia Schmidt.
- Markus: It's true – I've just seen them kissing goodbye, and it was full-on!
- Maria: The biggest tart in school! The girl who spent singing classes practicing her fake orgasms!
- Alex: Should've guessed you'd be jealous.
- Maria: Don't flatter yourself.
- Alex: You know you want it.
- Maria: Seen it, had it, got the disease, and I've spent the rest of my time clearing it all out of my system!
- Markus: Come on mate, let's sit down with the football...
- Alex: Yeah, nice one!

(The boys go and slouch in front of the TV and clink their drinks)

Markus: Prost!

Alex: Prost!

(They drink. Angela and Maria talk together.)

Angela: I can't believe this... and Markus just stood there and let it all happen.

Maria: Typical men – they lash out whenever you hit a nerve, never admit they're wrong!

Angela: And you're as bad!

Maria: What!

Angela: Winding them up, egging them on! How am I supposed to talk to Markus when you're just having a go all the time!

Maria: Oh... sorry.

Angela: It's no good arguing, you never get through that way. It just makes him all defensive. You have to talk, really talk with him, so you get him to actually listen and engage with what you're saying. It's the only way.

Maria: Um... look – I'm sorry if I got in the way. Tell you what. If I can take care of Alex – you could have some time with Markus?

Angela: You, 'take care' of Alex? What are you going to do, get a hitman on him!

Maria: I'll try and talk with him.

Angela: You and Alex? Talking!

Maria: I know, I know... look I'll just do my best, yeah?

Angela: I'll be amazed if you can get two words out of him.

Maria: Well let's just try shall we?

Angela: OK.

(They go over to the men who don't notice.)

Angela: Markus. – Markus!

(Maria has to stand in front of the TV to get the boys' attention)

Markus: Hey what you doing-!

Maria: Angela needs to talk to you.

Alex: Out the way woman!

Maria: The game's not even started. Can you just give her a few minutes of your time Markus.

Angela: Please Markus. Just till the game starts. *(He doesn't answer)*
For me?

Markus: *(sighs)* Alright, alright. What is it?

Angela: Can we talk about this in private? In our room?

(Markus sighs and gets up. They go through to the next room and shut themselves in.)

Markus: Alright, alright.

Angela: Thank you. It means a lot to me.

Markus: I'm doing it aren't I.

(Alex and Maria are left on their own. Alex ignores her and watches the TV.)

Maria: Hey. *(He ignores her)* Hey!

(Maria goes and sits down on his lap to get his attention.)

Alex: Hey what's this! Miss Lesbian 2001 looking for a real man at last!

Maria: Shut up Alex. This isn't about me and you.

Alex: Hey you should feel what I've got going on under there now, if that's not about me and you then what is!

Maria: Oh you're disgusting!

(Maria gets up. She sits in the seat Markus has left. Next door, Angela and Markus have a heart to heart. It gets quite

emotional at times, but by the end they've reached an understanding.)

- Maria: You've got a sick mind.
- Alex: Says the woman that blames men, every single one, for everything that's wrong in the world!
- Maria: It is men! You can't help it but that's what you do!
- Alex: Whatever. You know what your problem is – you're not over me.
- Maria: Not over you!
- Alex: Yeah. From the moment I dumped you, you've pretended to be a lesbian, just to hide the fact you're too afraid of getting hurt if you let a man get close to you again!
- Maria: I'm not pretending! I was trying to tell you at the time – but since we were only together a week, and didn't tell anyone, you didn't give me the time! And you ditching me, that was just a typical man's answer to what I was trying to say.
- Alex: You were just trying to dump me and pretend it was nothing to do with me, that it was you... yeah, I'd heard it all before, you women are all the same. I saved you the trouble.
- Maria: I just don't see why we can't be friends after it!
- Alex: The fact that I'm a man and you think all men are bastards, it does get in the way a bit.
- Maria: It's not all men! You're so self-centred, to think that because I can't face you, I must hate all men!
- Alex: Well it's what you're always saying!
- Maria: Do I?
- Alex: Yeah! You're so judgmental! I wish you could just give us a chance... you know, we're not all the same – we can change.
- Maria: Well – look – I'm sorry if that's how it comes out. I don't mean it to. But you can understand why I'm angry at you.
- Alex: What, for finishing it like you couldn't bring yourself to!

Maria: For being horrible to me ever since. You've always been nasty to me since then. We've done nothing but argue, every time we see each other.

Alex: Yeah well no wonder.

Maria: I don't think it's because we hate each other. I think it's because you're afraid that I turned into a lesbian because you weren't good enough in bed.

Alex: Eh!

Maria: That's the truth isn't it. You're afraid of me because I make you worry you're less of a man.

Alex: Look, look, you've got me all wrong...

Maria: What, you don't hate me!

Alex: No! Of course I don't hate you.

Maria: Then why are you always so cruel to me!

Alex: Look – I'm a man, alright! That's what we do! We can't own up to it when we care about someone... we only know how to show it by teasing them.

Maria: Ha! So you do care about me!

Alex: Oh come on... just don't tell Markus yeah – he'll think I'm being a girl.

Maria: *(sarcastic)* And seeming like a girl is much worse than caring about someone.

Alex: Exactly! You have no idea... when us men are together, any little spot of weakness gets ripped to shreds. We're horrible to each other, we really are. So we have to hide things, from each other, from ourselves. Pretend we're things we're not.

Maria: Is this your attempt at an apology!

Alex: Maria... I'm sorry. Yeah, I'm sorry. I'll stop being so nasty to you. You don't deserve it.

Maria: Thank you.

(Pause)

Alex: And?

Maria: What?

Alex: Is that all?

Maria: Look, I really appreciate it, yeah? I'll stop being difficult with you too. Maybe we can make a fresh start?

Alex: Yeah. Yeah, let's do that.

(They reach out and clasp each other's hands)

Maria: I'm glad we had this chat.

Alex: Yeah. Me too.

(Angela and Markus come back in from their room. They are holding hands and smiling very happily. They see Alex and Maria are also holding hands.)

Markus: Hey what's all this! Ladies' night!

Alex: Oh leave it out yeah... we've just been having a chat, that's all.

Maria: *(To Angela)* So – how did it go?

Angela: Wonderful!

Maria: Really?

Angela: We've talked it all over, and everything's going to be fine.

Maria: Really!!

Markus: It's my fault. I've been taking Angela for granted. *(To Angela)* I promise I'm going to be a good boyfriend for you, and do all my dishes, and help out around the house...

Angela: And *I* promise I won't nag, and I'll tell you if something's bothering me, before I tell all my friends.

Markus: That's the way.

(They kiss)

Alex: Aww knock it off you guys!

Maria: Alex! Don't interrupt when they're having a special moment.

Alex: If you say so.

Angela: Maria come with me... I'm going to tell you all about it... everything's going to be perfect again.

Maria: Really!

Angela: Yes! Come on, let's go out and talk about it.

Maria: Alright!

(Maria gets up and goes to Angela. Angela gives Markus a kiss on the cheek)

Angela: See you later darling!

Markus: Yeah! Have a good night. See you, Maria.

Maria: See you later.

(Angela and Maria go out and shut the front door behind them. As soon as the door is shut, Alex and Markus look at each other and can't stop themselves grinning. They burst out laughing. Markus runs over and jumps back into his seat in front of the TV. They clink their beers.)

Alex: What did you tell her!

Markus: Oh you know – all the usual – how sorry I am, how much I love her, how hard I'm going to try and change...

Alex: Ha! How do women fall for it, every time!

Markus: I don't know, I don't know... all I know is, the flat and the TV are ours for the night!

Alex: Top man!! – Prost!

(They clink beers again and laugh)

Markus: So what was all that touchy-feely stuff with Maria man, not going soft on me are you!

Alex: Exactly the same mate... you pretend to pour your heart out to a girl, and she just melts. However tough they act, they're all the same!

Markus: Ha! Nice job mate! And we got rid of them both, all in time for the game...

Alex: PROST!

Markus: Prost!

(They clink their beers once again, laugh together and settle down for the game.)

THE END!

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