

SCENE 8

A hotel room. Back with MARIA, who is on her own, but talking in the direction of the bathroom, where ANNELI is.

MARIA

Seriously! Late to his own wedding. That's so bloody typical.

ANNELI returns.

MARIA

So?

ANNELI

I tried, but no one answered.

MARIA

He's always like this; always lecturing me about being late but really, he's way worse than me! I can't believe this!

ANNELI looks at her phone and frowns. It is some expert acting.

ANNELI

I don't think he's running late.

MARIA

What do you mean?

ANNELI

Richard's just messaged me.

MARIA

Saying what? What's happened?

ANNELI

He's just written 'He's changed his mind. Sorry.'

MARIA grabs the phone.

MARIA

Let me see! Why has he put a kissy face at the end?

ANNELI

I don't know, I think he's just stressed.

MARIA

'Changed his mind'!! What the actual fuck? Could this day get any worse?

ANNELI takes the phone back.

ANNELI

Isn't this a good thing?

MARIA

How is my fiancé not turning up, a good thing?

ANNELI

Well, it means he won't be too devastated. It's like, mutual.

MARIA

I want him to be devastated! What was even the point of saying 'yes', if standing him up wasn't going to devastate him?

ANNELI

Woah. That's a bit dark.

MARIA

No, I mean, I didn't agree to marry him just so I could hurt him. But, I don't know...I didn't expect him not to care.

ANNELI

When he finds out won't he probably feel exactly the same way as you?

MARIA

He's probably just copying me. He must've got wind of what I was going to do and decided to do the same. The man isn't capable of a single original thought.

ANNELI

Bit harsh.

MARIA

Are you seriously going to side with him?

ANNELI

Do you think I'd be here, with you, enabling your escape if I was on *his* side?

MARIA

I can't believe he isn't going to turn up. What's everyone going to think? How long do you think they'll wait?

ANNELI checks her phone again.

ANNELI

Your mum has tried calling me fifty-three times. I'm not kidding. Fifty-three. And Janine has left three voicemails. Oh, here comes another one.

ANNELI puts her phone away.

MARIA

Janine's only left three voicemails? Jesus, she tried harder when she thought I was going to miss her bloody nail appointment. This day is a disaster! I just want to walk away and forget everything, but now Callum's making it about him and my own mother-in-law couldn't give less of a shit. Next you'll be telling me that mum's actually made other plans with the Yoga ladies.

ANNELI

She's not technically your mother-in-law. You just opted out of that, remember?

MARIA

Thank goodness!

ANNELI

Ugh, your mum is ringing me again. When I agreed to be your maid of honour, this is not what I was signing up for.

MARIA

She'll run out of battery eventually. You know, I actually bought her a portable charger for her birthday and she never uses it!

ANNELI

Your point being?

MARIA

She deserves having her calls ignored.

ANNELI

Who knew that runaway brides were so grumpy. Maria, I really should answer this and let someone know what's going on.

MARIA

No! Don't you dare! I don't want to talk to her. You know what she's like; she'll convince you to put her on loudspeaker and then she'll use her siren mum song to get me back. You know what, *she* should marry Callum, she's the one who's obsessed with him. What is it with mums and boyfriends?

ANNELI

At least then all my planning wouldn't go to waste. I was excited for that locally poached pheasant on a cloud of artisan flora...and I chose some cracking voulevants.

MARIA

Are you trying to make me feel bad right now?

ANNELI

Jesus, no. But you have essentially just lifted that beautiful dress of yours, shat in my hands and asked me to deal with it. I'm holding your shit, okay? I'm just not fully enjoying experience, surprisingly enough.

MARIA

You're disgusting.

ANNELI

You're the one whose shat on me.

MARIA

Is that really how you feel?

ANNELI

A bit. But I'm here, aren't I? So don't start looking like that. Mari...Mari. I'd much rather be dealing with this mess right now than the undeniably worse future mess when you realise your mistake after the legally binding signy signy bit. That would be a whole different volume of faeces.

MARIA

You're the best. This is why you're my maid of honour and Josie isn't. She would have crumbled immediately; she just wouldn't have been able to handle the pressure.

ANNELI

That sounds way too much like you've planned this.

MARIA

No, obviously I chose you because I love you.

ANNELI

Yeah, and I love you. But I'm taking that honeymoon as payment, that's for sure.

MARIA sits down.

MARIA

I'm tired.

ANNELI

Well, we don't have to leave right now. Maybe have a little lie down, and I really should go and let everyone know what's happened.

MARIA

You're not leaving me!

ANNELI

Don't be a baby. If you're big enough to abandon your own wedding, you're big enough to sit on your own for a bit.

MARIA

What if mum convinces you to tell her where I am? She'll drag me kicking and screaming up that aisle, I know it. Ugh, it's giving me first-day-of-Brownies flashbacks.

ANNELI

I won't tell her. Worse comes to worst, you can lock the door and barricade it with a chair or something. *(beat.)* Look, even if, for whatever reason Callum deserves this, there are a lot of people out there who just came to see a couple they probably care about having a lovely day. *(beat.)* Apart from Darren.

MARIA

Apart from Darren.

ANNELI

Yeah, I'm pretty sure he's just here in the hopes that everything will crash and burn. He's probably got a swarm of bees ready, just in case.

MARIA

And now he's going to get what he wants!

ANNELI

Well, unless you're going to marry him instead, he won't get exactly what he wants.

MARIA

Gross.

ANNELI

You know it's true. Ok, I'm going to go now. Sort this circus out.

MARIA

No, wait, wait... *(having an idea)* oh. Oh! I'm coming with you!

ANNELI

You're coming with me?

MARIA

Yeah!

ANNELI

Do not tell me you've changed your mind. I've just gotten used to holding this particular stinker, so don't tell me I've been holding it for nothing!

MARIA

No, of course I haven't changed my mind. Can you imagine?

ANNELI

Hah, yeah. Imagine making a very sudden, last minute decision that goes against everything you've previously said.

MARIA

I've gotten this far and I really have no intention of turning back.

ANNELI

Okay, and you reckon the next course of action is going straight into the middle of the fray that you've just escaped? You've poked a bear, a whole family of bears in fact, and now you want to go and check to make sure they're awake and happy?

MARIA

At the moment I'm the bad guy, right? Think about it.

MARIA makes a little groom and a vicar with her fingers.

MARIA

I'm the groom, *(as the groom)* "uhm, hello vicar, could you tell everyone that I've changed my mind", *(as the vicar)* "yes, of course, my son", *(as the groom)* "thanks, see ya!". And then the vicar goes to the congregation and he's like *(as the vicar)* "ladies and gentlemen I regret to inform you that there won't be a wedding today" and then everyone's like, "okay, that's fair enough, pub?" Right?

ANNELI

Right...

MARIA

But then! If it's the other way round! *(as the groom)* "where is she?", *(as the vicar)* "it would appear that she has stood you up. That bitch!" and then everyone's like "burn the witch! What a horrible person! Fuck women!"

ANNELI

Uh, I don't know about that. What's the point you're trying to make, exactly?

MARIA

Somehow, when you think about it in your head, the bride standing up the groom looks way worse than if the vicar makes an awkward announcement on behalf of the groom. People judge a runaway bride way more harshly!

ANNELI

Maybe?

MARIA

But if we know for a fact that Callum isn't going to be there, which we do, and as long as Callum hasn't told Carol and she hasn't shuffled on to deliver the bad news then I don't have to be the bad guy!

ANNELI

Mari, this doesn't seem like the thoughts of a sane person. Have you taken your meds today?

MARIA

Yes, of course of I have! Just think about it! Callum is going to be the one to stand this poor, sweet bride up! (*melodramatic*) And I'll be devastated and heartbroken, but look so beautifully sad, and eventually I'll be okay, and maybe, just maybe one day I'll learn to love again.

ANNELI

Wow. Are you secretly a bit of a psychopath?

MARIA

You said it yourself, today took a lot of planning and everyone is here for me. So we might as well give them a show!

ANNELI

I shouldn't be surprised. You were way too enthusiastic about dissection at school.

MARIA

You can't tell me it isn't a brilliant idea!

ANNELI

It isn't a brilliant idea.

MARIA

Come on! Isn't friendship basically the most sacred union of all?
Through sickness and through health, for better and for worse?

ANNELI

You're definitely sick.

MARIA

Yeah, but if I hadn't taken the lead during dissection then you would've had to cut up that poor little froggy all on your own. You should be thanking me.

ANNELI

I want a divorce.

MARIA

You know I'm right. Plus, I know you've been practising your walk. Wouldn't want Richard to miss that...

ANNELI

What are you talking about?

MARIA does a kissy face, copying the emoji. ANNELI looks at her phone as it starts ringing again. MARIA grabs it and answers it.

MARIA

Hi mum, yeah, it's me. I know, I know. I just lost an earring and I couldn't bear the idea of...yeah, I've found it now. Got myself into a bit of a tizz. You know what I'm like. Had to re-trace all of my steps from this morning; I've been all over town! Yeah, I know we're running late, yeah, we're on our way now. Are you sure you don't want to walk me down the aisle? No, yeah, was just checking. Yeah I know, it's my big day and the idea of 'giving someone away' it outdated and misogynistic- Have I heard from Callum? What kind of question is that? It's our wedding day, it would be bad luck...whatever it is I'm sure it can wait until afterwards. Got to go, Ann needs her battery to film everything. She forgot her portable charger.

MARIA signals to ANNELI to big up the mythical charger.

ANNELI

(deadpan) Yes, it's usually so useful. The best present I could ever have asked for. How could I have forgotten it?

MARIA gives ANNELI a thumbs up.

MARIA

Okay, see you soon!

MARIA hangs up and hands the phone back.

MARIA

I think she was trying to tell me about Callum.

ANNELI

Like any good mum would! *(beat.)* Are we actually doing this?

MARIA

Yup! How do I look?

ANNELI

Like a woman who has absolutely lost the plot.

MARIA

I said, *how do I look?*

ANNELI

Like a beautiful, blushing bride ready for her big day...and also a woman who has absolutely, completely and undeniably lost the plot.

MARIA leaves the room and ANNELI watches her, takes a deep breath and follows her.

BLACK OUT.