

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Swingers

Ashley Lister

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About the Book

Swinging, swapping, dogging, threesomes, soft-swaps, group sex and full-blown orgies. Everybody has heard about them. Everyone knows someone who knows someone who was rumoured to . . . But who is really doing it? How? Why? What's it like? And what really happens?

Frank and Eve regularly frequent the dogging circuits where she accepts up to a dozen different men in a single night. Roger and Sonia spend Saturday evenings having sex in their lounge while their friends sit by and watch. Grace and Harry own a large estate and host bacchanal swinging parties for up to a hundred couples at a time. Ken makes himself available as the other man for those partners who want to experience a MFM threesome. Arthur sits in the room below his wife Betty and listens as she takes lover after lover after lover.

Ashley Lister, a freelance writer, author and reporter, has met countless singles, couples and triples involved in the UK's recreational sex scene. Meeting people who have turned their fantasy lives into reality, he uncovers today's swinging Britain and reveals the sexy, shocking and true secrets of what happens behind closed doors.

Swingers

Ashley Lister



Introduction

Swinging is a lot like watching soap operas: so many people do it but so few will ever admit that they do.

For the purposes of this book, swinging is a blanket term used to cover those incidents within relationships where established couples consent to their partners having sexual encounters with others. These encounters range from mild flirtations, kissing and exhibitionism through to full penetrative sex, orgies, dogging and gangbangs.

Swinging and the terms threesomes, foursomes and moresomes are all synonyms for the same phenomenon that has crept stealthily across Western culture over the past sixty years. Originally referred to as 'wife-swapping', swinging is the term currently deemed politically correct because it suggests less of a patriarchal establishment and reflects the easy-going attitude of those involved in this alternative lifestyle.

Swingers come in all shapes and sizes, incorporated in a demograph that ranges from the age of consent up to and beyond retirement. Religion, race, political views and financial status do not bar anyone from participating. Proponents of recreational sex come from all walks of life and, in the UK, they reside in each corner of all four countries.

However, the most remarkable aspect about swinging is not its broad popularity across all social boundaries but that acknowledgement of its occurrence remains virtually non-existent. Occasionally, a Sunday newspaper will provide a damning exposé on a small clique of swingers and shock its scandalised readers with lurid details of what occurs in such

dens of iniquity. Or a tabloid might decry a heinous villainess and use an incidence of troilism as proof of her subversive nature. But, aside from the occasional salacious documentary, the swinging lifestyle is usually overlooked, ignored or forgotten.

Swingers do not get mentioned in soap operas, our society's barometer of every acceptable and unacceptable social interaction. Soaps will gladly tackle spousal abuse, drug cultures, murder, incest, interracial relationships and transsexualism. But none of them has ever shown a content swinging couple.

According to Isaac Asimov, 'Jokes of the proper kind, properly told, can do more to enlighten questions [. . .] than any number of dull arguments.' Yet there are no jokes specifically about swingers. There are jokes covering every other topic in the universe, and there are a vast number of jokes about sex and sexuality. But none specifically about the swinging community.

Nearly every other sexual proclivity is covered. 'I had a friend who was into necrophilia, flagellation and bestiality. I always thought he was flogging a dead horse.' Or, 'The masochist says to the sadist, "Hurt me! Hurt me!" and the sadist says, "No!"'

There are jokes about virgins, newlyweds, old married couples, adulterous couples, men with large penises, men with small penises, men with no penises. There are jokes about women with huge breasts, large bottoms, wide and gaping vaginas and every other variation on the human anatomy.

But there are no jokes exclusively about swingers.

Usually, especially here in the UK where we are renowned for our sense of humour, when we know about a subject we make jokes. Considering the vacuum of comedy surrounding the subject, swinging must truly be an unknown commodity.

Agony aunts and those sensational talk-show hosts who occasionally brush on the topic of swinging persistently

treat the subject with a disparaging undertone. They claim a third person in the bedroom is a sign that things are about to deteriorate and the prospect of pairing off with another couple is symptomatic of deviance in its most unpleasant form. But, while it does happen that some swinging encounters end badly, a good number of them conclude so satisfactorily that they allow another couple to enter the elite group of hedonists known as swingers.

The purpose of this book is to show that swinging is now more popular than ever and to illustrate some of the ways in which it is currently practised. The stories come from active participants in today's swinging scene who have spoken openly about their activities and I have only changed their names to maintain their anonymity. However, anonymous or not, without their candid contributions this book would not have been possible and I would like to thank them all for taking the time to share an intimate part of their lives.

WHAT IS SWINGING?

swinging (adj.) **1.** sexually promiscuous. **2.** practising exchange of partners, especially spouses, for sex.

SWINGING MEANS DIFFERENT things to different people and will never be defined by something as dry as a dictionary definition. The consensus amongst those interviewed in the process of making this book suggests that swinging is the ultimate act of sexual freedom between loving and open-minded partners.

The arguments in favour of swinging are compelling. Recreational sex between two or more consenting adults should be an erotically charged experience. As Woody Allen quipped, 'Sex between two people is a beautiful thing – between five it's fantastic.' Or, equally appropriate, 'Sex between a man and a woman can be absolutely wonderful, provided you get between the right man and the right woman.'

Because swinging can incorporate a broad spectrum of fetishes, deviations and tastes, it is open to anyone who wants to participate. The swinging lifestyle allows women to explore their bisexuality; encourages men to viscerally enjoy their partner's pleasure; and (according to its exponents) promotes greater levels of honesty within existing relationships.

Scientifically, it has been argued that men and women were genetically designed to enjoy group sex and multiple partners. According to the results of a Baker and Bellis study of cohabiting students at the University of Manchester, only a small percentage of the sperm released in a 'normal'

ejaculate are intended for procreation. The majority are the equivalent of a 'sperm militia', carried along in the ejaculate with the express purpose of destroying any other sperm they encounter within the vaginal canal. Their natural function and the fact that these antagonistic sperm are much more copious when a male suspects his partner has been with another lover suggest the human male is designed to indulge in procreation with a naturally promiscuous mate. The ejaculation of these greater numbers is always more forceful and provides the male with a stronger and more satisfying orgasm. The findings of this survey would suggest that sex for the male of a swinging couple is a far more intense experience than for one who doesn't swing and has a monogamous partner. Similar surveys indicate the female propensity for multiple orgasms is best exploited by group sex. Researchers have also found that females having unprotected sex with more than one partner are able to subconsciously choose the moment of orgasm, allowing them a degree of choice in which partner's sperm is favoured with entry into the cervix. If the results of these investigations are to be accepted and believed, it does imply humans have evolved to enjoy swinging.

Religious arguments are never simplistic and, while the Bible does say *love thy neighbour*, few would seriously argue this statement advocates wife-swapping on any level. Yet many swingers maintain strong religious beliefs and balance this faith with their accepting attitudes towards recreational sex. They sincerely love their spouses; they enjoy the pleasure of sharing, having multiple partners and indulging in group sex; and they devoutly adhere to their interpretation of their religious beliefs. The majority marry these conflicting ideals with the simple knowledge that they are not committing a sin: they have simply taken their relationship to an unconventional level of pleasure and honesty.

Sociologists suggest swingers are drawn by the community aspect of recreational sex, citing friendships that developed as a bonus to the sex, or sex that developed as a bonus to the friendship.

Anthropologists draw comparisons between swingers and the bonobo, a species of primates with a society that revolves around group sex. They explain (the anthropologists, not the primates) that the bonobos set a precedent in their relationships that shows human swingers are not doing anything that isn't natural in at least one part of the animal world.

But, rather than restate the opinions of 'experts' who are only trying to prove their personal hypotheses, this book has been written after interviewing those actively involved in swinging today. It is the author's belief that genuine swingers can better explain the attraction of the phenomena and more easily describe its benefits, drawbacks and (of course) its pleasures.

Andrew, Brenda & Charlie

'Sex is only ever about sex.'

BRENDA STEPS INTO the room with Andrew holding her right arm and Charlie on her left. At any other function, the two men would be assumed to be close acquaintances: a partner and a friend, siblings, cousins or work colleagues. But here everyone understands Brenda is accompanied by her two lovers.

She admits that it is a liberating position. Having a man on each arm makes her feel as though she is adored.

The room has been made small by the dozen or so couples already there. Everyone is dressed in the latest styles and fashions and it is clear that each individual has invested many hours of preparation before attending. The gentlemen wear razor-sharp creases, polished shoes and designer shirts so new they still smell like their original packaging. The ladies bask in a post-hairstylist glow and look as though they have won a date with their favourite movie idol.

Music from the 80s pounds through gargantuan speakers at either end of the room. Tracks from Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, the Human League's *Dare*, and Soft Cell's *Non Stop Erotic Cabaret* follow each other from the CD's random interchanger. The bass rhythms tremble through the laminated floor and make conversation impractical if not impossible.

Two couples sit on either side of a sumptuous settee. They are close together, kissing and holding each other intimately. A small crowd is gathered around the table in the corner from where the drinks are being served. One pair,

seemingly oblivious to everyone else, dance together in the centre of the room. Others, scattered around the various corners, lean close together to make their whispers heard over the roar of 'Love Action'.

Andrew kisses Brenda lightly before extracting his arm and going to get refreshments for the three of them. Brenda sees a couple she knows from previous parties and saunters over to greet them. Charlie remains gallantly at her side and is included in the polite introductions.

Andrew: 'Unless you've been to a party, it's impossible for you to know what it's like. Everyone thinks a swing party is a sexual free-for-all, and that you just turn up at the door with an erection and get instantly laid.' He laughs at the notion, shakes his head and says, 'Nothing could be further from the truth.'

Andrew and Brenda are 32 and 29, respectively. They have been married for five years and swinging for two.

'The protocol for swinging parties is more rigid than you'd find at a Victorian tea party,' Andrew explains. 'You can't get in if you're a single man. Men and women are expected to remain in very close proximity to their partners throughout the evening. It's not done to get drunk. But there's always alcohol available. Drugs are a big no-no, although we've been to a couple of parties where I've seen couples passing round a dodgy roll-up or two. And you don't touch anyone unless they invite you to touch them. Also, in a lot of cases, you're expected to be psychic. If a couple are getting it on, you should only watch if they want you to watch. After you've chatted with another couple, and introduced yourself, you're meant to understand what they're into from a conversation that's lost under all the music, with a meaning that's hidden behind euphemism, embarrassment and uncertainty.' Elaborating, he says, 'Brenda and I know what we want and we understand each other's limits. But a lot of couples come to these parties after having some

vague conversation that confirms they want to “do it” with another couple. They might be one of those intuitive couples who understand exactly what each other means when they say they want to “do it” with another couple. More often than not, they’ve both turned up with different expectations. He wants to watch her lezz off with some lass who looks like Pamela Anderson; she fancies the idea of either the softest of soft swaps or, at the other end of the spectrum, she wants a full-blown DP with a pussy to munch on as she comes.’ Laughing again, he adds, ‘With so much weighted against the chances, it’s a wonder anyone ever gets laid at a swing party. But it does happen. Nearly always: it happens.’

With Charlie properly introduced to the other couple, and Andrew returned and having distributed drinks, Brenda leads the conversation. She is a tall lady, her pale skin made lighter by the black dress she wears this evening. Her brunette hair is tied back from her angular face to show perfectly applied lipstick and eyeliner. She is confident and tactile in her gestures and, now she is in the sanctuary of the party, Brenda is bereft of reservations. ‘I hear that pubes are coming back into vogue this season,’ she tells the other woman. ‘The prepubescent look is becoming tired.’

‘Couldn’t you have phoned me to let me know that?’ The other woman giggles. Her husband, beside her, smiles perfunctorily. ‘I spent two hours in the bathroom tweezing out every last hair this afternoon,’ she complains. ‘It was like self-inflicted sadomasochism.’

‘You’ll have to show me the results,’ Brenda says and smiles.

‘You can feel them,’ the other woman replies encouragingly. She reaches for Brenda’s empty left hand and guides it between her thighs. Because the other woman is wearing a short skirt, and not wearing panties, Brenda’s fingers slip against smooth, freshly shaved flesh.

The party continues around them. 'Love Action' is replaced by Soft Cell's 'Frustration'. The dancing couple in the centre of the room have been joined by another pair. The more observant members of the party might have noticed that the first couple are no longer dancing with their original partners, although it is unlikely anyone will care. A pall of equanimity cloaks the room's mood and the prevalent attitude is clearly one of laissez-faire. All four writhe their hips and sashay around the impromptu dance floor while challenging each other via mesmerising gazes.

Another couple enter the room, apologising for being late. Someone latches on to the comment and makes a joke about the perils of coming too quickly. A flutter of high-pitched laughter draws attention to the nervousness underpinning events. The chatter of conversation reaches a volume that fights against the pounding of Soft Cell. On the settee, the couples furthest from the door exchange a long, lingering kiss.

Brenda slides her fingers easily over the woman's bald pussy lips. Their gazes remain interlocked and each struggles to appear calm and unmoved by the exchange. At any other party it would be unthinkable for two women to enjoy such a bold interplay in full view of all the other guests. Here, even though it is supposed to be the norm, it is early enough in the evening for the act to be viewed as daring.

However, Brenda does like to be seen as daring.

'That feels lovely,' Brenda sighs. She doesn't take her hand away. Instead, her fingers continue to tease the woman's sex lips. The flesh is warm and moist. 'How did you really get yourself so smooth?'

'I was being serious with what I said before. I used tweezers.'

They both wince. The conversation moves on to depilation products. Brenda sympathises with the woman's problem. She has luxuriant, thick, dark hair; shaving leaves an

uncomfortable stubble; she has yet to find a hair removal cream that is safe for the skin around her pubic region while still effective against the hairs.

And Brenda still doesn't take her hand away. She has already ingratiated a finger between the woman's pussy lips and slipped it inside. The moist hole clutches tight around the tip of her middle finger.

The men around them exchange polite glances and nods of unspoken greeting. The lack of conversation between them is universally understood as acceptable while they all watch the two women become acquainted.

Brenda passes her drink to Charlie, leaving her right hand free. Her new friend follows her example and passes her Becks to her husband. No longer encumbered by bottles or glasses, they assume a more natural position together so they can kiss and touch and explore.

Andrew: 'People outside swinging just don't understand what really happens at a party. Don't you get jealous? Do you get much pussy? Is your wife some sort of slut? The questions say as much about their own problems as they could ever reveal about any aspect of swinging. Yes, I sometimes get jealous. But not in a bad way. Brenda and I don't go to parties to hurt each other. We go to have fun. Do I get much pussy? It depends how you define "much". At some parties I might have sex with two, three or four women. At others I might not have sex with anyone. It all depends how the evening pans out. It's not like you buy a ticket on the door that entitles you to four fucks in an evening, and you go from one woman to another until you've had your ticket stamped the appropriate number of times.

'Is my wife some sort of slut? My wife and I share a relationship where we can be open and honest about our sexual needs. She has a demanding libido and I wouldn't be able to fully satisfy her without the swinging aspect of our

lives. That means, without the swinging, either Brenda would be frustrated or possibly cheating on me. With the swinging, it means that Brenda is satisfied and we have the advantage of being wholly honest with each other. Some people might describe her as being a slut because of that. But people always give stupid names to things when they don't understand them. I believe, a lot of the time, when guys make comments like that it's because they really wish they were doing something like this with their wives.'

Brenda and her new friend are pressed into a corner of the room. Their mouths have joined together, Brenda's left breast is being squeezed and she has yet to move her fingers from the shaved lips of the other woman's pussy. Their kiss has the urgent fullness of genuine passion. Neither is going for the faux feminine exchanges shown in so many pornographic movies. Rather than keeping their faces apart and rubbing the tips of their extended tongues together, Brenda and her friend are squashing their lips against each other and enjoying the full thrill of exploration.

Around them the party slowly gathers momentum. Soft Cell's 'Frustration' is replaced by Michael Jackson's 'Beat It'. The heavy bass of the stereo now causes the laminate floor to throb. Six figures gyrate in the centre of the room. One woman is already topless and beginning to ease out of her skirt. Her striptease is encouraged by a slow, approving handclap. She slips her thumbs into the waistband of her skirt and begins to slide the garment down to reveal the whisper of fabric that is her thong.

Sharp words are exchanged in the room's doorway. Someone makes an exclamation, ending with the words, 'I don't fucking think so!' Before anyone can see who is angry, or why, the door has slammed closed and there is one less couple at the party. The momentary silence that ensues is quickly banished by resumed conversations and a handful of sympathetic smiles. Veteran partygoers understand that

swinging is not for everyone and sometimes the adventure doesn't always work out as hoped.

Someone lights a cigarette and is immediately told to take it outside. The party's hostess is not allowing smoking on this occasion. The smoker apologises and leaves the room with her partner. A second couple follow them and those who have been to previous parties suspect the two couples will probably have their own smokers' party outside in the garden.

Brenda: 'It's not about sex. It's about eroticism. I don't go to parties so I can get laid by X number of men or X number of women, although, I admit, that's a bonus. But I go to swing parties so I can feel erotic. I go to parties so that I can confirm I'm desirable, and so I can meet other people who are also desirable. I'm not saying that I have issues about how people perceive me, or that Andrew and Charlie aren't enough to satisfy me. I'm just saying that I go because I like meeting people who share my ideas of what constitutes a good time.'

The decision to try swinging was a natural extension of Brenda and Andrew's love life. They met, became lovers, moved in together and then married. They enjoyed a full sex life, constantly experimenting with new ideas and repeatedly rediscovering what the other liked.

'But we were in danger of running out of new ideas,' Brenda explains. 'We'd tried every act that two consenting adults could possibly try and, although it was still fun, I think we both knew it was soon going to turn into a humdrum routine. There isn't a position we haven't tried or a style of sex that we haven't attempted. We've tried bondage, S&M, role-playing and every other variation you can think of. We've done anal, oral, watersports and experimented with various fetishes. We used a lot of fantasy talk in our lovemaking, and a repeated theme was the idea of being

with other people. It seemed only natural to change that fantasy into a reality.'

The party has now developed into something bacchanalian. The couple on the settee, who have been kissing, are now on the brink of intercourse. She has released his erection from his pants. He has exposed her breasts and raised her skirt to reveal she is not wearing panties. They glide closer to each other as they continue to kiss and murmur words of approval and encouragement. It is unclear whether they are oblivious to the party that is happening around them, or spurred on by the knowledge that others are close by and might be watching. The only thing that is certain is that both are involved in the excitement of the moment.

The woman who performed the striptease to Michael Jackson's 'Beat It' is now on her knees and sucking between her partner's legs. The gossamer thong she wears displays her backside. The sliver of white cotton trails between the cheeks of her buttocks, over a tautly puckered anus and down to a crotch that has been dampened by her excitement. As she sucks and slurps, her hips continue to sway to the music. Occasionally, she moves her head and puts her mouth over the sheathed erection of the man sitting next to her partner. Her lips are wet with saliva and twisted into a smile of mischievous devilment.

Another couple have left the room to join the smokers who do appear to be having their own party in the house's back garden. Giggles and throaty sighs from outside can be heard in the silences each time the CD's track changes. Eventually, the hostess goes to investigate and make sure the smokers are not running a risk of upsetting her neighbours.

An occasional glass clinks from the nearly forgotten drinks table. The majority of those at the party are now too involved with their various exchanges to be bothered about refreshments.

Brenda: 'Of course, wanting to swing and getting into swinging are two completely different things. We did the whole "talk it through" scenario. We discussed jealousy, disease and danger, and all those other subjects that make swinging sound so fucking awful. The strange thing was, the more we discussed things, the more it seemed like swinging was right for us.

'Stripped naked, Andrew's biggest fear was that we would stop loving each other. I assured him that wasn't going to happen because I love him for who he is: not what happens in the bedroom. My biggest fear was that Andrew wouldn't be able to handle watching me with other men.' She smiles at the memory and explains, 'I obviously didn't know him very well if I thought that would repulse him. It's turned out to be one of his biggest turn-ons.'

Brenda and her new friend continue to kiss. With the exception of their matching black stockings, their clothes and exotic lingerie have been discarded. They cling together in a compression of breasts against breasts and legs wrapped around thighs. Beads of perspiration make them look as though they've just stepped from a shower. In the muted lights of the party's main room, their bare bodies glisten in bronzed splendour. Fingers from both women explore and invade the other. Their gasps are urgent, breathless and passionate. Pushing herself away, finally breaking the intimacy of their lingering kiss, Brenda moves her lips to the other woman's breast and begins to suckle.

Things progress quickly. The other woman's partner touches his wife on the shoulder. She looks, at first, startled by his caress. When she remembers he is in close attendance, she quickly solicits Brenda's approval, and then encourages him to join them. Caught up in the moment, Brenda summons Andrew and Charlie to her assistance. Within seconds, the five are in various states of undress and joined in a mêlée of near-naked passion.

The other woman is taken from behind by her husband. Brenda continues to kiss her new friend, constantly stroking the woman's body and paying homage to her bare flesh. Andrew suckles against his wife's breasts, combining his tongue, lips and teeth in the way he knows she likes best. Charlie stands behind Brenda and plunges into her sex from behind. Occasional compliments are passed back and forth. Brenda tells the woman she is beautiful. Andrew and Charlie bestow the same praise on Brenda. The other couple exchange their own intimate accolades. But the majority of sounds are little more than pleasurable sighs and urgent, demanding grunts. Most of the cries are lost beneath Michael Jackson singing 'Human Nature'.

One couple watch them. They have already sated their passion on the settee and lie in each other's embrace touching in anticipation of another bout of lovemaking.

The climactic cries from outside suggest the smokers and their friends are enjoying their own annexed version of the party. In the centre of the room, the dancing has stopped and two couples lie side by side on the uncomfortable laminate floor. At first glance, it is impossible to say which person arrived with which partner. At second glance, it is obvious that no one is troubled by such a consideration.

Brenda: 'Our first swinging experience came from a contact ad. We'd made up our mind that we were going to do it, so I put an ad in the classified section of *Forum* and sat back and waited for the replies.' She laughs again and shakes her head. 'That's not entirely true. I couldn't just sit back. The idea excited me and frightened me. Every time I thought about it, I nearly cacked my knickers and then I had to go and have a wank. If Andrew was around I'd pounce on him and have a vigorous comfort fuck.'

'I got worse when the replies started to come through. And, when we organised our first meet, I was cacking bricks. I wanted to do it - I was so horny to experience Andrew and

another guy I was *really* wanting to do it - but because it was such a big step into the unknown I was very, very scared.'

The couple say little about their first experience. The gentleman was clean and presentable, and he helped to provide a sexually satisfying climax to the evening. But, afterwards, he seemed anxious to leave and made no suggestion about future meetings. Andrew was worried that they had committed some social faux pas. Brenda fretted that he hadn't found her sufficiently attractive.

The second time they planned to invite a third party into their bedroom they were less worried about the sex and more concerned about whether their visitor would simply disappear at the end of the night.

'But swinging is like that,' Brenda explains. 'It's different folk looking for different things. Some people are just in it for the sex. Others want a social connection. As well as the sex, I think we were looking for someone who would "click" with us. But it was only when we found Charlie that we realised we'd found what we were looking for.'

Charlie and Andrew throw their used condoms into a plastic-lined waste paper bin that sits discreetly in the corner of the bathroom. They left Brenda to kiss her new friend farewell before allowing the other couple to mingle with the rest of the party. A busty woman in her early thirties, displaying a trim figure adorned with the latest Ann Summers fashions, bursts into the bathroom and presses herself between them to dispose of a used condom. Her hair is a stylised red that looks as though it was coloured earlier in the day. All three of them gather around the bathroom's sink to wash their hands. Charlie recognises the woman from a previous party and reintroduces himself and Andrew. Intimate embraces are exchanged. As she kisses each of the men her breasts crush obviously against their bare chests. To avoid the risk

of social embarrassment she reminds them that her name is Lynne.

Lynne was the first of the party to be exiled outside with her cigarettes and she asks Andrew and Charlie if they would care to join her in the back garden.

'Isn't it cold outside?' Charlie asks.

Lynne confides, 'We've found a way to keep each other warm.' With a suggestive smile, she promises she will reveal the secret if they join her.

Charlie politely declines the invitation - Brenda is alone downstairs and he enjoys playing the role of an attentive lover - but Andrew is happy to accept Lynne's offer and the pair go off together.

Downstairs, he discovers Brenda is now in the centre of the settee and enjoying the attention of a round-faced man and his waiflike oriental wife. The sight is sexually exciting. Brenda is only wearing her stockings but her body is modestly covered by the hands and arms of the couple sandwiching her. The oriental woman's fingers play against the split of Brenda's pussy while the man has reached across her body to knead and tease her breasts. Brenda lazily turns her face from one to the other and enjoys being kissed by him, then her and then him again.

After pouring himself a soft drink, Charlie decides to follow Andrew and Lynne to the smokers' party.

Charlie: 'I'm Brenda's lover. I don't know how else to describe myself in the context of our relationship. She's married to Andrew; I live with the pair of them, and I often have sex with her. But try putting all that into the little box you find on forms where it asks for marital status.'

Charlie is younger than Andrew and Brenda by a couple of years. Whereas Andrew has an athletic build, Charlie looks more like a construction worker. His biceps are broad with an intricate Celtic tattoo circling his right arm. He keeps his scalp trimmed down to an austere number one that is

softened by an ever-present grin. Aside from the constant smile, everything about him, from his wide fingers to his heavy-set frame, suggests he is a strong and capable individual.

'I guess ours is a strange relationship but not that much stranger than many others. It only stands out as being different because the three of us live together. If Brenda and I were having an affair behind Andrew's back, people would think we were normal. Because I live with them, and we all know what we do together, it's looked on as being wrong.' He chuckles and asks, 'Doesn't that say something about the value our society places on honesty in relationships?'

Waving the question aside, momentarily losing his constant smile, he says, 'Sex doesn't always have to be about love. Take a look around any swing party and you'll see that's true. Even in regular nightclubs and bars, where people are clumsily trying to get off with each other, they're not after sex because they love people. They're after sex because they're after sex. Sex is about having fun and doing things you enjoy. I know married couples who are supposedly in love and they treat sex as an occasional chore at the end of the day before they go to sleep. Sex is seldom about love. Sex is only ever about sex. Brenda's a very good friend. Andrew is a good friend too. Living with them makes our arrangement easier for all three of us. But I don't think I love either of them. I certainly don't love Andrew. I don't think either of them loves me. We're just good friends who have an open and honest relationship. We're good friends who have sex together.'

Charlie drives the car back home. Andrew and Brenda remain in the back seat, still touching each other and continuing to play. The sound of their enjoyment carries easily over the late-night radio station flowing from the car's speakers. Charlie makes a joke about stopping at a dogging spot and Brenda tells him to fuck off.