

## Sliding Doors (1998)

The film follows Helen Quilley (Gwyneth Paltrow), a young Englishwoman living in London who has just been fired from her public relations job. The plot splits into two parallel universes, based on the two paths her life could take depending on whether she catches a London Underground train or not.

In the timeline in which she makes the train, she meets James (John Hannah) on the underground and they strike up a conversation. She gets home in time to catch her boyfriend Gerry (John Lynch) in bed with his American ex-girlfriend Lydia (Jeanne Tripplehorn); she dumps him and moves in with her friend Anna (Zara Turner). James continues to serendipitously pop into Helen's life, cheering her up and encouraging her to start her own public relations firm. Helen gets a new makeover by cutting her hair short and dyeing it blond. She and James fall in love despite Helen's reservations about beginning another relationship so soon after her ugly breakup with Gerry.

In the timeline in which she misses the train, she then hails a taxi instead but gets mugged when a man snatches her handbag. Helen hits her head in the scuffle and goes to hospital. She arrives home late, giving Lydia time to leave. Helen carries on with her life oblivious of Gerry's infidelity, and begins working part-time jobs to pay bills. Gerry conceals his infidelity and juggles the two women in his life; Lydia even interacts with Helen on several occasions. Helen has a number of conflicts with Gerry, then discovers she's pregnant with his baby, but delays telling him.

In the first timeline, Helen discovers she's pregnant, believing it is with James' child, and goes to see him at his office. She is stunned to learn from James' secretary that he is married. Upset, she disappears. James finds her on a bridge and explains that he was married but is now separated and planning to divorce. He and his soon-to-be ex-wife maintain a cordial relationship for the sake of his sick mother. After she and James declare their love for another, Helen walks out into the road and is hit by a car.

In the second timeline, Helen tells Gerry she has a job interview with an international PR firm. Thinking Helen is at the interview, Gerry sees Lydia, who is also pregnant with his child. While there, the doorbell rings and Lydia tells Gerry to answer it. Helen is there, and is stunned when Lydia tells her she can't do the interview because she's "deciding whether or not to keep your boyfriend's baby." Distraught over finally catching her two-timing boyfriend's infidelity, Helen runs and falls down Lydia's staircase.

In both timelines, after her accident (hit by a car in the first timeline, and falling down the stairs in the second) Helen goes to hospital and happens to end up in the very same emergency room in both timelines, and loses her baby. In the timeline in which she caught the train, she dies from internal bleeding in the arms of her newfound love. In the timeline in which she didn't, she recovers and tells Gerry to leave for good. Before waking up, she sees flashes of the other Helen's life.

In the final scene (now taking place solely in the "missed the train" universe), James is leaving the hospital after visiting his mother, and Helen is leaving after ending her relationship with Gerry. Helen drops an earring in the elevator and it is picked up by James. This mirrors the start of the film, where James picks up Helen's earring on the elevator after Helen is fired from her job. Before the doors close, James tells Helen to cheer up, and repeats his line, "You know what the Monty Python boys say..." Helen (who, in the beginning of the film, assumed the rejoinder to be "always look on the bright side of life.") says, " Nobody

expects the Spanish Inquisition." She and James stare at one another, each surprised by her response. The doors close and the audience is left to wonder what will become next.

### Cast

Helen	Gwyneth Paltrow
James	John Hannah
Gerry	John Lynch
Lydia	Jeanne Tripplehorn
Anna	Zara Turner
Russell	Douglas McFerran
Claudia	Nina Young
Clive	Paul Brightwell
James's Mother	Virginia McKenna
Paul	Kevin McNally
Kind Cabbie	Terry English
Man on Tube	Paul Stacey
Cheeky Bloke	Peter Howitt
Suspicious Girl	Joanna Roth
Defensive Bloke	Neil Stuke

### Short notes on difficult vocabulary

[Helen tells James her boyfriend is cheating]

**James:** Well, if it makes you feel any better... do you see that bloke over there?

[Points to his friend at the end of the bar]

**James:** Not only does he own a personalized matching set of crocodile-skin luggage, but his favorite TV program is Baywatch. So you see there's always someone sadder than you.

[Helen starts to cry]

**James:** Do you love him?

**Helen:** No, I could never love a Baywatch fan.

**bloke** = tipo, tizio; **there's always someone sadder than you** = c'è sempre qualcuno che è messo peggio di te

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**Anna:** Are you okay?

**Helen:** Yes, just going quietly mad.

**Anna:** Thank goodness for that. I was worried.

**just going quietly mad** = sto solo impazzendo in silenzio

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**James:** Everybody's born knowing all the Beatles lyrics instinctively. They're passed into the fetus subconsciously along with all the amniotic stuff. Fact, they should be called "The Fetals".

**they're passed into the fetus** = ti vengono trasmessi quando sei ancora nel feto

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**Helen:** I kissed you.

**James:** Yeah, I spotted that too.

**I spotted that too** = me ne sono accorto anch'io, l'avevo notato

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**Russell:** Sorry, let me just... Lydia's becoming more and more demanding and you feel bad because Helen's working night and day to keep the money coming in. But you've asked Helen to come on a research trip to Dorset with you - knowing that she wouldn't be able to - to cover up the fact that you're really taking Lydia. And despite the fact that Lydia gave you an out on the phone - which you didn't take - you're having a moral dilemma.

[pause]

**Russell:** Gerry, you are a morality-free zone.

**to cover up** = nascondere; **to give an out** = mettere alle strette; **Gerry, you are a morality-free zone.** = Gerry, non sai proprio dove stia di casa la moralità.

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**Lydia:** Gerry, I'm a woman! We don't say what we WANT! But we reserve the right to get pissed off if we don't get it. That's what makes us so fascinating! And not a little bit scary.

**to get pissed off** = (volg.) incazzarsi

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**Lydia:** I'm trying to be your girlfriend Gerry! I'm trying to win you back! I'm standing on the platform at Limbo Central with my heart and soul packed in my suitcase waiting for the Gerry Fucking Express to roll in and tell me that my ticket is still valid and that I may reboard the train. Only the station announcer keeps coming on and telling me that my train has been delayed as the driver has suffered a major panic attack in Indecision City, "We suggest you take the bus"! That's what I have been trying to do, you cripple!

**to win you back** = fare in modo che tu ritorni da/con me; **to roll in** = (qui) arrivare; **to reboard the train** = risalire in carrozza

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**Helen:** You wanker. You sad, sad wanker.

**wanker** = (volg.) coglione

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**James:** Cheer up. Remember what the Monty Python boys say.

**Helen:** "Always look on the bright side of life"?

**James:** No, "Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition."

**Monty Python** = gruppo comico inglese, attivo dal 1969 al 1983 e costituito da Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones e Michael Palin; **look on the bright side of life** = cogli l'aspetto migliore della vita; **nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition** = nessuno si aspetta la santa inquisizione

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**Russell:** I must say, being friends with you certainly makes the wait for the next episode of "Seinfeld" much easier to bear.

**Seinfeld** = famosa situation comedy statunitense

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**Helen:** I-I'm not - I'm not very good at - at, you know...

**James:** Constructing sentences?

**constructing sentences?** = costruire frasi?

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**Gerry:** There's loads of them... having some sort of sponsored epileptic fit!

**epileptic fit** = attacco epilettico

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[*Helen has broken up with her boyfriend*]

**Helen:** Bollocks to him. I'm over him.

**Anna:** [*skeptically*] Oh. You're over him.

**Helen:** Yes. Totally and utterly and completely over him.

**Anna:** No you're not.

**Helen:** I am.

**Anna:** You're not.

**Helen:** Anna, I'm over him! What do you mean I'm not? How do you know I'm not?

**Anna:** Well, two things really. One, you're still counting how long you've been apart in days - and probably hours and minutes - but the big-flashing-red-light way of telling you're not really over someone is when you're still reading their horoscope in the hope that they're going to get wiped out in some freak napalming incident.

**Helen:** Smartass!

[*tosses the paper at Anna*]

**Anna:** [*opens the paper*] What is he?

**Helen:** A wanker.

[*pause*]

**Helen:** Oh. Aries.

**Anna:** Aries... Aries... well, just shows how much I know.

[*reads*]

**Anna:** "With Mars your ruler in the ascendancy, you will get wiped out in a freak napalming incident and Helen says bollocks to you." This guy's very good.

**bollocks** = balle; **you're over him** = ti è passata/non provi più nulla per lui; to get wiped out = essere spazzato via, annientato; **smartass** = sapientone, sputasentenze; **freak** = strano, folle

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**Helen:** Look, James. Maybe I shouldn't be here. I'm sorry, I'm not being fair. You know, under normal circumstances, etcetera... You're really nice - and funny. My friend Anna thinks you're cute...

**James:** Wait. Wait! Your friend Anna thinks I'm cute? Your friend ANNA thinks I'm cute? Shit, I just blew - wait

[*looks at menu*]

**James:** - two eighty-five on the wrong girl!

**cute** = carino; **I just blew** = mi sono fregato

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[*to her boss just after he has sacked her*]

**Helen:** OK, I'll go. I was getting a bit choked up with all the testosterone flying about the place. Best I get out before I start growing a penis.

**to choke up** = soffocare; **before I start growing a penis** = prima che mi cresca il pene

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**Gerry:** [*looking in the mirror*] Are you some peculiar, thus far undefined breed of dickhead. You have two head problems. One, that was close, very close. Put in layman's terms, she nearly caught you. Two, and this is far more worrying than the first one, you're talking to yourself in the mirror again. Really bad sign.  
**dickhead** = (volg.) testa di cazzo

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**Helen:** God! I feel like such a mug! Useless, no good, shagging, horrible, despicable, lying, two faced, pissing, shagging...

**Anna:** You said shagging.

**Helen:** ...wanker!

**shagging** = fottere

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**Helen:** So who are you on the rebound from?

**James:** A girl called Pamela. My who life pivots around Pam and I breaking up.

**Helen:** When was that?

**James:** 1973, we were eight. I bloody loved that woman! No warning just up, gone, left me for someone else.

**Helen:** Who?

**James:** Gary Glitter! Gary Glitter for cryin' out loud! I mean all my friends were being left for Donny Osmond or David Cassidy, I could have come to terms with that given time, but Gary ooooooh she wanted to touch him there yeeaah...

**on the rebound** = in ripresa

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120148/>