

# "TANGO UNDERPANTS"

By John Collee

Adapted from "Brief Encounter"  
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Sensible, white undies cover an attractive bum.

Above them a simple singlet, and being pulled up - a pair of worn jeans.

A FIXED-CAMERA HIGH SHOT takes in the bed and room. \*

In time-lapse, over the course of a few hours we see Carolyn cover the bed with things for a trip to South America.

Jeans. Socks. Other socks. T shirts. Different T shirts. Dress, Shoes, toiletries, plain bras. Shorts.... \*  
Alternative dress. \*

Carolyn picks up the jumper and in a moment of strength throws it unceremoniously into the bin.

She is on a roll now, back to the first choice of T shirts. Nail clippers, toothbrush, a copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets. South American Lonely Planet.... \*

It all goes into the backpack \*

CAROLYN

I don't know much about travelling  
but I know this

A fresh set of BONDS sensible, white cotton underpants stuffed in a pocket of the backpack. \*

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

....a girl needs sensible  
underwear.

The backpack is closed with a CLICK CLICK of buckles. weighs a ton. She is ready. \*

The CLICK CLICK turns to a TAP TAP and is joined by frenetic South American guitar as we

Run Title: TANGO UNDERPANTS

A bus horn sounds, drowning the guitar and a classic South American bus pulls up in a South American village. The guitar continues from the bus.

The bus fills the screen - covered in dust and rust, festooned with decorations and holy icons.

A bunch of villagers pile aboard carrying pigs and chickens and raffia bags of fruit for the market. \*

3 **INT. THE BUS. VILLAGE. DAY.** 3

Carolyn, looking dusty and exhausted from weeks on the road sits wedged beside and the fat lady with the chickens.

\*

The bus wobbles off. To us it's all mad and exotic, to Carolyn it's familiar, uncomfortable and exhausting.

Carolyn leans her head against her backpack and sleeps.

4 **EXT. BUS STATION. NIGHT (THIS SCENE IS AN OPTIONAL DELETE)** 4 \*

... late night. Carolyn stands bathed in harsh fluorescent light under the lonely entrance to the

BUENOS AIRES BUS STATION.

She shoulders her bag and sets off into the city.

5 **INT. CRAPPY HOTEL ROOM. DAY.** 5

She awakes late the next day to the sounds of the city filtering up from below.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Three months on the road. This  
must be Buenos Aires.

\*

\*

She takes in her surroundings.

The broken ceiling fan, the sagging iron-frame bed, the dusty Madonna on the painted sideboard. A stained sink in one corner.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Travel is a drug it's perfectly  
true. But there's always a  
hangover.

She gets up stiffly and opens the shutters. Bright light. Then a wall of run down apartments and balconies festooned with washing.

CAROLYN

Its not always pretty.

Open dumpsters line the alley below the window.

6 **INT. CRAPPY HOTEL ROOM. DAY. DELETE?** 6 \*

Carolyn washes her socks and underwear in the sink then...



9 CONTINUED:

9

He shrugs and smiles, understanding, and moves on to another lady in the crowd, Carolyn slinks back from the scene.

\*

10 **EXT. BOULEVARD. DAY.**

10

The music stays with Carolyn - playing in her head now as she wanders the city.

It's early evening - the hour of the promenade when men and women walk arm in arm - boys with girls, girls with girls, boys with boys - and people sit in the street-side cafes watching the talent going by.

She's avoiding eye contact, watching the bums of the people who pass in front of her. The tight little buttocks of South American guys and the rolling arses of South American girls all of whom seem to manage a kind of self confident wiggle.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

CAROLYN (V.O.)

Funny. I'd been like them once:  
sexy, confident, outgoing. But  
after a while it all becomes too  
much effort.

\*

\*

\*

\*

She turns down a quiet side street

\*

11 **EXT. SIDE STREET. DAY**

11

And finds herself alone in front of a clothes shop window

\*

She stops there and regards her own reflection with a certain sense of resigned amusement:

\*

Hair limp and scraggy. Clothes loose and worn. Posture nonexistent. Face sallow and dull. But behind all that...

... a black dress in the crowded window - not unlike the dress which the tango dancer was wearing.

\*

Carolyn moves to get a better look at the black dress.

Her reflection superimposes on the mannequin - not a bad look.

12 **INT. SHOP. DAY.**

12

From inside the shop, LINA - a grandmotherly yet spry figure - watches Carolyn looking at the dress.

\*

13 **EXT. ON THE STREET. DAY**

13

Carolyn sees Lina gesticulating from inside the shop.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: 13

She cautiously makes her way inside. \*

14 **INT THE SHOP. DAY** 14

LINA  
(In Spanish)  
Come in Come In \*

Lina bustles towards then past Carolyn and straight to the dress, efficiently removing it from the mannequin.

LINA (CONT'D)  
(In Spanish) \*

You must try it on. \*

15 **INT CHANGING ROOM** 15

In the cramped and awkward changing room Carolyn strips down to her underwear and puts on the dress.

There's no mirror. \*

16 **IN THE SHOP.** 16

Tentatively, she comes out and stands in front of the shop mirror - its a simple black dress - figure hugging. Knee length.

Even in her slightly downtrodden state she can see that it works

In front of the mirror, she does a little sashay.

The hem of the dress swings, like the dress of the tango dancer.

In Carolyn's mind Tango music starts playing again

LINA  
(in bad English)  
Beautiful is. You beautiful!

CAROLYN  
Not beautiful.

LINA  
(Beaming)  
Si! Beautiful!

Lina beams like a proud nonna. Her huge smile slowly draws a small one out of Carolyn.

CARTOLYN  
OK. I'll take it.

17           **INT. CHANGING ROOM**

17

In the changing room Carolyn takes of the dress looks at herself in her underwear

CAROLYN (V.O.)

The old body wasn't holding up too badly from all that travelling.

Her gaze travels down to the white (actually grey now) cotton underpants - their elastic barely holding.

CAROLYN (V.O.)

The underpants were on their last legs.

\*

\*

18           **INT SHOP. DAY**

18

At the counter she puts down the dress and three pairs a pair of sensible skin coloured, high waisted underpants

\*

CAROLYN

(in Spanish)

This... And these.

\*

\*

Lina looks at the sensible underpants and her smile abruptly drops.

\*

LINA

No.

CAROLYN

Si.

LINA

No.

CAROLYN

Si. Gracias.

LINA

No!

CAROLYN

What do you mean no?

LINA

For you?

(In Spanish)

You can't wear these. These are old ladies underpants. No.

CAROLYN

Si.

LINA

(In Spanish)

No. No. Wait

(CONTINUED)

She goes off to the underpants section; comes back with something different.

LINA (CONT'D)

Try these.

CARILYN

You're kidding me.

Its like ...a thong!

LINA

Good for you.

CAROLYN

Bad for me. Cystitis. *Malo mi.*

\*

She puts away the thong, puts the sensible pants back on top of the dress. Lina throws them aside. Carolyn retrieves them

\*

\*

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

This is ridiculous.

(Slowly in English)

I'm having these. The customer is always right.

LINA

(a flood of Spanish)

I have no idea what you're saying but I'm not letting a girl like you buy a nice dress like this with underpants like these. You'll completely spoil the effect.

CARILYN

(in Spanish)

"Effect?" What means "Effect". What word are you speaking?

Lina keep putting the bizarre black thong underpants back on top of the dress

\*

\*

LINA

(in English)

Just try. Much better.

CAROLYN

(In English)

Look. Sorry. Heres the bottom line. I buy them. I wear them. They're my underpants.

(In Spanish)

No-one's will see them except me.

LINA

(in Spanish)

You think so? Well there's your problem right there.

(CONTINUED)



Insulted and patronized, Carolyn goes off and returns with a pair of very slightly less grandmotherly underpants.

CAROLYN

These then?

LINA

No.

There follows a series of jump cuts which follow the process of underpant bargaining as Lina and Carolyn make their way through the lingerie section of the store.

Carolyn relents by degrees, suggesting a variety of medium sized briefs, none of which lina will sell her.

\*  
\*

CAROLYN

This one

LINA

No

CAROLYN

OK this one

LINA

No No No.

CAROLYN

Ok I'll wear these.

LINA

These are appalling. Look at the colour! What if a bus hit you. A girl shouldn't be seen dead in these.

Relenting slightly, Lina picks up another pair.

LINA (CONT'D)

Ok. Try these.

The pants are a red lace and sexy.

\*

CAROLYN

(Beginning to weaken)

Not bad, I'll take them. Happy?

Trying to add a more generous pair also

\*

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

And these

\*  
\*

LINA

No!.

\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

It appears that the negotiations are about to recommence but Carolyn finally give up, on impulse grabbing the lacy bra which comes with the red underpants

\*  
\*  
\*

CAROLYN

OK and the bra, whatever

\*

20 **EXT. SHOP. DAY.**

20

Carolyn emerges from the shop, clutching a bag with her purchases quite proudly.

She heads off up the street with new determination in her step.

Tango music starts to play.

21 **INT. CRAPPY HOTEL ROOM. EVENING.**

21

Carolyn has laid out the dress and the red lacy undies on the bed.

**EXT. CRAPPY HOTEL ROOM BALCONY. EVENING.**

Wrapped in a towel, Carolyn takes her worn out sensible underpants and throws them down into the open dumpsters below.

\*  
\*

She watches them fall in SLO MO -then looks up and shares a smile with a suburban Sophia Loren lady across the alley, who is unpegging some fairly sexy underwear of her own.

\*

**INT. CRAPPY HOTEL ROOM. EVENING.**

As she prepares to go out we see a succession of quick cuts - just details.

The edit is quick and percussive, to the beat of the tango: Clip fingernails, unzip jeans, Clothes tossed in the laundry bin.

Constantly in the background, the music builds and keep building.

22 **INTERCUT THE DANCERS**

22

The gypsy tango dancers, stamping and whirling.

23 **IN THE HOTEL ROOM**

23

Carolyn washing - dirt and the occasional chicken feather fall out of her hair when she rinses it.

(CONTINUED)

- 23 CONTINUED: 23  
Carolyn shaving her legs.  
Carolyn pulling the red lace panties over her ankles and calves.
- 24 **INTERCUT THE TANGO DANCERS** 24  
Clapping and shouting to the music, a flash of teeth, a glimpse of bare leg as...
- 25 **IN THE HOTEL ROOM** 25  
Carolyn pulling the black dress over her head.  
Lipstick, perfume, earrings, eye liner.  
Check the mirror.  
Wow. She actually looks pretty amazing.
- 26 **INTERCUT THE TANGO DANCERS** 26  
The music deafening.  
The dancers sweating.  
The gypsy whirling around and around...
- 27 **EXT. THE MAIN STREET** 27  
Carolyn steps out the door of the hotel and walks down the main street in evening light. A wiggle in her walk, a bounce in her step, the music playing in her head.  
Men and women turn to watch her pass.  
Her eyes meet a sexy guy sitting in a cafe. He offers a seat next to him.  
She smiles, no thanks, and carries on....
- 28 **EXT. DANCE AREA. EVENING** 28  
The gypsy couple and a younger couple - their adult children? - dance up a storm in the small plaza.  
A guitarist and a percussionist provide the basis of the music, but it seems to be coming from everywhere. The crowd are loving it as much as the dancers.  
As Carolyn arrives, the older couple break apart and the man sweeps over to her again.

(CONTINUED)

She hesitates, but this time he's insistent, and she takes his hand as he leads her into the dance.

CARILYN (V.O.)

Shakespeare said "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." He was right about that.

More onlookers are brought into the dance, the experienced dancers teaching them the basic steps.

Carolyn lets herself go a little more, swinging her hips and going with the flow.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Now if ever I feel low I don't even have to put on the red knickers. I just imagine them

\*

Back in with Carolyn, now dancing freely with a handsome Argentinian man more her own age.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

My secret weapon.

We freeze on Carolyn - a huge smile on her face, her black dress flowing and the red of the lacy underwear flashing from beneath it.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

My Tango underpants.