

# I'm tired of reading about romance. It ruined mine...



by **Antonia Hoyle**

**T**he photographs are marked less by their passion than their warmth and familiarity – notable only in their utter normality. In one, Charlotte Church and Jonathan Powell share a portion of chips. In another, they relax over a lazy cafe lunch together. Even when the pair perform an impromptu set at a friend's birthday party, they look as comfortable in each other's presence as long-established lovers.

Perhaps, however, this sort of scenario will serve the Welsh singer's interests best. Her five-year relationship with rugby player Gavin Henson – with whom she has two children – was not exactly known for its stability and easy companionship.

Since Charlotte and Gavin split up in May, she and Jonathan, a little-known songwriter, have spent increasing amounts of time together. Although she has stopped short of admitting a romance, she is said to hope their blossoming friendship will form the basis of a lasting relationship.

By all accounts, he appears an ideal suitor. Ambitious yet sensitive, Jonathan exhibits none of Henson's flash arrogance and celebrity swagger, and appears to place more importance on loyalty than lavish displays of shallow affection.

At least, that's what Catherine Jones thought during her two-year relationship with him. Such was her regard for Jonathan that she trusted him when he worked with Charlotte on her new album.

She bolstered his confidence when he was struggling to succeed in his chosen career and she believed him when he said his interest in his famous friend was purely platonic. Catherine's faith in Jonathan – or Jonny, as she calls him – proved unfounded when he ended their relationship with a startling revelation.

'The night we broke up, Jonny's exact words were that he was in love with Charlotte Church,' says Catherine. 'He said that they had shared "moments" together. I felt incredibly stupid, hurt, angry and distraught. I thought that they would have had the decency to put some distance between the end of their relationships before thinking about starting something new.'

'Maybe nothing physical did happen between them while we were together, but that's not the point. Jonny still felt an attraction. He has told me that he and Charlotte are a couple, but are taking things slowly. I'm tired of reading about the way their friendship is helping Charlotte. It was their relationship that ruined mine. I'm speaking out because I want everyone to know the truth.'

Gavin and Charlotte deny that there was any third party involved in the break-up of their relationship.

Instead, it was widely believed that their differing career trajectories were to blame. Charlotte's new album is released next month and she was praised for her judging performance on Andrew Lloyd Webber's BBC reality show *Over The Rainbow* earlier this year.

Gavin is on unpaid leave from his club, Ospreys, with injuries that appear to have put paid to his international career. Last week, it was revealed he will appear on the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* to boost his profile.

But Catherine's ordeal suggests that Charlotte's friendship with Jonathan was a contributing factor. Speaking exclusively to *The Mail on Sunday* from her home town of Cardiff, she provides a fascinating insight into their break-up and Charlotte's feelings towards Jonathan.

Brought up in a comfortable middle-class family in the affluent town of Penarth in the Vale of Glamorgan, Catherine left her local comprehensive school with three A-levels and an offer to study Media Studies at Cardiff University.

After a gap year working as an administration assistant for a financial firm, she decided against further education and worked her way up to the position of product trainer for the company.

Although she is reluctant to admit it, she shares Charlotte's feisty

personality and her striking beauty. Both are lager-drinking, cigarette-smoking brunettes. It seems Jonathan likes a particular type of woman.

He met Catherine, now 23, in July 2008 when he was combining bar work with poorly-paid pub gigs. They were introduced through a friend.

'He was caring, funny, flirtatious and complimentary. We clicked immediately,' she says.

Within weeks, they were spending all their time together. 'We'd see every film that came out and then analyse it on the walk home,' she says. 'We watched box sets of DVDs and drank pints of lager in the pub.'

She says he also proved an apt listener. 'I'd just split up with my boyfriend of four years. I was vulnerable. He looked after me,' she says.

Catherine was still living with her parents. Jonathan's parents were divorced and he was living with his mother, a coffee-shop owner, in her terraced house in the Cardiff suburb of Canton.

**P**rivately educated at Monmouth School for boys, he was devoted to music from an early age and taught himself the mandolin, piano and guitar. At 16, he won a scholarship to London's Royal Academy of Music.

On completing his studies, he returned to Cardiff to forge a singing and songwriting career. With his folksy style, Jonathan, 23, was never intending to conquer the charts.

'His integrity meant everything to

him,' says Catherine. 'I knew he wouldn't leave me if he made it because he wasn't the type of person to be lured by fame. At first Jonny was paid for his gigs in beer. When his clothes were too ripped I'd buy him more. He wasn't interested in the way he looked. He didn't like artists who sold out and valued celebrity status above their music.'

Yet he had one valuable showbusiness contact in the form of Charlotte. The pair met when he was working at her mother Maria's pub, the Robin Hood, in Cardiff and it was Maria who suggested Jonathan write songs for Charlotte's new album.

Having had two children, Ruby, now two, and Dexter, one, with Henson, Charlotte was keen to re-establish her singing career.

'Jonny was nervous,' says Catherine. 'He didn't think Charlotte was rubbish, but he didn't want to be associated with her kind of music. I told him it was an amazing opportunity.'

Meanwhile, Jonathan set up his own independent record label and, last September, invited Charlotte to the launch party for his debut album *Forgive This Day*. It was the first time Charlotte and Catherine met.

'I had a pint in my hand and she said I was a girl after her own heart,' says Catherine. 'She seemed perfectly friendly. Nobody there was impressed or star-struck.'

Catherine says one of the songs on his album, *Snow*, was written for her. In it he sings, 'I want to spend every waking moment that I can with you.'

'That's what our relationship was



**SUPPORTING ROLE:** With Jonathan on guitar, Charlotte performs at the launch of his debut album in Cardiff last year. Catherine, right, was stunned when he later announced he was in love with the Welsh singer

## When Catherine Jones's partner was asked to write songs for Charlotte Church, she urged him on for the good of his career. Her reward? To be cast aside for the Welsh diva – and left to count the painful cost of her unthinking loyalty



# Charlotte Church's fairytale it's time the truth came out



**'BETRAYED':** Jonathan and Catherine in a picture taken by Charlotte Church

and he rolled his eyes toward Jonny and said, "Because he is."

'He was obviously jealous. I just thought he was paranoid. He saw Jonny and Charlotte sharing a cigarette and pretended to have a drag of mine – as if to prove he could do it, too, even though he's not a smoker. He was pathetic.'

Gavin – who earned £120,000 a year playing for Ospreys before he was injured, a trifle compared with Charlotte's estimated £11 million fortune – also charged his guests £2 for every three songs they chose to play on his jukebox.

'Halfway through the evening he had a tantrum – I don't know what about – and threw everyone's change all over the floor,' she says. 'Later on he deliberately stamped on Jonny's guitar. I was furious and accused him of wrecking my boyfriend's livelihood. But he didn't care. He just shrugged.'

'Charlotte saw how angry I was and said, "I know, I know, love. Tell me about it, I've got two kids with him."'

She recalls how Charlotte encouraged her stepfather James to start an altercation with Gavin.

'I heard Charlotte tell James that Gavin had criticised her and that he should "lamp him one". Then there was a kerfuffle before they were pulled apart. It was obvious they had problems.'

Meanwhile, Catherine was being woken in the middle of the night by calls to Jonathan from Charlotte. On one occasion she even turned up at his mother's house.

'He would tell me it had been Ruby calling by accident, and that Charlotte had popped round to see his mum, who she is also friends with,' says Catherine. 'Jonny always told me Charlotte felt trapped in a loveless relationship and that he felt sorry for her. I did, too.'

In March, Jonathan went to London with Charlotte for a fortnight to record her new album.

'I struggled to get hold of him. I didn't want to seem clingy and I was proud of him so I tried not to worry,' says Catherine.

But when he got back they started to bicker. And one evening, in the middle of an argument, he made his feelings for Charlotte known.

'He said he was in love with her, that he was infatuated with her. It took me completely by surprise. Maybe I'd been naive, but I'd had no

idea. He said that Charlotte felt the same way, but both agreed that nothing could happen because they had partners. I believed him. But in a way, I would have preferred it if he'd just had a one-night stand with someone rather than fallen for her. That would have been easier to forgive.'

'He admitted that the 3am calls hadn't been an accident, and that she had turned up to visit him, not his mother. He said that she had done all the chasing. But then he would say that, wouldn't he? I screamed at him. I felt completely let down.'

After a sleepless night discussing their relationship they split up.

'Jonny said he didn't expect anything to happen,' says Catherine. 'He said Charlotte and he had agreed to limit their contact and liaise only through their managers. But I knew it was only a matter of time before they got together.'

Yet a couple of weeks later Charlotte and Gavin announced their engagement in a glossy magazine feature. Gavin revealed he had proposed with a two-carat heart-shaped diamond ring the day after Charlotte's 24th birthday in February.

'I wasn't relieved when I heard the news. Just because she had a ring on her finger wouldn't stop a relationship with Jonny,' says Catherine. 'I thought it was an attempt to patch up their troubled relationship, to throw some money at the problem. I was heartbroken, struggling to eat and sleep.'

Within two months came the announcement that Gavin and Charlotte had split. 'Needless to say, I wasn't surprised,' says Catherine.

**B**ut she was taken aback to see pictures of Jonathan and Charlotte in the gossip magazines over the following months.

'I texted him the first time – it was so strange to see someone so averse to the idea of celebrity being subject to so much attention,' she says. 'But he seemed relaxed about it. For someone who had valued his integrity so much he seemed remarkably unbothered being in the limelight.'

'I asked him if they were together. He said, "Kind of, but we're taking things slowly." I can see why she wants to deny the relationship. She's going through a break-up in which there's a lot of money and children involved. But she knows the truth as well as I do. I can see why she has fallen for him. She is newly single, in exactly the same situation as I was when I first met Jonny.'

A couple of weeks ago, Catherine heard Charlotte singing a version of Jonathan's Snow – the song he had written for her. 'It was ironic, and not a pleasant experience,' she says.

Gavin, meanwhile, has refused to confirm or deny Charlotte's relationship with Jonathan. 'I'm sure he knows they are together,' says Catherine. 'He had been suspicious from the start.'

But despite everything he has put her through, Catherine can't condemn Jonathan completely. She says: 'Jonny was always so wary of fame. He has entered a world he doesn't know or understand. I think their relationship will either work out brilliantly or be a disaster. There won't be any middle ground. But it has ruined what we had together.'

like – incredibly intense,' she says. 'We were together every minute we could be. Jonny didn't want to get married as his parents had separated and it had put him off. But we wanted children in our early 30s, when we were financially stable.'

Last New Year's Eve, Jonathan and Catherine were invited to a party at

Gavin and Charlotte's £1.2 million home just outside Cardiff. Jonathan had been invited to perform to the 15 family and friends present during an evening that gave Catherine a colourful insight into the celebrity couple's fractious lifestyle.

'Their house was cosy but immaculate,' she says. 'There was unlimited

beer, wine and spirits behind the bar and everyone was drunk.'

None more so, it seems, than 28-year-old Gavin. 'He was smarmy and orange from too much fake tan,' she says. 'It was clear that he didn't like Jonny, whom he must have met before. When he saw me he said, "I'm glad you're here." I asked why