

'I'm starting to lose my mind. I'll call anyone to help'

Charlie Sheen's public meltdown has gripped America.

Tim Teeman picks over the pieces of a very visible car crash

Is he bi-polar, or in a manic state, or suffering a drug-induced psychosis? Should he be hospitalised, against his will if necessary? Will he lose his children? Will he take CBS and Warner Brothers to court? Who will replace him on his hit TV show? When will his newly minted catchphrases appear on mugs and T-shirts?

The Charlie Sheen circus continues to undergo several dizzying revolutions every day, with experts, lawyers and TV hosts weighing into the delirious debate. The dramas affecting America's highest-paid television star have consumed the country's media in the past week: from his being fired from *Two and a Half Men*, the No 1 sitcom, to Sheen's increasingly bizarre rants to radio, TV and his own online channel, invoking warlocks, tiger's blood and the "trolls" who are his enemies.

"I'm really starting to lose my mind. I'm ready to call anyone to help," the 45-year-old actor admitted yesterday to *Life & Style* magazine. "I'm really trying to contain myself... My lawyer wants to come over to my house and take the bullets out of my gun." A friend told the magazine: "Charlie is a ticking time bomb, and we all fear he could do something drastic like committing suicide or falling back on hard drugs... He's a danger to himself — a really big danger."

Sheen, at legal loggerheads with his former bosses at CBS and Warner Brothers, who sacked him on Monday for "dangerously self-destructive conduct", was paid nearly \$2 million (£1.24 million) an episode of *Two and a Half Men*, but has in the past week become better known as the bug-eyed host of his own badly lit, far less glossy home-made show. On Tuesday night he unveiled what he claimed would be his final *Sheen's Korner* episode online, "Building the perfect torpedo: my manifesto".

It was trailed on his Twitter account as "The Warlock is hungry. Hungry for corporate flesh." The camera was initially wonkily focused on a book, *The Art of War: Great Commanders of the Ancient and Medieval World, 1500BC-AD1600*, edited by the British historian Andrew Roberts. We spied a bottle of "tiger blood", whose

ingredients were listed as "beet, carrot, pear, celery and red apple". Could this be the drink Sheen is set to endorse? Even warlocks need to pay the rent.

In the latest video Sheen, who has a history of drug and alcohol abuse as well as abusing women, appeared unwell and absurdly self-delusional, although he claims to have been drug-free since undergoing a "home-rehab" in January after an all-night cocaine binge at his Hollywood home led to him being hospitalised. His blurted catchphrases of the past week (primary among them, "winning", as in "I'm the one winning") may have entered the pop-cultural lexicon and his living arrangements seem intriguing — he is living with two "goddesses", one of whom is a porn star — but even for the seasoned gawper a human car crash on the scale of Sheen's has become an ugly, depressing spectacle. Only 60,000 people tuned in for the final *Sheen's Korner* video, compared with 100,000 for the first. "Lock this creep up now before he kills everyone in LA," read one viewer's comment alongside his video.

Sheen may have amassed 2.1 million Twitter followers since last week and looking to generate \$1 million in advertising revenue associated with it, as well as merchandise and a comic book. But industry observers are more intrigued about Sheen's longer-term future after he was fired from *Two and a Half Men*. The sacking followed not another drugs binge — CBS routinely offered its "support" through those — but Sheen viciously rounding on the show's creator Chuck Lorre.

His children from his third marriage to Brooke Mueller were removed from his care after Mueller had alleged that Sheen had threatened her life, although Sheen's lawyer, Mark Gross, indicated on Tuesday that matters between them could be resolved out of court without the airing of grubby linen.

In the final *Sheen's Korner* video, after a tableau of images from movies — including *Platoon*, in which he starred — Sheen embarked on a lunacy-peppered rant that swerved from vicious insults to surreal sound-and-fury, encased in his belief that he is involved in a fantastical battle against his foes. He called his sacking "completely illegal", concurring with his lawyer Marty Singer, who had called it "shitty shitty suck suck" (tell that to the judge, Mr Singer). Les Moonves (CBS's president) was renamed "Les The Goon Ves" who had gone back on his word; Peter Roth, the executive producer of *Two and a Half Men*, got off easiest and was merely invited to "trust not your evil overlords". "Shame on you, fool," Sheen railed at "Bruce" (Rosenblum, Warner Bros TV president). "The pulp of fiction suits you well."

But it was Lorre ("Chuckeecheeseball") whom Sheen attacked most forcefully. He has



already heaped insults on Lorre, including calling him "Chaim Levine" (his real name is Charles Levine, so calling him Chaim was seen as insultingly drawing attention to his Jewish background). "Where are you hiding, you silly little clown?" Sheen asked on Tuesday's video. "Behind your narcissism, greed, yourself, women? I see you, worm." He imagined the "ratty dogshit" of Lorre's soul and then pondered how Lorre's mother felt when "this feeble abortion survived". He outed Lorre as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and vowed: "You're no match for this warlock... My power will consume you. You're an ugly clown sent by corporate fools... Defeat is not an option."

Sheen had initially welcomed his sacking "because now I can take all of their bazillions... and I never have to put on those silly shirts for as long as this warlock exists in the terrestrial dimension." But on Monday Singer, who claimed that Sheen was owed \$10 million in unpaid fees for cancelled episodes of the show, vowed: "We will sue. It's a matter of when."

Sheen's vituperative home videos will surely have damaged his legal position in the row with CBS and Warner's lawyers, which continued in an exchange of letters on Tuesday, the same day that an app emerged for those keen to block out any mention of Sheen and his demented prattling. "Tinted Sheen, the Charlie Sheen Browser Blocker" is a browser extension for Chrome and Firefox that blocks out all mentions of this "warlock" and his "winning". On the other hand, if you're a fan, you could respond to Sheen's advertisement for an intern: the pay may not be great, but your working day will never be dull.

Insiders believe that *Two and a Half Men* will continue without Sheen; and that his immediate future lay "most probably" in a reality show, with a future in prime-time comedy or drama unlikely "until he's undergone some kind of visible rehabilitation", according to Stuart Levine, the assistant managing editor of *Variety*. (Rob Lowe, Matt Dillon and John Stamos have emerged as the front runners to succeed him on the CBS sitcom.)

Gloria Allred, one of Hollywood's best-known lawyers, told *The Times*: "Opening his mouth may be guaranteeing him headlines now, but in the long run it is damaging his legal prospects and his professional future. If I was advising him — and I wouldn't because I represent victims not victimisers — I'd be advising him to shut up."

Allred claimed the legal case was complicated, though Warner Bros was in the "slightly stronger" position. Sheen's drug use, which Warners call "a felony involving moral turpitude" even if he hasn't been charged, could be difficult to prove, she said, although his own admissions of drug use and those of others who claim to have seen him take drugs could prove important. Easier to stand up — if they indeed have the out-takes to prove it, as they say they do — are Warner Bros' claims that Sheen's off-camera behaviour left him unable to "perform the essential duties of his position", defined by his "physical appearance, inability to deliver lines, inability to collaborate creatively with staff and crew" and "inflammatory comments poisoning key working relationships", a case only strengthened by the *Sheen's Korner* videos.

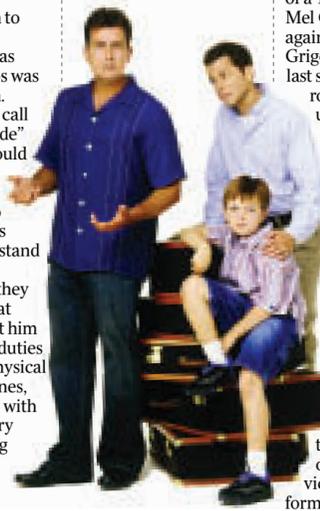


Proper Charlie: Sheen, on his online show, left; above, "Goddess" Natalie Kenly looks on as Sheen kisses Bree Olson; below, *Two and a Half Men*, the No 1 sitcom from which he was dismissed



Charlie Sheen's career in pictures
thetimes.co.uk/television

“My lawyer wants to come over and take the bullets out of my gun”



Warner Bros are also citing missed rehearsals and Sheen's admission that he turned up to work having not slept, requiring pieces of set furniture to be placed near him so he could lean on them for support. "There is a lot of legal sabre-rattling going on," Allred notes. "Typically this happens in correspondence between lawyers. By playing it out in public, both sides are testing each other and edging towards negotiable ground."

The farrago is hardly a lose-lose for all sides. Sheen has been made rich by the show. CBS and Warners have made fewer episodes than they would have hoped with him, but still have 177 episodes starring Sheen in the can, which they can syndicate (*Two and a Half Men* is already shown in nearly 50 countries worldwide), repeat and make money from.

Whatever his state of mind, Sheen is cannily looking to capitalise on his infamy in the short term by profiting from the catchphrases "winning" and "tiger blood". He announced his partnership with the promoters Live Nation, who hailed Sheen a "folk hero", while wielding a machete and drinking a red goopy liquid. Live Nation intend to send him on tour (to say or do what is a mystery). By next week Live Nation promises a range of mugs and T-shirts will be available.

Sheen is not alone in the pantheon of celebrity meltdowns, although his is unusual in that it has occurred at the height of his fame, derailing production of a TV show. Before him, most recently Mel Gibson's alleged hate-filled rant against his former partner Oksana Grigorieva created a surge of headlines last summer: "I'll put you in a f***in' rose garden, you c***! You understand that? Because I'm capable of it. You understand that?" he reportedly screamed at her. David Hasselhoff's drunken cheeseburger rant made it on to YouTube, while Alec Baldwin calling his daughter a "pig" achieved online notoriety.

Other scandals focus on the contrast between the character an actor plays on screen with his or her messier private life. Gary Coleman, who played Arnold in *Diff'rent Strokes*, died aged 42 last year after long squabbles with his family over his wealth and various legal battles. When the actress Meredith Baxter came out as gay, and claimed to be a victim of domestic abuse by her former husband David Birney (he

denies it), it was in sharp contrast to the placid family life depicted in her hit Eighties sitcom *Family Ties*.

Sheen's father, Martin, the actor best known for playing the President in *The West Wing*, is close to his children, although Emilio Estevez, Sheen's brother (Estevez is the real family surname) once told *US Weekly* of his relationship with his brother: "We went ten years where we were estranged because he was an addict and I wasn't." In 1990 Sheen's family reportedly staged an intervention to try to control his addictions. They got him into rehab and, at the time, Sheen said: "I'd be drinking away, doing blow [cocaine], popping pills and telling myself that I wasn't an addict, because there wasn't a needle stuck in my arm!" Sheen's battle with drugs and addiction continued throughout the decade.

Martin Sheen, who has attended many of Charlie's court appearances over the years, said of his son recently: "We pray for him... This disease of addiction is a form of cancer. You have to have an equal measure of concern and love." He added: "We have to be that much more present." Sheen brushed aside Martin and Emilio's supportive overtures. "They tried. But I said... I'm not interested in your rhetoric right now. I appreciate your love, your compassion... But I'm 45 years old, and I'm not interested in people treating me like a 12-year-old."

After getting his big break, aged 21, in Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, Sheen testified in the trial of Heidi Fleiss, the

Hollywood madam. He admitted ordering 27 call girls at a cost of £31,000. He has an older daughter, Cassandra Jade, now in her late twenties, by a former girlfriend. In 1996 he was given a year's suspended sentence, two years' probation and a £1,800 fine for assaulting his ex-girlfriend, Brittany Ashland, while in 1998 he went to hospital after injecting cocaine.

His career rehabilitation began when he succeeded Michael J. Fox in the sitcom *Spin City* in 2000, followed by *Two and a Half Men* in 2003. His latest lurid unravelling began in late October when he trashed a room after a reported cocaine and drink binge at the Plaza Hotel in New York while spending the night with a porn star, Capri Anderson, who claimed his wild behaviour had left her cowering in the bathroom. Two of his expensive cars have been found wrecked at the bottom of ravines. In November Sheen and Mueller filed separate divorce petitions after two years of marriage, both citing irreconcilable differences, with Mueller claiming that he had threatened her with a knife. Sheen also has two young daughters, aged 6 and 7, with his second wife, Denise Richards. They divorced after she accused him of abusing drink and drugs and threatening her with violence, although they appear now to be on reasonable terms.

Last week, when Mueller obtained a restraining order against him, she said she was afraid of violent comments that Sheen had made in recent days, including threats that he would stab her in the eye with a pen knife. Mueller said Sheen told her, "I will cut your head off, put it in a box and send it to your mom!" Mueller also contended that Sheen had punched her on the arm during a trip to the Bahamas and that he knocked her unconscious in October 2009.

"Sheen has the most visible issues to deal with," said Stuart Levine. "But why does it seem that CBS and Warners saw Sheen as finally overstepping the mark when he insulted the producer of the show, rather than his record of mistreatment of women? Why didn't that bother them enough to take action in the past seven years? Why didn't his drug abuse lead them to dismissing him?"

These arguments may also be marshalled by Sheen's own lawyers in any action. It would be a suitably perverse irony if his history of violence against women, and his health-imperilling addictions actually helped Charlie Sheen if the warlock has his day in court.



Sheen's father, Martin ("we pray for him"), right, and his brother, Emilio