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Autobiography, Memory and the Playwright

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by

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For my mother

With thanks to: Martin Goodman, Valerie Sanders, Viv Kerridge, and the Drama students of the University of Hull both past and present.

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Abstract

The thesis is made up of two plays and a piece of writing that is a reflection and critical sharing of a developmental and critical process of writerly development. The thesis explores the use of memory and autobiography in playwriting and is concerned with the development and enhancement of playwriting through a process experienced and analysed by its author.

The work draws upon recent psychological research into memory, particularly the idea that memories can be manipulated. The work of Mazzoni and Geraerts enables links between scientific psychology and narrative fiction and autobiography to be explored. Explorations of memory, narrative and the construction of self feed directly into the first of two plays, *That Berlin Moment*, in which a group of characters grapple with the implications of lost, false and unwillingly recovered memories.

The thesis includes individual and comparative analyses of my own work alongside that of three other dramatists: Anthony Minghella, James Graham and Richard Bean. Much of this work is drawn from a series of interviews with each playwright, which focused on uses of autobiographical material. Ideas about appropriation and adaptation are significant in focusing and developing this material. Informed by this analysis, the second play, *Petticoat Lane*, represents an attempt to push further with autobiographical writing, developing characters and situations based closely on my own memories, whilst incorporating insights gained from the scientific and theoretical work on memory.

The thesis is an articulation of a self-conscious process of writerly development, which suggests an unexpected connection between autobiographical and applied drama playwriting. Rather than setting up an opposition between self, creativity and original imaginary worlds on the one hand, and social utility and empowerment and political concern on the other, this process has opened up new ways of understanding the potential for playwriting to provoke and enable positive change.

Introduction

My history as a playwright so far has been one of writing plays for the creative frame of applied drama. The reason for undertaking this thesis is a desire to change and develop my frame of practice, pursuing a thematic focus on autobiography and memory. The theoretical hinge of this thesis is the connection between these two different yet connected interests.

In her book *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* Adriana Cavarero indicates that: “It is occasionally said that autobiography responds to a rather precise question: who am I?” (44), but she goes on to argue that autobiography does not in fact respond fully to the question posed. Instead, she claims, it is the biographical tale told by another that does this, by providing the distance that allows for reflection on the memories (45). In my case I will have to do both. I will write two scripts that use the voices of created characters to tell tales rooted in autobiographical memories, and I will provide critical distance by analysing the process. But I will also go further and pose the additional, more focused questions: what kind of playwright could I be and what memories do I access in order to make that happen?

The catalysts that led to my desire to change my creative writing practice have been both serendipitous and deliberate, as will be made clear as the thesis progresses, but I will begin by explaining the writing frame I started from, that of applied drama. The focus of applied drama is the educative structuring of the audience’s experience. How I respond to this overarching aim when creating a script for applied drama purposes is explored more fully in my published article “After Cyclops: Appropriating the Chorus of Euripides When Scriptwriting for Applied Drama,” but I’ll briefly synthesise my process in the next few paragraphs.

When writing for an applied drama context the playwright should focus on creating a play that makes the audience care about what is happening, question their own behaviour, gain a perspective on events and feel that they can bring about change in the future. As Helen Nicholson explains in her 2005 book *Applied Drama*: “It is this understanding that narratives can be changed that lies at the heart of practice in applied drama” (63). In the past I have frequently been commissioned to write plays for special interest groups such as young carers, travellers, and economic migrants. The intended audience is usually young people in Britain and Europe, although the plays have also been used in prisons with adult

inmates – my 2007 play *The Landing*, for example, was and is used to help inmates gain an understanding either of their own children’s behaviour or of themselves when young. With all of the groups I work with, I aim to tell their stories in the most effective way I can whilst attempting to avoid an externally-imposed “truth”.¹ Ultimately I consider how the individual and group can bring about positive change by focusing on how personal concerns connect to social and universal themes.

For this reason I have always researched thoroughly the biographies of those I depict, drawing on their memories and testimonies with a clear notion of and responsibility towards the real-life person. I have used and manipulated a variety of dramatic devices and structures in order to present the exploration of often difficult but pertinent moral dilemmas. Some I use more than others. There is usually a polyvocal, stylised chorus commenting on the lives of the chosen group, and this chorus is usually the main focus of the play. The moments that depict the lives of the special interest groups are written in a non-stylised way, using conventions familiar to the group and the audience as indicating aspects of the real world and life as it is really lived.

Having written eleven plays, I experienced in 2008 a serendipitous catalyst of change, which was to inform my writing practice from then on. Whilst responding to a commission from the Goethe-Institut, the thinking that underpinned my writing was challenged by events. I had always believed that juxtaposing the narratives of popular memories with the narratives of minority memories draws attention to the instability and fluidity of the truth. For this reason, articulating the voices of the voiceless is particularly important to me. However, it soon became apparent in my research trip to Berlin that up until this point in my creative practice I hadn’t fully explored how flexible and changeable “the truth” can be, or the implication this had for my writing of plays that drew on autobiography and memory for their content.

I was commissioned to write a play for the Goethe-Institut as part of the *After the Fall* project, which was set up to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Emerging and established playwrights across Europe were asked to respond. My reputation for writing plays for young people came to the attention of the Goethe-Institut in

¹ I am aware that “truth” is problematic both as a term and as a concept. Its use fluctuates wildly from context to context and speaker to speaker. Rather than engaging in theoretical analysis of the nature of truth, I have chosen to use the word *truth* in this thesis much in the way that Foucault uses the term *discourse*: it is a usable way of communicating a judgement about the veracity of material according to the individual’s perception.

London and I was invited to participate. The play I created is called *Not Yet*. It was performed in Hull in February 2009 and toured Yorkshire, going into schools, colleges and community centres with associated workshops. The play was one of the few chosen to be part of the *After The Fall Festival: Part 2* and was subsequently performed in Dresden and Mulheim.

As part of this work, the Goethe-Institut facilitated a research visit to Berlin in the autumn of 2008. In Berlin I found a city that had worked hard to deal with the fall of the Berlin Wall. When visiting museums and institutions I noticed that my guides had practised narratives of how effectively the city had come to terms with reunification. Even though it had not been easy and their stories were often brutally honest, they focused on how positively the city was going forward. This was the collective performed popular memory. But when I dug deeper, when I challenged tour guides, curators and academics in relation to their performed memory, usually over a coffee or more effectively a beer, I uncovered counter-memories that presented a much more complex narrative.

The most startling of these were the hidden biographies of East Berliners. These were mainly people who felt they had not fitted in with the previous East German regime, who had wanted the wall to come down and who had welcomed change. Startlingly, when they shared their counter-memories with me it was almost as if they were ashamed to express them. People lowered their voices, became aware of those sitting near. The theme that underpinned all of the conversations I had was the loss of biography experienced by the East Berliners. They felt that their previous lives were being erased, both physically in the sense that all redevelopment was being carried out in the style of the previous West Berlin, and emotionally in the sense that they felt they could not criticise any of the changes occurring around them. There was at best a sense of bewilderment. This was further complicated by the East Berliners being faced with the choice of whether they should access a recording of their biography by others – the Stasi files – that was burdened with cultural, social and political implications. I met individuals whose families had accessed the files and found that their brother, uncle or father had indeed provided information to the Stasi about their own families.

Loss of biography was echoed in conversations with those born in West Berlin. Many appeared to struggle with their sense of being a citizen of Berlin in relation to being a citizen of Germany. There was a sense that Berlin itself needed to express its counter-memory in relation to the collective popular memory often expressed by the rest of

Germany. One of my interviewees in Berlin was a Dr Hartmut Haeussermann, Professor of Urban and Regional Sociology at the Humboldt University of Berlin. He told me that his research indicated that a significant number of Germans outside of Berlin felt that Berliners made “too much fuss about the wall”. There was a belief that Berliners saw themselves as “special” or at best “different.” Interestingly, in a survey carried out by Haussermann a trial group of Berliners, when asked how they identified their nationality, tended to answer that “first they saw themselves as Berliners, secondly as European, thirdly as German.” Haeussermann also pointed out that there is an immigrant population in Berlin, both adults and children, for whom the wall has little significance. Bearing all of this in mind, it did not surprise me that whenever I asked “has Berlin come to terms with the fall of the Berlin Wall?”, the most prevalent response was “not yet.” Consequently, this felt like an appropriate title for my then-new play related to the commission.

Until this point on my research trip I was accessing both memories of the state and the counter-memories of individuals, and whilst recognising the messiness of emotional relationships I believed I was identifying and discovering shared truths. However, on a tour of the Berlin- Hohenschönhausen Memorial Site my research and writing practice in relation to the sourcing and presenting of the truth were severely challenged. The site is an ex-Stasi prison and is maintained, in the words of a leaflet that I picked up at the site, to “explore the history of the Hohenschönhausen prison between 1945 and 1989... and prompt visitors to take a critical look at the methods and consequences of political persecution and suppression in the communist dictatorship.” Guided tours are led by former prisoners. What I found particularly interesting and challenging was the hostile response from some of these prisoners-turned-guides to the performed memories being shared by another of their colleagues.

There were many examples around the site of rooms and devices that had been built to enable the carrying-out of systematic mental torture that would leave no marks on the body, since Western countries of Europe would sometimes pay for the release of prisoners but not if there were physical signs of torture. The purpose of each room often needed explaining, as it was not clear how the torture was carried out. I noticed that most of the groups became more and more quiet as they went around the museum. This was obviously due to the impact of what they were seeing and of the stories and explanations that they were hearing. However, one group of visitors was becoming much more overtly responsive to their guide, which seemed incongruous with the surroundings. I attached myself to this

group, losing my interpreter in the process. I could not understand a word the tour guide was saying but I saw him giving an animated performance that had the audience sometimes gasping in horror but also laughing in side-splitting delight whilst standing in torture chambers. Simultaneously I saw the other tour guides regarding my new group's guide with barely concealed distaste.

Eventually my interpreter caught up with me and I asked if she could arrange an interview with this guide. His autobiographical story was supposedly not unusual. As a nineteen year old he had produced a rock fanzine discussing the music of Western European bands. It was a home-produced affair with a very small circulation. However, someone informed the Stasi and he was arrested and incarcerated in the Hohenschönhausen prison for eighteen months. He recounted his story as dramatically as he had done for his tour group. My interpreter, before she translated for me, was as responsive as the tour group had been. The guide had structured the narrative primarily to be an entertaining story. He obviously enjoyed the telling and an audience's response.

When I went to get us all more coffee, one of the other tour guides pulled me to one side to tell me that the story of the man I was interviewing was completely exaggerated; if I wanted true stories, he said, I should talk instead to any of the other tour guides who had been prisoners. I asked whether the resentment of the other guides was because my tour guide's presentation was more popular and interesting. I also asked if he believed my tour guide was lying. He replied that he and his colleagues felt that my tour guide had "turned the truth into circus." Before leaving me he asked: "Would you like someone to turn your truth into a circus just to service themselves?"

I attempted to arrange further interviews with the other guides but the schedule constructed by the Goethe-Institut didn't allow for this. However, I was intrigued by the conflicting attitudes towards the retelling of painful memories from a shared context and experience. I was also interested as to why both men wanted to come voluntarily, albeit paid, every day to a place that could only contain painful memories for them. Most importantly of all, this encounter made me consider the implications for a playwright of manipulating a painful memory in order for it to become an entertaining narrative. The encounters with both tour guides raised a lot of troubling questions for me, questions I hope to respond to in this thesis. Initially it raised the question of whether I too was guilty of turning the biographical truth of the people and groups I had worked with into a "circus." My complex commitment to truthful narrative remained. Therefore, to hone my practice I

identified the need to understand how memory works and what its function is. How does memory relate to the autobiographical past, present and future, both for the individual and society? Understanding this would enable me to be confident in the even-handedness of my use of biographical information and memories as source material. Applied theatre has a commitment to truth and this is an indelible aspect of my writing practice.

In order to explore creatively the function of memory I will use my own autobiography as source material for scripts, critiquing the process to ascertain whether I can create effective scripts whilst demonstrating fidelity to memories, or whether I too am prone to turning autobiographical memories into a “circus.” Theoretically, using my own memories should enable me to be more certain of the truthfulness of the recall. However, I do not consider myself to have a good memory. Therefore an anxiety for me is my ability to demonstrate fidelity to autobiographical truth, particularly where my memories involve others. In an attempt to allay my concerns I will explore whether a theoretical understanding of adaptation as well as memory will enable me to manipulate autobiographical memories more effectively when creating a play. I will also consider the adaptation of autobiographical memories by other writers.²

The writers I have chosen to focus on are Anthony Minghella, Richard Bean and James Graham. All three have a connection to Hull where I live and work, and I was interested to see whether the biographical connections would have resonance for me as a playwright. Initially, I was fortunate enough to interview Minghella due to his association with the University of Hull. I occupy the same room as he did when he was a lecturer at the University and I was the next person to teach playwriting after he had, so the connection there felt particularly strong and personal. James Graham attended the University as a student in the Drama department, and Richard Bean was born in Hull.

To enhance my understanding of adaptation in practice I will begin by focussing on the work of Minghella, a film director who saw himself first and foremost as a scriptwriter and an adapter of text for screen, but also as an adapter of his personal memories for the enrichment of his writing practice. My discussions of Graham and Bean will then develop further towards consideration of autobiography and memory. In my interviews with them both Bean and Graham freely admitted to drawing on autobiography and memories when

² I am going to use the terms *playwright* and *scriptwriter* to reflect the chosen usage of active writers I have interviewed. Many worked or work for both stage and screen and used seemingly similar terms deliberately to describe their own practice.

creating some of their plays, and so I will concentrate on these texts in order to juxtapose their use of autobiographical memories as source material with my own playwriting. I will consider whether I am emulating their approach to the adaptation of memories, or utilising the material differently. This part of the analysis will include discussion of whether their work essentially reflects life as it is or was, or if they offer the possibility of changing future narratives.

In order to hone my own theatrical voice I will consciously attempt to use my autobiographical memories in the creation of two scripts: *That Berlin Moment* and *Petticoat Lane*. I will consider how effectively I work in the new creative frame; how I draw on autobiographical memories in order to craft plays that aim to answer the search for self-knowledge in terms of truth, finding a voice, understanding memory in relation to the past present and possible futures; and whether I can create scripts that offer possibilities of how a personal narrative can be adapted or changed without reverting to didactic solutions. For the purposes of this thesis, I will focus firmly on the creation of the text on the page, not text in performance. Michelene Wandor considers that with most creations of a performed drama, a *dramatic text* is written and then when it is put into production it becomes a *performance text* (1). She is not the first to identify this difference but she is a writer who aims to theorise the thinking underpinning her creative process and as much as possible in this thesis I will draw on the theorising of creative practitioners as they most closely mirror my own practice. I will focus on the ways that I and others create dramatic text, how we use our writing to reflect on how we live our lives, and particularly if and how we structure possibilities of future lives.

Chapter One

Autobiography, Memory and Intent

This thesis is an articulation of a sustained period of practice and it draws on a range of sources, both creative and scholarly. Of the scholarly sources, the least relevant have always been critical and narrative theories, and this reflects the development of my conceptual and experiential writerly toolbox. This thesis stands at a right angle to the current of critical studies on plays and playwriting. It is concerned with authorial intent because it is written about the process of authorship. It is both a piece of writing on being a playwright and a reflection, a critical sharing of a developmental and critical process of writerly development. I would contend that the intent of the playwright when creating a piece of work has been largely ignored in critical terms since the middle of the twentieth century. This is partly due to the rejection by many forms of criticism of the notion that authorial intent is the sole or main guarantee of a work's meaning (Hutcheon 106-07).

When writing plays for young refugees or engaging with theatre work in prisons I have felt very much that I was a) indisputably the author of the play and b) not even close to being any kind of arbiter of meaning. The critical debate is framed in a way that is not helpful or relevant to me. My investigation of authorship is not an attempt to discover or express in a parallel fashion the underlying meaning of the play; I agree that this is not a particularly interesting critical pastime. What I am interested in doing is charting the creative process, the struggles with material, with notions of truth and narrative. I am interested in learning about the creative process. As Hutcheon asserts in the context of adaptation, "if we cannot talk about the creative process, we cannot fully understand the urge to adapt and therefore perhaps the very process of adaptation. We need to know 'why'" (107).

In order to do this I will briefly review past consideration of the use of autobiography and memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and assess ways critics have explored the use of autobiographical memory in terms of the text on the page.

Truth, autobiography and intent

The ideas explored by Laura Marcus in her 1994 book, *Auto/biographical Discourses*, have

particular resonance for me as a writer when she places “truth” in relation to “intention.” She argues that understanding the intention of the writer can help ascertain the degree of truth that can be expected from the autobiographical writing (3). I also agree with Paul John Eakin in his 1985 book *Fictions in Autobiography* when he considers that “the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of present consciousness” (5). We can assume from the writings of both Marcus and Eakin that autobiographical truth is fluid and evolving, with memory strongly influenced by the imagination in order to deal with the present. This is useful to me as a writer because my intent when creating characters is that the search for and scrutiny of identity leads to the recognition of choices available when creating new or adapted identities.

The theorists outlined so far have mainly connected their analysis to creative novel writing, but their thinking has had some influence on the study of autobiography in relation to drama which can be seen in texts such as those by Phelan, Smith and Watson, Gale and Gardner, and Heddon. All these texts have added to and enhanced the discussion of autobiography and drama, but they have concentrated on analysing *performance* in relation to autobiography rather than the script on the page. Overall the majority of analysis has been focused on the performer, the performance and its cultural context, not on the scriptwriter and the creation of the script.

My intent when using my own autobiography as source material is to do more than add another reflective account to the autobiographical tradition’s self-indulgent collection. In order to avoid this, I will explore further the concept that memory and imagination play an important role in utilising past experiences to make sense of the present. I consider that a greater understanding of how memory and imagination function will enable me to more effectively manipulate theme and characterisation in relation to autobiography and will result in a more focused, controlled and challenging dramatic experience for the audience rather than simply a self indulgent one for me.

Truth, memory and intent

Needless to say there are other ways of working in order to create a dramatic or performance text based on autobiography and memory. Documentary theatre draws on interviews with people involved in significant events as well as written documentation – for example *The Colour of Justice* by Richard Norton-Taylor, which is based on the killing of

young black Londoner Stephen Lawrence. Verbatim theatre uses only interview material. In works such as *Cruising* (2006), Alecky Blythe takes the form to its extreme by having the actors listen to their characters' testimony on headsets and reproduce faithfully their words on stage. The working process used by Tim Etchells and his company, Forced Entertainment, is just one example of a theatre maker who has redefined the role of the playwright in relation to performance text and whose working process is now much copied.

However, as a playwright I am interested in the creation of characters from a more humanistic perspective. I focus on how the individual functions and connects to their society, and I am interested in how individuals may bring about positive change, both by themselves and as part of a collective. I do this by creating a dramatic fictional context populated by fictional characters. In order to improve as a playwright by honing my intent, I will focus on memory studies to fully understand how memory works. In the context and constraints of this thesis I will specifically consider work on memory that has been carried out this century.

My past experience as a playwright leads me to believe that if I am to consider memories then I have to consider shared memories as well as the individual's use of memory. Obviously shared memories are not always positive; in the past the groups I have worked with have tended to see themselves as outside of the mainstream (Dickenson, "After Cyclops" 296). When working with such groups using their biographies as material, it is apparent that in many instances they have violent or traumatic memories and are unsure how to deal with them or move away from them constructively. Exploring how to forgive, whilst not dismissing the severity of the impact of the trauma, has been an important aspect of my past creative intent. What else was apparent when working with such groups was that the recall of the individual was often affected, put under pressure and sometimes changed by the recall of others. In the introduction to their edited collection *Theories of Memory*, Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead offer a very useful overview of recent developments in memory studies. They usefully place Paul Ricoeur's last work, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) in relation to the thinking of Avishai Margalit. They outline that Ricoeur identifies memory as originating first and foremost from the individual but recognises that humans are basically relational and therefore there is a mutual interdependency between collective remembering and the memories of the individual (12). They go on to say that it was originally Ricoeur who considered that central to the ethics of memory is the relationship between forgetting a hurt/sense of being sinned

against, and forgiving, but they believe that Margalit goes further in *The Ethics of Memory*, explaining that forgiveness is based on disregarding the sin rather than forgetting it (11). What is particularly pertinent to me as a writer regarding the work of Margalit and Ricoeur is the concept that forgiveness is an acceptable part of shared memory acts.

Attilio Favorini's 2008 monograph *Memory in Play: From Aeschylus to Sam Shepard* goes some way to considering the use of memory in a personal and social context in relation to the work of playwrights such as Beckett and Pinter. Favorini draws heavily on the neuroscience and philosophy work of Gerald Edelman in order to support his findings. Edelman considers that what we remember is both biologically and culturally based. He argues that images in the memory are not fixed but are continually renegotiated by the present; memory is interactive in altering the present, and experiences in the present alter the memory. When considering the creation of characters, I find particularly useful the idea that "Memories are... part of the continuous, ongoing process of self-creation" (Favorini 184). Of course if memory is continually evolving, the argument follows that truth is not necessarily fixed and is also evolving. Favorini is somewhat dismissive of any sort of binary debate regarding truth. This is particularly evident when he briefly discusses the "memory wars" of the 1980s and 1990s (171). The term refers to disputes between individuals claiming to have recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse and those claiming that the accusers are subject to False Memory Syndrome. Favorini bases his argument on the fact that accounts of recovered memory were virtually unknown before the nineteenth century (172).

Controversy still surrounds the relative authenticity of discontinuous memories of childhood sexual abuse (CSA), and research into the issue is ongoing. In a 2007 edition of *Psychological Science*, results published by Geraerts, Schooler, Merckelbach, Jelicic, Hauer and Ambadar "indicate that discontinuous CSA memories spontaneously retrieved outside of therapy may be accurate, while implicating expectations arising from suggestions during therapy in producing false CSA memories" (564). The authors of this report pay particular attention to the fact that if a discontinuous memory is retrieved outside of therapy, the person retrieving it demonstrates a sense of surprise, whilst memories recovered during therapy were often almost expected by the retriever of the memory. The study also found that discontinuous memories discovered outside therapy were more likely to be corroborated. The authors conclude that "whereas deliberately recovered memories are apt to be suspect, spontaneously discovered memories... are more likely to be true"

(567). But once again this depends on definitions of the term *truth* and whether we can believe there is an absolute core of truth in any of our memories. Does the corroboration of a memory mean that it is the absolute truth, or simply likely to be more truthful, or does corroboration make truth?

Mazzoni, Scoboria and Harvey approach the memory and truth debate from a slightly different perspective with their study of “nonbelieved memories”: memories that persist as memories even after the person experiencing them no longer believes them to be true. While anecdotal examples of nonbelieved memories are not unfamiliar (the authors cite “the prominent developmental theorist Jean Piaget,” (1334) who in 1951 analysed his own vivid memory of a supposed abduction which did not in fact occur), this was the first detailed scientific study of the phenomenon (1339). The study found that “nonbelieved memories share most recollective qualities of believed memories, but are characterized by more negative emotions” (1334). Both believed memories and nonbelieved memories were recalled with the same intense emotions and visual and perceptual details, and both types of memory were experienced as a “single, unitary, and coherent episode” (1339). The authors conclude that their results “have important implications for the way autobiographical memory is conceptualized and for the false-memory debate” (1334).

For Mazzoni, Scoboria and Harvey, their findings demonstrate the power of memory regardless of its truthfulness. A memory does not need to be believed for the feelings experienced during the memory recall to feel powerful and real. Therefore the authors conclude that: “autobiographical memory and autobiographical belief are partially independent processes,” and that “autobiographical beliefs are formed by the attribution of a truth value to the mental representation of an event” (1339). But even if the “truth value” of the memory is devalued, the feelings associated with the memory often remain the same. However, there were minor differences between nonbelieved memories and believed memories. Nonbelieved memories were often less complex and their associated emotions were less positive. This recognition of difference is interesting for me as a writer when creating characters and structuring narratives around believed or nonbelieved memories. Interestingly, Mazzoni, Scoboria and Harvey also conclude that when a belief is undermined there can be a change in the recall of event, basically an *adaptation* of a previous truth (1339).

Imagination and the adaptation of memories

The research detailed above raises the question of how nonbelieved autobiographical memories are created if they are not truth-based. Mazzoni and Memon argue that it is the imagination that is all-powerful. Not only can it adapt the perceived truth of a memory, it can also actually create false autobiographical memories. The results of the study carried out by these authors on the relationship between imagination and the creation of false autobiographical memories are quite startling. 40% of participants in the research eventually believed a given false memory after they had been asked to imagine it happening. Only 23% claimed it as a memory after being exposed to the false memory event in a different way, as a passage of writing that they were asked to read. Mazzoni and Memon conclude that “people can develop both a belief in and a memory of an event that definitely did not happen to them by simply imagining its occurrence.... the production of false beliefs and memories was not due to an increase in familiarity with the event... but instead depended on processes that occur specifically during imagination” (188).

How strong and effective imagination can be has been recorded in the study “Lasting False Beliefs and Their Behavioural Consequences” by Geraerts, Bernstein, et al. These authors consider the human memory to be fragile and yet inventive (749): fragile in terms of being suggestible, and inventive regarding the complexity of false narratives produced by the imagination. Furthermore they concluded that their study clearly demonstrated that “it is possible, in at least a significant minority of adult subjects, to induce lasting false beliefs that have consequences not only for attitudes, but also for behavior” (752). The false suggestion implanted for the purposes of this study was one supposedly experienced in childhood: an unpleasant reaction to an egg salad. In real terms the egg salad aversion was considered a non-threatening false memory. However, as the research indicates, the emotional and behavioural implications of planting more threatening false memories are concerning for the individual and for the community.

The pursuit of objective truth is difficult to consider in the context of the psychological research being undertaken by Geraerts, Mazzoni and others. It would appear that autobiographical memories are continually affected and adapted by the social and cultural context, and furthermore that the imagination is extremely creative with the notion of truth. From a playwright’s point of view, the instability of the imagination is intriguing. If imagination is such a powerfully creative but untrustworthy tool, and its chameleon-like quality means it moves away from, rather than towards, the triggering memory, then the

potential for conflict makes imagination's manipulation of memory fertile source material for the creation of dramatic text.

Completeness rather than happiness

The work of Mazzoni and her colleagues suggests that the primary desired outcome for the individual seems to be completeness rather than happiness. When I interviewed Giuliana Mazzoni, she argued that the individual strives for the "person self" to be a whole entity. "We cannot miss parts of ourselves. If we feel a part of ourselves is missing or a moment of behaviour is out of context we need to find an explanation, justification and reason for this. We need to fit that odd piece of behaviour into our 'person self' and make it fit." Mazzoni argues that we need to find a cause for that behaviour and if we cannot find a cause we may well make one up in order to feel at ease with ourselves. People would appear to desire stories with clear narratives that leave no gaps. Mazzoni's research demonstrates that the imagination is a powerful influence in terms of memory. Furthermore, once memory is influenced it then adapts to accommodate the influence rather than returning to the original memory. Ultimately, autobiographical memories appear to be used by the individual to create coherent narratives regardless of the truth, perceived or otherwise.

Conclusion

An initial anxiety for me as a writer was a concern that I do justice to the memories of others without turning their recollections "into a circus." The research discussed above demonstrates that truth is not a given in any use of memory I have explored, and so my concern seems unjustified. In order to pursue my intent as a writer to reflect effectively on how we have lived and offer the possibility of change, I need to take these psychologists' ideas about memory with me into the writing process.

For the purposes of present and future narratives, memory is extremely malleable. The imagination can be a powerful influence but there is sometimes a difference in emotional response to the recall of believed and nonbelieved memories. A memory does not need to be believed for it to feel powerful and real. The adaptation of a memory by a social or cultural context means that some people will be drawn to the adaptation rather than the original memory; it is the completeness of narratives that people desire. I need to

be mindful of the possible correlation between forgiveness and memory. Ultimately I should be mindful of my own memories, both of the personal past and of the craft and creative process, as I move forward in the writing process.

The next chapter will explore the intent and craft of other writers who have admitted to using their autobiographies and memories as material for writing scripts. I will consider how they use their memories and try to determine if their intent and technique is different or similar to my overarching intent, which is to enable the audience to reflect on and consider how life is and could be lived.

Chapter Two

Autobiography, memory and adaptation in the scripts of Anthony Minghella, Richard Bean and James Graham

When I interviewed them individually, Anthony Minghella, Richard Bean and James Graham all admitted to drawing on memory and autobiography in their work. In this chapter I will investigate how all three of these writers access and adapt their autobiographical memories for use in their scripts. This will include exploring their memories of the writing process and developing a comparison between their respective writing frames and my own. I will begin with Minghella. A director and scriptwriter and an adapter of written text, he also drew on and adapted memories as if they were text. Exploring his working process will help me to consider how a writer may approach the adaptation of the text of memories.

Adaptation and fidelity

It is useful at this point to consider previous discussions regarding adaptation, particularly in relation to fidelity. The fidelity debate in relation to the study of adaptation as a process has been occurring for over fifty years. The debate initially concentrated on adaptations from text to screen. In *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel*, Sarah Cardwell considers that there have been “three paradigmatic approaches to adaptation that have marked out the terrain of adaptation studies,” which she identifies as being “the medium-specific approach, the comparative approach and the pluralist approach” (43).

Cardwell associates the medium-specific approach with George Bluestone, whose 1957 book *Novels into Film* was the first serious study of the subject. Bluestone considered each medium (for example, novel and film) to be autonomous, with its own distinct and defining forms of expression. The comparative approach can be identified with Brian McFarlane’s *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, published in 1997. This approach, Cardwell tells us, is “less concerned with the technical, and thus formal, capabilities of each medium and more concerned with the specific conventions that constitute its system of signification” (55). In a further analytical development, the pluralist approach “recognises that an adaptation’s relationship to... its source novel is not

necessarily more salient than its relation to other ‘resources’ such as other adaptations, and film and television conventions; its institutional context as a marketed, audience-targeted, contemporary media text; and its particular historical, social and cultural context” (72). Cardwell identifies the pluralist approach with Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan’s 1999 collection *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, and with Robert Giddings and Erica Sheen’s 2000 collection, *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*. However, Cardwell herself ultimately argues for a “novel, alternative approach.” She believes that medium specificity “has been too readily dismissed,” and that “appropriately modified, and combined with other paradigms, a medium-specific understanding of television can in fact provide us with a valuable framework for considering television programmes including classic-novel adaptations.” More importantly from my perspective, she considers that “attention to aesthetic questions is overdue in the field, and the recent renewed interest in close textual analysis suggests a potentially rewarding methodology” (73).

As the subject area of adaptation has developed, others have shifted the focus away from the novel and screen. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders attempts to define the difference between the two terms in her title, identifying “adaptation” as having a relationship with the source text as opposed to “appropriation,” which “frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (26). In *A Theory of Adaptation* Linda Hutcheon begins to identify the many and varied motives behind adaptation in a variety of media and genres. Thomas Leitch, in *Film Adaptation and its Discontents*, asserts that “adaptations [are] examples of rewriting that can inspire storytellers and analysts alike to their own productive and inevitable rewriting” (21). However, all of the above authors at the very least touch an academic toe into the fidelity debate and all deem that fidelity to the source text is decidedly misplaced. These findings echo psychological analysis of adapted memories: the adaptation does not need to show fidelity to the original memory as it is the use of the memory by the individual to construct a complete and satisfying narrative in the present that is most important.

Anthony Minghella: Memory, adaptation and the creation of a screenplay

Minghella saw the script as the starting point of the creative process that leads to the

creation of a film, although he also claimed that: “A glance at the end credits should be enough to dispel any notion that film-making is an auteur activity” (*Ripley Acknowledgements xv*). He saw himself first and foremost as a scriptwriter (Interview[1]), creating a script that would be a catalyst to the creation of a film. Because of the importance Minghella placed on the role of the script it is useful for me as a writer to understand the creative influences he responded to and how he used them in the creation of a screenplay.

Underpinning at least three of his screen adaptations is the importance of memory as a creative influence, particularly in the realisation of the main characters. During the interviews I had with Minghella we initially focused on the films *The English Patient* (1996) and *Cold Mountain* (2003), and these are the screenplays I will mainly discuss. We also discussed *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999) and touched on the creation of *The Reader* (2008) and *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* (2008). In the last interview I had with him, we agreed to discuss both of these films in more detail at our next scheduled interview; sadly he died before this meeting took place.

Hull, Bach and Beckett

Minghella’s early career was spent as a lecturer in the Drama department at the University of Hull, the same department in which he gained his first class degree. During his years as an academic he continued to hone his scriptwriting skills as well as pursuing research into the work of Samuel Beckett, a writer whom he regarded, alongside the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, as one of the two major influences on his creative work.

Minghella took a joint Music and Drama degree at Hull but he arrived at university more experienced in music than drama. He played the piano a lot when writing a screenplay and he saw his experience as a musician constantly informing every aspect of the way he made films. As he stated in print, “the understanding of music is my most important tool in the understanding of film” (*Minghella on Minghella* 116). His interest in and passion for Bach’s diverse and layered musical structures was apparent in interview: “[Bach’s] work is so rich, there is so much in there, there isn’t a day that goes past that I don’t feel the need to listen to Bach” (Interview[2]). Minghella’s comments on writing the scripts of *Truly, Madly, Deeply* and *The Talented Mr Ripley* emphasise the direct influence of Bach on his work. His first thematic idea for *Truly, Madly, Deeply* came from listening to cello and

piano pieces by Bach, with the idea evolving into the playing of a Bach duet by the lead characters. He wanted to portray the joy experienced when sharing a musical moment and it was Bach he turned to in order best to demonstrate this. Likewise in *The Talented Mr Ripley* he used musical motifs to aid the portrayal of the main characters. The lead character, Ripley, was directly connected in his mind to the music of Bach:

the importance of music grew in my mind, replacing the more literary motif of painting in the novel.... the screenplay also became a kind of libretto, working out relationships in musical terms, pitting Dickie's identification with jazz, its mantra of freedom and existentialism, against Ripley's formal classicism and asserting that, just as in music, where truly great extemporising begins with Bach and Mozart, so it is Ripley who proves to be the more genuine improviser (*Ripley Introduction* xiii).

His time at Hull helped to spawn Minghella's admiration for the work of Samuel Beckett. He immediately saw similarities between Beckett and Bach: "Both are noted for their severity of line, the dry surface, but underneath there's a volcano, there's lava" (*Minghella on Beckett* 280). He began a PhD on the work of Beckett and became very aware of how Beckett explored memory as a dramatic device. *Play* and *Happy Days* were the first plays he directed in the professional theatre (280-81); both use memory as thematic material. Beckett explored the uses of memory in relation to character in much of his work, providing stark, resonant images in plays such as *Eh Joe*, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Not I*. Minghella identified as significant in Beckett's work the manipulation of time and space and the repetition of the past. He described Beckett's writing as "terrifying and remorseless... [but] also profoundly uplifting. It's honest, naked, leavened with mischief. And full of pity" (82). Minghella's last radio play, *Eyes Down Looking*, was a homage to Beckett.

Beckett not only used memory as a device/topic when creating characters in his dramatic work but also explored its use by others in their creative work. Suzanne Nalbantian points out that in Beckett's book on Proust he saw the memory episodes as mystic experiences to be treasured (*Memory in Literature* 61). Conor McPherson suggests that Beckett's manipulation of characterisation illustrates "that even our own attempts to duck life's experiences and cast our memories aside is impossible, for to experience even a moment of happiness blesses us with a kind of cosmic faith that is beyond language, and

thus beyond denial.” I would contend that Beckett’s use of memory encouraged Minghella to use memory in a similar way when creating characters in his scripts. He retrieved his own memories and adapted them as source material for the creation of key characters in his screenplays.

During the interviews I had with Minghella it was clear that the experience of being a student and then a lecturer at a university left him with the desires to keep learning and to bring an analytical dimension to his work. He wanted to “remain porous... in pursuit of brilliance” (Interview[2]). This is similar to my own approach to scriptwriting and is one of the reasons that I am interested in him as a writer. Minghella’s desire to continually improve meant that he often felt that he didn’t achieve his creative aims, believing that “much of the work I do is murky and undiluted.” He was continually “striving for brevity of form,” something he felt that Beckett and Bach achieved (Interview[2]). This is one of the reasons he felt compelled to write more for screen rather than for stage.

Minghella felt that the forms of film and music were clearly related and that the cinema was a better medium for texts that suited his sensibilities (*Minghella on Minghella* 5). Understanding this, it is not surprising that his progress as a writer, after initially being about writing plays for the stage, soon became a matter of learning how to manipulate the televisual and filmic mediums. I would suggest that Minghella drew heavily on his memories of the work of Bach and Beckett in order to inspire him when creating screenplays.

Memory and the source text

Minghella recounted on many occasions how he did not write a screenplay with the novel beside him. He made this clear to me when discussing the films *The English Patient* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*, and with reference to *Cold Mountain* in an interview published by Richard Stayton:

I don’t feel like my job is to copy out the best bits of the books into screenplay areas.... Having read the book carefully and thought about it, I don’t go back to it in the process of adaptation. I don’t have it with me when I’m doing the adaptation, and I don’t refer to it again. Certain things in the book really spoke to me and moved me, and my job was to advertise them (17).

Usually when writing a screenplay, Minghella took himself off alone to a house in the country and left the source novel in a drawer in his office. This is not an unusual practice for an adapter; Hitchcock did similar, stating that “What I do is to read a story only once, and if I like the basic idea, I just forget all about the book and start to create cinema” (qtd. in Truffaut: 56). The difference between Hitchcock and Minghella in terms of their approaches to adaptation was that Minghella researched intensively around the source text. On his writing retreats he took with him many other books, some connected to the historical context of the novel, and did little else but write, including sometimes not eating, dressing or washing.

Minghella believed that “what creates quality in literature isn’t what creates quality in film”. Isolating himself from the text made him concentrate on the filmic structure. He believed that “film is rather resistant to literature” and that access to the source text would only interfere with the creating of the screenplay (Interview[1]). It is obvious from this approach that he did not adhere to the adaptation discourse that asserts the “axiomatic superiority of literature to film” (Stam 4). On the contrary, Minghella suggested that film can add to the text: “Every contribution to the film story should feel as if it is a missing episode from the novel.” He justified this by stating that “to remove the contours of the book [means that] you are animating an internal soul of the book” (Interview[1]). This once again has a direct relationship to the adaptation and use of memory cited by Mazzoni and others.

Minghella’s physical and emotional removal from the source text when writing the screenplay enabled his memory of the book to become more visual and filmic. By placing the source text as a memory he was giving himself permission to change the memory to make it fit for the purpose of the present. With *Cold Mountain*, where the story is loosely sourced in a classical myth, the first thing he had to deal with was the epic nature of the text, as he explained to Richard Stayton: “The big challenge to an adapter is that essentially what you can contain within two and a half hours of a movie is a novella, a slight tale, and I’m trying to cram *The Odyssey* into that time. Almost inevitably in the process you’re compromising and hurting and sometimes finding incredible felicities” (17). Minghella was unapologetic about reducing the source material to a “memory in a drawer” (Interview[1]), as he believed his job as an adapter was first and foremost to reduce the text down into a manageable format for the medium of film.

The source texts that Minghella has adapted for screen are modern classics or popular novels. Scholars have noted that when this is the case, the adapter seems to be less subjected to the “a priori valorization of historical anteriority and seniority” (Stam 4) or the “moralistic rhetoric” (Hutcheon 85) so often poured on adapters of classic nineteenth-century writers such as Jane Austen or Charles Dickens. But adapting modern novels for film brings with it its own peculiar problems. As Minghella explained, “the modernist novel is very different.... It has the suggestion of being cinematic when it isn’t” (Interview[1]). For example, in his introduction to the screenplay of *The English Patient*, Minghella says that he considers that novel to be deceptively cinematic, “as if somebody had already seen a film and was in a hurry trying to remember all the best bits” (xiii). He goes further in the introduction to *The Talented Mr Ripley*, explaining that:

The screenplay, obliged to work in its own right, is both an argument with the source material and a commentary on it. The uninflected brilliance of Highsmith’s novel, its disavowal of moral consequence, Ripley’s solipsism, the author’s acerbic judgment of everybody other than Ripley, the book’s heavy employment of devices – letters, coincidences – do not sit easily within the context of film” (ix).

The process of adaptation, Minghella explains, “require[s] me to join the dots and make a figurative work from a pointillist and abstract one. Any number of versions were possible and I’m certain that the stories I chose to elaborate say as much about my own interests and reading as they do about the book. And I can’t apologize for this” (*English Patient Introduction xv*). The need to create a reasoned narrative that pleases him from all the source material he has explored connects Minghella’s writing process directly to the work of Mazzoni where she outlines the individual’s adaptation of memory to construct personal coherent narrative.

Memory and characterisation

I would suggest that it is Minghella’s use of personal memory that most affects the final shape of his main characters. This was particularly pertinent when he was working on *Cold Mountain*. His relationship to all of his main characters is explored more fully in *Minghella on Minghella* (16-17) but I believe it is his connection with *Cold Mountain*’s Ada that best

exemplifies the impact of the use of his own memory when creating a character.

Minghella described his immersion in the making of a film as “like travelling into a long tunnel” (*Ripley Acknowledgements* xvi). But his focused immersion when writing a screenplay was even more absolute; he described it to me as “a self-imposed purdah” (Interview[1]). The text was accessed as a memory. He was isolated, surrounded by only books and music, he played the piano and he drew on his own memories. He described how when creating the screenplay for *Cold Mountain* he drew on memories of his grandmother for the role of Ruby. His grandmother was someone he spent “much time with” (Interview[2]), a woman who “said exactly what was on her mind” (*Minghella on Minghella* 16). In the creation of the character of Inman, Minghella believed he could imagine exactly what it was like to be Inman as he was the polar opposite to himself, both in physical terms and in their approach to academic learning. He imagined Inman to be “a man who is very distrustful of language, whereas I have invested all my life in language” (*Minghella on Minghella* 17). The creation of the character of Ada in *Cold Mountain* was even more personal.

Minghella was attracted to the text of *Cold Mountain* because of its exploration of the dislocation of humankind from nature, a topic which had interested him prior to reading the novel (Interview[2]). The conundrum that preoccupied him initially in the writing process of the film centred on whether the mourning of that dislocation was justifiable:

I kept being reminded that nature itself was a very cruel master... If you were looking for God in nature it's actually quite hard to find. Certainly no compassion. On the one hand, one of the things that makes us mad is that we have lost touch with the earth, but the earth is mad, or you could construe it as tyrannical and merciless, so I thought that was a very interesting place to start working (Interview[1]).

The example of Ada in *Cold Mountain* demonstrates how Minghella imaginatively translates into his work the memory of a personal feeling state, his internal personal debate regarding nature, religion and dislocation, and his experiences in his place of writing. The result is literally to put words into a character's mouth. In discussion Minghella commented: “I have more connection with Ada, she has a series of skills which have no connection with her inner being, which was where my head was at that time... playing

Bach, being able to write a screenplay, writing on a farm knowing nothing about the animals surrounding me” (Interview[1]). The imaginative transposition of this feeling state appears in the extract of dialogue where Ada vents her fear and frustration at her own practical inadequacies: “I can’t! I can’t! All right?... I know harmony and counterpoint, the Old and New Testaments.... I can embroider, but I can’t darn, I can arrange cut flowers, but I can’t grow them. If a thing has a function, if I might do something with it, it wasn’t considered suitable” (*Cold Mountain Screenplay* 72).

Memory and historical context

Both *The English Patient* and *Cold Mountain* have specific historical settings: for *The English Patient* it is the Second World War, for *Cold Mountain* it is the American War of Independence. We might presume that Minghella would want to foreground and prioritise the historical events in the adaptation process, but in fact this was not the case. Minghella does not open his films with a metonymic iconic image reminding us of the period: “no Big Ben showing us we are in London” (Interview[1]). When discussing *Cold Mountain* he said: “Even though it is a civil war novel it is written from the perspective of the present day and I suppose that’s why it excites me. The job of the film is not simply to reanimate history, it is to create some dialectic; it’s got to have some argument with the present.... In *Cold Mountain* we have tried to throw the period away (Interview[1]).

The beginnings of the films discussed here tie in directly to the feeling states of the main characters and it is the characters’ preoccupation with and use of their memories which, I would argue, most concerned Minghella in his filmmaking. After reading the source text and removing himself from it Minghella believed that he as the adaptor should become “an enthusiastic messenger... remembering the best bits” (*Ripley Introduction ix*), and the “best bits” for Minghella were to do with characterisation rather than the setting and political backdrops depicted in the novels. Producer and director Sydney Pollack, who worked closely with him, described Minghella’s way of working as one of “reimagining the entire work” (viii). However, Minghella believed his job as adaptor was ideally to enable “the captive cinema audience to make the pilgrimage back to the book, which remains blessedly itself” (*Ripley Introduction ix*). Therefore there needed to be a recognisable essence of the source text, but interpreted by Minghella through an imaginative veil of his own current concerns and memories.

The “reimagining” by Minghella of characters in *The English Patient* meant that in some cases the political observations in the book were watered down, with the personal responses of the characters to each other being highlighted. For example, Kip’s anger and subsequent rejection of his lover Hana are seen in the film as being triggered by the death of his friend Hardy by a booby-trap bomb, whereas in the source text his anger and rejection of Hana are mainly triggered by the bombing of Hiroshima and only exacerbated by Hardy’s death. In one of the conversations published by Michael Ondaatje, the film’s editor Walter Murch justifies this reduction in focus, explaining that “the film was so much about those five individual people: the Patient, Hana, Kip, Katharine, Caravaggio – that to suddenly open it up near the end and ask the audience to imagine the death of hundreds of thousands of unknown people... it was too abstract.” And as Ondaatje observes a little later in the conversation: “It’s almost as if irony would kill the intimate drama that has been created” (213-15).

Minghella adapts the settings of the text to key in directly to the emotional state of the main characters. For example in *The Talented Mr Ripley* there is a greater awareness of place in the film with the highlighting of mainland Europe and specifically Italy as an important entity. However, Minghella made it clear that his intention in doing this was primarily to support character development: “In *Ripley* we had a different job because we had to shoot the film like tourists because Ripley’s perceiving of Europe is like a tourist so he sees everything in iconic terms” (Interview[1]).

The historical periods are used in the films as background material to support the notion that all of the characters are mourning their memories and trying to recreate the feeling state they remember in order to feel fulfilled in the present (or, as in the case of Ripley, who is a consummate fantasist, a feeling state he wished was true so he could remember it and feel fulfilled in the present). For example Almasy in *The English Patient*, whilst crippled with pain from his extensive burns and soon to die, remembers how he was thwarted from returning to rescue the woman he loves because of those preoccupied with the machinations of the Second World War. In the film we see a beautiful land shattered by war, but Almasy is preoccupied with his memories of his and Katherine’s passion, his failed attempt to save her and the loss of all that mattered to him. Who lost or won the war seemed irrelevant to him. In *Cold Mountain* we see Inman, a wounded confederate soldier, risking capture and death whilst struggling to get home to Ada, the woman he loves. Once again we see a country and people shattered by war. Inman and Ada’s love was in its early

stages of development when he left to fight but he holds onto it and sees the manoeuvrings of war as mere obstacles which thwart his journey home. Both Almasy and Inman see the political backdrop in terms of obstacles to their personal passion. They each suffer a sense of yearning and loss and continually reach for a memory to reassure. Their determination to remember better times results in the creation of mirages “erected on fast-fading memories and half-remembered images” (Thomas 199).

There is a sagacity experienced by the main characters in *Cold Mountain* and *The English Patient* that they must attempt to make sense of and engage with the present however difficult they find it, but they do this by drawing on their memories for support. Bronwen Thomas asserts that there is a “sense of celebration that intense emotions and cherished memories can provide some kind of anchor for the individual” (229). Inman and Almasy each have a cherished book, which they carry with them and continually read. For Almasy it is a copy of Herodotus, who was known as one of the first historians and wrote many tales set in North Africa. Almasy continually adds notes, drawings and photographs of his own to the text: his memories, his thoughts. Inman carries and reads a book given to him by Ada, William Bartram's *Travels*, which describes the countryside he goes through before the war. Within the book he keeps a photograph of Ada, which she also gave to him when he left to go to war. For both Almasy and Inman, the personal memories held in the books, and the historical descriptions of better times, punctuate the horror and pain that both characters experience. Both characters reach for their own book, full of memories, throughout each film in order to reassure or comfort themselves. I would argue that for Minghella the importance of presenting a historical context in his films was to emphasise how the characters used personal memories for emotional support, to create positive personal narratives, whilst reluctantly engaging with a brutal and exposing present.

Whilst Minghella was a very interesting and generous person to interview, the reliance on the memory of the filmmaker is always problematic if the critic is seeking the authentic memory. Minghella was willing to describe his creative process for each project we discussed but recognised the difficulties of being accurate in the retelling. He declared: “All our memories are faulty, everything is true, and that’s why it is so hard to discuss the creative process. I’m saying more than I know” (Interview[2]).

Minghella did not watch his films after they were distributed. For him, his memory of the making of the film was stored and he simply wanted to move on to the next project. He saw the point of delivery of a film as where the critic takes over (Interview[2]). When

discussing the screenplays of Minghella there are considerations which cloud the issue further, not least because every time I interviewed him he reiterated that he felt: “I haven’t got a big enough body of work to analyse. Whatever you say about your work is a lie. I want to make more of it. I haven’t made enough films to make a direct retrospective of my work feasible” (Interview[2]).

In essence this is true if we agree with Andrew Sarris that to fully understand a director’s work they “must be evaluated in terms of the total context of their careers” (22). But only if the career has been allowed to run a relatively long course. Minghella was driven by “the feeling that I have so much to do and not enough time to do it” (Interview[2]). I would argue that one constant throughout the writing of the films studied here was that Minghella drew on personal memories regarding learning and experiences in order to create and develop his characters, while his characters draw on their memories to make sense of and survive the present. In every discussion I had with Minghella it became apparent that characterisation was his main preoccupation. He was more interested “in the why than the how, why is that person doing this, that’s what I’m patrolling at the moment. Why am I? What am I?” (Interview[2]). He, like his characters, was continually attempting to make meaning of the lived experience.

In relation to my own creative practice it is useful to recognise that Minghella drew on memories influenced by a variety of sources from his distant past to his immediate past and from experiencing and drawing on the work of other writers and musicians. I too draw on creative practice by others for inspiration, as I will discuss in more detail later on.

Anthony Minghella continually renegotiated his memories and placed them alongside his present day struggles in order to make meaning of the lived experience. Like myself, he recognised that there were gaps between his memories, but his overriding concern was to adapt his memories to suit the purpose of the medium he was working in. The demands of the new medium were paramount. There was no sense that there had to be a demonstration of fidelity to the source material or his memories. This connects very obviously to claims by Mazzoni et al that memory is to be adapted and changed for present use. His use of a creative medium to explore his own identity directly connects to the thinking of Adriana Cavarero outlined in the introduction: he is using characters to tell tales from his adapted biography, something I intend to do in my plays.

Richard Bean and James Graham

When interviewing both Richard Bean and James Graham I discussed their memories of their intent in terms of the writing process as I did with Minghella, so I may compare them all to my own. However, I was also particularly interested in the issue of exploring the potential for change. Aleks Sierz considers that British theatre in the last twenty years has mainly settled for reflecting tensions that already exist in society or presenting “dystopic futures,” considering that playwrights were “better at criticising existing forms of identity rather than imagining different ones” (*Rewriting the Nation* 242). With this in mind, I spent some time talking with Graham and Bean about whether they intended to offer their audiences the possibility of positive change.

Beginnings

Richard Bean’s playwriting came to prominence at the end of the twentieth century and James Graham’s at the beginning of the twenty-first. Both playwrights have written for the most well known established new writing venues in London (the Finborough, the Royal Court and the National Theatre). They differ in age and experience, in personal and playwriting terms. Richard Bean began writing successful plays in his forties after pursuing other careers; James Graham began scriptwriting in his early twenties and has seen it as his main occupation since gaining his degree. Richard Bean’s circuitous route to a playwriting career enabled him to build up a wealth of experience in other areas of professional and personal endeavour which he has drawn on when creating his plays. James Graham took Drama at university, thereby gaining a theoretical understanding of theatre and drama and access to facilities that enabled him to put into practice his understanding. It was at university that he decided to pursue a career as a playwright.

There are also similarities in their backgrounds, and both want the audience to be aware of what they feel strongly about in both personal and political contexts. In interview Bean refers to this in terms of anger, Graham in terms of passion. Their writing challenges audience members to draw on their own memories and place them alongside those of the characters in order to compare and contrast, and to make connections for both the characters and themselves. However, the personal experiences they draw on differ, as do their uses of structure, form and certain thematic choices, which I will now consider.

James Graham: memory and characterisation

James Graham was born and grew up in Kirkby-in-Ashfield, a mining community in north Nottinghamshire. His mother, who is still working, has had a variety of jobs from barmaid when Graham was young to later working with children's services run by the local council. For the past fifteen or so years she has been a primary school secretary and worked in a logistics warehouse in the evenings. Graham recognises the influence of his mother's employment and work ethic on his writing, not only on a personal familial level but also on more of a social level:

These logistic warehouses – storing and shipping goods of any sorts – seem to have replaced the mines to an extent. Whole business park full of them. Lots of ex-miners there but, more prolifically I think, ex-miner's wives. Who have now taken charge of work instead of their husbands. I worked in these kinds of places over the summers, during A Levels and degree etc. and it certainly added flavour and texture to the world and voices of my early work (Email).

Graham's parents divorced when he was four and his stepfather lived with Graham and his mother from when Graham was twelve. His stepfather was a window cleaner and Graham's first job was assisting him on his rounds. Graham's birth father works for Nottingham City Council and has done so all his life, first employed doing unskilled physical jobs before being promoted through the services until now his job entails dealing with legal contracts related to the outsourcing of building and other services. Graham often felt "a slight 'class' distinction between what my mum did, and what my dad did – though I've never been quite able to decipher it" (Email).

From an early age Graham used to create stories in order to remember things when studying. "If I had scientific or historical facts to learn I would create a scenario with a story I would walk through in my mind.... Maybe pick a location, field or something talking to James the First or someone but would link it to a narrative" (Interview[2]). After A levels Graham attended the University of Hull to study Drama at undergraduate level and it was here that he decided to concentrate on developing his playwriting skills. His first performed full-length play was *Coal Not Dole*. Graham wrote and directed the piece whilst he was in his third year at Hull. The student production went to the 2002 Edinburgh

Festival and then on a tour around the area of Graham's birth and neighbouring county, Yorkshire. Set during the miners' strikes of the eighties, *Coal Not Dole* examines the effects of threatened pit closures and the resulting industrial action on the individuals and communities involved. The relationships of the miners fracture but the women, who work in the local sewing factory, provide stability and permanence. As Geoff Kidder put it in his review of the 2002 production: "As the failure to make the strike national became apparent, it was graphically brought home how the divisions between geographical areas solidified and spread to cause division and strife within communities and individual families."

Graham admits to the influence of the area of his upbringing on his writing. "The geo-political side to 'North Notts' has always interested me, certainly in how I write" (Email). Graham does not come from a mining heritage but his stepfather comes from a mining family, which was a source for the play. More importantly it was the voices of those around him that he had most respect for, and which he drew on for dialogue purposes:

I had grown up in a world of very strong quite working-class northern women and the voices of my aunties and my mum resonated in my head and I felt like I could create those, imitate their dialogue and speech rhythms and their patterns and I wanted to as those were the women that I loved and liked and I really wanted to put them on stage (Interview[1]).

Whilst the characters in *Coal Not Dole* are conventionally realistic, Graham takes his first tentative steps away from that style, breaking up the narrative with the use of song, a device he was to use to greater effect in a later play.

The miners' strike in Britain (1984/5) saw some Nottinghamshire pits eventually take a different political stance to the National Union of Miners (NUM), forming a breakaway union, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM). The conflict between the two unions was still referred to on each organisation's websites as lately as 2012, with the animosity still palpable. The UDM web site has recently been taken down but in 2012 it contained the following passage: "Following the 1985 strike the NUM attempted to change the Rule Book, which was unacceptable to the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire mineworkers. A ballot was arranged which resulted in a vote not to accept any changes to the Rule Book, hence the Union of Democratic Mineworkers was formed." This is countered by the NUM, who still state on their web site that: "On March 8, 1984, the NUM National Executive

Committee granted permission for areas to take strike action in defence of pits and jobs... In the large Notts coalfield, however, miners (with 5,000 honourable exceptions) tragically refused to give this support.” For James Graham the early experiences of the animosity the strike produced in the community and the confusing emotional aftermath, evident for many years, are something he believes had a colossal impact on his manipulation of conflict and character perspective in his writing generally.

The villages where I lived, that are Nottinghamshire on the map, but quite Yorkshire in character and soul, became a sort of boundary line between the two, neither committing one way or the other, and a lot of the worst violence at this time broke out around my neck of the woods for this reason. On the plus side (well, I think it's a plus) I feel like this has given me a sense of diplomacy in my writing, and my outlook in general – a genuine willingness to not be didactic in my politics, and to see both sides (Email).

This determination to give a balanced argument or a contrary, sometimes unpopular viewpoint is much in evidence in Graham's work and exists in his second published play.

History, politics and content

After university Graham worked in his local theatre as a Front of House person and wrote plays in his spare time, one of which he sent to the Finborough Theatre in London. The play was *Albert's Boy*, which was first performed in 2005 and was subsequently broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 10 November 2009. The play was commissioned by the Finborough partly because the subject matter connected to the theatre's intent to highlight the 2005 National Year of Physics: the themes of the play connected to the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the centenary of Einstein's famous papers on relativity, and the 50th anniversary of Einstein's death. Graham admits to being “a bit of a history geek” (Interview[1]) and in 2003 the political focus in Britain was on Iraq and the existence, or not, of “weapons of mass destruction.” He “looked to history to find an historical equivalent... I discovered Albert Einstein's contribution to the first ever weapon of mass destruction, the Atomic Bomb” (Interview[1]).

Albert's Boy juxtaposes the political and the personal throughout, presenting both

sides of the atomic argument but deliberately not reaching a political conclusion. Sam Marlow in *The Times* recognised at the time that “there is a boldness, and an occasional lyricism, to the writing that has a certain potency – particularly in the play’s closing section.” The discussion of occasional successes hints at parts of the play being less successful and it was those sections which were focused on by Brian Logan in *The Guardian*: “For the first half of *Albert’s Boy*, there’s nothing dramatic happening. It’s just chat, and creaky chat at that.” The play is conventionally realistic in style and structure and the “creaky chat” alluded to by Logan I would identify as caused by a limited emotional range demonstrated by the characters. However, most reviews applauded the bravery of the piece and the attempt by a young writer to explore a political debate. If Graham had been a mature writer with more profound memories of experiencing a range of emotions I would suggest the reviews would not have been so supportive. The success of *Albert’s Boy* led to Graham becoming a writer in residence at the Finborough and he was also chosen as the Finborough’s representative of one of the fifty emerging writers given a bursary award by the BBC and the Royal Court Theatre as part of the Royal Court’s 50th anniversary celebrations. He was also awarded the Pearson Playwriting Bursary in 2006 for *Albert’s Boy*, enabling him to work mainly as a playwright.

Cole Not Dole and *Albert’s Boy* set a pattern of two very distinctive approaches to manipulating the form of a play, which would be echoed in Graham’s later work. *Coal Not Dole* mainly focuses on the personal relationships of characters drawn from the writer’s memories. Characterisation dominates the play but the plot structure is provided by a political backdrop that is also drawn from the writer’s memories and which frames the relationships. As Graham explained:

The miners’ strike presented a reasonably good template for a structure of a play as it had a beginning, it had a crisis, it has a climax and it has a resolution so that was a good vehicle to write into, but it also tackled themes that I was passionate about, the death of industry and community and also to what extent then do we have responsibility as individuals to the wider world, so essentially very rich territory but it was mainly the characters, I felt I could write them (Interview[1]).

Conversely, *Albert’s Boy* is laden with political argument and this, rather than the characterisation, is the main focus of the play.

Graham's improvement as a writer involved a maturation process both in terms of manipulating the form and content of a play and in personal development terms. He realised that he needed to plan his development as a playwright if he was going to have a career that would last. Therefore he had to evaluate what he could do well, where he wanted to position himself in the canon of playwrights and most importantly, what he would have to do to develop as a writer. Deciding to hone his skills by writing political plays he reflected that "at least this gives me a niche. . . . I was aware that in the long run that this might stand me in good stead because I was writing bigger plays than writers older than me were writing and that if I could survive I would be the better for it, for having taken on these ambitious themes and these ambitious plays earlier on" (Interview[1]).

Graham's next two plays, both for the Finborough Theatre, were similar to *Albert's Boy* in that they portrayed famous political individuals and reflected on the past in order to consider the political present. *Eden's Empire* (2006) was written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Suez Crisis and the role of Anthony Eden in the then political arena, but the play also reflected on the political issues that were prominent at the time of writing: the political machinations of the Labour government, Prime Minister Tony Blair and his relationship with Gordon Brown, and the invasion of Iraq. This contemporary political perspective was not lost on Michael Billington when he reviewed the Finborough production in *The Guardian*: "Graham's play is both a dramatic piece of living history and a timely demonstration of the danger of allowing foreign policy to be dictated by a prime minister who flagrantly flouts international law." Lucy Powell went further in *Time Out*, commenting that "the parallels [Graham] draws between the politically disastrous PM of post-war Britain, Anthony Eden, and his latter-day namesake are so bold you'd have to be, well, Tony Blair to miss them. . . . The circles of similarity are drawn so tight it's almost disorientating." Graham won the Catherine Johnson Award for the Best Play in 2007 for *Eden's Empire*. Once again the form and content were conventionally realistic. The plot was linear but the time span reached from the fall of Nazi Germany until after Suez.

In his next play Graham became more experimental. This was a further commission from the Finborough, *Little Madam* (2007) in which Margaret Thatcher reverts to her childhood and foresees the story of her career. Graham's starting point was politics but to create the character of Thatcher he looked more to the memory of his own feelings. As he explained: "[My characters] have characteristics, they have particular flaws which might be things that I think I have in myself which I latch onto; [it] didn't enter my head that

Margaret Thatcher was a woman, she was just a particular character who had a particular desire, a particular function within the play” (Interview[1]). In this play Graham’s manipulation of form became much more mongrel in intent. There are surreal moments in the play where Thatcher’s toys are constantly in dialogue with her as a child, telling her about her future.

Another political play followed, this time for the National Youth Theatre. *Tory Boyz* (2008) looks at prejudice, tolerance and tradition in the British Conservative Party. Graham provided a snapshot of the party from Edward Heath to the present day, moving back and forth between the past and the present; he also depicted Heath as a young boy. Graham’s manipulation of the structure of time in this play was a further attempt to expand his ability to manipulate theatre form beyond realistic structures and conventions.

At this point in his career, Graham recognised the need to develop his emotional intelligence in terms of the creation of the characters in his plays. I would argue that the characters in *Albert’s Boy*, *Eden’s Empire* and *Little Madam* are all restricted in their emotional range. When I put this to Graham during interview he admitted that on reflection this was an accurate assessment, “because I wasn’t really ready to do it, either I was embarrassed to explore or I just didn’t have it in me yet to realise what I thought about it all or how I could communicate those things” (Interview[1]). However, the process of honing his structural craft – particularly the manipulation of form – over several plays, whilst also having time to mature emotionally beyond his student persona, enabled him to feel ready to tackle his next chosen project. He stated that after the four plays where politics were the overriding focus he felt confident that he:

did have a voice, a craft, a handle, a technique, and wanted to tackle something that was very rich in terms of family dynamics but followed a traditional well-made play structure, where scenes were long and happened in real time and I thought I was ready... but ultimately I had a burning desire to explore the situation they were in which reflected my own situation (Interview[1]).

The resulting play was the autobiographical *Sons of York*, which was performed at the Finborough in 2008. Like *Coal Not Dole*, the play has a political backdrop. It is set during Britain’s “winter of discontent” (1978-9) and it shows three generations of a family in Hull coming to terms with the changes in their familial relationships as well as political changes

in the country. There was also meant to be a political resonance for the present in terms of Gordon Brown's premiership, which was current at the time of the play's writing.

The focus of the play is mainly the three generations of men portrayed. The Grandfather, Dad (Terry) refuses to face the reality that his wife, Mam (Val) has a terminal illness. His son Jim tries to ignore his mother's illness and refuses to stand up to the tyranny of his father, not allowing his wife, Brenda and son Mark to admit that Mark is not following his grandfather and father into the haulage business but is a sixth form student instead. Brenda, a nurse, copes pragmatically with the strained domestic situation, but can't change any of the men's attitudes. As the play primarily follows a traditional structure, there is a climax, with Jim revealing the truth about Mark and making clear the need for his mother to return to care, and an explosive crisis when Mark gets electrocuted by some Christmas lights and Jim finally reacts with aggression to his father's intransience and violence. Mark lives but the Grandmother inevitably dies.

Most critics focused on the quality of the characterisation. Brian Logan stated in *Time Out* that "James Graham's *Sons of York* sometimes feels like performance art; an experiment to prove how closely acting can resemble real life." The improvement in the emotional range of Graham's characters appeared to be recognised. However, Billington considered the play as less than successful, writing in *The Guardian* that: "I get the point, but can't help feeling that Graham's quarrelling Yorkists have to bear too much symbolic weight." What Billington did applaud was Graham's occasional disruption of the linear form of the play so that "the oldsters... touchingly break out of the time-frame to remind us of their youthful aspirations as romantic vocalists." Both Mam and Dad appear either individually or together, in their youth, singing songs, very happy and in love in stark contrast to their emotional and physical states in other scenes of the play.

Once again the manipulation of time and the inclusion of song in *Sons of York* demonstrate a writer refining the use of devices previously employed in his plays in order to become more mongrel when dealing with theatre form, whilst keeping primarily to a traditional structure. In interview Graham was clear that he had employed the device because he was concerned about the emotional concentration of his audience and wanted to provide them with moments of respite: "Clearly from the theatrical point of view I thought it would be theatrically interesting to break the rhythm of this quite hard drama with song to get a sense of their relationship before we got to this point and making sure the audience was still being entertained" (Interview[1]).

Although they all share similar amounts of stage time, the most rounded characters in *Sons of York* are Jim and the grandfather, Dad. Mam is a limited character as she is seriously ill and has little dialogue except when she is singing, and both Mark and Brenda travel little in the sense of a character arc. This reflects Graham's preoccupation at the time of writing:

I saw it more as being about the father and grandfather... much as the character [Mark] in the play is watching the father and grandfather... there were certainly elements of me in that character and I loved writing that character because I felt very safe doing it but I never for a second thought of it as his story because I never felt the real-life event being about me, it was about the older men (Interview[1]).

The "real-life event" Graham refers to was the illness and death of his grandmother. There was a specific memory for Graham that sparked the genesis of the idea for the play. At one point soon after his grandmother died, his father, his grandfather and he were all in one room at the grandfather's house. Graham remembered that "my dad was looking out of the window, my granddad was looking at his lap I was looking at the wall and even though we shared this terrible thing that happened we were dealing with it completely on our own" (Interview[1]). Graham transposes this lack of communication primarily to the character of Jim in the play. For example, whilst all the other characters chat to the grandmother even though she can barely talk and they are not sure if she can hear, Jim, her son, cannot. This is established at the very beginning of the play:

[Dad] enters from outside, dumping some bags. He watches Jim watching Mam.
DAD. Can talk to her, you know. Still hear you.
He leaves. Jim watches Mam. The dog barks outside. (75)

Later in the play when Mam is more ill, we see Jim struggle to talk to and demonstrate affection towards his mother. He manages to touch her but still can't speak to her.

BRENDA. Oy. Not wanna spend a bit of time with your Mam? Go on, I've got these.

JIM. What? No, I'm / ... It –

BRENDA. (*takes his bags*). Look 'ere, go on. Have five minutes.

Brenda exits. Jim turns to Mam. He saunters over. He watches her. Beat. He sits next to her. Beat. He lifts his hand as though to take hers, but brings it down again. He looks around the room. Without looking at her, he slowly takes her hand in his.

Jim begins to struggle; stop himself from breaking. Bringing his clenched fist up to his mouth. Shifting around in his chair. Looking anywhere but at his Mam. (89-90)

By concentrating the inadequacies of three real life people into one character, Graham intensifies the dramatic potential of that character.

It might be argued that Graham's adoption of the observer role within this play acts as a personal emotional protective device for the writer but does not aid the character development of Mark, who is meant to reflect emotional aspects of Graham. Although beginning to attempt to write his memories and himself into plays, Graham was at this point laying bare the emotions of others rather than himself. The result is that the character of Mark is limited in range. It is not until Graham became more confident in his emotional intelligence that he became a richer writer of character.

For example, in *Sons of York* Graham starts to explore the theme of masculinity, a theme which resonates autobiographically for him and which he goes on to investigate further in subsequent plays. In *Sons of York* this exploration is tentative and two-dimensional in the character of Mark, who is drawn to poetry and writing songs and does not want to play-fight with his grandfather, or arm-wrestle, as emphasised in the following extract:

DAD. (*sitting*). Thought you were wanting an arm wrestle, hand up like that.

(*Takes his hand.*) Grr. Come on then, let's have yer.

MARK. Ge'or, you'll mess up me reading (102).

Dad insists on arm wrestling and goes on not only to beat Mark but humiliate him, a predictable outcome in terms of the characterisation presented. Nonetheless, *Sons of York* acted as a release mechanism for Graham in terms of autobiographical writing, as he discussed in interview: "Using my own very biographical personal experiences in it

unlocked the ability to do it and now I don't seem to have any problem with it at all, people now tell me that I can very quickly capture relationships and the heartache and pain" (Interview[1]). *Sons of York* opened Graham's emotional floodgates in terms of placing his autobiographical feelings into plays.

Exploring the personal

Graham's following three full-length plays, *A History of Falling Things* (2009) *The Whisky Taster* (2010) and *The Man* (2010) are all autobiographical explorations of the young male characters, with the other characters drawn from his family and friends the same age as him.

A History Of Falling Things is a love story between two people who have Keraunothnetophobia, which is a fear of human-made satellites randomly falling out of the sky. Robin is a writer of children's books and has had the condition since he was young. Jacqui's fear is relatively recent, sparked by the 7/7 bombings in London as she was trapped on the underground when the bombs went off. Both characters are housebound due to their illness, and in Robin's case he often sits under a table. They discover each other via the internet and find out that they live very close to each other, but they only see each other via their web cams. Robin is intelligent but insecure in his masculinity, particularly where social interaction with women is concerned. He appears sensitive but lacks maturity as he cannot fully understand the reaction of others.

ROBIN. You look...

JACQUI. What?

ROBIN. *(pause)* Really...

JACQUI. *(beat; giggles)* What?

ROBIN. *(beat; shrugs)* Perfect.

JACQUI. *(speaking out)* He didn't say that.

ROBIN. Yes I did.

JACQUI. No.

ROBIN. In my head that's what I said.

JACQUI. But out of your mouth came...?

ROBIN. It had been a while. I was out of practice.

JACQUI. He said I looked 'good'. 'In the face.' (8)

This emotional inarticulacy is also reflected in the young male lead characters in Graham's next two plays and is obviously something that preoccupies him as a writer. Robin appears sensitive but lacks maturity as he cannot fully understand the reaction of others, particularly his family. Robin describes his brother Mark's reaction to Robin's refusal to attend his father's funeral: "I asked Mark how it had gone, and he said, 'Fine.' And then he hit me in the stomach. And it hurt. And I deserved it. But then as I was trying to stand he hit me again. And I didn't think I deserved that. I was the one who had missed the funeral..." (30-31). There is also evidence of obstinacy in this response, a personality trait which was to appear more fully formed in Graham's male lead character in *The Man*.

Robin has a psychologist, paid for by his mother: an omnipresent, aggressive and unsupportive father figure who is only heard from offstage, making the character intrusive but distant. Reece, Jacqui's father, is supportive but ineffectual while Lesley, the mother of Robin, is sympathetic and tries to help her son and Jacqui but without much success. Neither character is as fully developed as Robin and Jacqui, and Reece in particular is very two-dimensional. However, Graham gives Lesley the speech that eventually persuades Robin to go to Jacqui's house. This echoes the use of female characters in his other plays, such as Brenda in *Sons of York*. The women seem to be the characters with the answers, a vision of the way forward even if they don't expect the men around them to change. I would suggest that the female characters' actions, values, attitudes and opinions are not challenged by the writer as much as the men's are in the more autobiographical work. This was made clear for me in interview with Graham. When asked whether, when drawing on the women in his life for character creation, he questioned their behaviour he replied: "Not with women, I don't particularly question their behaviour, with women, with my mum or anyone else I don't feel there is unfinished business either growing up or now, but with my male role models I felt like and still feel like there are still some things to explore [*pause*] haven't really been that conscious of it until now" (Interview[2]).

Graham does see Lesley as part of Robin's problem as she doesn't push him to change "not telling him to buck up." But he "liked it that at the end she plucks words of wisdom seemingly out of nowhere and gives him the confidence to change, almost accidentally and that being a sort of surprise" (Interview[2]). Lesley's pivotal speech ends with the words: "...no point in going back or staying still, is there? At least in front there's

the slightest bit of. Hope” (59).

It is interesting that one of the pivotal messages in the play comes from the mother and randomly out of nowhere because this concentration on hope reflects Graham’s own personal belief and intent. In interview he claims to be “quite an optimistic person” and doesn’t think a play is “much use unless it can offer some potential for hope.” His personal faith in the “power of people and humanity” is what he tries “to filter into my work” (Interview[2]). He does this in *A History of Falling Things* when Robin eventually goes to Jacqui’s house, albeit having to be taken there by the courier Jimmy who liaises between the two main characters throughout the play. For the two main characters the fear of falling things is now replaced with the more joyous and recognisable fear usually encountered when embarking on a new relationship.

The manipulation of form in *A History of Falling Things* is more confident and playful than in Graham’s previous plays. The main characters use direct address as well as conventionally realistic interaction and Graham’s intent to experiment with the staging is clear in the stage directions. Robin and Jacqui’s rooms and furniture are literally split in half (8). Dark and light are explored and made explicit in the stage directions, with some of the action taking place either offstage or in darkness or both, and there are directions for a surreal jive between the characters whilst they are in separate houses (48). Once again this reflects a playwright who is becoming more mongrel in intent with regard to his use of theatre form.

Lyn Gardner identified the political themes in the play, seeing it as a “21st-century love story set in a world where fear of terrorism and collapsing financial systems has also infected relationships” (“Theatre Preview”). But for Graham as a writer *A History of Falling Things* was the beginning of his attempt to fully reveal personal aspects of his memory. “It was using my own literal biographical experiences of feeling things that gave or seemed to affect my work with a more emotional truth” (Interview[1]). I believe this comment is particularly important in relation to the leading male characters in Graham’s plays but it is also pertinent in terms of the way he writes other people of his own age into a script.

This is evident in *The Whisky Taster*, “a play that is part advertising-industry satire, part thwarted romantic comedy, and part celebration of Scotch” (Billington). The two main characters Barney and Nicola work in advertising and are seen as an exciting and ambitious duo. Both are in their twenties. Nicola comes from Croydon and has the gift of the gab,

whereas the pensive Barney depends for his creative success on the fact that he has Synaesthesia, a syndrome that makes sufferers able to feel, smell and taste colours. For not fully explained reasons they hire an unnamed dour Scot who is a Whisky Taster to apply his wisdom about whisky to a brand of vodka for which they are trying to win the advertising account. Success means a dream posting to Mumbai. However, the Whisky Taster is uninterested in either their ambition or the vodka. In addition to this Barney has fallen in love with Nicola, but Nicola, although attracted to Barney, is more intent on winning the account at all costs.

Graham was very clear where the character of Nicola came from. He was “very conscious she was an amalgamation of a lot of my girl mates I had around me at the time. Very direct, not particularly imaginative” (Interview[2]). Nicola was a more rounded and challenging character than Jacqui in *A History of Falling Things*. Graham was also clear that Barney was very much like him. “Like me he has a very odd relationship with the girl he likes, his masculinity and his strength and his appearance and [*pause*] he is lots of things all of which are experiences I’m conscious and aware of... all insecurities” (Interview[2]).

It is clear that *The Whisky Taster* is a reflection of Graham’s preoccupations at the time of writing: he has a passion for whisky, had at the time experienced a failed relationship, and wanted to “look at what it was like to be twenty-six years old in 2010 and living in London” (Interview[1]). However, Graham does not use his plays to explore his current insecurities. The point at which he chooses to write about them is at the point where he feels confident identifying them and their implications for him on a personal level; this he believes occurs prior to the creation of a character: “I feel secure enough to write about them knowing what I think about them and so by the time I start writing that character I feel safe doing it but I don’t do it to discover. I feel I’m already intelligent enough about myself and my feelings” (Interview[1]).

The Whisky Taster was Graham’s first play at the Bush Theatre and had its run extended due to popular demand. It was seen by the critics as a play with a social comment to make: “a classic example of the Bush Theatre at its quirky best. It is charming, funny, sad and original and has much to say about the times in which we live” (Charles Spencer), but with a running time of two and three quarter hours, it appeared to be trying to include too much content. As Billington wrote at the time, applying a whisky analogy, “while it is breezily entertaining, it never achieves the perfect blend.” It was almost as if Graham was trying to fill the play with too much. Graham’s response to this criticism in his next play

was to be even more minimalistic in autobiographical terms, both regarding content and also in terms of form.

The resulting text was *The Man* (2010), a black comedy with an interactive structure that could be performed differently each night depending on the choices of the audience. Once again the lead character, Ben, is the same age as Graham was at the time of writing the play. Ben has to fill in his tax return and is very afraid. He has a shoebox full of receipts and he calls the Inland Revenue for help. The character(s) of the Inland Revenue are two helpful women who are placed in the audience. As the audience enters they are given a receipt at random connected to the individual stories in the play. Ben then asks for his receipts back. “Periodically, he chats to a female inland revenue officer in Wrexham with whom he establishes an intimacy over the phone. But, mostly, Ben relies on the receipts to jog his memory” (Billington). Once again the language is conventionally realistic but the manipulation of form relies heavily on the liveness of theatre, the direct interaction with the audience providing an enhanced dramatic tension to the stories told. Furthermore it negates the need for an overall dramatic character arc.

The Inland Revenue women are similar to the Mother characters in Graham’s earlier plays. They are supportive and warm and they solve problems but travel little in development terms. Ben is, by Graham’s own admission, the most autobiographical character in his plays so far. In interview he claimed: “The Man character [is] literally my age, literally living on the street like the one I live on, going through the relationships I was going through.” “The Man” referred to in the title is the tax man and ironically in the play the tax man is a woman, mainly a character called Lisa and briefly another unnamed woman. The title also refers to the exploration of masculinity, which is major theme in the play. Graham doesn’t feel that he “quite fits in with traditional notions of masculinity, I feel quite boyish rather than manly” (Interview[2]), and in the play the character Ben refers often to the expected behaviour of men and how he doesn’t understand it:

BEN. It was a Saturday, which meant Dad was at Homebase. I don’t know why; but that’s what Dads do on Saturday. I guess I kind of assumed that when I grew up to become a man, that you would find out, the reasons would ‘present’ themselves to go to Homebase and Halfords on a Saturday morning. But they haven’t yet. (12-13)

Furthermore he doesn't seem able to achieve it. In his first conversation with the audience Ben makes clear his insecurities: "I find a lot of things... 'difficult'. I feel like I'm behind on a lot of things, grown-up adult things, and I'm... and it's like I'm trying to catch up" (7). However, as in the character Robin in *A History of Falling Things*, there is an obstinacy, in Ben's case of not wanting to grow up, partly because growing up is connected to being in relationships. Ben ends one relationship because, he explains: "I suppose that literally really is becoming a grown-up isn't it? Saying bye to being young, to being... saying bye to the future being possibly *anything*. And instead saying, no, it's going to be specifically *this*" (15).

Graham recognises that for him in autobiographical terms there are "intriguing paradoxes about those relationships" and that in *The Man* once again "the main character is insecure in terms of gender politics and relationships with girls' insecurities" (Interview[2]). However, I would suggest that the character Ben, whilst a mass of insecurities, is more confident in rejecting relationships with women as well as with his family, whereas Robin in *A History of Falling Things* had been obstinate only in rejecting a relationship with his brother. Ben in *The Man* has familial guilt due to the illness Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva that affects his twin brother but not himself, but after his brother's death and despite regular therapy he chooses to remain immature and not visit or maintain a relationship with his mother because he doesn't want to deal with her grief. Interestingly, Graham agreed to be one of the group of actors employed to play the role of Ben on a rotational basis during the run of the production, his first acting role since university. It was almost as if he was drawing a personal autobiographical line from the text to the stage.

During the writing of *A History of Falling Things*, *The Whisky Taster* and *The Man* Graham commented that he was "aware of being obsessed with a particular sort of guy and I wanted them to find themselves," but did not feel it "was cathartic, [I] just had a real sense of those issues." Once again Graham felt he had processed his concerns regarding masculinity and relationships prior to the writing of the piece. He claimed: "I had pretty much a sense of what I felt about those issues before I started writing it." But he recognised how his writing had become imbued with his memories and autobiography:

The writing of my plays has got way more personal and I see myself so much in all of them, not only as my character but in the things that frighten me and I see the

things that I am currently interested by or obsessed with or passionate about or my opinions or my perspective on the world, I see them coming more and more into my characters. (Interview[2]).

However, it seems that Graham only writes the plays when he feels that he has placed the obsessions he refers to as a memory.

It is clear when considering these three plays – *A History of Falling Things*, *The Whisky Taster* and *The Man* – that the theme of masculinity and relationships was explored with ever increasing autobiographical intensity and honesty. There is also a recognisable development in Graham’s attempts to become more mongrel in the use of form. Furthermore, there was a growing confidence in the use of metaphor, for example there was the recurrent use of physical syndromes to reflect on the psychological and emotional integrity of the lead character. Each time such a metaphor was used it became more emotionally exposing for the lead character. The learning process Graham experienced from writing the three plays ultimately gave him the confidence to return to the writing of a political play, but this time with a large cast and “with heart” (Interview[2]).

Politics with heart

Graham’s *This House* (2012) concentrates on the last time Britain had a coalition government, exploring its establishment and its demise. Naturally its content aims to enable the audience to reflect on the coalition government of the present. It is set in the Palace of Westminster, with most action occurring in the Whips’ Office. There are eight main characters, plus a large ensemble that mainly represents the rest of parliament. Graham again employs a mongrel use of form; much of the dialogue is realistic but many scenes involving the ensemble are stylised. For example, the following scene depicts the deaths of sitting MPs, which will affect the government’s slim majority:

The Chamber: The Members sing a choral version of ‘Five Years’ by David Bowie. As they’re announced, the members in question stand... and die.

SPEAKER. The member for Coventry West!... Thurrock!... Ilford North!

Coventry West’s heart goes; Thurrock trips and tumbles through the air; Ilford North struggles to take in air through a mask, eventually giving up. (Other members

*help in creating these effects) (55)*³

The main advancement in Graham's writing in *This House* is the sympathetic and three-dimensional creations of multiple lead characters. He manages to depict the ruthlessness of the role of Whip and parliamentary practice in general but makes you care about the main characters whichever political persuasion they represent. In the penultimate scene the lead Whip of each party, Harrison for Labour and Weatherill for the Conservatives, demonstrate that the respect they have for each other overrides party politics and they end up behaving as the 'honourable' men of their titles. Their actions are selfless and will never be known beyond themselves (76-77).⁴

This House demonstrates that Graham has learnt from his experiences of producing a number of scripts in a relatively short space of time. It is his memory of the use of form and his adaptation of his writing technique in response to past success or otherwise which is evident in the latter plays. The honest exploration of his own feelings has enabled Graham to create fully rounded characters in a more minimalistic context. Graham has to believe that the feelings he accesses to use as source material have been dealt with, that the experience should be a memory, not an ongoing concern, in order to be used effectively in a script. But I would argue that certain memories, for example the theme of masculinity, were explored in a few of his plays before they were handled in a focused and effective dramatic form.

Graham now believes he is at a stage in his writing career where he can translate his feeling into any character, not just someone his own age. In interview he stated: "Even if it is a 50-year-old black woman, I see myself and see my current obsessions in her. I've got more confidence to do it" (Interview[2]). I would contend that the characterisation in *This House* is a clear indication of this improved capability when compared to the characterisation in *Albert's Boy*, *Eden's Empire* and *Little Madam*. Graham claims that *This House* is concerned with his current obsession which is "Britishness and Englishness and

³ Quotes and page references from *This House* are taken from the 2012 typescript draft provided by Graham, which was the most up-to-date version at the time of writing this chapter. The text of *This House* has since been published and there are small differences between the 2012 draft and the final (2013) published version. For the sake of accuracy it should be noted that the member for Coventry West does not appear in the published version of this sequence, which includes only Thurrock and Ilford North. The scene appears on page 86 of the published text.

⁴ pp. 114-16 in the published text.

how people identify themselves as a nation or not” (Interview[2]). The obsession with Englishness is shared with the other writer whose work I will now go on to explore in more detail, Richard Bean.

Richard Bean, memory, characterisation and comedy⁵

Richard Bean’s father was born in an East Yorkshire village, trained as a blacksmith but moved to Hull to become a policeman in the 1950s. He kept a few pigs as a sideline. Twenty years later he retired from the police force and with his wife, who was a hairdresser, moved to a smallholding in North Yorkshire and went back to being a blacksmith part time. Richard Bean was born in East Hull in 1956 and lived there until he went to university. After A levels he worked for eighteen months in a bread plant, living with his grandmother in Wawne in Hull after his parents moved to the country. After this he went to Loughborough University to study Social Psychology. Bean became a personnel officer for a few years and then spent a further decade acting as an independent occupational psychologist advising NGOs (non-governmental organisations).

Between 1989 and 1994, Bean also worked as a stand up comedian and went on to be one of the writers and performers of the sketch show *Control Group Six* (BBC Radio). He identified his playwriting “as beginning with stand up.” Bean’s plays are imbued with humour and he felt when approaching a career in playwriting that he was firmly confident in his ability to manipulate comedic moments: “This sort of links to autobiography. I worked for six years as a stand up comedian. I kind of think I know what’s funny, well eighty percent of the time I know what’s funny.” Bean says that he was asked by the Almeida Theatre London to adapt *Le Malade Imaginaire* by Molière because it was recognised that he could write comedy: “they said they needed five new jokes.” After reading the script Bean felt this wasn’t enough and in his adaptation, now re-titled *The Hypochondriac* (2005), he says that “there are twenty-five new jokes.”

When attempting to become a scriptwriter, Bean “did waste a lot of time writing stuff for telly, *The Bill*, *Morse*, that all got rejected.” He then wrote “two plays that didn’t get anywhere.” The first of these demonstrated his early intention to draw on his memories

⁵ Except where otherwise stated, quotes from Richard Bean in this section are all taken from a personal interview conducted by the author on 6th July 2010.

of the region of his youth as a backdrop for much of his work. His first play was about a Bed and Breakfast hotel falling into the sea at Hornsea in East Yorkshire, a metaphor for family breakdown, which in Bean's own words "was awful – I sent it to a few people, it got rejected." His second attempt at a play once again drew on his autobiographical experiences, this time as a stand up comedian. The play was set in a "stand up comedy gig, with a big room downstairs, little room upstairs, Green Room in the middle. The play was set in the Green Room." Bean believes "it was a great idea but I didn't know how write then." He was not willing for me to see his two early plays as he believed they were not very good.

His first success as a playwright was the play *Of Rats and Men* (1996). The setting was a psychology lab and it was put on at the Canal Cafe Theatre London; as mentioned previously, Bean was a student of psychology. *Of Rats and Men* was his first produced play and was a critical success. "They took it to Edinburgh – student production. BBC picked it up, Monday night Radio 4 play, 90 minutes with Anton Lesser" and Bean is convinced that "they did it really well." This is borne out by the fact that the 1997 radio version of *Of Rats and Men* was nominated for a prestigious Sony Award. *Of Rats and Men* was the predecessor to *Toast* (1999), the script that would bring Bean to prominence in the theatre community.

Bean claims that *Toast* is probably his most obviously autobiographical play to date. It is based on his time working in a bread plant when he was eighteen and living with his grandmother. However, it was initially at university that he discovered that his stories of working on the bread plant's continuous production line were entertaining and to some, challenging:

At university I was always telling bakery stories... made me a little bit different... then our professor said write an essay describing the social relationships within a work place... he couldn't understand continuous production... made me realise that for some people who don't understand that world it is like someone coming back from China in the 18th Century and describing China, there is a fascination in that.

It wasn't until Bean was forty that he thought of turning his bread plant experiences into a play. He saw a production of David Storey's *The Changing Room*, which was to be enlightening and career changing. Bean, by his own admission, "wasn't really into theatre"

but a friend from his cricket team was in a production of *The Changing Room* and he went along. He was surprised by the structure of the play and realised that he “could just write *Toast* like *The Changing Room*. And if you look at the structure they are very similar.” Bean’s main concern about depicting the bread plant in a play had been: “how do you show the production line and bread and that?” In *The Changing Room* the rugby league match is not seen; the players are seen in the changing room. Having encountered Storey’s play, Bean “went home and wrote *Toast* in a week or two weeks.”

Bean considers seeing *The Changing Room* to have been the “best thing that ever happened to me. [It] dipped me in that working class dialogue which I use in my plays.” *Toast* not only deals with the personal but also begins to demonstrate what has become an ongoing propensity for Bean to deal with the political in his plays. On one level *Toast* is an observation of male night workers, in a bread plant in Hull, working on a continuous production line. However, the play effectively explores the universal tensions inherent in any work place, the underlying power struggles, the trivial and not so trivial jealousies. “At its very simplest, the play understands the collective psychology of male night workers.... The play is about identity and sense of self. Or lack of it” (Bradley 10). On a more political level, in *Toast* Bean “presages the current insanity of food-miles: the workers’ jobs are threatened because it is cheaper to transport bread from Bradford than to bake it in Hull. And he provides a poignant eulogy to the obsolescence of the closed-shop – after two crippling strikes the staff are back on worse terms than they had before” (Hickling).

Bean created the character Lance in *Toast* from memories of his own thoughts and emotions at the time of working in the bread plant when he was in his late teens. “It was a year of growing up for me.... Things that [Lance] says in the play I was thinking and feeling.” However, he believes the other characters in the play to be even more biographical as he based them very closely on the men he worked with. In interview Bean stated that “I could give you their names. I was a bit naive about using people’s lives and made no concessions to hiding their identities and in fact in the first draft I used their real names which, given the things they say... Most of the stuff in *Toast* are things I heard said or did happen.”

Bean admits to drawing heavily on his autobiography in at least three of his plays- *Toast*, *Harvest* (2005) and *The English Game* (2008), yet claims that he is uncomfortable writing himself into a play. He felt when drawing on his autobiography to create Lance that he had to embellish and exaggerate his state of mind at the time. Lance is thirty-five and

has been in mental institutions for fifteen years. He attempts to convince some of the other workers, when he is with them on his own, that he is the messenger of death come to claim them. He begins with Nellie, a naive member of the work team:

NELLIE. Where are you from?

LANCE. The other side. From across the metaphorical water.

NELLIE. What? Grimsby?

LANCE. No Walter. The land of living souls and rotting bodies. The next world.

(48)

However, each worker he attempts to convince believes him less as the workforce do not have secrets from each other. Evidence of Lance's instability is demonstrated when, even after being throttled by Colin for trying to convince him he had come for his soul, Lance still tries to persuade Blakey the chargehand that he is from another world:

LANCE. There's something I have to tell you.

BLAKEY. No.

LANCE. The reason I'm here...

BLAKEY. Shut it! Not wi' me pal! Alright? I've been told. (70)

Blakey demonstrates that despite their differences, the workers are part of a community, established in a gruelling workplace, as they share their personal stories with each other. Furthermore, they are not afraid to ask direct, personal questions. Blakey proves this as he interrogates Lance on why he tried to kill himself, as evidenced by the scars on his wrist. For once Lance replies honestly:

BLAKEY. Don't be shy about it. I might have been there mesen for all you know.

LANCE. My doctor, the consultant, calls it an absence of self.

BLAKEY. Oh aye?

LANCE. Fundamentally it is a desire to disappear, just not to be. I actually got to the point where it was difficult to look in the mirror. (71)

Blakey is sympathetic and admits to having such feelings himself when he was in prison,

demonstrating a willingness to include Lance in the bread plant community despite his foibles.

Bean admitted in interview to feeling as an eighteen year old, “as many eighteen-year-olds do, an absence of self,” and he believed working in the bread plant helped him to focus and begin to plan for the future. But the purpose of the exaggeration of character, I would suggest is threefold. Firstly, it serves to conceal Bean’s autobiography. Secondly, it produces a more effective dramatic character – as Bean put it in interview: “I just wasn’t very interesting at eighteen. [Lance] was more middle class than me, more everything than me. You have to exaggerate everything to make a contrast.” Finally, the exaggerated character can effectively draw attention to the social and political issues that Bean wishes to highlight, which in this instance is the threatened loss of community. It is interesting that whereas Lance quickly becomes exaggerated as a character, in the next play where Bean admits to drawing on his memories in order to create character they demonstrate much more emotional vulnerability. This echoes the developmental process of Graham.

Since writing *Toast*, Bean has attempted to use a variety of forms in his plays, often drawing on the structure or style of other practitioners for inspiration. As he drew on the work of Storey for the structure of *Toast*, Eckart Voigts-Virchow argues that Bean has drawn on the work of Harold Pinter for *The Mentalists* in 2002, Alan Ayckbourn for *Honeymoon Suite* in 2004, and Joe Orton for *In The Club* in 2007 (3). However, Bean’s early plays are all very traditional in structure. *Toast* has a unified linear plot with an ending that brings closure, and the setting and the language adhere to common theatrical conventions for depicting reality. Something that begins to emerge in *Toast*, which becomes a major signature device in all of his plays, is Bean’s use of dark humour connected to exaggerated characterisation and behaviour which adds a more mongrel aspect to his work in order to aid an oblique reflection on the social and political themes he wishes to bring into focus for his audience.

Fragments of autobiography and the storyline

As Bean gained in confidence as a playwright he began to aspire to produce large-scale writing for the theatre. In 2002 he, along with the writers Moira Buffini, Ryan Craig, David Eldridge, Tanika Gupta, Colin Teevan and Roy Williams, set up the Monsterists. The group issued a manifesto, which demonstrated that their aim was primarily to promote new

writing for big casts to be performed on the largest, most prestigious stages in the country and supported by adequate financial resources (Meadows). At the time new writing was mainly performed in studio spaces with small casts.

The next play in which Bean draws primarily on memory and autobiography is *The English Game* (2008), a play which employs cricket as a metaphor in order to comment on current social mores. Reviewing *The English Game* Michael Billington, a self confessed “cricket nut” (which may account in part for his very sympathetic review of the play) considers that “Richard Bean is the first dramatist to construct a state-of-England play out of a cricket match,” but rightly recognises that “its omission of women obviously limits its application.” Once again the play has a similar structure to *The Changing Room* except that the actual changing room in *The English Game* has been burnt down. But the action is not the game itself. The plot is in real time in the first half and is linear in the second but with time jumps. The language is conventionally realistic. The focus is on an amateur London cricket team, the Nightwatchmen, and the simmering differences of values, attitude and opinion that appear and erupt to disrupt their friendships during a Sunday league match. Their captain, Will:

is an old crock, whose air of benign liberalism turns out to be misleading. The match skipper [Sean], meanwhile, is a mixed-up journo with a disintegrating marriage. And the motley team includes a joke-spinning rock legend, a gay Hindu, an Oxbridge actor, a doctor, a plumber and a British Council desk-wallah who happens to be black. The one newcomer is a mouthy Telecoms worker who idolises Enoch Powell (Billington, Rev. of *English Game*).

Bean is obsessed with cricket. When I met him for an interview he was hobbling and awaiting knee operations, which were necessary due to wear and tear on his frame from playing cricket on a regular basis for many years. Bean had been captain of his school second eleven cricket team and when he moved to London he played for the New Calypsonians, a multi racial team in the Marrant Middlesex League. He holds his love for cricket in part responsible for at least one broken relationship. “‘You could say it has ruined my life’, he says. ‘How do you run a relationship when you’ve got a mistress called cricket?’” (Cavendish). Bean gives one character, Sean, aspects of his autobiography, starting with similar physical description of Bean at the time of writing the play: “*SEAN is*

a man of about forty. Athletic but carrying a bit of weight" (167). Sean is baffled as to why his marriage isn't working, which is clear when he discusses his relationship with two of the senior players:

WILL. Has she told you to give up cricket?

SEAN. I can't give it up. It's who I am.

THEO. It's a long day, a cricket match. Seven, eight hours.

SEAN. I did all the shopping yesterday and took them both to the Natural History museum. I sanded down one of her fucking pine doors. Every Saturday is me working to buy a pass for myself for Sunday.

THEO. That's how marriages work. (200)

But his reaction later in the play to the lack of use of the LBW rule by the opposition demonstrates that Sean is an obstinate man who will sacrifice others' happiness, in this instance his team mate Nick's and his hopes of achieving a half century, for his own selfish aggrandisement. Sean is umpiring and declares Nick is LBW on forty-eight runs, but when Nick challenges him:

NICK. (*Quietly.*) I wasn't out was I.

(*Beat.*) You gave me out to prove a point about playing the game fairly when in fact, all you're doing man, is putting yourself at the middle of everything.

(*Beat.*) It's just selfish actually.

(*Beat.*) Was I out?

(*Beat.*) Answer me. You know I wasn't out.

(*Beat.*) I want an answer, man. I know I'm right. Was I out?

(*SEAN starts sobbing. No-one moves. No-one says anything.*) (225)

I would suggest that in *The English Game* Bean begins to imbue the characters based on his autobiography with more vulnerability and begins the process of using aspects of himself to add to the creation of more than one character. Whilst Bean claims that Sean was based on himself, it is Will who, like Bean, has severe knee damage and reflects more of Bean's current prevailing attitude towards cricket. In the interview with Dominic Cavendish

referenced above, Bean is almost echoing the words he gave to Will, who states in the play that: “I’ve wasted the whole of my life playing this game. It’s claimed my knees, and it fills every spare synapse in my brain. Not even sure I like it anymore” (206). Will appears to be a possible older version of Sean, one that Sean fears. Furthermore, Will begins to show intolerance towards multiculturalism (220-221).

In *The English Game*, the characters’ conflicting principles are exposed but never untangled. Bean explained to Cavendish that “The tenor of the play follows Trevor Phillips’s pronouncements: that we can’t have cantonisation, that it’s not the way Britain has ever worked.” The dismissal of multiculturalism as unworkable in England is a recurrent theme in Bean’s later work, most notably in *England People Very Nice* (2009). It is also a theme connected with direct autobiographical experience, as I will outline later in this chapter.

Once again in *The English Game* Bean draws not only on himself for the creation of the characters but also on people that he knows through playing cricket. Christopher Campbell, a long time cricket colleague who played for years on the same team as Bean, claims that most of the characters in *The English Game* are “based pretty closely on people I know and one of them, in fact, on me” (9). In interview Bean drew attention to the similarity between *The English Game*’s Sean and Lance from *Toast*, admitting that both characters reflect where he was emotionally at a particular moment. In *Toast* Bean has Lance demonstrating traits of an undecided eighteen-year-old even though he is depicted as thirty-five, while Sean is a forty year old who is trying to summon up the courage to leave a failing marriage. Interestingly Bean gives both characters suicidal tendencies, and yet he claims, “I’ve never had a moment’s thought of being suicidal, I’m a bit miserable sometimes but... Lance was suicidal, my character in *The English Game* [Sean] was kind of suicidal.” In the creation of both characters there is embellishment, exaggeration, and a definite show of mental vulnerability which Bean claims is not in his personality. Both are based on Bean but, he claims, are not him. However, the topic of failed relationships in his own life is one that he plans to mine further in future work.

I asked him to express his future ambitions and if, how and why he would write himself into any future plays. He replied that to have had a play performed on the National Theatre’s Olivier stage “is the playwriting equivalent of playing for England,” but he wishes to prove it wasn’t a fluke by doing it again. Furthermore, the other really serious professional challenge he identified at the time of interview was that he would “like to

prove my stuff can live in the commercial world,” which he identified as primarily commercial theatre in the West End of London. When asked to identify probable themes and a genre for his intended West End play he stated that it would be a comedy and “probably going to have to be about modern social mores and love and kind of a romantic comedy. I might mine that element in my life, how I can’t make relationships work, it is something I’ve never touched.” Once again Bean intended to draw on his autobiography to underpin the proposed new comedy but, once again, he demonstrated his intention to conceal his autobiographical self: “I think I’d try and avoid writing a play where the central character is a writer... I would make me somebody else.” His reasons for this appear to be twofold. Firstly he wishes to avoid being accused of the vainglorious tendencies of some writers to enhance their status and abilities when writing themselves into one of their own plays. Bean believes an example of this is evidenced in the work of John Godber who, he says, “does this whenever he puts himself into his plays.” Furthermore, Bean doesn’t believe that his use of autobiography in his plays is deliberately cathartic for him. He claims, “I don’t think I’m that interesting. I don’t think I’m getting anything psychological out of it, don’t think there is anything psychological I need to get out of it.” Bean’s background in psychology should enable him to identify whether or not he is using writing for personal therapeutic purposes.

It would appear from discussion with Bean that he uses autobiographical material as raw material in order to inform a storyline but not to be the storyline. As he stated in interview: “The playwright has one job... they have got to make the play work and unfortunately historical truth can get in the way of a good story.” For Bean, the servicing of the storyline is paramount; the honest and accurate depiction of a point of view is more important than autobiographical accuracy. But I would suggest that he, like Graham, needs to believe that the aspect of autobiography he is using in his writing is a memory, not emotional work in progress, before he begins writing the play. When he refers to writing more about the struggle to maintain a relationship it is similar to Graham’s returning to masculinity as a theme: it is in order to control the form and tell the story effectively rather than work through an emotional problem.

In *The English Game* Bean began to use fragments of his autobiography to create more than one character and in later plays the use of fragments of memories in such a way becomes a more obvious practice. An example can be found in *Harvest* (2005). In *Harvest*, Bean depicts the life of a pig farming family and the relational permutations that evolve

over four generations. The family gain and lose an eighty-two acre farm near Driffield on the East Yorkshire Wolds. In this play, “you see rather eccentric people struggling with the earth, the weather, animals, politics and each other, amid ongoing social and technological change” (Benson). Not only did Bean’s father own some pigs but his half uncle also owned and eventually lost a pig farm due to cheap imports from the EU and because other EU governments had not enforced new welfare regulations as Britain had done. In *Harvest* the family farm is lost for exactly the same reasons. Further aspects of Bean’s familial experiences appear in the play. Bean used to spend school holidays on his uncle’s pig farm and when young, wanted to go and work there. In the play Laura is a niece of the brothers Albert and William who own the farm but have not produced any children and are concerned as to who will take over the farm. Albert is not keen on the farm going to relatives but William, the brighter and more enigmatic brother, has other ideas: “She’s our niece. She’s fifteen now and is still showing a liking for the life. She’s up from Hull every holiday” (48). However, unlike Bean, Laura marries a German prisoner of war who was posted to work on the farm during the Second World War and they move into the farm. Eventually she is one of the last to live there.

Bean draws further on his memories for the creation of another of the characters, Alan. Alan is Laura’s son, who first appears aged twenty-two and dressed in pyjama bottoms and a black Ramones T-shirt (79). Alan is also taking a PhD in Educational Psychology. Bean admits to adopting such a look at a similar age and of course the area of study is familiar to him. But Alan, like his older sisters and unlike Laura, is not interested in carrying on the farming business. This is made clear by Laura when she speaks of “the fact that every single one of my daughters has upped and offed to university and became so bloody full of themselves that I never see them” (89-90). Alan too moves away, physically by going to live in America and emotionally by marrying Rebecca, a vegan, who clashes with his mother over animal welfare. Bean’s mosaic use of his autobiography in *Harvest* enables him to skilfully construct characters that allow the audience to empathise with them and yet fully consider the political argument that he presents. As the theatre critic Richard Benson, himself from a pig farming family, points out, in *Harvest* “Bean is really concerned with understanding the lives of people who make what we consume; with seeing them as individuals and not a lumpen mass; with noting a culture whose values, morals and esteem contrast with the bleak, blank moral relativism that came in on the tails of the postindustrial service culture”.

In *Harvest* Bean uses a linear structure made up of temporal ellipses similar to the structures he used in *Under the Whaleback* (2003) and *Honeymoon Suite* (2004). But it is the confident use of humour and the eccentric but believable characterisation that move *Harvest* beyond *Toast* and *The English Game* in the development process of Bean as a writer. As Aleks Sierz says, “the humour [in *Harvest*] is antic, strange, appealing” (*Rewriting the Nation* 139). The strangeness of the humour helps Bean to avoid sentimentalising of the lives of the farming community, ensuring that the political perspective is ever present.

The loss of self and culture

The loss of self and culture is a recurrent autobiographical concern for Bean and reappears thematically in his more recent play, *England People Very Nice* (2009). Of all Bean’s plays so far it is the one that has generated the most controversy both at the time of performance and afterwards in the media and academic journals. When Bean was involved in a platform discussion regarding the play at the National Theatre the stage was “invaded” by teacher Keith Kinsella and playwright Ismail Hussein who called Bean and Nicholas Hytner “racist” (Voigts-Virchow 11). Once again Bean has written a state of the nation play. *England People Very Nice* is an historical comedy that covers five centuries and four waves of race, religion and immigration, the Protestant Huguenots, the Catholic Irish, the Jews and the Muslim Bangladeshis. It begins in the 17th century and ends in a post-9/11 world with second generation immigrants passionately supporting radical Islam.

When it was first performed at the National Theatre, the play incited much conflicting criticism in relation to both its thematic content and its depiction of differing waves of immigrants. Michael Billington considered that “[Bean’s] new work... leaves a sour taste in the mouth. Far from rejoicing in London’s ethnic diversity, it manipulates a series of comic stereotypes like a misanthropic *1066 And All That*,” whereas Charles Spencer considered that “Richard Bean’s new play about immigration could hardly be more timely.... [It] strikes me as wise, brave and true”. Janelle Reinelt, when trying to redefine the term “political correctness” in relation to performance practice, uses the play as a case study and considers whether it could be classed as “politically correct,” concluding: “My own view is that it was not – and that director Nicholas Hytner should have shown better judgement in deciding to produce it” (145). James Moran accuses Bean of a kind of

universalism, in which the cultural values of the most powerful are assumed to be the globally applicable norm, and sees the play as binary in perspective, “measuring a foreign ‘them’ against an English ‘us’” (15). John Bull was less negative in his analysis of the play, considering it confused and unclear in its intentions but arguing that the lack of ideological clarity made it “an important event in England’s National Theatre” (130). However, John Nathan in the *Jewish Chronicle* considers Bean to be “perhaps the only prominent British playwright who is prepared to challenge left-wing orthodoxy. And he has provocative things to say about what he regards as the failed experiment of multiculturalism.” To support this thinking Nathan presents Bean’s explanation garnered from the interview he had with the writer: “I want this country to have a clear culture which is based on the rule of law. British law. We are all equal before the law.” Bean is unapologetic about the impact of the first production of *England People Very Nice*. “So some Islamic fundamentalists didn't like *England People Very Nice*; so what?” (qtd. in Lee).

Bean has written four plays with the word “England” or “English” in their titles, and I would argue that his concern about what it means to be English is a thematic preoccupation in many of his plays. He considers the immigrants in *England People Very Nice* “to be English. I’m English, they’re English. If I can’t write about my fellow Englishmen I might as well pack up and go home” (qtd. in Nathan). This is not a newly contentious topic when considering new writing, as Sierz points out: “the notion of a British drama or an English drama remains acutely problematic” (*Rewriting the Nation* 4).

It was clear when interviewing Bean that his impenitence regarding his depiction of the impact of immigration on Bethnal Green is largely due to his personal experience of living in the area. During the four years he had resided there he had “been mugged once, car broken into three times, was spat at in the street for being white.” When his daughter was born in the local hospital and he and his partner went to take her home they “went out and the car window had been smashed so her first experience of life was to travel in the back of a car covered in broken glass.” However, it was a walk through his local market which made Bean feel he had to do more than share his anger with friends: “In Bethnal Green they had a market stall flogging DVDs of 9/11. I thought, this is liberalism gone mad, as a writer I’ve got to write about this.”

In terms of manipulation of form, the structure of *England People Very Nice* is the richest so far in Bean’s writing career. Once again he uses temporal ellipses but he also uses the metatheatrical framing device of a play within a play in order to help reflect on and

break up the racist opinions regarding ethnicity expressed by the characters. The language is conventionally realistic but, as in previous plays, the humour continually provokes and disrupts any sentimentality or complacency in relation to defining Englishness, as emphasised in the following exchange:

LAURIE. And what is it that defines the English Ida?

IDA. I believe in certain fings.

RENNIE. Yes, like what?!

IDA. Tolerance!

DEBORAH. You been slagging them all day!

IDA. O' course I slag 'em, that's free speech innit!

RENNIE. Integration boy! Integration!

LAURIE. How's a Muslim woman gonna integrate round here?

IDA. Get your arse tattooed, a crack habit and seven kids by seven dads! (93-94).

This use of humour does not, I would argue, allow or encourage the superior universalism which Moran accuses Bean of cultivating. Humour rarely presents a balanced argument and Bean's use of it will always open him up to accusations of flippancy, but here Bean is ironically advocating assimilation rather than uniformity.

Bean draws on memories of his past to varying degrees in most of the plays he has written. In *Honeymoon Suite*, for example, he draws specifically on his parents' relationship for raw material. The play charts a relationship from honeymoon to an uneasy friendship via traumatic and emotional upheaval. It explores the pros and cons of self development in relationships and the politics of work. As Samantha Ellis points out, in this play "a relationship breaks down partly because one of the characters is involved in work that his wife finds less and less palatable, and because his flash modern job does not bear comparison with the honest danger of her father's job as a Hull trawlerman." In interview Bean identified his parents relationship as a starting point for the play: "My Dad was a policeman, all policeman are lower middle class aspirational Tory voters... In *Honeymoon Suite* the central character has this socio-economic goal to drag the family up from working class roots in Hessle Road to live in Kirk Ella – that was what my family's aspirations were."

In *The Heretic* (2011) Bean once again drew on family experience, albeit in a minor

way. When I interviewed him he was in the process of writing *The Heretic* and had already focused on a controversial theme for the play. “I want the world to know that the sea isn’t rising in the Maldives... that’s political playwriting.” He was initially commissioned to write the play for the actress Kristin Scott Thomas, a successful performer with an international career on both stage and screen. She requested that he wrote her something funny with political bite. Juliet Stevenson ended up playing the title role in the first run of the play but the commission meant that Bean was writing for a particular actress who he did not know and about a political issue he didn’t feel fully conversant with. He obviously saw it as differing from his usual working practice. “For *The English Game* I didn’t have to do any research at all. Now I’m writing a play about global warming and I have to do endless reading.”

Once again Bean introduces what he has memories of. The settings are a university and a house in Yorkshire. The main character has at least one failed relationship and is struggling to form a relationship with her daughter. Furthermore, Bean demonstrates his autobiographical familiarity with the subject of psychology, with the use of depreciating humour as evidenced by the following speech by the morally dysfunctional character of Professor Kevin Maloney:

KEVIN. Then in the seventies, the Psychologists took over the asylum. Boy did those tossers fancy themselves. But they could never nail anything properly down. One minute being mentally ill is a crushing personal tragedy, next minute it’s a bit of a laugh and you should try to enjoy it. All that Psychology ever achieved was making bullshit respectable, which of course, paved the way for Media Studies and ten years of mind-numbing bollocks! (35).

The above speech from Kevin appears to add little to the storyline or development of the character, therefore it can only have been included for the amusement of the author and for connectivity purposes in relation to autobiography.

Whilst I would suggest that Bean uses his autobiography in many of his plays to some extent or another, he does not have a career strategy that concentrates on the exploration of his memories. Many of his plays concentrate thematically on the loss of self and culture, and Bean is willing to mine his personal past and present in order to do this,

but always alongside the past and present of other people he has met. He does not see himself primarily as an autobiographical playwright, explaining that “it really is a play-by-play dilemma.” Bean’s overriding concern as a creative person is that he wants to write about the dilemmas that challenge him socially and politically, and indeed he has “often said people should write about what they are angry about.” Bean believes that in order to do this effectively he needs to concentrate on the manipulation of the form of the play. When discussing the writing of *England People Very Nice*, he said: “I struggled with the ending. I’m not very good with endings. Structure is the difficult thing. In television you have script editors doing it for you; not in theatre of course.”

Bean’s process is, in the first instance, a form of storyboarding: he uses file cards with described moments of conflict outlined on each one. In discussion he gave an example from the planning of *The Heretic*: “One of my story boards says Ben and Phoebe leave, I know the mother doesn’t want them to leave so there is going to be a big fuss.” Bean plans each structure “knowing that it will inevitably change” as he doesn’t have “any faith in it.” This lack of faith in his writing of a play’s structure is driven by something much more fundamental in holistic terms, which Bean revealed in interview: “The big struggle for the playwright always and in every play is, is this dramatic? That is the only question that there ever is, now nobody in the whole theatre business can describe or know from reading the play, if anything is dramatic off the page.” The fact that a script is mediated by the performer’s body and the director’s manipulation and interpretation presents the playwright with the challenge of knowing what is dramatic. But Bean’s response may also demonstrate a simple lack of confidence in his ability to manipulate form, precipitated by the fact that both the endings of *Harvest* and *England People Very Nice* were criticised by reviewers for appearing to be disconnected from the rest of the text.

I would suggest that as Bean becomes more experienced in the use of form he will become more confident in his abilities. Alan Plater, a scriptwriter with over two hundred assorted credits in radio, television, theatre and film, freely admitted in interview to drawing on his autobiography every time he sat down to write and was very clear on what for him made a play dramatic. As usual in interview with Plater the use of a metaphor was never far away:

Imagine a great bridge. I’m going to ask you for a walk across this bridge. The for’ard of the play is in the mist but come with me, you’ll be alright, and you go

across the bridge and the mist clears and you say, this is a beautiful place, thank you for bringing me here. So many plays I see I feel I'm still on the same side of the river or I get half way across and think this is boring or pointless or stupid I won't go across. (Interview)

Plater, never one to waste a moment of understanding, put the above quotation into a speech made by the lead character of his play *Peggy for You* (21). The play was based on the life of Peggy Ramsay, an agent who managed many of the foremost British playwrights, including Plater, from the nineteen-fifties onwards until her death in 1991, and a woman Plater felt had taught him much about scriptwriting. Perhaps, when Bean has had as many works produced as Plater has, he too will be able to claim, as Plater did in our interview: "I think I know why a play doesn't fall down."

Similarities between Bean and Graham

It is clear that both James Graham and Richard Bean have demonstrated in their work that they want to explore the relationship between the individual and the state, Graham in terms of Britishness and Bean more in terms of Englishness. Both writers have drawn heavily on their autobiography and memories for subject matter and character creation. It was not until each writer became more open and honest and aware of the emotions connected to their memories that they could fully imbue their characters with an emotional depth that would enable an audience to connect more effectively with them. Both writers have certain personal themes which they revisit: for Graham, the theme of masculinity and relationships both familial and with women, and for Bean, the theme of the failure of relationships. But both writers believe that a memory has to be settled and the issues dealt with before they can use them in plays. Then the revisiting is more to do with the manipulation of form and content, the controlling of the craft of the playwright. Both use primarily realistic language, but they are mongrel in their use of form, Graham drawing on various theatre styles, Bean in particular on the use of outlandish humour.

Both Bean and Graham demonstrate a developing confidence in the use of form and content as their playwriting progresses. Graham's focus on what he felt needed developing in his writing practice was very concentrated: first the political plays, then the more personal plays before he could return to the larger, more ambitiously political *This House*.

Bean's progress has been ambitious in terms of the size and scope of his plays; however, his concentration on the use of humour as a challenging device rather than one of reassurance, has become a defining characteristic of his writing style.

Both writers challenge the political present in their plays. Bean expresses his with a palpable anger, which has become more overt in his more recent plays, *England People Very Nice* and *The Heretic*. Graham wishes to imbue his audience with a sense of hope and so his lead characters tend to experience a moment of change, particularly Jim in *Sons of York*, Robin in *The Fear of Falling Things* and Harrison and Weatherill in *This House*. However, the audience is left with the sense that the change may be temporary. I would suggest that both writers demonstrate the need for change, but leave it to the audience to fathom how to make it happen.

Connections and Conclusion

There are various similarities between Minghella, Bean, Graham and me in autobiographical terms. We are all first-generation attendees at university in our respective families. Our families were working class but had aspirational tendencies and none of our fathers were initially impressed by our choice of subject at university, nor with our subsequent careers. All of us are somewhat bemused by our cultural context; as Bean stated in interview: "it's too complex, I wouldn't describe myself as working class, it's much more complex than that." Studying and talking with these writers, I have realised that Minghella, Bean, Graham and I all approach our work from a humanist perspective. We are preoccupied with searching for a sense of identity in the present cultural context. I need to consider how their thinking and working processes connect to my wish to put my own thinking on identity, truth, memory and finding your own voice into a play, and whether I feel I have contextualised and fully understand the emotions connected to the memory before I use them creatively or not. I have more in common autobiographically with Minghella and Bean in the fact that we have all had previous careers which have been our prime occupation or major preoccupation prior to attempting to write scripts for a mainstream audience. Both Bean and I have come to scriptwriting via another creative artistic medium, Bean via comedy and myself via applied drama. The difference is that Bean has let his experience of comedy seep into his current writing frame, whereas I am looking to create a frame combining elements of character and audience learning taken

from applied drama practice whilst enabling myself to hone my theatrical voice.

Studying the working process of Minghella, Bean and Graham has enabled me to consider how I too might approach the adaptation of my personal memories and memories of the creative process when using them as source material for the writing of a play. Focusing on the working practice of Anthony Minghella in relation to studies on adaptation has made me aware that a writer doesn't have to valorise the source text – in my case the memory – but rather the source text has to be adjusted and transformed to be suitable for the medium it is being adapted to. I would suggest that Minghella and Bean are more concerned with subsuming the identification of the writer in their plays than Graham is and I need to explore whether I am or not. I also need to consider how I construct characters and their narratives from my own memories compared to Minghella, Bean and Graham.

My intent, in working in my new frame of writing, is to initially make sense of the present through my characters, but move on to offer the possibility of provoking or enabling lasting change. I believe this is where my creative frame differs most from Minghella's, Bean's and Graham's, but I will now go on to explore whether this is true in a practical creative context with the writing of two plays: *That Berlin Moment* and *Petticoat Lane*.

Chapter Three
That Berlin Moment

THAT BERLIN MOMENT

by Sarah Jane Dickenson

CHARACTERS

ALEX

(Female. Late twenties)

STEVE

(Male. Late twenties. Slightly undernourished)

STRANGER

(Male. Early thirties. Has a very toned body)

DOCTOR

(Female. Early twenties. Too tidy for a young medic)

A forward slash (/) marks where dialogue starts to overlap. Names appearing without dialogue indicate an active silence between those characters.

ONE

Music. There is a soundscape of a car driven hard and a crash. STRANGER appears running. He is exhausted. He has run forever. He stops to get his breath. He is wearing only Jersey boxers and is soaking wet, drenched. But he is impervious to everything. DOCTOR moves towards him. Examines him in a quasi-medical way. He knows she is doing this but it doesn't occupy his focus. He is a lost soul. After the examination DOCTOR wraps him in a survival blanket but leaves him.

TWO

DOCTOR brings on an operating trolley. She sits on it surrounded by instruments, which she absentmindedly fiddles with.

DOCTOR: I'm a doctor. I'm very qualified. We have this joke about how many letters we have after our names, mine reach from here... all the way to here. (*Amused by herself.*) It's because I've specialised. I'm a specialist. We are considered mavericks. I prefer pioneers, but the old guard, well.

Beat

I'm really quite disappointed we doctors have lost that white coat thing... I was really fond of the white coat... but we still have the stethoscope (*Showing.*), which I usually wear here... but mainly we just have these. (*Shows identity badge.*) I pin mine here (*Breast pocket.*) always here no matter what I'm wearing, sometimes it leaves permanent holes which is bit of a... but I think it's important. A lot of doctors wear them here (*Indicates waistband near groin.*), mainly the men, which is bizarre as they generally have the breast pockets, but no, they wear them here.

Pause

Patients don't really like it. You can't really see the picture. It could be anybody... but me... always here, I think it's more... honest.

Beat

We're going to meet Steve now. Steve is completely and utterly distraught.

THREE

Hospital room.

STEVE is dancing to the music of Erasure. He for a moment believes he is Andy Bell incarnate. ALEX is lying in a hospital bed attached to monitors. She is in a medically-induced coma. STEVE keeps checking to see if she is watching him. He wants her to see him. Seeing no change he becomes frustrated and turns the music off. He sits on a chair next to the bed. There is a notebook in front of him. He stares at ALEX, then at the notebook. When he speaks his tone veers between absolutely desperately sincere and practising sincere.

STEVE: I... I...

He rubs his face in frustration.

I so... Alex... I So... Love you. I've always loved you... I will always love you. Always. No one can stop me.

Beat

Not ever. Not now, not after this. *(Takes her hand.)* This is as far away as I will ever be. See? This far. Alex, I love you, so much, so very much.

Pause

Yeh, that's good. *(Writes it down. Reads.)* So very, much. So very, VERY much. *(Satisfied.)* Come back to me... please? I'll do anything. Anything. Please?

Pause

He looks at the notebook.

I want to fix things - I want to make you... *(Looking at notebook.)* very, very, very, very. No. Three's enough. *(Crosses out a 'very'.)* Happy.

He holds her hand.

More music, yeh? Wait there. *(Realises.)* No, I didn't mean - It's just, they said music might help.

DOCTOR: We do say that... Usually there is no accompanying visual display... Just music that means something to the patient, like the music played at their wedding... Did you know the most popular tune played as the bride exits down the aisle is 'every breath you take'... I always thought it was about stalking but hey, I'm not married, except to the job.

STEVE puts on a CD. It is Erasure.

STEVE: *(Listening.)* This... this is Andy Bell at his best. Remember, I found their first album in a charity shop. *(Looks at ALEX.)* No you're right, I remember now, you found it... called me over... "Steve, love, here... look Erasure!" I made a rubbish joke about what did you want to rub out. *(Laughs.)* You always

laugh at my rubbish jokes, always, you're so... (*Listening.*) And Vince... he really knows how to... See... Brilliant. Classic I call it, truly classic.

He turns the music up.

This bit... always you.

He starts to move as only those who think they are alone start to move.

They've been together twenty years. And Andy... voice like an angel, brilliant dancer... two hip operations and still dancing like only he can.

He tries to dance like Andy Bell. Turns music up louder and really lets himself go. Takes his shirt off in the process. Ends sweating and panting by the bed.

See. You make me feel... I can be so... I know it's not much... but I can be me with you. And I will do... I promise promise, promise, promise. Actually I should lose the last promise shouldn't I. (*Gets notebook.*) It's the threes isn't it... 'Very, very, very', ... 'Always, always, always', 'you, me, (*Quietly.*) Dan'... (*Discards notebook.*) Oh Alex, I just want you to know... Inside of me is so much... 'stuff' for you. What I feel... the feeling I... I just want to get the... want you to see... the Andy Bell in me.

Pause

He lifts her eyelid open. No response from ALEX. He's frustrated. DOCTOR is looking on.

DOCTOR: Alex is in a drug-induced coma. We do that with head injuries. But we've reduced her medication now so she should be coming round soon.

Medically it is very sound practice but she's still in dangerous territory.

STEVE: See this close.

Dissatisfied. He carefully climbs on to the bed and lies awkwardly next to her.

This, no further than this.

Pause

He carefully puts her hand on him. Moves it around a bit. Sneakily puts her hand on his crotch. Moves it around, groans a little.

If you would just wake up, this would be... (*Gets notebook. Writes.*) Perfect.

If you wake... when you wake, the first thing you have to see is my love for you, (*Idea.*) the first thing.

STEVE gets the notebook and props it on the bedside table so ALEX can see it. He stares at her. He has another great idea.

And if - when - when you wake and if I'm not here, you'll go to the bathroom for a pee or something and in the mirror, you'll look and see this.

He gives her a love bite on the shoulder.

My mark... My love mark - not love bite - love mark and you'll know, someone loves you. Very, very, very much. (*Viewing his work.*) That's beautiful. Another yeh?

DOCTOR: I best go in now. I'll just get my... *(Indicates stethoscope.)*
STEVE starts to give ALEX another love bite. ALEX wakes. It takes a moment for her to work out what is happening. The machine she's linked to starts to beep. STEVE hears it and then sees that ALEX is awake.

STEVE: You're awake!

Beat

ALEX screams, a blood-curdling scream, then starts to cough and hyperventilate. STEVE leaps off the bed. Enter DOCTOR, at pace. She goes to ALEX.

DOCTOR: It's ok, it's ok.

ALEX: He... He... He!

DOCTOR: *(To STEVE.)* What did you do?

STEVE: Nothing, I did nothing!

ALEX: He bit me!

STEVE: Didn't!

ALEX: My shoulder - he - he -

STEVE: Affectionately.

ALEX: It hurts!

STEVE: I'm allowed!

DOCTOR: Look, can we just -

STEVE: *(He goes to her.)* Oh sweet cheeks.

ALEX: Away - Get him - get -

DOCTOR: Steve, just move away.

ALEX: He - He -

STEVE: Look, I talked to you, I danced for you, I did everything to bring you back, 'cos I love you and we are very, very, very, very happy!

DOCTOR: Steve, we discussed the need for calm. *(To the audience.)* You wouldn't think so would you but we -

ALEX: *(To both of them.)* Who - who are you?

STEVE: You know me, Steve. You remember? I'm your husband. And her, she's the doctor.

DOCTOR shows stethoscope.

ALEX: Doctor?

DOCTOR: I have a badge here. *(Shows ALEX. To audience.)* And a steth -

ALEX: Aargh!

DOCTOR: Gently now.

STEVE: What's happening?

DOCTOR: *(To STEVE.)* I think it would be best if you -

ALEX: It hurts!

STEVE: What hurts?

DOCTOR: It's normal, it's just -

ALEX: Aargh!

STEVE: I'm staying.

ALEX: Steve?

STEVE: Yes?

ALEX: Just piss off!

ALEX collapses. DOCTOR sees to her. STEVE hesitates.

STEVE: Did she just swear?

FOUR

DOCTOR enters with trolley. Picks up clipboard from trolley and makes some notes. Very aware of the audience.

DOCTOR: *(To audience.)* It's alright, it happens, I've seen this many times. It looks distressing but... the first time I saw it well... but training kicks in... actually to be truthful, you've either got it or you haven't. The number of people who just haven't, they can study for years but they just... It's like this next moment, with Steve, different skills required but, you've either got it or... luckily I have it in spades.

Puts trolley in a special place.

FIVE

A corridor.

Music. STEVE is pacing up and down. Enter DOCTOR.

STEVE: She ok - Did she say anything?

DOCTOR: I said she'd need time, I said -

STEVE: Does she remember... anything?

DOCTOR: Every case is different.

STEVE: But does she -

DOCTOR: Sometimes there is no memory loss, sometimes partial memory loss, sometimes complete memory loss. Sometimes it comes back slowly, sometimes it comes back quickly, sometimes partially slowly, sometimes /partially quickly, sometimes -

STEVE: Does she remember anything right now?

Beat

DOCTOR: No - nothing.

STEVE: But what are the chances of nothing, absolutely nothing coming back.

DOCTOR: We have to be watchful, vigilant, patient and positive.

STEVE: Which means...

Beat

DOCTOR: We have to be positive, patient, vigilant /watchful -

STEVE: Look. She has no one but me.

DOCTOR: And you her. *(To audience.)* I know this because we keep detailed notes on all concerned in cases like this, not always written down, this moment, it's all in *(Taps head.)* A natural see.

STEVE: Does she know what happened?

DOCTOR: You have to remember, you've had time to... not necessarily come to terms with... but begin to assimilate what happened. She has a lot to deal with before /we even -

STEVE: But if she knows who died she might -

DOCTOR: She'll be mourning herself first, she'll feel a great sense of loss, anger, bitterness, /betrayal -

STEVE: But maybe you could tell her, doctor, tell her who died.

Beat

DOCTOR: Let's see if she remembers herself.

STEVE: OK fine, fine. But what if...

DOCTOR: What if what?

STEVE: What if she remembers things wrong?

DOCTOR: Wrong how?

STEVE: Things wrongly, you know, around the wrong way?

DOCTOR: I do have to make you aware - warn you she may not remember in quite the same way. The memory is variable, I mean, we can't deal in absolutes, we deal in -

STEVE: Could? I'm asking you to deal in 'could'.

Beat

DOCTOR: Then yes, she could. Sometimes people demonstrate false memories.

STEVE: False what?

DOCTOR: Sorry, this must be difficult, particularly after what /you've been -

STEVE: No it's not see - it's easy - easier than it's ever been. Look, I love her. I've always loved her. Maybe not always how I wanted. I'm lucky, I have a second chance. I just want her to know that, remember that. Remember that I love her so much.

DOCTOR: But, you have to be prepared, sometimes people change.

STEVE: Change?

DOCTOR: Our understanding of brain trauma often comes from conflict.

STEVE: Yeh, I know, her head conflicted with a tree.

DOCTOR: Military conflict. In the con - war in Afghanistan, *(To audience.)* fascinating, really fascinating those injured are young and fit, and sometimes survive horrific injuries, absolutely great for us. *(To STEVE.)* There was this one case, severe head trauma, complete memory loss, change in personality, seen as a classic.

STEVE: Yeh, I know.

DOCTOR: Do you?

STEVE: 'Afghanistan, the Fatal Frontier', magazine, special introductory offer with a DVD and map to put on the wall. Half his head blown off. Yeh.

Beat

DOCTOR: Yes, severe effect on his relationships.

STEVE: You sure it was his injury? His wife was shagging his best friends, plural, enough to make anyone crazy.

DOCTOR: But, what I'm saying -

STEVE: What you're saying is although Alex survived head butting a tree at speed her brain might be a little messed up, right.

DOCTOR: Right. But not necessarily permanently.

STEVE: Well it can't be as permanent as what happened to my brother.

DOCTOR looks uncomfortable.

That shouldn't be too much for you, you're a doctor.

DOCTOR: No, just... Alex was very lucky that you got to her when you did.

Beat

Was your brother bringing her home?

STEVE: No, no all going away for the weekend. I was... later. But I got, caught up.

DOCTOR: Lucky you did. Whereas your brother, /just unlucky.

STEVE: Never wore a seat belt, never. Got thrown out onto the road, looked like a rag doll. I couldn't - I told the Police that - I couldn't stop.

DOCTOR: Are they still -

STEVE: Don't think so.

DOCTOR: (*Quietly.*) Good.

You must have been close.

STEVE: Why?

DOCTOR: Holiday, weekend...

STEVE: I never left my brother out, never. Alex, my brother, me - we are - were, all the family we had. I loved him, I love her.

DOCTOR: I am sorry. (*Looks at watch.*) Remember, we go at her pace.

STEVE: Sure. Whatever it takes.

Pause

DOCTOR: Do you read books?

STEVE: Course, what you saying?

DOCTOR: Well you said magazines but -

STEVE: Read loads of books me, why?

DOCTOR: It's just there are some good books to... help, with all this, user friendly, sometimes on CD.

STEVE: Do CD's too and iPod, Kindle, Smart phone, twitter -

DOCTOR: Waterstone's self help section, not as daft as it... I could give you a list?

STEVE: Like I said /whatever it -

DOCTOR: Whatever it takes, excellent.

SIX

STEVE starts to pace. DOCTOR goes and gets her hospital trolley. STEVE's pacing becomes more and more frantic. DOCTOR watches. She produces a croissant and is dipping it into a cup of coffee. She puts them on the trolley as STEVE reaches a point of intensity. She calms him as you would a scared but dangerous animal. Not noticing her, he calms, sort of. DOCTOR goes back to her croissant and coffee.

DOCTOR: *(To audience.)* Recent research shows that you should treat the relatives as much as the patients. Trauma will consume anyone within its emotional radius. Some of the old guard in the profession don't go along with this, but those of us in the vanguard... the mavericks... well, you have to be prepared to respond to any given circumstances, be ever changing. Sometimes you find yourself out there on your own... but hey, small price and all that... small price.

SEVEN

Hospital room.

Music. ALEX is in bed. Enter STEVE with full carrier bags, which he dumps on the bed.

STEVE: Hello sweet cheeks.

ALEX just looks.

The doctor says -

ALEX huffs.

The doctor says maybe seeing things -

ALEX: I'm not seeing things.

STEVE: No not - seeing things - seeing things (*Showing bag.*) might help.

ALEX: Help who?

STEVE: Help you.

ALEX looks.

Help us?

Pause

I've brought loads of things, you know, stuff. (*Rummaging in bag.*) You ready?

He carefully produces a very worn teddy.

ALEX: What's that?

STEVE: Teddy.

He stares expectantly.

ALEX: A teddy.

STEVE continues to stare expectantly.

STEVE: No, you call him... Teddy.

ALEX: Stunningly original me.

STEVE: Sometimes Ted.

He puts away the teddy.

I'm not to push you - she said not to push you.

ALEX: Best not then.

STEVE: Just... encourage.

STEVE rummages in the bags. He produces a small unprepossessing jewellery box. He places it on the table and looks at ALEX.

Beat

ALEX: It's a box?

STEVE opens the box. A ballerina pops up and a tune starts to play. ALEX looks blank. STEVE is eager for her to connect with the box. The music continues to play.

STEVE: A musical box.

Pause

The name?

ALEX: Hmm... Box?

STEVE: No, the tune?

ALEX: The tune?

STEVE: You like the tune?

ALEX: *(Listens.)* Hmm... No, I don't.

STEVE: You sure?

ALEX: *(Listens.)* I'm sure.

Peeved, STEVE starts to rummage in the bag. He produces a china green frog and places it carefully on the side. He looks at ALEX.

STEVE: Daddah!

ALEX: A china frog.

STEVE: Called...

ALEX: Frog?

STEVE: Kermit.

STEVE rummages.

STEVE: You love this...

Produces a mug with a saying on it. ALEX reads it.

STEVE: See?

ALEX: Did I buy this?

STEVE: I did. It was a present.

ALEX: Oh.

STEVE: Read it then.

ALEX: 'Hot Stuff'?

Beat

STEVE: Because it's your mug for tea, hot tea. I know, rubbish joke, you love my rubbish jokes, you smile every time you use it.

ALEX: Steve I -

STEVE: Hold on.

STEVE produces another mug.

STEVE: And this one see. *(Showing.)* 'Trust me I'm a lawyer'.

ALEX: Am I?

STEVE: No!

ALEX: So why...?

STEVE: That's the joke see. *(Another mug.)* See 'Queen - there's a bee there - Bee-otch', Eh? You used it when you were cross with me. Not that you were ever

really cross with me, but you liked to, you know, pretend and out would come -
And then this one (*Another mug.*) 'I heart - see heart - schmoo'.

STEVE does shape of heart and points at ALEX. ALEX is unimpressed. STEVE is even more determined. He produces something else, then something else until the table is littered with a pathetic pile of junk.

STEVE: This?... This?... This?

ALEX: (*She stops the music box.*) No.

STEVE: (*Getting frustrated.*) Are you sure?

Enter DOCTOR.

DOCTOR: How's it going?

STEVE: Fine. Brilliant.

DOCTOR: (*To ALEX.*) Brilliant?

STEVE: I haven't prompted her, just shown her like you said.

DOCTOR: And?

STEVE: And it's brilliant, we're doing brilliant.

DOCTOR: (*To ALEX.*) Do you recognise any of these -

STEVE: See, this is your music box. (*He opens it.*) You loved this music box.

DOCTOR: Please, Steve -

STEVE: This music box is you, this frog is you, this mug is you, this thing with the broken thingy is you. I know you like these things, you said you liked -

DOCTOR: Steve... Steve... Maybe let's take a moment here, OK?

Beat

STEVE: OK.

DOCTOR: (*To ALEX.*) Are these just... 'things' to you?

ALEX: They're just... not my kind of thing.

STEVE: How can you say that?

DOCTOR: (*To STEVE.*) Steve, please, sit, let's sit down.

Reluctantly, STEVE sits.

If they bother you...

STEVE: Why should they? I'll arrange them nice.

He does so.

DOCTOR: (*Stopping STEVE.*) If you feel uncomfortable we'll move them.

ALEX looks at objects.

ALEX: I feel I don't like them.

Pause

I think I like that artist.

DOCTOR: Which one?

ALEX: With a tent and a bed.

DOCTOR: Tracy Emin?

STEVE: Who?

ALEX: That's her, the mess of her bed represents her emotional mess involving past lovers. That's the kind of thing I like.

DOCTOR: Interesting...

ALEX: Conceptual artists I know are supposed to stir things up -

STEVE: Do you?

ALEX: And she certainly does with me - I think it took me a while to understand conceptual.

DOCTOR: I love conceptual.

ALEX: The way the idea takes precedence regardless of convention.

DOCTOR: Regardless, the triumph /of the maverick.

ALEX: Of the maverick yes!

STEVE: How do you know this stuff?

DOCTOR: Steady now -

ALEX: I don't know, I -

STEVE: The only art on your walls is from IKEA.

DOCTOR: Who chose that?

STEVE: She did, well, we did, we chose it together, we do everything together. You know, big flower, bit blurry, we like the same stuff, all the same stuff.

DOCTOR: Steve -

STEVE: I'll do the photos now.

DOCTOR: Steve, I don't -

STEVE: (*Rummaging in carrier.*) You said I could - you said it might help.

He produces some photos and sits himself on the bed next to

ALEX. He pulls the blanket over himself a little to be closer to her.

STEVE: This is you on our wedding day, see.

ALEX: (*Looking at photos.*) Is that...

STEVE: You look beautiful, really beautiful, see.

ALEX: I look... different.

STEVE: You were nervous.

ALEX: I look resigned.

STEVE: You look lovely. (*Gently starting to sing.*) I'm so in love with you...

DOCTOR: Is that Erasure?

STEVE: Maybe. See they're real artists.

DOCTOR: Are they still alive? - (*Looking at photo - To STEVE.*) Where are you?

STEVE: If you're not keen, if she's not keen on the wedding, (*Rummaging.*) here's some more of you, this is one of my favourites see, you're sitting in a cafe, deep in thought see.

DOCTOR: Is the blurring deliberate?

STEVE: (*To DOCTOR.*) It was raining see. (*To ALEX.*) I got soaked.

DOCTOR: Why?

STEVE: I, I went out for something or other - for you - and I looked back and I saw her and I thought that's -

ALEX: I'm wearing grey.

STEVE: Oh its not grey, it's gun metal - you call it gun metal - it's your favourite colour (*producing more photos.*) see, you're wearing it here and here... and here... and -

ALEX: But I don't like grey.

DOCTOR: No?

STEVE: (*Helpfully.*) Sometimes we call it charcoal.

ALEX: I look miserable. Like a caterpillar that's never going to be a butterfly.

STEVE: You'll always be my caterpillar.

ALEX: I don't want to be a caterpillar, I want to be a butterfly.

DOCTOR: Are there any of you together?

STEVE: I take them, always take them.

DOCTOR: On your wedding day?

ALEX: This one's torn.

DOCTOR: (*To STEVE.*) Did you...

STEVE: No, no... That was you.

ALEX: Me?

STEVE: You tore people off you didn't like.

ALEX: But there's loads torn off. Bitter as well as miserable.

STEVE: You weren't bitter, you were just...

ALEX: What? What was I just?

STEVE: I mean he said it was just -

But I said, I mean, lots of people tear up pictures and 'stuff' don't they Doctor?

ALEX: He. Who is he?

Pause

DOCTOR: You'll have to help her here.

Beat

STEVE: Dan did.

DOCTOR: Your brother, Dan?

STEVE: Yeh, him, he did. Dan didn't understand you.

ALEX: Didn't he?

STEVE: I did, I always did.

ALEX: Is there a photo of...

STEVE: Somewhere in there, but listen, sweet cheeks, I knew what you were thinking, what you were feeling, almost before you did, I just felt it... here.

DOCTOR: Do you do it professionally?

STEVE: Feelings?

DOCTOR: Photography?

STEVE: No, no, I - No, course not.

ALEX: What do you do?

STEVE: You know what I -

DOCTOR: Not necessarily.

STEVE: (*To DOCTOR.*) You said we shouldn't rush her.

ALEX: I'm asking.

DOCTOR: If she's asking...

STEVE: OK, OK. I'm... in charge?

ALEX: In charge?

STEVE: Yes.

Beat

ALEX: Of what?

STEVE: *(To DOCTOR.)* I think... maybe later?

ALEX: What?

STEVE: What?

ALEX: You're in charge of what?

Beat

STEVE: Stuff.

ALEX: Stuff?

STEVE: *(To ALEX.)* You didn't want to *(To DOCTOR.)* She didn't want to -

ALEX: Did we do it together?

STEVE: Together?

ALEX: In charge?

DOCTOR: Ah yes, everything together. Were you?

STEVE: In charge?

DOCTOR: Together?

Beat

STEVE: Yes

ALEX: Yes?

STEVE: Yes, of course.

ALEX: Of what?

STEVE: Of what?

ALEX: Yes. In charge of what?

STEVE: Of me.

ALEX: You? We're in charge of you?

STEVE: No! *(Laughs.)* I say, "she's in charge like always", although you then insist on saying, "no, no, not in charge, look after". And I say, "who am I to -

ALEX: Is that all I -

STEVE: Alex, you do everything for me brilliantly and I am very, very, very, very grateful.

ALEX is deflated.

DOCTOR: Alex, you need to rest now. *(Firmly.)* Steve?

STEVE: Course.

STEVE and DOCTOR start to go.

ALEX: Wait. Did you buy my clothes?

STEVE: No, course not. We bought your clothes together, always together.

EIGHT

DOCTOR is lying on the hospital trolley swinging an IV tube aimlessly around her head. She has a mask on and is breathing deeply, heavier and heavier. She stops. Pulls the mask down. During the following she gets up and puts the trolley to one side.

DOCTOR: Now this next patient would be difficult for some but I'm very comfortable with the latest research, so much so I could quote large tracts of Parham and Brown at you or PowerPoint you into submission with Kerridge and White, all leaders in the field. But, actually sometimes you have to surf the latest research... surf as in with a board, like you are surfing a big blue beast of a wave. And us mavericks, well, we surf research like we're surfing a tsunami. Balance is everything, no hiding behind drug programmes or art therapy. You have to sashay in wearing nothing but your professional wet suit.

She moves towards STRANGER.

Not for the faint hearted, not this one. But, like I said, pioneer.

NINE

Sterile room. Chairs.

Music. STRANGER is sitting, focused. He carefully rubs his face, then carefully inspects the hand which rubbed his face, then rubs the hand. Enter DOCTOR.

DOCTOR: How are we today?

Pause

STRANGER sits very still. DOCTOR sits.

DOCTOR: Has anything...

STRANGER: No. It hasn't.

Pause

DOCTOR: Did you dream?

STRANGER: No.

DOCTOR: Are you sure?

Pause

No reaction from STRANGER.

DOCTOR: You're safe to talk here.

STRANGER looks at her.

STRANGER: How do you know this?

DOCTOR: Because you are talking to me.

STRANGER: That's different.

DOCTOR: I suppose it is.

Beat

You spoke to the nurses, first time.

STRANGER: The other staff -

DOCTOR: The nurses?

STRANGER: They do not nurse.

DOCTOR: No?

STRANGER: No. They snigger. They talk about me and they snigger. Is that the right word, snigger?

DOCTOR: If that's what they do. What do you think they are sniggering about?

STRANGER: Underwear.

DOCTOR: Aah.

STRANGER: They find underwear very amusing.

DOCTOR: They do this behind your back?

STRANGER: No. They come in with new clothes and...

DOCTOR: And?

STRANGER: Ask if I want to wear my underpants over my trousers.

DOCTOR: Oh.

STRANGER: They sniggered, in here, in front of me, thinking I didn't... so I spoke.

DOCTOR: I'm glad you spoke.

STRANGER: Thank you.

DOCTOR: But I'm sorry for what made you speak. I'll have a word.

STRANGER: I said enough words.

DOCTOR: Aah, that's why they -

STRANGER: ---

Pause

DOCTOR: When you spoke -

STRANGER: Yes?

DOCTOR: Did it feel good?

STRANGER: It felt... right.

DOCTOR: Did it feel wrong before?

Pause

STRANGER: It felt a... betrayal.

DOCTOR: Can you explain that?

STRANGER: I don't have the words.

DOCTOR: English - not your first language?

STRANGER: I... don't think so.

DOCTOR: What language do you think in?

STRANGER: I'm... not sure.

DOCTOR: Dream in?

STRANGER: (*Sharply.*) I told you I don't dream, I never dream, I don't know what a dream is in any language.

DOCTOR: Let me try again. What do you feel?

STRANGER: I don't...

DOCTOR: You don't have the words? The language?

STRANGER: No.

DOCTOR: Is it to do with confusion? Do you understand the word confusion?

STRANGER: No.

DOCTOR: It's when you -

STRANGER: No, I understand. The answer, it's no. I feel... nothing.

Pause

Is that unusual?

DOCTOR: It depends what that 'nothing' is. Sometimes when people say 'nothing' they don't mean 'nothing', they mean they feel detached or surprisingly calm, or a little rather than a lot.

Beat

STRANGER: Well I don't feel 'detached', or 'a little', or 'calm' -

DOCTOR: An emptiness? Emptiness scares people, they think emptiness needs filling but if you fill emptiness you need to take a risk, a big risk, risk scares people so they don't -

STRANGER: But I don't feel scared, I feel -

DOCTOR: Dead inside. That happens.

STRANGER: No, not dead. I fought to stay alive.

DOCTOR: Did you?

STRANGER: I...? How many people feel absolutely nothing?

DOCTOR: OK, people don't usually feel absolutely nothing. What they do feel they can't identify. We help them identify the unidentifiable.

STRANGER: You give them words?

DOCTOR: Sort of, yes.

STRANGER: Proving they feel something rather than nothing? That's your proof?

DOCTOR: Your accent?

STRANGER: What?

DOCTOR: Your accent, it changed.

STRANGER: ---

DOCTOR: It moved countries, maybe continents, did you know it -

STRANGER: (*Coldly.*) What accent?

Beat

DOCTOR: Sorry, I'm trained to -

STRANGER: I might be trained too.

DOCTOR: You said you don't remember.

STRANGER: I might be a doctor just like you.

DOCTOR: Believe me, if you were I'd know -

STRANGER: Believe you, why?

DOCTOR: Why?

STRANGER: You don't believe me?

Beat

DOCTOR: What you must understand is this, this is not personal, none of this is

-

STRANGER: I understand I'm a personal challenge to you, but what you don't believe is that nothing is personal to me because I feel 'nothing'.

DOCTOR: Most doctors would have simply used drugs to make you talk.

STRANGER: How do I know you didn't?

Beat

DOCTOR: (*Starting to leave.*) We don't believe in getting patients worked up.

STRANGER: Did you do well at medical school?

DOCTOR: (*Defensively.*) Why?

STRANGER: Did you pass all your exams?

DOCTOR: Course.

STRANGER: So you remembered words well, most in a dead language, well done. Very impressive to those who have lost words.

Pause

DOCTOR: You are getting worked up.

STRANGER: It has changed.

DOCTOR: What?

STRANGER: Your accent, it changed.

DOCTOR: I've moved around, as a medic, one minute here -

STRANGER: One minute 'doctor', one minute 'friend', then one minute something very -

DOCTOR: (*Irritated. Going to him.*) I believe you're beginning to remember. You might not know it, you might not want to know -

STRANGER: I remember nothing and you can't make me just by giving me your words!

Pause

DOCTOR: (*To audience.*) OK, I'm going to go professionally naked here. Take the wet suit off. Sometimes you just have to go skinny-dipping... to make a difference, bring about change. (*To STRANGER.*) I'm going to - would like to try something.

STRANGER: It involves me?

DOCTOR: And another patient.

STRANGER: We're to be your rats?

DOCTOR: The term is guinea pigs.

STRANGER: We are to be your cuddly pets?

DOCTOR: Far from it.

STRANGER: There, your accent, sounds like -

DOCTOR: According to a study by Kerridge & Brown carried out under quite extensive controlled conditions in the nineties and extended further by Kerridge & White in the noughties, have you heard of them? They moved into the mainstream, Waterstone's self help section.

STRANGER: No.

DOCTOR: Oh well, they found that most patients with memory loss patterns like you and this other patient have, by this time, begun to show signs of recall unless...

STRANGER: Unless what?

DOCTOR: Unless there is more obvious cerebral disturbance.

STRANGER: Cerebral disturbance?

DOCTOR: More obvious evidence of recent injuries.

STRANGER: You mean you think we're not damaged enough to forget for so long.

DOCTOR: We don't believe in the word damaged.

STRANGER: So you think we are making this up?

DOCTOR: We believe -

STRANGER: You believe.

DOCTOR: The study implies, the damage is more likely to be caused by something emotionally based.

STRANGER: How many pigs have you tried it on?

DOCTOR: Guinea pigs.

STRANGER: How many?

Beat

DOCTOR: In the past, patients have been treated in isolation. In this case, we believe -

STRANGER: Believe, believe - you don't know, but hey, they are just freaks who feel nothing so let's experiment and -

DOCTOR: The other patient doesn't feel nothing. The other patient feels confused, frustrated, angry, upset, annoyed -

STRANGER: And how much does he -

DOCTOR: She -

STRANGER: She remember?

DOCTOR: Nothing.

STRANGER: Are you sure?

DOCTOR: She remembers nothing of her previous life, but she feels she remembers some things.

STRANGER: She remembers then.

DOCTOR: No, feeling isn't remembering. She has elements of what we call false memory.

STRANGER: False according to you?

DOCTOR: According to her husband.

STRANGER: And according to her friends?

DOCTOR: They were very... insular.

STRANGER: So, according to just her insular husband?

DOCTOR: *(Irritated.)* Are you interested?

STRANGER: In being a rat?

DOCTOR: Pig - guinea pig - yes.

STRANGER: Do I have a choice?

DOCTOR: We bel - of course, yes.

STRANGER: Then my choice is... I will let her choose. If she says yes, so do I.

DOCTOR: Good, good.

She starts to go.

STRANGER: But.

DOCTOR stops.

If her husband says yes, I say no.

DOCTOR goes.

TEN

DOCTOR with the hospital trolley. She is randomly tidying medical instruments, with purpose but little effect.

DOCTOR: You have to let them feel they are winning sometimes. You... you have to be confident enough, not arrogant, confident, to let that happen.

Pause

She arranges things.

To be honest and you have to be honest, with yourself, I didn't know I'd put that plan into action... didn't know I'd planned that plan... I didn't.

Finishes arranging.

But, I've done my homework, not homework they'd necessarily recognise here, but hey... sometimes a backwater is the right place, absolutely the right place to try... achieve the pioneering.

Pause

But sometimes, just sometimes... it's quite lonely being so... research active. But I believe... I know, that only good will come of this. I feel it, really feel it... in every single one of my professional bones. See, mavericks can share too, we are just...

DOCTOR puts stethoscope on and pushes trolley off, but she is not content.

ELEVEN

Hospital room.

Music. ALEX is sitting on the bed dressed. She is looking into hand mirror.

Enter DOCTOR.

ALEX: Is that new?

DOCTOR: What?

ALEX: The stethoscope, is it new?

DOCTOR: Er no... not really. I've had it since I qualified.

ALEX: Looks new.

DOCTOR: How are you today?

ALEX: I... don't know.

DOCTOR: Do you feel you've remembered anything else?

ALEX: (*Firmly.*) No.

DOCTOR: Sure?

Beat

ALEX: He keeps telling me things.

DOCTOR: He's trying to help, in his own way.

ALEX: His way is...

DOCTOR: Confusing?

ALEX: Irritating.

DOCTOR: Maybe you're just feeling frustrated because he remembers and you don't?

ALEX: He talks endlessly about things, people, places that I have no memory of.

DOCTOR: That can be helpful -

ALEX: They sound so... He's so...

DOCTOR: Unfamiliar?

ALEX: Boring.

DOCTOR: Oh.

ALEX: He talks about football. He says I like football. I say I don't like football, he says I absolutely do. I say maybe I was humouring him then. He says absolutely not. (*With distaste.*) He says we had replica kits. The same, exactly the same. He says we wear them out together. I say, out together where? The pub, he says, to watch football. We watched a match on TV here, crucial match he said. I fell asleep.

DOCTOR: You've been through a lot, it could be because you -

ALEX: I really, really, really, don't like football.

Beat

DOCTOR: It's not just the -

ALEX: No. It's not. I look at him and he... This is such a betrayal...

DOCTOR: Betrayal is ok... in times of... Sometimes, after trauma people's likes, dislikes, they change. So Kerridge and White say, or was it Kerridge and -

ALEX: I loathe every single word that comes out of his mouth, I mean, 'sweet cheeks', I ask you, (*Holding mirror up.*) do I look like a 'sweet cheeks'?

DOCTOR: No, but -

ALEX: I loathe his habits, his laugh, his gestures, his absolute lack of... grace and when he does that thing in the back of his throat, this is a complete and utter betrayal, but I really, really, really don't like my husband.

DOCTOR: Things might not be quite as bleak as... When, or if the past comes back, so does the old self.

ALEX: But, I don't like my old self.

DOCTOR: When your old self comes back you don't feel that.

ALEX: Why?

DOCTOR: Because you forget your new self.

ALEX: But... I like my new self -

DOCTOR: It's a bit like a cross fade in a film, more black and white than 3-D but -

ALEX: Can I stop it happening?

DOCTOR: No... not in my experience.

ALEX: And what experience have you had?

DOCTOR: Sorry?

ALEX: You're young, you can't have been doing this long, maybe some doctor, somewhere, did stop it happening. It started and hey, they stopped it.

DOCTOR: I, I mean we believe not.

ALEX: If I was a mass murderer you'd stop me remembering my horrible urges to kill wouldn't you?

DOCTOR: If you were a mass murderer we'd drug you and keep you in a secure unit, probably.

Pause

ALEX: How many patients like me, exactly like me, have you seen?

DOCTOR: Today? Not enough.

She starts to go.

Steve, he loves you with a vengeance. It might be enough.

ALEX: Do you honestly think that?

DOCTOR: Well some believe -

ALEX: Utterly, truthfully, totally, hand on heart believe that?

Pause

DOCTOR: There's someone I'd like you to meet. A patient like you - well not like you. But he has lost his memory.

ALEX: How?

DOCTOR: I can't say.

ALEX: Why can't you say?

DOCTOR: Because I don't know.

Beat

ALEX: How old is he?

DOCTOR: Your age - ish. He was found running/ in the rain -

ALEX: /Why?

DOCTOR: /Just a pair of boxers.

ALEX: Why?

DOCTOR: Why boxers?

ALEX: Why meet?

DOCTOR: To... share.

ALEX: How can we share, we can't remember anything.

DOCTOR: Share now, how you feel now.

Enter STEVE.

STEVE: Hey sweet cheeks!

ALEX shows hand mirror to DOCTOR.

I have DVDs -

He shows them.

ALEX: There isn't a DVD player.

STEVE: (*Triumphantly taking one out.*) Dahdah! a laptop. How good am I?

Beat

I'll set it up shall I?

DOCTOR: What are they DVDs of?

STEVE: Tottenham, The Road To Victory - Tottenham The Glory Years, Tottenham and the Foreign Invasion, classics every one of them. (*To DOCTOR.*)

I didn't think they'd stress her. (*To ALEX.*) We love our football, don't we? (*To DOCTOR.*) It might help.

He starts setting up the laptop.

ALEX: (*To DOCTOR.*) This patient.

STEVE: What patient?

ALEX: Will it make me remember?

DOCTOR: We haven't found that.

ALEX: No doctor has found that?

DOCTOR: No, Kerridge and -

ALEX: I'll see him.

TWELVE

DOCTOR rushes carelessly on with the trolley. Tries to park it then abandons it as she is keen to share.

DOCTOR: OK, years of experience specialising in an area I have a real passion for, that I'm completely and utterly at home in and yet at this moment, this very moment I am well and truly holding my professional breath... Like deep sea diving for pearls with a borrowed nose clip and an ill-fitting H&M bikini and you go deeper and deeper and your lungs are screaming for air and then you see the shell, THE shell, you know is THE one and you reach out for it, the biggest stretch, the smallest fingertip kiss... I mean, this is out there, really out there! Just as long as you don't meet a couple of great white sharks on the way up, but hey, without risk eh... and I embrace risk... subterranean pioneer me.

Exit DOCTOR at enthusiastic pace.

THIRTEEN

Sterile room. Chairs.

Music. STRANGER is sitting scarily still on a chair. Enter ALEX and DOCTOR.

DOCTOR: Hi. This is Alex that I told you about.

No response from STRANGER.

(To ALEX.) And this is, now, how can I best introduce you?

STRANGER: Stranger, they call me Stranger.

DOCTOR: I thought they'd named you -

STRANGER: Oh, they have a list of names. Stranger is the least objectionable.

DOCTOR: Right... right...

They sit. DOCTOR looks from one to the other. Both ALEX and STRANGER stare off into the distance.

DOCTOR: Right, we need an icebreaker, don't we? *(To STRANGER.)* Do you understand 'icebreaker'?

STRANGER: Yes.

DOCTOR: I thought we might start by saying anything that comes into our heads.

Uncomfortable pause.

STRANGER does not move a muscle. ALEX is still but not quite as still as him.

Alex, would you like to...

ALEX looks away.

Pause

DOCTOR looks at STRANGER who still stares.

Pause

DOCTOR: Alex, if you could just say briefly why you agreed to meet with er...

STRANGER: *(Said differently each time.)* Stranger.

DOCTOR: Alex?

ALEX: I mean... I don't know exactly.

DOCTOR: You were quite decided, quite ok with meeting with...

STRANGER: Stranger.

DOCTOR: I'm not happy with 'Stranger', you can't be happy with 'Stranger' shall we call you something else, something more personal, more you, can you think of something OK?

STRANGER: OK.

DOCTOR: OK... So Alex, why did you agree to meet with -

STRANGER: Me.

DOCTOR: Me?

STRANGER: 'Me' is personal.

DOCTOR: But 'me' is -

STRANGER: 'Me' is more 'me'.

DOCTOR: Fine, fine. Alex, you were quite keen to -

ALEX: Keen?

DOCTOR: Determinedly keen I'd say to meet -

STRANGER: Me.

ALEX: I... I just thought I -

DOCTOR: You said you -

STRANGER: This woman does this to me too.

DOCTOR: Do I?

ALEX: Does she?

STRANGER: She does. She tries to put words in my face.

DOCTOR: Mouth.

STRANGER: Exactly - does she like you saying words like - 'confusing'
'unfamiliar', 'believe'...?

ALEX: You know, actually -

DOCTOR: I don't believe (*Realising.*) I don't think I overuse those words.

STRANGER: You wanted us to share, doctor but unfortunately for you, we only
have you to share.

ALEX: That's true, that's very true.

DOCTOR: Are you ganging up on me?

STRANGER: 'Ganging up', that's a new one.

DOCTOR: I suppose it's slang, it means -

STRANGER: (*To ALEX.*) Is that a new one for you?

ALEX: You know, I think it is.

DOCTOR: Is it?

ALEX: Uhuh.

Beat

DOCTOR: Good, good, well maybe it's better if I...

She gets up with no real intention of leaving.

STRANGER: Leave.

DOCTOR: Leave? No I -

STRANGER: Is that allowed?

DOCTOR: I'm a doctor, of course I'm allowed to but -

STRANGER: (*To ALEX.*) For you - Is that allowed?

ALEX: Yes, yes it is.

DOCTOR: Now hold on -

STRANGER: (*To ALEX.*) Are you sure?

ALEX: Sure.

STRANGER: Very?

ALEX: Very.

STRANGER: We're both sure, doctor.

DOCTOR: *(To ALEX.)* Really?

ALEX: Uhuh.

DOCTOR: Fine, fine, I'll be at the... outside, just outside. *(To audience.)* This is fine, fine, I'm good with this.

Beat

It wasn't quite what I expected... but then as a pioneer, nay maverick, you expect the unexpected, Kerridge goes on and on about that in... I mean, *(Looking at ALEX & STRANGER.)* it's not exactly a couple of great whites is it?

She leaves.

ALEX and STRANGER look at where she's gone. Turning back they look at each other but when they catch each other's eye they look away.

Pause

ALEX tries to sneak a look at STRANGER. He turns and looks at her. She looks away, then looks back. He is still looking impassively with consummate stillness. ALEX gets bolder.

ALEX: What are you looking at?

STRANGER: I know not.

Beat

They say you don't either.

ALEX: *(Looking at him.)* They say you don't know what I'm looking at either.

STRANGER: No.

ALEX looks away. STRANGER still looks.

Pause

ALEX: You're still looking.

STRANGER: Yes. Shall I not?

ALEX turns to look at him.

ALEX: *(Stares.)* Shall I stop?

STRANGER: No, please, no.

Pause

ALEX: They say -

STRANGER: Who say?

ALEX: The nurses say -

STRANGER: Oh they say.

Beat

ALEX: They say you were found in just your underpants.

STRANGER: Boxers, they say.

ALEX: And you say?

STRANGER: I don't say.

ALEX: They say that's the problem.

STRANGER: They say that do they?

ALEX: They do.

STRANGER: They say a lot of things. (*Looking at her.*) They say a lot of things about you.

ALEX: Do they?

STRANGER: They do.

Pause

ALEX: What do they say?

STRANGER: I don't know, I don't listen.

ALEX: So you don't listen and you don't say.

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: But you're saying to me.

STRANGER: I... am.

ALEX: And listening to me?

STRANGER: I am. That's -

ALEX: Weird.

STRANGER: Yes. They say you're weird.

ALEX: Do they? As weird as you?

STRANGER: They say you're weird about grey.

ALEX: I am not weird about grey!

STRANGER: They say you get - what is it? - 'aggressive' about grey.

ALEX: I don't!

STRANGER: 'Worked up' at least.

ALEX: Look, I just don't like -

STRANGER: They say it was good my boxers weren't grey.

ALEX: They say that?

STRANGER: They say that. They say that and they snigger.

ALEX: (*Hurt.*) Snigger at me?

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: No?

STRANGER: No, at me. Sorry, I think I'm ganging up.

ALEX: No.

STRANGER: No?

ALEX: No, you're teasing.

STRANGER: Am I?

ALEX: I, hope so.

STRANGER: Then I must be.

Pause

You wouldn't suit grey.

ALEX: I know, I do know.

STRANGER: It's good you know.

ALEX: Thank you.

STRANGER: You're welcome.

Pause

ALEX: What colour were your boxers?

STRANGER: I remember not. They took them. They gave me pants. Tightly whities they say. I don't think I like tightly whities.

He smiles at her. She smiles back.

Pause

ALEX: Every question -

STRANGER: Yes?

ALEX: Every question I think of asking... you won't be able to answer. Even if you could, you might ask me back and I couldn't answer.

Pause

STRANGER: They say you have a husband.

ALEX: So they say.

STRANGER: You don't?

ALEX: I don't know. He doesn't feel like...

STRANGER: Husband?

ALEX: No.

Pause

STRANGER: I suspect... does he like you in grey?

ALEX: I suspect he likes me very much in grey.

Pause

STRANGER: What colours do you like?

ALEX: I don't... I'm not sure.

STRANGER: Dark colours, light colours?

ALEX: Bright colours... I think.

STRANGER: Bright reds?

ALEX: No.

STRANGER: Bright greens?

ALEX: Ooh no.

STRANGER: Bright blue?

ALEX: Yes, yes bright blue.

STRANGER: Turquoise, Navy, Aquamarine...

ALEX: Are you an artist?

STRANGER: I... I don't know.

ALEX: Course not. Sky blue - I think sky blue.

STRANGER: Did I say sky blue?

ALEX: No. But, if I forget I like blue, which I do, I really, really do -

STRANGER: I think I do too.

ALEX: Then all I - all we have to do is look out of the window and we'll know what we like.

STRANGER: But, it changes, the sky changes.

ALEX: So, we'll change with the sky. We'll wear just what the sky wears.

STRANGER: Sometimes there is no blue, just grey.

ALEX: Then we'll refuse to get dressed.

STRANGER: Good idea.

ALEX: Excellent idea.

STRANGER: It is.

ALEX: Thank you.

STRANGER: You're welcome.

FOURTEEN

DOCTOR is sitting on the trolley with a glass of wine and some dips. She uses an instrument to pick up some olives.

DOCTOR: Well that went as expected.

Beat

Yes it was expected.

Beat

You don't think... I meant to leave at that point. It's about transferring perceived and I mean perceived responsibility, in a good way of course. Look change happens in a moment, like that. (*Clicks fingers.*) It's easy. But to bring about change, that is a risk to many and few will... people will make up dreadful false memories - not good ones - awful ones - rather than risk. But if it's managed, if people feel in control... in charge even... like... I thought they did rather well considering. I mean they have a long way, a very, very long way to go, these things really absolutely can't be rushed. I think Kerridge identified it as a roller coaster ride in treacle. But, in real terms and in the first instance... I think they managed... quite sweet really.

DOCTOR leaves with the trolley.

FIFTEEN

Hospital room

Music. STEVE is lying on the bed. Practicing for the return of ALEX.

STEVE: Hello love!

Beat

Hello darling!

Beat

Hello sweet cheeks! (*He's pleased.*) Soooo. You met a bloke - another patient? Lovely. How was it? Uhuh? Really? Oh well, he might still be a bit, you know.

Beat

So what did he say - talk about - discuss - what did you chat about - did you have a nice chat?

Beat

No? That's a shame. His accent? Course he's... Yeh, you're right, they should learn it but hey. Look if meeting is not good for you. I won't let the doctors bully you. No, I know, but you know I'd sort it for you. Yeh, (*Abashed.*) I know, just where you're concerned mind. It's just, you know, I love you, so much, you're beautiful. (*He smiles a loving smile.*) Is he... good looking?

Enter ALEX, smiling. She sees STEVE and stops.

ALEX: Oh, hello.

Beat

STEVE: I brought you some clothes.

ALEX: Oh, right. Thank you.

She looks at them.

They're... all grey.

STEVE: Seen him then?

ALEX: I'm not sure they fit now.

STEVE: So what did you talk about?

Beat

ALEX: Colours. We talked about colours.

STEVE: Colours?

ALEX: Uhuh.

STEVE: Team colours, like strips? I mean Man U this season, shocking.

ALEX: No, not strips.

ALEX starts to put clothes away.

STEVE: Does he like sport?

ALEX: I don't know.

STEVE: What do you know?

ALEX: About him?

STEVE: Yeh.

ALEX: Not much.

STEVE: What's not much?

ALEX: Do I have any blue clothes?

STEVE: They say he was found in the rain in his skids.

ALEX: Boxers.

STEVE: He told you that?

ALEX: Somebody did.

STEVE: They say he's foreign.

ALEX: Maybe.

STEVE: An immigrant.

ALEX: Maybe.

Beat

STEVE: He could be a perv.

ALEX: They say that do they?

STEVE: Suppose.

ALEX: He seemed fine to me.

STEVE: Well he would wouldn't he?

ALEX: Meaning?

STEVE: Meaning you're vulnerable, pervs can smell vulnerable.

ALEX: Really.

STEVE: You were never that street-wise.

ALEX: Wasn't I?

STEVE: Look, are you going to see this bloke much? Bet he tried to swim here, they all want to come here, bloody hard with them all here, really bloody hard.

ALEX: Why does it bother you?

STEVE: That he swam here?

ALEX: That I'm seeing him.

STEVE: Well, as your husband -

ALEX: Why don't I feel that, why don't I feel there's anything 'husband' about you.

STEVE: You've forgotten, that's all.

ALEX: I don't feel it - feel it!

STEVE: Sweet cheeks, you're not well.

ALEX: I'm well enough to feel. And I don't 'feel' husband, I smell you and I don't 'smell' husband, I look at you and I -

STEVE: He is a bloody perv, all this smell and feel talk, complete bloody perv.

ALEX: This is me talk.

STEVE: No it isn't.

ALEX: It bloody is, from in here.

STEVE: You never talked like that, never swore, never -

ALEX: What did I talk like Steve?

STEVE: You know, just -

ALEX: Did I talk much?

STEVE: (*Lying.*) All the time. We talked all the time.

ALEX: I think I wore grey and I said nothing. Did you speak for both of us?

STEVE: It wasn't like that, not with me.

ALEX: What was it like Steve, really like?

STEVE: It was beautiful, colourful -

ALEX: No it wasn't.

STEVE: You remember?

ALEX: I don't feel it was beautiful or colourful, I think it was grey, bloody wishy washy insipid grey.

STEVE: Look it was complicated.

ALEX: By what?

STEVE: Not what...

ALEX: Who?

STEVE nods.

Oh... You had an affair?

STEVE: No, no, not me.

Beat

ALEX: Me?

STEVE nods.

Pause

We had no friends... I was grey, how did I manage that?

STEVE: He was... always around.

ALEX: A neighbour?

Beat

STEVE: You were in the car with him.

ALEX: Oh.

Pause

How long?

STEVE: I want to forget too Alex. I'm desperate to bloody forget.

Pause

You know what, when I was sitting there watching you wired up, you looked so... All seemed so simple, it is still so simple. We don't need complicated, not again, not no more. All that matters is that I have you... with me. Simple see.

ALEX puts her head in her hands. STEVE paces. ALEX and room fades. STEVE comes across the DOCTOR'S trolley.

DOCTOR watches unseen by STEVE. In frustration STEVE attacks the trolley with his fists. All contents on the trolley bounce up and down including instruments, coffee cups,

half eaten croissant. STEVE stands exhausted and almost weeping with frustration. DOCTOR moves into the next scene.

SIXTEEN

Hospital room. Bed.

Night. STRANGER is asleep but having a bad dream. DOCTOR comes in.

DOCTOR: See the vigilant pioneer is never off duty. (*Looking at STRANGER.*) Ah, now this is really, really interesting. (*To STRANGER.*) Ssshhh. (*To audience.*) I was hoping I could show you just such... To witness this is a... You might not be able to, you know, but the sleeping state reveals so much to the skilled practitioner. (*To STRANGER.*) Sssshhh.

She goes to STRANGER to calm him.

This needs attention, (*Sits on the bed next to him*) but it's a fine line between intervention and interference. You see the various strands and moments of memory can collide in wake, but in sleep, they can be like bumper cars without bumpers leaving a residue strewn -

STRANGER grabs her by the throat. DOCTOR struggles for air. STRANGER is strong, ruthless. DOCTOR is on the point of passing out. She grabs something and hits STRANGER with it. STRANGER realises what he is doing.

STRANGER: Oh my goodness.

He helps DOCTOR to sit down.

I am so sorry, so very sorry.

STRANGER hands her some water. DOCTOR begins to recover.

DOCTOR: Were you...

STRANGER: Drink.

DOCTOR does so.

DOCTOR: Were you dreaming?

STRANGER: More water.

STRANGER gets more water.

DOCTOR: What did you dream?

Beat

STRANGER: Terrible things, I saw terrible things...

Pause

DOCTOR: Please... ?

STRANGER: I can't it -

DOCTOR: It may help explain this.

Pause

STRANGER: It was a house, night. A big house, I was crouching, hiding I think. There were men in the house, they meant harm. I knew that, before I saw them I felt their violence. I saw them appear. They didn't see me. They were wearing black. Black mask... black guns. They went up the stairs. I knew, sensed people were upstairs asleep. I wanted to shout out, warn them... but I didn't... I didn't -
DOCTOR: That loss of voice happens a lot.

STRANGER: There were... thuds... but I knew what they were. I heard a scream, a very, very young scream.

Beat

Then more thuds. Many more.

Pause

The men came down relaxed, so relaxed. I felt their... satisfaction. One took something from a table the other looked. 'Memento' he said. The other laughed. They went.

Pause

I knew I had to climb the stairs. My legs were heavy with weight. There were bedrooms. In one a double bed, bloody... a body. A woman, a beautiful woman. I moved to the next room, two beds, small beds. I heard a dripping - blood from a little dark haired body, boy I think. But he looked delicate, frail, no more than seven. The other bed was empty. I looked round the room. I saw a trail of blood to a chair behind a chair, I followed it. I heard the breathing first. She was no more than five, struggling for breath, her eyes were brown, soft brown. She looked at me and... the fear almost stopped her screaming.

Pause

DOCTOR: Did you save her?

STRANGER: I woke up.

Pause

I'm sorry for your throat.

DOCTOR: Hazard of the job.

STRANGER: You have been strangled by many?

DOCTOR: Not many, no.

STRANGER: Am I the first?

DOCTOR: Yes.

STRANGER: Sorry.

DOCTOR: Don't be.

STRANGER: If this dream, if it is a memory, those children... they could be my

-

DOCTOR: Generally, when there's been a blank for a long time, the first dreams are often awful and terrible but -

STRANGER: But they were so -

DOCTOR: Listen, I've followed a lonely path, in medical terms, but I had no choice. I've been driven to deal with just this...

STRANGER: This?

DOCTOR: The horror of those suffering the residue of dreams. You know, it's that bloody residue... It lingers. It seeps into every corner of your soul.

STRANGER: Your soul?

DOCTOR: Oh yes, we medics - the more pioneering of us - are comfortable using the word 'soul'. Souls are delicate things. If they are full of that residue and not treated... well.

STRANGER: So we should forget our dreams?

DOCTOR: You can't climb into someone's head, especially your own and take the bad dreams out, you just can't. But you can do a Tracy Emin.

STRANGER: Who?

DOCTOR: An artist. She made the residue of her dreams, wake or sleep ones, into something else, a work of art.

STRANGER: I can't do art.

DOCTOR: Some say she can't.

STRANGER: But you say...?

DOCTOR: I say you, or me, can create a living, feeling, ever-changing work of art.

STRANGER: Ever-changing?

DOCTOR: Forever changing.

STRANGER: But that residue -

DOCTOR: Forever leaving that residue in your wake. I believe... I feel, it has to be the ultimate experience. But then, I am considered -

STRANGER: Crazy?

DOCTOR: I prefer maverick.

STRANGER: I prefer maverick too.

DOCTOR: Thank you.

STRANGER: You're welcome.

Pause

DOCTOR: Do you feel you are truly awake now?

STRANGER: Yes, yes I do.

DOCTOR gets up to go.

STRANGER: Doctor?

DOCTOR: Yes?

STRANGER: I am so sorry for your neck.

DOCTOR: It wasn't my neck was it?

Beat

STRANGER: No, it was not.

SEVENTEEN

DOCTOR enters at pace pushing hospital trolley. It is piled high with things underneath a green cover. She begins rummaging under the cover producing books and DVDs and giving some of them to the audience, the rest on the floor, unpacking her trolley.

DOCTOR: The thing about bringing about change, being very comfortable with change, is you can get a little... forward looking... I know, I know, I shouldn't, I should be ever present ever -

She stops. Listens.

Anyway, mea culpa. See the Latin comes out under...

Stops.

Did you hear that?

Beat

Call it the enthusiasm of the pioneer, or maverick, or whatever, the thing is, I was in the future rather than the moment, consequently -

Stops, listens.

I was too successful here. I empowered those involved, well not all those involved, but the ones that I did empower have become well, very involved. They reached, lungs bursting, for that shell and grabbed it. And now are actually about to surf their own emotional tsunami. And you know how... However much of a specialist you are it can happen... to the best of us.

Listens. What she hears spurs her on.

Anyway you'll see. Look...

Gets out some books from under the cover of the trolley.

I'll leave these with you, for you. If you need more... Waterstone's self help section.

She exits at speed.

EIGHTEEN

Hospital room. Chairs.

Music. STRANGER is sitting waiting. Enter ALEX. They are shyly pleased to see each other.

STRANGER: I'm pleased you could come.

ALEX: I wanted to come.

STRANGER: I ask if you are coming, but...

ALEX: They didn't tell you?

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: I told them to tell you. Are they the ones that snigger?

STRANGER: Yes.

ALEX: I shall say something to them as I pass.

STRANGER: I have said. They just said back.

ALEX: What?

STRANGER: They have said they are very qualified, all with degrees and all very, very busy.

ALEX: But they just sit drinking coffee at the 'help' station.

STRANGER: They do not make eye contact but manage to give you dirty looks, quite aggressive.

ALEX: OK, I will take the moral low ground.

STRANGER: Low ground?

ALEX: Uhuh. I will walk up to the help station, shout 'fuckwit arsehole nurses' stick out my tongue and run, you can watch from a distance if you like.

STRANGER: No need.

ALEX: No?

STRANGER: No. I have done something which will upset them more.

ALEX: Oh?

STRANGER: I have stolen.

ALEX: Have you?

STRANGER: (*Showing.*) Their newspaper. They run their lives by this paper.

ALEX: Do they?

STRANGER: First thing they do... gather round and read their stars. Then they decide if they should hold their tongues -

ALEX: Unlikely.

STRANGER: Or speak their minds -

ALEX: They have them?

STRANGER: This now they cannot do. They'll have to be like us today, live only in the moment, see if they snigger then. I have done well, no?

ALEX: Very well, very well indeed.

They sit. Slightly awkward.

ALEX: Have you read the rest of this?

She starts to flick through paper.

STRANGER: Yes, no, I started but -

ALEX: They are so completely outraged in this paper... You know, I don't know if I read a paper... If so I hope it wasn't this.

STRANGER is upset.

You ok? Sorry, stupid question - you're in a bloody hospital.

STRANGER: This. (*Newspaper.*) the innocent suffer. Pensioner raped in home, children stolen and...

ALEX: If you believed half this stuff - it's not - I mean you wouldn't go outside.

STRANGER: It might be true it might be -

ALEX: It's not this, is it?

STRANGER: No.

Pause

ALEX: (*Worried.*) Do you... are you beginning to remember?

STRANGER: I'm dreaming, beginning to dream.

ALEX: Oh.

Beat

Of people, places?

STRANGER: Yes.

ALEX: Are they... do you know if -

STRANGER: I don't know if it is my story or not.

Beat

ALEX: Is it a bad story?

STRANGER: Very.

ALEX: Were you hurt?

STRANGER: Others were.

ALEX: Bad others?

STRANGER: No.

Beat

ALEX: Did you -

STRANGER: I don't know.

Pause

ALEX: Maybe we should look at your stars.

She takes paper and finds them.

What star sign are you?

STRANGER: I don't -

ALEX: OK, what star sign would you like to be?

STRANGER: What one do you think I should be?

ALEX: Let's see... Aries no... Taurus... no... Gemini no -

STRANGER: You are reading them, is that cheating?

ALEX: There have to be some plusses to having no idea who you are...

(*Reading.*) Virgo, 'You have to let go of fears about the future, no one can know what is going to happen, no one.'

STRANGER: Is that it?

ALEX: That's it.

STRANGER: The reader of stars can't read the future in the stars?

ALEX: Not in Virgo, apparently.

STRANGER: Huh. They are desperate to read them, even before the coffee.

ALEX: Let's try Scorpio.

STRANGER: Must we?

ALEX: Definitely. 'In this moment the interplanetary kerfuffle going on will bring clarity and provide you with a clear blue starry vision. You may have entered this world in only a pair of boxers -

STRANGER: Boxers?

ALEX: But hey, carpe diem -

STRANGER: Let me see that.

ALEX: And carpe anything else you want to as well.

STRANGER: You are making this up.

ALEX: Of course but sometimes it's OK to make things up.

STRANGER: Is it?

ALEX: Or at least rearrange.

STRANGER: You think?

ALEX: When the truth is a 'help' station that doesn't and a husband who doesn't feel husband, then yes, I think.

Beat

(*Indicating paper.*) I'll take this back.

STRANGER: Together, we should take it back together.

ALEX: OK.

STRANGER: But I'll say I took it.

ALEX: And I'll say I took it.

STRANGER: They won't know the truth.

ALEX: Then we can snigger.

STRANGER: Snigger as we walk past.

ALEX: Walk past?

STRANGER: Yes walk past. Together. We must seize the day.

ALEX: We must.

Their hands touch on the paper. They are close.

Enter DOCTOR with an empty trolley.

DOCTOR: Here, you'll need this.

She gives them the trolley. ALEX takes it.

ALEX: Thank you.

ALEX pushes trolley off as she exits.

DOCTOR: No, thank you.

STRANGER: 'Thank us' Doctor?

DOCTOR: I've been asked to do some research with Kerridge, Parham, White, Brown and Kerridge... again. They've been drawn to Berlin. A city re-inventing itself, over twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and still re-inventing... population falling mind, reinvention isn't for everyone, but I really think I could work in Berlin.

STRANGER: You speak German?

DOCTOR: Maybe, don't know yet. Funding has just come through and we need to -

STRANGER: Carpe diem.

DOCTOR: Yes. Yes, that's right, seize that Berlin moment.

STRANGER: Then, thank you.

STRANGER goes.

DOCTOR: *(To audience.)* Now you may think that just because of Berlin that -

Beat

Listens.

I'm being negligent not seeing, controlling and assessing all outcomes as most serious researchers should do. But the truth is...

Listening, looking round.

I have to go... and I'm really sorry. I am, truly. But if I don't go now I will be very, very, very sorry.

DOCTOR exits as a hunted woman.

Enter STRANGER and ALEX with the trolley at speed.

ALEX is on the trolley tummy down arms outstretched as if flying and STRANGER is pushing. STRANGER spins the trolley around. They stop. They are both breathless but having the best fun. STRANGER goes up to ALEX, kneels and places his forehead against hers as she lies on the trolley.

STRANGER: When you are not with me. I listen, I stand with my head against the door like this and I listen, not with my ear, with my front head.

ALEX: Forehead.

STRANGER: See it cools your... *(He smiles.)* Forehead. The door is cool and I can hear voices moving through the air, voice, upon voice, upon voice, words just simply there, but they are words for me to take or leave. Many I leave, they are wasted words. But the words I take are words to do with you, just you.

ALEX: That's not good enough.

STRANGE: No?

ALEX: I want everything, your smell, your forehead, your words, everything you are, just now in this moment, this very moment.

STRANGER: Just you and me?

ALEX: Uhuh.

STRANGER: No luggage then?

ALEX: Baggage.

STRANGER: Baggage.

ALEX: No, none.

STRANGER: No... regret?

ALEX: Definitely not.

STRANGER: No myopic misery for things not done.

ALEX: Oh very good, and in a second language too.

STRANGER: Thank you.

ALEX: And means what?

STRANGER: No idea.

ALEX: Oh.

STRANGER: The words I truly feel... in this moment... there are no pieces of my heart that is broken or stolen or poisoned. You... you can have my whole heart because I feel for the first time ever it is whole, you made it whole.

ALEX: Thank you. You have very green eyes.

Pause

The following can be adapted according to the look of the actors.

STRANGER: You have very... blue eyes.

ALEX: Thank you. You have fine cheekbones.

STRANGER: Thank you. You have a delicate nose.

ALEX: Thank you. *(Touching.)* You have very soft hair.

STRANGER: Thank you. *(Touching.)* But, you have the softest of skin.

ALEX: Thank you. *(Still touching.)* The sweetest smile.

STRANGER: Thank you. The gentlest voice.

ALEX: How soft is your touch?

STRANGER: The sweet smell of your skin just here.

He smells the crook of her elbow. ALEX pulls his head gently towards her. She breathes in his ear and nibbles his earlobe.

STRANGER: And when you do that to my ear it travels from my fingertips to my hair tips.

In this moment... I like you very much.

ALEX: I like me too.

STRANGER: More than very very much.

STRANGER puts his arm around ALEX. She folds into him.

Beat

She puts her arms around his waist. Her hand slowly moves down to casually rest on his crotch. He freezes.

ALEX: Is that ok?

STRANGER: For sure.

ALEX: Good.

STRANGER: Is that ok with you?

ALEX: For sure.

STRANGER turns ALEX'S head towards him and kisses her gently and sweetly.

Beat.

She kisses him with longing.

STRANGER: Have you always kissed like that?

ALEX: I don't know.

STRANGER: Do you think you kissed many?

ALEX: I shall believe I did. And you?

STRANGER: I shall believe I kissed no woman but you, but am a quick learner for sure.

ALEX: For sure.

They seriously kiss. ALEX starts to undo his shirt, looks at his body.

ALEX: Maybe you are gay.

STRANGER: Gay?

ALEX: Maybe you'll suddenly remember and go all gay on me.

STRANGER: I don't remember anything gay.

She pulls his shirt off.

ALEX: Your body's pretty gay.

STRANGER: Sorry?

ALEX: Very well toned, (*Touching him.*) do you work out?

STRANGER: I don't think so.

ALEX: (*Feeling.*) This bit is very toned.

They kiss more and continue to do so.

STRANGER: Is anything coming into your head?

ALEX: Sorry?

STRANGER: Anyone else coming into your head?

ALEX: No, you?

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: You see nothing?

STRANGER: I see your lips, your lips fill my head, my heart, my groin.

ALEX: Oh, now that's in my head.

STRANGER: I know I've never felt like this.

Enter STEVE. Sees ALEX and STRANGER.

STEVE: What you doing?

ALEX and STRANGER stop, sort of.

STRANGER: What do you think?

STEVE: (*To ALEX.*) How could you?

ALEX: Steve -

STEVE: I want you!

STRANGER: She wants me.

STEVE: Shut it! *(To ALEX.)* You don't do this, do you hear? You don't do this, not again.

STRANGER: Again?

STEVE: Shut it you!

STRANGER: This must be hard but -

STEVE: Hard! Hard! Fucking deja vu. *(To ALEX.)* How could you, how bloody could...

ALEX: I don't know you!

STEVE: All I've ever done is love you!

ALEX: But I remember nothing of us, nothing!

STEVE: You never gave us a chance.

ALEX: I won't remember, I refuse to remember!

STEVE: I can tell you how it was. It was beautiful, so beautiful.

ALEX: It didn't look beautiful. I looked miserable and scared.

STEVE: But that wasn't me.

STRANGER: But you married her and she was miserable.

STEVE: Yes! - No! Look -

STRANGER: I make her happy.

STEVE: I do!

STEVE launches himself at STRANGER.

ALEX: Steve no!

ALEX tries to intervene. STEVE punches STRANGER hard, STRANGER goes down.

ALEX: Stop it!

STEVE kneels over prone STRANGER. He punctuates the next speech with punches.

STEVE: I've been so patient, so bloody patient.

He gets up.

(To ALEX.) You're with me!

ALEX: I'm not!

STEVE: You are, you're mine now just mine!

STEVE goes to grab ALEX. STRANGER jumps him. STRANGER is transformed. He is a professional. He disables STEVE quickly. STEVE is lying face down across the trolley, STRANGER has his arms behind his back. He breaks one of STEVE'S fingers. STEVE screams. STRANGER's accent is now broad Yorkshire.

STRANGER: Hear that? That is the sound of one of your fingers breaking. I am very happy to break the rest, like this.

Breaks another.

Now some answers.

Hurting STEVE.

Are you her husband?

STEVE: Yes.

STRANGER: (*Hurting STEVE some more.*) Are you sure?

STEVE: Aargh!

STRANGER: You choose which finger next, eh? This one?

STEVE screams.

Now answer me, are you her husband?

STEVE: (*Quietly.*) No.

He begins to cry.

STRANGER: Say it louder.

STEVE: No!

STRANGER: Was she married?

STEVE: Yes.

STRANGER: Who to?

Hurting STEVE.

STEVE: Dan, Aargh, My brother, Dan.

STRANGER lets STEVE go. STEVE lies crying.

STRANGER stands.

STRANGER: I bloody knew it. It didn't add up see. None of it added up as soon as he said 'Deja vu' so bloody knew it, I bloody knew it. He is so not your husband, so bloody not.

Beat

ALEX: And who the bloody hell are you?

NINETEEN

Hospital room.

ALEX pushes on the trolley with her things on it. She is defeated. She sits. She is reliving in her head all that has happened and the consequences of just about everything.

ALEX: I mean... oh, I mean... I mean... I mean what?

Pause

I mean... I married a Dan.

Pause

Dan.

Pause

Dan, Dan.

Pause

Dan.

She gets out the photos STEVE brought in. She goes through them and finds a few of Dan. She considers a photo.

Dan.

Considers photo.

Daniel.

Pause

Danny... Danny Dan Dan Dan.

She looks closely at another photo.

Oh... Dan.

She inspects some of the other photos of him more carefully.

Oh Dan you didn't...

Another photo.

No... you didn't...

Another photo.

And I knew it.

Photo.

So knew it.

Photo.

But Steve...

Photo.

Oh you poor, poor... bugger.

She puts the photos down and sits.

Pause

Bugger. Bugger. (*Starting to enjoy herself.*) Bugger piss... bugger piss bollocks...
bugger piss bollocks fuckwit wank.

She smiles to herself.

TWENTY

Hospital corridor.

Music. STRANGER is sitting on the empty hospital trolley very still. Enter ALEX. She is wearing different shades of blue.

STRANGER: I'm glad you came.

Beat

You're wearing blue. You look nice.

ALEX: You think?

STRANGER: I... I do.

ALEX: ---

STRANGER: They wouldn't let me come to you.

ALEX: No, they said.

STRANGER: And you said?

ALEX: Nothing. I said nothing.

STRANGER: Oh.

Beat

But you are here now.

Pause

I tried to see Steve.

ALEX: Really?

STRANGER: They wouldn't let me see him either.

ALEX: Oh c'mon! He'll never play the piano again.

STRANGER: He played the - ?

ALEX: Tsk!

STRANGER: Oh.

Pause

He's not pressing charges.

ALEX: I know.

STRANGER: He should.

ALEX: Why should he?

STRANGER: He had no chance.

ALEX: Are you that good?

STRANGER: I was breaking his fingers, I'd lie if he was breaking mine.

ALEX: Would you?

STRANGER: *(Unconvincingly.)* Yeh.

ALEX: He was lying, about everything, absolutely everything, everything that came out of his mouth, out of his bag, out of his everything, everything was a big fat buggering lie.

STRANGER: You weren't married to his brother?

ALEX: Oh, I was married to his brother who, at best, loathed me.

STRANGER: He told you this?

ALEX: He didn't have to.

STRANGER: Wow.

ALEX: Wow?

STRANGER: Well, to do all that... create all that... he must really -

ALEX: Really what, love me with a vengeance.

STRANGER: No. Not love, never Love.

Beat

Did he kill him?

ALEX: Does it matter?

Beat

STRANGER: You don't sound like you.

ALEX: You don't sound like you.

Pause

You were trained weren't you?

STRANGER: So they think.

ALEX: To do what?

STRANGER: I'm not sure.

ALEX: But you think what?

STRANGER: I think... It's something I have to...

ALEX: Remember, why remember?

STRANGER: It comes in moments, fragments, whenever, whatever, I can't stop it I can't -

ALEX: Are they good memories?

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: Then stop them.

STRANGER: I can't.

ALEX: You can. Do these puzzles see - *(Gets puzzles out, starts to show him.)* Do these puzzles and it breaks up the bad, blocks it or something -

STRANGER: But it's -

ALEX: Triads they are - there was this self help book on the floor and -

STRANGER: I can't -

ALEX: You can.

STRANGER: Can't.

ALEX: Won't!

STRANGER: They're not bad.

ALEX: But you said -

STRANGER: I'm bad. Really really really bad.

ALEX: You feel bad?

STRANGER: No. I am bad.

Pause

ALEX: Who knows this?

STRANGER: You, me.

ALEX: The doctor?

STRANGER: No.

Pause

ALEX: But with me you are -

STRANGER: I know.

ALEX: So you can be -

STRANGER: I can't risk it.

ALEX: You can't risk.

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: Oh great, that's great, that's bloody great. I read about this - Giuliana Mazzoni -

ALEX gets the self help book. STRANGER goes to interrupt.

No don't interrupt, (*Reading.*) here it is, 'They want a complete narrative not a changing one' -

STRANGER tries to interrupt.

Don't. Basically you are choosing to feel rubbish rather than risk happy.

STRANGER: No.

ALEX: Then risk us!

STRANGER: I choose not to strangle you in my sleep!

Beat

ALEX: Why would that happen?

STRANGER: It did.

ALEX: When?

STRANGER: With the doctor.

ALEX: You slept with her?

STRANGER: I was asleep, she came in, I strangled her.

Beat

ALEX: Is she ok?

STRANGER: You haven't heard?

ALEX: She's dead?

STRANGER: She's gone.

ALEX: Because of the strangling? She must have been strangled before working with -

STRANGER: She's gone because she's not a doctor.

ALEX: Not a - ?

STRANGER: No. All made up.

ALEX: Really?

STRANGER: Really.

ALEX: Her stethoscope was very new.

Beat

STRANGER: I think she was a very good doctor, a specialist.

ALEX: You think?

STRANGER: She knew I should meet you.

He moves closer.

Pause

ALEX: The police, they interviewed me first, about the fight.

STRANGER: Did they?

ALEX: I pointed out to the police that Steve said very clearly he was “going to kill you, you foreign piece of shit!” And that Steve had struck you first, struck you several times even when you were on the floor crying for mercy -

STRANGER: Mercy?

ALEX: Mercy and he was fully aware you were a trauma patient as I’d said “stop hitting him he’s a trauma patient!” And I quite clearly heard him say again that he was going to kill you, with his bare hands, “I will kill you with my bare hands!” And kept repeating it even when you broke the first of his fingers, which is why you had to keep going resulting in quite a few fingers being broken.

STRANGER: Oh.

ALEX: Oh? Is that it, oh?

STRANGER: Thank you?

ALEX: Thank you.

STRANGER: OK. Thank you for lying.

ALEX: I didn’t.

STRANGER: That wasn’t what -

ALEX: New life, new clothes, new truth. I’m choosing, choosing mind, to write my own new story, I’m helping myself, to whatever I want. Why don’t you?

STRANGER: I can’t tear up my past. I just can’t.

ALEX: You don’t have to repeat it.

STRANGER: I have to make sure I can’t.

ALEX: Are you sure you don’t want to?

Moving closer to her.

STRANGER: I want to be in your story, but I want you to be safe.

Pause

ALEX: Then you’ll have to try very hard.

STRANGER: I will, very hard.

ALEX: Promise?

STRANGER: I promise.

They kiss. ALEX offers the STRANGER something.

ALEX: Here.

STRANGER: What is it?

ALEX: Something to remember this moment.

STRANGER: Thank you.

ALEX: It's just my hospital wristband, not much, a memento.

STRANGER: It's a... memento. I think... I think I remember mementos... I think.

ALEX: Is that one of the bad things?

Beat

STRANGER: You know... I feel somehow... I like mementos, really like mementos.

ALEX: Good, that must be good then.

TWENTY-ONE

Berlin. Hospital.

DOCTOR is obviously waiting with a hospital trolley by her side. Enter a new STRANGER in underpants, frantic, cold and wet. DOCTOR smiles at audience. She calms him. Wraps him in at least one survival blanket and places him on the hospital trolley. She strokes his head.

DOCTOR: *(To audience.)* Guten morgen. Early morning but definitely morning. I'm a doctor, I'm very qualified. Some doctors - the old guard - see it as a 9 to 5 job. Tsk. But, us - us pioneers - consider our careers an ever-changing creative work of art twenty four seven. The ultimate experience.

Now this one. Is definitely a challenge, oh yes. Some might say a professional risk, but hey, you know I do 'risk'.

And I'm in this for the long haul, the very, very, very long haul. It is the threes isn't it.

She puts the stethoscope around her neck, looks at patient.

Want to surf that tsunami?

DOCTOR exits pushing trolley. Music.

End.

Chapter Four

The creation of *That Berlin Moment*

In this chapter and in chapter six I will reflect in turn on the writing of two plays: *That Berlin Moment* and *Petticoat Lane*. I will pay particular attention to my use of autobiography and memories in terms of the creation of characterisation, thematic content and narrative. I will also consider how I have manipulated characterisation, content and narrative in the writing of past plays as well as the two plays mentioned. This leads me to consider whether I am developing as a writer and honing aspects of my playwriting craft. I will draw on my memories of the frame of playwriting for applied drama purposes in order to think about changes to my frame of practice.

In my new frame of working I will consider whether I have honed my craft in terms of manipulating autobiography and memories. I will also consider whether I offer my audience possible structures and opportunities for change in order to enable a sense of completeness. Although the plays draw on autobiography and memory, the characters and situations are fictitious. I will also draw upon the thinking of the writers interviewed in the previous chapter, using their memories of their writing process to enrich my reflections on my manipulation of characterisation, content and narrative when writing the new plays. Finally, I will draw on reflections on the writing process of other playwrights or teachers of playwriting to enable me to identify and use perspectives external to the intensive and personal development process articulated in this thesis.

The creation of dramatic text

I am conscious that the debate regarding the role of the playwright is far from over. This was clearly in evidence at the conference “Turning the Page: Creating New Writing 1945 – 2013,” which was held at the University of Reading in September 2013 and eloquently reported on by Louise LePage in *Contemporary Theatre Review*. LePage states that “finding ways to identify, value, and interpret drama evidently persists as an unresolved problem where drama and performance intimately coalesce” (288). She goes on to explain that the conference’s main focus regarding new writing was “‘the author’ whose status, role, and visions are being challenged and changed by our contemporary economic,

political, and aesthetic, educational, practical, and intellectual contexts” (290). The debate is interesting and timely but for the purpose of this thesis I have created two *dramatic texts* (in Wandor’s terms), which means I am the sole creative influence, and therefore it is easier for me to identify my creative thinking. I will not be considering the plays as performance texts.

In Britain there has been a distinct lack of monographs written by playwrights on how to write plays. Steve Waters in his 2010 text *The Secret Life of Plays* puts this down to “the crippling myth of the ‘natural playwright’, a kind of idiot savant that haunts the profession” (6). This supposition appears to be based on two myths, firstly that playwriting is a “gift,” and secondly that if you talk about the process too much then the “gift” will disappear. In the USA, creative writing has been accepted as part of the curriculum in the academy for a longer period of time. The first recognised text that discusses how to write a play was published by Harvard and Yale lecturer George Pierce Baker in 1913, entitled *Dramatic Technique*. Kara Reilly provides a particularly reflective analysis of Barker’s influence on the evolution of American playwrights in *Contemporary Theatre Review*.

Further seminal texts appeared over the years with Lajos Egri’s *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, originally written in 1942, and Sam Smiley’s *Playwriting*, first published in 1971. Both focus mainly on plot structure and character and have been much revised and continually in print since first publication. In addition to these there appeared the more personal, wide ranging and increasingly provocative polemics by writers such as David Mamet, the most pertinent to scriptwriting being *A Whore’s Profession* and *Three Uses of the Knife*. However, during the last ten years, there has been an increase in the number of texts that comment on and inform the craft of the writing of plays by playwrights in Britain. Some are very personal reflections, such as *Obedience, Struggle and Revolt*, by David Hare and *The Crafty Art of Playmaking* by Alan Ayckbourn. Other texts have been written by writers who also have worked, or are working in academia and have mainly written up the content of their teaching. Examples include Tim Fountain, who provides a very personal and user-friendly reflection on practice, and Noel Greig, whose experience includes writing for younger audiences. Michelene Wandor engages with the theoretical landscape from the work of Barthes to Aston as well as the practical claim that dialogue should be the starting point for all aspiring playwrights. She is dismissive of most other texts published before hers, apart from Greig’s, claiming that they often demonstrate “a singular lack of argued clarity,” which “testifies to the complexity and, at times, muddle in argued understandings

of what constitutes the art of writing drama” (89). Writing after Wandor, David Edgar, who established the first postgraduate playwriting course in Britain, also pays homage in *How Plays Work* to the theorists who attempted to classify the mechanisms and techniques of playwriting, cherry-picking from the brief lecture notes of Aristotle via the Russian formalists and European structuralists, to the more theatre-focused work of Styan, Bentley, and Carlson. In this book Edgar also provides clear examples of applying what he considers to be predictable structures and patterns in practice.

Steve Waters, one of the writers who took Edgar’s course and who then (after April De Angelis and Sarah Woods) took over the leadership of the M.A., has written a text which he admits is placed to follow on from Edgar’s. Waters claims that the difference between the texts is that “in place of Edgar’s confident formalism,” he offers “a tentative ecology of playwriting” (*Secret Life of Plays* 8). In his article “How to Describe an Apple,” Waters reviews many of the texts mentioned here, including his own in which he claims he “elected to note surface phenomena rather than lay out foundational principles” (145).

Ultimately all the playwrights who write about playwriting, including Wandor, recognise that the art form has a “repertoire of conventions which its audiences bring with them into the playhouse whether theatre-makers like it or not, and which aspirant playwrights can study” (Edgar *How Plays Work* xii). The identification of such structures and patterns is useful to the playwright, providing, if nothing else, a shared language with which the writer can interrogate their own work in development; this can be important since most writers work alone and probably will not or should not show their work to a prospective commissioner until they believe it is a fully formed dramatic text. This thinking is echoed by Tim Fountain, who with his experience as a literary manager as well as a playwright insists that: “You must not send your script out half-dressed in public, or you will find it coming home in tears” (64). Therefore an understanding of the language used to describe shared conventions is useful as an aid to the writer in enabling them, not to slavishly follow the practice and belief of others, but to refine their own thinking on how they wish to manipulate the form and find their own theatrical writing voice. I need to be able to recognise in the plays I write how I specifically draw on my autobiography and memories in order to inform characterisation and theme. I need to be clear how self-invention, or adaptation of the self, occurs within the scripts I write. I need to be certain that adaptation of the self does not become self aggrandisement but that it helps provide clarity on possible future narratives for myself and my audience, personally, socially and

politically, by presenting alternative courses of action or behaviour, but told in a voice that is all mine.

Theme, form and content

Reflecting on my previous experience, when writing plays for special interest groups, whatever the context, I appear to use recurring themes such as identity, dislocation, self esteem, lack of voice (individually, communally and politically) and loss of auto/biography. I have responded on occasion to a writing brief but mainly I have not been dictated to regarding content and form. Therefore I must consider whether there are some recurrent autobiographical concerns regarding the choice of theme or themes that need exploring and clarifying, or whether my autobiographical concerns vary. I need to judge whether the concerns are still current or if, like Bean and Graham, I believe I feel comfortable exploring aspects of them because I consider I have already worked through my preoccupations regarding them and just need to focus on transposing the memory of the topic or event in order to use them effectively when writing new plays.

I have used a variety of styles in my playwriting so far, usually more than one in each play. I have written previously in more detail on the creation of character (“Writing Effective Characterisation”) and the use of language (“Listening Better to Look Better”) when writing plays for special interest groups, but what is significant in relation to this thesis is how I have created the main and secondary characters. Many of my previous plays have scenes in them that can be removed from the play and be used as a mini play in order to interrogate the issues highlighted for applied drama purposes. Most of the plays contained four such large scenes, which in turn contain characters who often demonstrate the experiences of the groups I have worked with and are written in such a way as to enable the audience to understand and be sympathetic to the characters. Whilst the removable scenes contain rounded characters, “gifted with inner life and the possibility of transformation,” (Waters *Secret Life* 97) their principal purpose has been that of secondary characters. As Dara Marks makes clear in *Inside Story: the Power of the Transformational Arc*, “the primary function of all secondary characters in a story is not specifically to achieve the goal of the plot, but to serve the protagonist in attaining it” (57).

The main goal in most of my plots so far has been that the main characters gain an understanding of the narratives of others and the understanding that all narratives can be

adapted, including their own, in order to encourage active citizenship. In my plays the main characters have mostly been presented as a combative chorus, a strategy that I discussed in the article “After Cyclops”: “The... chorus are seen as a failing subgroup. They are outside of the mainstream but secretly want to be accepted by it. They respond to this dislocation by being badly behaved and dysfunctional, and their overwhelming attitude is best described as passive-aggressive” (297). The audiences I have worked with inevitably connect with the attitude of the chorus, the main character/s, which is important because as Marks points out: “The audience enters a story through the protagonists” (56). The challenge for me as a writer has been to show an emotional transformational arc for the main characters, one that the audience can connect to on an emotional level, whilst employing a language style that is usually used by more representational two-dimensional characters, a style that enables the audience to reflect impartially on the actions of the main characters. Consequently the chorus seem familiar but also unfamiliar, as if they come from a parallel universe. I have argued that using such a manipulation of style and form enhances the dramatic tension of the piece whilst informing the debate in more detail (“After Cyclops”), but most pertinent to this thesis is that in my practice so far I have experience of creating characters using a variety of styles but have not yet created realistic main characters. This is unlike what Bean and Graham have done in their writing so far.

In most of the plays I have written I have manipulated time frames, sometimes moving backwards and forwards in time and occasionally having two different time states running simultaneously, with characters in the present observing and commenting on the behaviour of characters in the past and sometimes interacting with them. (*Not Yet, The Landing, Booters*). Sometimes I have employed the device of replaying certain scenes once the audience have gained further understanding, the aim being that the audience will review the content of the replayed scene with a changed perspective (*The Tipping Point*). However, the transformational arc of the main character/s invariably follows a traditional pattern: There is inner, intra- and extra-personal conflict experienced by the chorus, an inciting incident, then several scene climaxes leading to a major crisis followed by a climax. Or as Alan Plater remembered Peggy Ramsey saying when describing this popular structure: “oh darling, all plays are the same really, lots of little surprises and then a big one” (Interview). I do not offer obvious closure in the plays as they aim to invoke the possibility of a change of attitude and behaviour where the main character is concerned. I do offer choices and possibilities whilst recognising that there is always a cause and effect.

Utilising metaphor in applied drama is a familiar practice, the purpose of which is twofold: firstly, metaphorical meanings are the product of our engagement with each other, society and the environment. They reflect the ever-changing interactions that are possible. As Brian Woolland makes clear: “Understanding and learning to play with this fluidity must be central to any education which values creativity, which styles itself as humanising” (50). Secondly, the use of metaphor in applied drama provides an emotional protection, a linguistic buffer on sensitive and painful matters highlighted in performance. I agree with Bruce Wilshire when he claims: “The whole point of art is to put us in touch with things that are too far or too close for us to see in our ordinary offstage life” (94). The use of metaphor allows the participants involved in applied drama to engage with often challenging topics but in a protected context. From a structural point of view, I also concur with Wilshire that “it is not true that there is always an adequate literal way to refer to the persons or things in the offstage world which are referred to metaphorically by the characters onstage” (94). Sometimes the subject matter is too wide ranging or runs the risk of being too person-specific or simply unrealisable on stage. Metaphor allows for personal interpretation and consequently ownership. I have always attempted to explore the use of metaphor when writing plays. But I am mindful that metaphor is particularly pertinent when considering using autobiography in creative practice. In her book *Aesthetic Autobiography* Suzanne Nalbantian cites James Olney’s *Metaphors of Self*, in which, she says, “Olney had regarded the autobiographer’s mind as a metaphor-making mechanism with an impulse to order” (36). Consequently I need to be aware of my “impulse to order” metaphor and make sure it is an order that is theatrically engaging.

Like Bean and Graham, I consider my use of form and content to be mongrel in approach, using any style or structure which connects to my sense of purpose when writing a play. I have memories of manipulating a variety of linguistic structures and time structures, creating stylised and naturalistic characterisation as well as employing the use of metaphor in practice. I will draw on these memories, but aim to hone my practice of creating naturalistic protagonists and using my understanding of memory and autobiography to create a new frame of practice in which to work.

In the writing of *That Berlin Moment* and *Petticoat Lane* my intent was to place myself as the client of the writing brief, using my memories of the writing process to build on my practice, improve my control of the medium and hone my theatrical voice. I will also reflect on whether I can write drama that demonstrates the possibility of change, as made

explicit by Dorothy Heathcote when she wrote that drama “does not freeze a moment in time, it freezes a problem in time, and you examine the problem as the people go through a process of change” (115).

Intent and the writing of *That Berlin Moment*

I'm not alone as a playwright in gathering information from a variety of sources such as media, interviews, overheard conversations, friends and colleagues in order to gain inspiration for plot and characterisation. Generally I store the information, both physically in files and mentally, which is probably as haphazard a storage system as the files. Certain memories eventually bubble to the fore of my consciousness and keep refusing to be ignored, and they drive me back to the files. The writing of *That Berlin Moment* was informed by several sources of inspiration, which I found raised questions that overlapped and connected in ways which, if woven into a play, might offer the characters the possibility of change. On reflection, four main influences underpin the play, the first of which was my visit to Berlin.

I have already discussed my writing commission for the Goethe-Institut and its associated research trip to Berlin. Various aspects of my memories of the city still intrigue me. I have already written one play regarding the visit (*Not Yet*), which explored and worked through certain memories of the city, but I found like Bean and Graham that one play was not enough to reflect all the issues the experience had raised for me. On the one hand Berlin is a city steeped in its past. There were still bullet holes from the Second World War in the walls of one university building that I visited, which had previously been in East Berlin where there was no money to repair them. On the other hand it was a city rebuilding at a prodigious rate with EU money funding the obliteration of large areas for new high-rise office buildings.

Museums, the more obvious places of remembering, were variable in their authenticity. Certain museums were examples of meticulous preservation of the past, for example the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial Site and the Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte Normannenstraße, which was the Stasi headquarters. Others were in danger of being no more than “Disneyfication” of the past, for example the Mauermuseum Haus am Checkpoint Charlie, with its reconstruction of the famous border control building and a shrine to the deceased owner of the museum, complete with candles, placed by his wife

who now runs the museum; and the Dokumentationszentrum Berliner Mauer, the Berlin Wall Documentation Centre, which has rebuilt part of the Berlin wall. One research and exhibition project I visited, *Schrumpfende Städte: Shrinking Cities*, presented research proving that in relation to population, Berlin was shrinking. It appeared to me that there was a proportion of the population who were leaving both Berlin and the dilemma of whether to remember or not, choosing to start afresh unburdened by the history of the divide.

Secondly, I came across the story of an American man who had been found behind the bin of a Burger King restaurant, with no clothes and no memory (Forsyth). He was diagnosed as having focal retrograde amnesia. In some recorded cases of the illness the memories return if the patient is treated soon after the initial memory loss. In this case he hadn't received such treatment and at the time of writing his memories have still not returned. He is the only American listed as missing whose whereabouts are known. What surprised me was the reaction from others to his memories not returning. The overwhelming response was one of mistrust. People obviously found the continued lack of memories to be threatening and disturbing.

Thirdly, I was intrigued by something I discovered in my interview with Giuliana Mazzoni. We discussed the phenomenon that mental or physical trauma can result in the sufferer apparently switching to a completely different personality. Mazzoni told me that in such a case, if the old personality returned, the memories of the new personality would disappear.

Finally, I was fortunate enough to see a major exhibition of the work of the artist Tracey Emin, *Love is What You Want*, at the Hayward Gallery in London in 2011. On the subject of Emin's work Jen Harvie quotes Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, usefully recognising that "Emin's art 'both mimics and questions the notion of autobiography's authenticity, teasing the public as well as the art establishment about the limits and possibilities of the artist's re-presentation of the "real" life in autobiographical acts.'"(203) Most of Emin's work is autobiographical. The bluntness inherent in her work regarding her own life has made her, as Ali Smith claims in the text supporting the exhibition, "a repository, in the media... for all that's contentious in contemporary art" (25). Emin seems unperturbed by this, an artistic stance that is empowering for someone about to expose themselves further through the use of autobiography in their work. From a creative writing point of view Emin's work is attractive to me because of her use of language as an integral

aspect of her work. As Ali Smith argues, “Emin’s ear for the right word in the right place, and for the resonances of ‘rightness’ and ‘wrongness’ in word and place, are at the basis of her art” (24). Emin’s defamiliarisation of both language and the various ways she employs it, makes the message more powerful. For example, for this exhibition she produced scrawled notes in neon lights. The writing is animated, with the appearance of being rushed. Sometimes there are crossings out, misspellings and inconsistent use of upper and lower case. The writing looks as though it was meant for personal rather than public consumption and yet the personal thoughts are there on the wall in large neon lights.

One particular piece of art that resonated for me in terms of the creation of my new play was a neon sign that read “I Whisper to My Past Do I have Another Choice” (Emin 61). There is no question mark or full stop used, providing a sense of possibility, a chance of change. Emin does not offer easy answers in her work; in fact she “constantly reiterates the ambivalent feelings of self-love... and self-loathing that she has felt, but also that she has been made to feel in a patriarchal culture” (Harvie 207). It is this tension that I am particularly attracted to in Emin’s work on an autobiographical level.

Emin places her voice into a variety of formats and media in order to make herself heard but with an underlying tension regarding the right to be heard. I have used the theme of the individual’s perceived lack of voice and the right to be heard in previous plays, but the past holds many moments of memory where I have felt voiceless. From a background which included an uninterested, unreliable and aggressive father, where the discussion of feelings was discouraged, I went on to work in male-dominated environments where the struggle was not just to be heard but also to be able to engage in a shared language where ideas, when aired, were recognised for their authorship and not claimed by others. Like Emin, I am conscious of using a variety of styles and media in order to make my voice heard; unlike Emin, not always so creatively or effectively.

The experiences outlined above, from Berlin to Emin, combined to provoke certain questions. Would it be better to literally forget the past? Why is having no memories threatening to others? What are the challenges if, on gaining a different personality due to trauma, you prefer the new one and don’t want the old one back? And what may make a quiet voice listened to in order to bring about change? Taking these questions as my themes I decided to embark on writing what Attilio Favorini calls a “memory play”:

A memory play, by my definition, is one in which the intention to remember and/or

forget comes prominently to the fore, with or without the aid of a remembering narrator; in which the phenomenon of memory is a distinct and central area of the drama's attention... or in which memory or forgetting serves as a crucial factor in self-formation and/or self-deconstruction (138).

The title I settled on for the play is *That Berlin Moment*. By connecting the title to my experience of the city it hints at the desire to reinvent and rebuild in order to feel whole, but it also hints at struggling to come to terms with a fractured past and the possibility of forgiving and forgetting. Furthermore it hints at the option that living in the moment may be preferable.

The story of *That Berlin Moment* is that Alex, the main character, has lost her memory in a car crash and woken up with a different personality, one that she really likes. The more she learns about her past, the more she doesn't want her old self back. I set the play in the present as I wanted a sense of the concerns of the characters being culturally current. However, there is no reference to the year or the place so time is the non-specific near-present. Events occur in a linear fashion in order for the emotional conflict of people healing, which is usually celebrated, to be juxtaposed with the likelihood of the healed having to go home to places they don't want to be with people they didn't like and separated from those they love.

A main creative intent in *That Berlin Moment* was to produce for the first time in my writing career recognisably realistic main characters. All the characters exemplify the questions I thematically set out to explore. Some embody most of them, some only one, depending on their importance in the play. For example, regarding the question "would it be better to literally forget the past?" Alex much prefers her change of character, which is intelligent and independent compared to her previous downtrodden personality who only wore grey, said little and was bullied. Her challenge is to keep growing in confidence by continuing to forget the past.

Stranger is loving, vulnerable and caring with Alex. When evidence of his previous personality and behaviour starts to appear, it presents itself as violent and sadistic with obvious signs of military training. Therefore the challenge for Stranger is whether he can confront the past in order to have a future with Alex.

Doctor knowingly and continually reinvents herself. She mainly presents a false past: she is not a qualified doctor, but gives a very detailed explanation of her fake

qualifications and learning. This behaviour ties in directly to Mazzoni's thinking regarding how people will fabricate a past and a present in order to feel complete. Doctor's challenge is whether she can reinvent herself effectively; will it be best to keep with the lie or try to heal people in other ways rather than as a fake doctor?

Steve also invents an imaginary past, manipulating his own memories and trying to manipulate Alex's in order to feel happy and complete in the present. Steve's challenge is to admit to the past so that he can present a possible and realisable future to Alex, one in which they may have an effective relationship. But we see him persisting with his nonbelieved memories. All of these characters have been damaged or brutalised by the reality of their pasts, an idea that is hinted at more than fully revealed in the play. How to deal with the past in order to claim the future is the choice that each character makes, with no didactic resolutions offered but with a clear sense of choices on offer and being made.

Stranger is the only character we initially see with no remembered past, as Steve provides false memories for himself and Alex, and Doctor provides her own false professional history. Therefore he is the character who thematically explores why having no evidence of memories may be threatening to others. In the play there is antagonism towards Stranger from all other characters except Alex. The nurses openly make jokes at his expense and ignore his need for care. Steve is overtly racist about him without even meeting him, and Doctor is initially irritated by his complete lack of remembering, particularly of his dreams.

In each case the others find Stranger's lack of a past disturbing because it disrupts their efforts to create their own stories and control what they believe is their own fate. Doctor finds Stranger's symptoms a challenge to her fake professionalism, while Steve sees him as a direct rival for Alex's affections as he believes that Stranger impresses her more with no memories than Steve does with the ones he has invented for her. The nurses dislike his abstract disengaged attitude towards their obsession with daily astrological predictions and his minimalistic use of language as opposed to their *Daily Mail* inspired gossip. When Stranger begins to have flashbacks in the form of horrific dreams, Doctor is relieved and opens up to him, sharing her own fear of her dreams and therefore obliquely of a disturbed past. The behaviour that most of the other characters demonstrate towards Stranger suggests that a past, however disturbing, is a narrative that others can use to contextualise and evaluate their own narratives. The exception among the characters is Alex, who is threatened by the return of Stranger's memories; this highlights her fear of her own

memories returning.

Alex embodies two of my initial thematic questions, ones that are pertinent to her character only, and which are also the questions that most resonate autobiographically for me. They are: what are the challenges if, on gaining a different personality as a result of trauma, you prefer the new one and don't want the old one back; and what makes a quiet voice listened to? It is Alex who begins the play with the most obvious quiet voice. Initially she is interrupted by both Steve and Doctor, with Steve reporting statements she is supposed to have made, conversations he claims she was part of, literally putting words into her mouth. As the play progresses we see her attempting to claim her space to speak, to bring about change. Alex has a developing eloquence when discussing modern art with Doctor, and she also uses metaphor in order to express her urge to be recognised for who she believes she now wants to be. By the end of the play it is she who leads the conversations she has with Stranger, both in a physical passionate context and in their final concluding conversations. Alex becomes desperate for the past not to return and she questions Doctor as to how to avoid its happening. Doctor offers textbooks for both Alex and the audience. Alex takes the text and researches the subject herself, taking advantage of the offered possibility of bringing about change, discovering exercises that may inhibit the return of her memory. In the process she gains confidence in her intellectual capabilities. We eventually see an Alex who is becoming comfortable in her own skin and yet there is always the threat of the past coming back, the old self emerging which allows for tensions, acknowledged in the work of Emin, of the bold continually undermined by the vulnerable.

Having decided on the themes I wished to pursue in the play and the connecting of the themes with the characters, my next aim was to structure the characters, primarily identifying their action. This was a divergence in practice from my previous working processes, whereupon at this point I would usually concentrate heavily on structuring the plot. My new attempt to create a new focus is succinctly identified by Stuart Spencer when he claims that: "Action is what a character wants. It is the wanting itself" (41). Once again my change of practice was linked to the desire to challenge my writing practice in relation to the construction of character.

When introducing the characters in *That Berlin Moment*, I intended to present a level of uncertainty in the minds of the audience as to the truth of the reportage of the characters and their back-story. For example Steve's initial behaviour is at times unorthodox: giving a love bite to a comatose Alex, dancing topless around her bed, and so

on. This places a level of disturbance in the minds of the audience, implying that all is not right with his reporting of the back-story for himself or Alex. The character of Doctor presents herself thus: “I’m a Doctor. I’m very qualified. We have this joke about how many letters we have after our names, mine reach from here... all the way to here. (*Amused by herself*) It’s because I’ve specialised. I’m a specialist” (71).⁶ Stating her qualifications so explicitly disrupts the professional frame of “Doctor” for the audience and once again presents a sense of unease in terms of the truth. Doctor presents Stranger as challenging but uses metaphor to demonstrate her belief that she can deal with his case:

DOCTOR. But, actually sometimes you have to surf the latest research... surf as in with a board, like you are surfing a big blue beast of a wave. And us mavericks, well, we surf research like we’re surfing a Tsunami. Balance is everything, no hiding behind drug programmes or art therapy. You have to sashay in wearing nothing but your professional wet suit. (*Moves towards Stranger*) Not for the faint hearted, not this one. But, like I said, pioneer (87).

Once again Doctor’s over-confidence disrupts the professional frame of her character and this is exacerbated when she moves into action with Stranger and he proves to be more challenging than she expected.

There is limited back-story to Stranger as he has no memories, therefore it is important in terms of character development to show him in action with others. For example:

STRANGER. I might be a Doctor just like you.

DOCTOR. Believe me, if you were I’d know -

STRANGER. Believe you, why?

DOCTOR. Why?

STRANGER. You don’t believe me.

Beat

⁶ Page references to *That Berlin Moment* refer to the version included in this thesis and not to the published play text.

DOCTOR. What you must understand is this, this is not personal, none of this is -
STRANGER. I understand I'm a personal challenge to you, but what you don't
believe is that nothing is personal to me because I feel 'nothing' (90).

This extract shows Stranger in action challenging Doctor on many levels, including instinctively touching on her vulnerability as a fake doctor. However, when Stranger meets Alex he is shy, warmly teasing but instantly supportive:

ALEX. No, you're teasing.

STRANGER. Am I?

ALEX. I, hope so.

STRANGER. Then I must be.

Pause

You wouldn't suit grey.

ALEX. I know, I do know.

STRANGER. It's good you know (101).

The contrasting behaviour demonstrates Stranger as an example of the fact that, as David Edgar so succinctly states, "there is no such thing as an independent character... our attitude to a character is created by a matrix of impressions, presented to us in a particular order, and supported by evidence that is also orchestrated" (*How Plays Work* 47). Alex rejects the presentation of herself by Steve but it is in action with Stranger that she becomes more dynamic and ready to make choices.

This brings me to the next constituent of the structuring of the characters in *That Berlin Moment*, the identifying of the objectives of each character and the obstacles they meet. For example, Steve's actions demonstrate that he is a monomaniac. In action he shows that the pursuit of his objective, to make Alex love him, is so single-minded that he stops seeing her as a person, just continually trying to believe in the narratives he creates for both of them. The obstacles he comes across are Alex's rejection of his story of their past and her attraction towards Stranger. Steve does not try to understand the new Alex. It is his repeated determination to prove that Alex and he had a perfect life together, his single-minded choice of actions, which leads to his downfall.

I agree with Edgar that the fate of the monomaniac is to discover:

that he never really wanted what he strove so hard – and at such a cost – to achieve.... it is at that moment when the individual character emerges from the role.... it is the moment of reversal, when the character realises or understands the true nature and limit of the role into which their own ambition or outward circumstance has propelled them” (*How Plays Work* 56).

It takes the breaking of several of his fingers and the threat of more pain being inflicted for Steve to admit to the truth that it was his brother and not he who was married to Alex. At this point we see evidence of Steve as literally broken at the point of realisation. But I made the moment deliberately brief so the focus would be on the changed memory state of Stranger and its impact on Alex. Later, Alex reports that Steve is no longer a threat to her and therefore he has realised to some extent the flaws in the creation of the narratives he had constructed for himself and Alex based on adapted or non-existing memories.

The main objective for Doctor becomes apparent only in the latter half of the play when Stranger tells her of his disturbing and horrific dream. She makes clear that her reason for becoming a doctor, albeit a fake one, was to deal with “the residue of dreams.” It becomes obvious that in order to deal with her troubling dreams and the past that produced them she attempts to mimic what she understands to be the practice of Tracy Emin, who she believes makes the residue of her dreams or memories into “a living feeling ever changing work of art.” Doctor considers this to be the way to provide a coherent narrative, to nullify the negative impact of a traumatic past and “to be the ultimate experience,” one she hopes will make herself feel whole (111). She attempts to help herself by helping others to control their disturbing dreams and reinvent themselves. The obstacle to her realising this is the risk of being found out by her patients or colleagues as not a real doctor, consequently she tries to present herself as a maverick or pioneer, separate and enigmatic but learned, revelling in the protracted use of metaphor, whose validity becomes more suspect as the play progresses. Doctor finally chooses simply to change location rather than practice, but her redemption as a character is her genuine willingness to help others as well as herself, a benign fraud.

The objective for Stranger is to be with Alex. The main obstacle becomes apparent when he begins to dream and he is unsure if he is the victim or the perpetrator of the violence. Stranger promises Alex he will deal with his dreams so they can be together,

however the audience is left with a sense of unease when Alex gives him her hospital wrist band as a “memento” and Stranger has a moment of remembering:

ALEX. Is that one of the bad things?

Beat

STRANGER. You know... I feel somehow... I like mementos, really like mementos.

ALEX. Good, that must be good then (127).

What the audience is aware of is that the most violent person in Stranger’s dream likes mementos too. This action clearly indicates the choice Stranger has to consider: is his love for Alex strong enough for him to change his inherent moral character? It is through the character of Stranger that we come to realise that the journey leading to effective change is not always easy or the outcome predictable but it is still worth trying.

Alex’s objectives are to be the self she wants to be, with the voice she wants to have. Her obstacles are Steve and his determination to make her believe the fake past he has created, Stranger’s dreams and their implication, and most challenging, the possible return of her past personality. At first we see her overwhelmed by her circumstances and unable to see how she could bring about change. It is by engaging with the character of Doctor that Alex comes to realise the possibility of change. Doctor is the initial agent of change, offering opportunities and structures for Alex by tempering Steve’s determination to make Alex believe in his lies, introducing Alex to Stranger, and providing the trolley of books which contain exercises for Alex to practise in order to hinder the return of past memories. The danger of another character being the agent of change is that the main character may appear passive. I find myself agreeing with Lajos Egri that “there is really no such thing as a weak character.” The question the writer has to ask herself is: “did you catch your character at that particular moment when he was ready for conflict?” (89). The challenge for me was to identify the moment when Alex should become proactive, willing to deal with conflict and bring about change for herself, otherwise the implication would be that change for her could only be brought about by patronage.

Gradually Alex becomes more aware of her likes and dislikes and begins to trust them. She even challenges the agent of change, Doctor, as to the extent of her professional experience and knowledge. However, it is her disappointment with Steve for producing

grey clothes, a metaphor for her past life, and his irrational racism towards Stranger which make her begin to enter into serious conflict with Steve, challenging his claim to be her husband: "I'm well enough to feel. And I don't 'feel' husband, I smell you and I don't 'smell' husband, I look at you and I -" (106). Steve, being the monomaniac he is, tries to win the argument by attempting to burden her with guilt. He claims untruthfully that she was having an affair with his brother but as he loves her is willing to forgive; in real terms the nonbelieved memories are born from more negative emotions. This is a pivotal scene for Alex. It is here that she begins to claim her voice and, to use imagery from an early scene, it is where she gets her wish and begins the transformation from "caterpillar" to "butterfly." Steve senses this and in the next scene we see him having lost any sense of providing a controlling narrative for her by taking his frustration out on Doctor's hospital trolley, at the end of which he is left weeping silently with frustration.

The ultimate obstacles Alex has to confront are her own desire not to remember and the memories that are coming back to Stranger. Initially Stranger is the agent of change in their relationship. But Alex soon becomes more assertive, enjoying the physical relationship they have and taking the lead sexually. But when Stranger regains his Yorkshire accent and combat skills she is angry and confronts him with the ultimate question, which no character in the play is able to answer: "And who the bloody hell are you?" (120). Alex attempts to become Stranger's agent of change, offering the books and exercises left by Doctor, which she is using to prevent her memories from returning. But he rejects this, deciding that he has to be his own agent of change. Once again, a character has been offered structures to change but realises that they have to do it by themselves.

Thematically with this play, I explored specific questions considering certain aspects of memory. This theme-led approach presented challenges in the creation of the characters. Each of the characters explores a particular thematic question but all are interconnected by the questions. I concur with Sam Smiley when he identifies the danger of this as being that: "the interrelated energies of all the characters tend to overwhelm each individual" (141). He goes on to say that most modern plays "render a character more prominent than others... to portray the value and dignity of the individual" (142). I made Alex the main character, giving her the most developed emotional journey on the principle of "character arc" described thus by Robert McKee: "the... writing not only reveals true character, but arcs or changes that inner nature, for better or worse, over the course of the telling" (104).

The other characters do not travel as far emotionally, so I focused on their use of language to portray a difference in their characters. This is conventional playwriting practice, but I went further: not only does each character employ individual linguistic rhythms when speaking, but each of them also has attention explicitly drawn to their use of language, either by themselves or others. For example, in an early encounter Doctor accuses Stranger of altering his accent. Stranger in turn accuses Doctor of changing her accent (90, 91). This foregrounds the fact that ultimately Stranger's accent changes from nondescript Eastern European to broad Yorkshire and Doctor turns out not to be a qualified doctor. Another example is Steve being obsessed with the use of repetition when writing a note, even when the woman he allegedly loves is desperately ill in a coma (72). In each of these characters, explicitly highlighting language devices increases uncertainty as to the believability of the characters' assertions and the functionality of their memories. This ties in directly with the work of Mazzoni and others on nonbelieved and believed memories and the adaptation of memories by the individual, as discussed earlier.

I also need to consider the ways in which my characters serve my premise. In *The No Rules Handbook for Writers*, Lisa Goldman identifies the subtly different interpretations of "premise" adopted by Egri in *The Art of Dramatic Writing* and John Truby in *The Anatomy of Story*. I was particularly drawn to Egri as I worked on the relationship between characters and premise in *That Berlin Moment*: was I using my characters to "sum up the world view that is argued out through the action of a story"? (qtd. in Goldman 35). Ultimately, did I create a strong premise in my play? For Egri, this is paramount if a play is to be effective. He asserts that: "the immediate goal is the proving of the premise, and nothing else" (Egri 248).

The premise of *That Berlin Moment* is that there are strategies to bring about change and for enabling the quiet voice to be listened to. Some of these strategies are offered to characters by other characters, but ultimately the characters recognise that they have to be agents of their own change. Each character in the play attempts to bring about change and each does it in terms of differing recognition and adaptation of memories, and they often act from contradictory values. It is the conflict of values that continually forces the characters to explore the premise. Those who do so most positively, without providing knowingly false or adapted narratives appear more likely to have future success in making themselves experience a sense of completeness. At the end of the play, implicit but not explicit answers are provided. There is a sense that although it will be difficult, both Alex

and Stranger will endeavour to become their own agents of positive change in order for them to be together even if success is not guaranteed due to the unknowns in terms of memory. I do not offer obvious closure in the play but I do offer choices and possibilities whilst recognising that there is always a cause and effect.

Evaluating the creative journey so far

Evaluating the implementation of my intent in relation to *That Berlin Moment* made me realise that I had achieved some of my goals but not all. I was working in my newly identified frame of practice in that the characters are offered structures which could lead to the possibility of change, offering choices and possibilities whilst recognising that there is always a cause and effect. I had a main character who was the most developed of all the characters and I drew heavily on Mazzoni's work on memory to underpin the narrative and language-use of each character. I went further than I had intended in *That Berlin Moment* in relation to exploring the theme of the quiet voice becoming heard. Interestingly for me the need to be listened to eventually permeated all of the characters rather than just the main character as was my initial intention. But on reflection I found that in other areas of my practice I had constrained some of my intentions. For example, I do not explicitly adapt autobiographical material in *That Berlin Moment*; instead I appropriated elements of my memories and the work on memory by others. Appropriations of elements of my character or remembered feeling states were reflected in some of the behaviour of the characters; however, there was no use of specific stories or episodes from my autobiography or myself as a character. Like Minghella and Bean I appeared not to want to place a recognisable character in a play that could be identified as myself.

Interestingly, the characters in *That Berlin Moment* that contain some of my personal characteristics are the lost violent male figure, Stranger, and those who have an attraction to him. Both Alex and Doctor are willing to take on the aggressive lost male figure even when his violent tendencies become more apparent. Alex is accepting of Stranger even when it is revealed he may have had a very violent past. Doctor is drawn to heal the aggressive Stranger particularly after he has almost strangled her.

What I have to consider is whether constraining the use of my autobiography in *That Berlin Moment* resulted in a constraining of my imagination and desire as a writer to fully explore a new writing frame. Ironically, while I have focused on writing a "dramatic

text” without thinking primarily of the “performance text,” *That Berlin Moment* is a play for a small studio space with just four characters and limited production needs. Studio spaces are usually used for new writing or where large audiences are not assured. It also means a play performed in a studio space is not seen or heard by many. I was constraining the play further by limiting the number of characters used and the use of space. I intended in the next play to specifically concentrate on and redress all of the above-mentioned omissions of my original intent.

Chapter Five
Petticoat Lane

PETTICOAT LANE

by Sarah Jane Dickenson

CHARACTERS

PLATE-SPINNER

UNCLE BILLY

SADIE

OLIVIA
(Daughter of Sadie)

TRISH
(Mother of Sadie)

FRANK
(Father of Sadie)

MILKMAN

JANICE

MARCUS

RECEPTIONIST

COMMENTATOR

ANABELLE

BILLY BOY

DANCERS

A forward slash (/) marks where dialogue starts to overlap. Names appearing without dialogue indicate an active silence between those characters.

ONE

1961

*Vast empty stage
A Variety experience is about to begin*

Music circa 1961. Enter two DANCERS from the Black and White Minstrels show, one woman and one man in white matching outfits. He is in white top hat and tails with diamante detail and of course fully 'blacked up'. She is in a high-legged white Tiller Girl outfit. They are sublimely elegant. They come to centre stage and he doffs his sparkling white top hat to the audience, which shows how far his black makeup goes. They dance.

A PLATE SPINNER appears. He has long sticks and many plates. He starts to spin, drops a few.

More Black and White Minstrel DANCERS appear. They do the same dance as the original ones. They all start to help the PLATE SPINNER, whilst still doing the routine.

More and more DANCERS, more plate spinning, more help. The plates are spinning successfully; the DANCERS are dancing so very smoothly.

The DANCERS move off. The PLATE SPINNER stays centre, still spinning.

TWO

1961

Petticoat Lane Market. East End, London

Music circa summer of 1961.

Enter UNCLE BILLY. He is slick, quick and very East End. He has a large wooden slatted box with straw and a dinner service in it. He takes out a plate.

UNCLE BILLY: See this?

Shows plate.

None of your old Hong Kong rubbish this. Bona china all the way from...

Throws the plate high in the air and catches it.

Mr. Wedgewood himself.

Gets another plate out and chinks the plates together. You always feel that he will drop something or break something. He teases the audience throughout with this feeling. Punctuating his speech throughout with a chink or throw of china. Occasionally a plate or cup will break. He does not apologise - says one of the following: 'shows it's bona china darlin.' / 'Don't worry Missus you get a full set not one chip promise cross me 'art.'

You can hear the quality can't ya! But I don't want to give you this.

Gets out another plate and throws it high in the air.

Or this.

And another.

Or this or...

Throws three more plates in quick succession, each thrown high in the air. Holds all the plates. Taps the plates against each other.

See, no rubbish, but I don't want to... know what I'm going to say Missus? That's right! Eh, we've met before ain't we. Was my pleasure, always my pleasure Missus. Listen, I want to give you...

Produces a large serving plate from the box. Throws that up high and catches it.

But you're thinking - and I know you're a sharp one Missus - you're thinking that's all fine and dandy, Nat - yes Nat - not one of your common ol' Franks or Des or Rons - named after Nat King Cole himself I was. When I popped out

Mum thought I was the spit of him - Yeh I know what you're thinking - Mind you Nigger Brown is her favourite colour cotton know what I mean. I blame the Black & White Minstrels - I bet you are you are a bit more Harry Belafonte, Eh? Paul Robeson for my Missus. She likes 'em big, know what I mean - yes you do! Mind you, some call me Uncle Billy, strange 'cos I'm uncle to no one but father to many know what I mean missus? But enough carping on.

Throws plates in air.

Nat you say - I'm Nat to you eh? Or darlin' eh? - Nat you say, you're pulling my rather finely shaped leg - yes it is Missus, your old man's not around is he? But you'd say - and you'd be right to say - you'd say Nat me ol' china, what if the Queen herself is perusing the produce daaaaaahn Petticoat Lane Market and decides she is gasping - I mean gasping - for a rather nice cup of ol' char and thinks I'll just pop in on - what's your name love? Iris? Iris is it? Lovely, my Nan's name that. It was. It was. Eh I've got a heckler here, it was! Alright it wasn't - eh - but you sees her Majesty - god bless 'er - approaching through your pristine white net curtains - boil wash 'em every other Monday eh? Yeh I know your sort, - An' you sees her royalness and she looks as though she is gasping, An' you Iris, you say to yourself, 'but do I have anything fine enough to touch her Majesty's blue blooded lips, and you, flower, you, 'cos you salt of the earth you - you listened to your little ol' Nat -

Takes out six cups. Throws them in the air.

Six bona china cups. Six - not just two - 'cos if the Queen appeared you'd have a few neighbours wanting a nosey now wouldn't ya! That one next to you would be in like a shot wouldn't ya! - no, I'm messing -

Gets out saucers.

See I think of - And the saucers all matching mind. But I don't want to give you just that I want to give ya...

Pulls out a cake stand. Taps it with cup so it rings.

Hear that? Music of the China Gods. Quality Missus real bona quality! But I don't want to give you just the perfect tea service fit for a queen, no! I will give you much, much more 'an that my girl - Sure your ol' man isn't about?

Winks at Iris and gathers whole tea service together in a pile in his arms.

Honest up, not just this little pile of treasure.

Throws the service up and catches it.

I want to give you flower - oh I want to give you much much much MUCH moooore! This is the age of plenty missus, the age of promise and I promise you, I wanna give you, not one set of side plates, not one set of main plates, not one set of cups not one set of saucers not one cake stand all matching but...

Takes out another complete tea set and puts it on the floor next to the first one.

But TWO!

Piles china up into one pile as he says the following.

TWO sets of china side plates, TWO sets of main plates, TWO sets of six cups and TWO sets of six saucers -

Picks up the whole pile of china.

- you could give one away - and is it for the grand sum of ten guineas? Ten guineas I 'ear you cry! Missus, no not ten. Like I said the age of plenty, the age of promise.

Throws china up.

Is it nine guineas you enquire sharply 'cos you are no fool Missus and you know every penny counts, no Missus it is not.

Throws china.

Not eight? I hear you whisper breathlessly Iris so amazed are you at such a low price for Mr. Wedgewood's finest spode and Chippendale, no Missus.

Throwing the sets up to punctuate.

You get all this. (*At speed*) Two sets of six side plates - two sets of six main plates - two sets of six saucers - and two sets of six louverly bona china cups not to mention the TWO cake stands for the princely sum of six - yes I said six guineas - now would you Adam and Eve it Iris, yes you would because it is the bona fida truth so cross my heart - so how many shall I pack you up Missus? And what about your gorgeous friend there - you could pay three guineas each - what's your name Missus? Daisy? Same pattern that's on the china - what are the chances of that eh! You ignore fate at your peril Missus! Or should I say flowers - flowers eh, no stop it now...

THREE

2015

*Cooperative Funeral Parlour
The General Election*

Music: 2015. A white cardboard flat pack coffin balanced on a velvet-covered trestle. OLIVIA stands and stares at the coffin then slowly walks around it. She pauses. Touches it tentatively. Pauses. She crouches and peers at where the lid joins the main part of the coffin to see if there are any gaps. She stands. Pauses. She kneels and lifts up the velvet to see what's underneath. She stands. Gently pushes the lid to see if it is secure. It is not fastened. She decides against lifting it up to look inside. Pause. Businesslike, she takes felt tips out of her bag and puts them on the coffin. Chooses one. Bends down to the side of the coffin furthest from the door and starts carefully to draw on it. SADIE enters with a sheaf of photos. She closes the door carefully and stands by it, staring at the coffin. Suddenly OLIVIA stands up. SADIE jumps and yelps.

OLIVIA: Hello.

SADIE (*Whispering*): Don't do that!

OLIVIA: What?

SADIE (*Whispering*): Olivia! That's not funny.

OLIVIA: So is.

SADIE (*Whispering*): No it isn't.

OLIVIA (*Whispering*): 'Tis.

SADIE: You voted yet?

OLIVIA: Thinking about it.

SADIE: Oh Olivia. Someone threw themselves under a horse for you.

OLIVIA: No she didn't Mum.

SADIE: Did so.

OLIVIA: She was trying to put suffragette ribbons on it.

SADIE: Was she?

OLIVIA: Had a return ticket.

SADIE: Oh.

Holding out photos.

These any good?

OLIVIA: Can't see from here.

SADIE: Come here then.

OLIVIA (*Starting to draw*): Put them on the coffin.

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: Mum. The coffin.

SADIE: You put them on the coffin.

OLIVIA: You're joking.

SADIE: I never joke when standing within three feet of a dead body.

OLIVIA: Fine.

She goes around the coffin and takes the photos, begins to look through them.

SADIE: What do you want them for?

OLIVIA: To stick on the coffin.

SADIE: Really?

OLIVIA: Really.

Beat

Problem?

SADIE: No... Just...

OLIVIA: Just what?

SADIE: I didn't print them off at home.

OLIVIA: So?

SADIE: Just...

OLIVIA: Just what?

SADIE: Are you taking them off before...?

OLIVIA: No.

SADIE: Oh.

OLIVIA: They're copies, yes?

SADIE: Good copies. Quality copies. Quite expensive quality -

OLIVIA: Oh!

OLIVIA remembers something and goes to bag. Produces champagne and two glasses.

Bought us this.

She puts them on the coffin.

SADIE: Olivia!

OLIVIA: What?

SADIE indicates coffin.

OLIVIA: Oh c'mon, you're not religious.

She sorts photos.

SADIE: I know but...

OLIVIA: But what?

SADIE: Shall I...

She takes the champagne off the coffin but there is not a table to put it on. Eventually decides to put it in a corner. OLIVIA is looking at the photos.

OLIVIA: Yeh, you do the honours. Always the best at opening champagne.

SADIE: Learnt as a cocktail waitress.

OLIVIA: Did you?

SADIE: Student, summer holidays.

OLIVIA: Just thought it was 'cos you necked it a lot.

SADIE: That is not true.

Beat

Cava, I neck Cava - can't afford champagne.

OLIVIA (*Looking at photos*): God he was drop dead gorgeous!

SADIE: Not funny Olivia.

OLIVIA: Oh wow and in uniform! Positively lickable.

SADIE: Oh for god's/ sake.

OLIVIA: What's the badge?

SADIE: Paras.

OLIVIA: 'Mazing, elite.

SADIE: National Service - used to single out the fly boys for the Paras. Or the lunatics.

OLIVIA: Bit harsh.

SADIE: His words.

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: He got promoted - to Corporal.

OLIVIA: Brilliant.

SADIE: Then demoted.

OLIVIA: Oh?

SADIE: But all the men wanted to be in his platoon.

OLIVIA: Natural leader?

SADIE: Natural thief.

OLIVIA: Oh.

SADIE: Saved his men's lives on many an occasion. Managed to make sure they were bringing up the rear.

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: Yes. Looting.

OLIVIA: Oh.

Beat

I'll draw the badge here on top it's so gorgeous. And elsewhere?

SADIE: Elsewhere what?

OLIVIA: I thought you could tell me.

SADIE: Tell you what?

OLIVIA: What I should draw on him?

SADIE is uncomfortable.

SADIE: Olivia I -

OLIVIA: You agreed to this.

SADIE: I agreed to the cardboard coffin. Even that was going against his

wishes.

OLIVIA: Can't exactly see him wanting the whole oak number with fake gold handles.

SADIE: Not exactly.

OLIVIA: What then?

SADIE: A bin bag. Thrown into the Thames.

OLIVIA: That's illegal.

SADIE: I know that.

OLIVIA: Did he know?

SADIE: Course. Fly boy. Rules were for other people.

OLIVIA: This coffin is really cool, I mean flat pack, brilliant. I want one of these.

SADIE: Don't.

OLIVIA: I meant for you.

SADIE: What if I want an oak one?

OLIVIA: Do you?

SADIE: I...

OLIVIA: Such a rip off, you know they nick them soon as you go through the sliding doors.

SADIE: No they don't.

OLIVIA: Nick stuff off the body, jewellery, watches, gold teeth -

SADIE: Oh for god's sake -

OLIVIA: Unscrew the handles for definite.

SADIE: Not the Co-op.

OLIVIA: Did you get points on your member's card for this?

SADIE: Just... get on with it.

OLIVIA continues to draw.

Pause

OLIVIA: You used to draw.

SADIE: Then I had you.

OLIVIA: You used to draw for me.

She draws.

Do you remember?

SADIE: No.

OLIVIA: I'd say draw me a unicorn and you would. I'd say draw me a castle for the unicorn, you would. Then I'd say draw me a speed boat for the unicorn to travel to the castle in and a pink ball gown and accessories to match that all fitted beautifully and you would.

SADIE: You were a demanding child.

Pause

OLIVIA: I could be an undertaker.

SADIE: What happened to being a lawyer?

OLIVIA: Really helping people deal with difficult -

SADIE: Don't lawyers help people deal with -

OLIVIA: You taking the piss?

SADIE: -

OLIVIA: Anyways, it was politician.

SADIE: Was it?

OLIVIA: Yeh.

SADIE: You sure?

OLIVIA: Course.

SADIE: Think I'd remember if you said politician.

OLIVIA: Politician.

She draws.

SADIE: That's rich coming from someone who might not vote in a general election.

OLIVIA (*Drawing*): I could draw on these all day.

SADIE: But, the bodies...

OLIVIA: Just dead meat.

SADIE: But they might be -

OLIVIA (*Still drawing, head down*): Decomposing? Must put air freshener in, quite fragrant this close.

SADIE: No, what if, a car accident, or someone diving face first off a tower block. Or having been half eaten by dogs -

OLIVIA: Half eaten by dogs? This is Southwark, not Outer Mongolia!

SADIE: It happened in Southwark.

OLIVIA: Oh Mum!

SADIE: No seriously, old person, had loads of dogs, died, two weeks before they found him, you can't blame the dogs, them half starved, him half eaten.

OLIVIA: I didn't say I would be an undertaker, just...

Pause

She draws.

You ever seen a dead body?

SADIE: Once, when I was little. Aunt Mabel.

OLIVIA: Who?

SADIE: Aunt Mabel.

OLIVIA: You had an Aunt Mabel?

SADIE: No.

OLIVIA: Then -

SADIE: She wasn't an Aunt and she wasn't called Mabel but she was always in the corner, by the range at Nanny Hall's, who wasn't a Nanny either. Anyway Aunt Mabel died and Nanny Hall laid her out. She did a lot of that in the village. And you went in to see them laid out. They put pennies on their eyes but, hers were a weeny bit... and being five and level with them... I swear she was looking right into my soul. I slept with a torch and a butter knife for a month. Why?

OLIVIA (*Indicating coffin*): Lid's not stuck down.

Beat

SADIE: Don't you dare!

OLIVIA: Just a peek.

SADIE: No!

OLIVIA goes to lift up the lid of the coffin.

SADIE: I'm going.

She gets up.

OLIVIA: No Mum/ please!

SADIE: Seriously! I'm abso-bloody-lutely pissing off!

OLIVIA: I won't.

Moves to SADIE.

I won't.

SADIE: If you even -

OLIVIA: Honest.

SADIE: I just...

OLIVIA: I won't, I'll just draw, here, this end, near you.

Pause

SADIE: It's just he's (*Points to head.*) in here.

OLIVIA (*Points to heart*): And in here?

SADIE: Don't be daft.

OLIVIA: Really? Even now?

SADIE: I don't want to see him in there, I just don't, you hear!

OLIVIA: No, whatever, I wouldn't. You know I wouldn't, you know I, really, really, REALLY wouldn't -

Suddenly the coffin lid moves.

SADIE (*Whispering*): Did you do that?

OLIVIA (*Whispering*): No!

Lid moves again.

SADIE: It's not/ funny!

OLIVIA: Honest, it's not -

Lid of the coffin moves again. OLIVIA and SADIE yelp.

Nothing moves. They giggle nervously.

SADIE: It must be just gas or/ something.

OLIVIA: Something/

SADIE: Something.

OLIVIA: I'll go ask/ I'll -

SADIE: You're going?

OLIVIA: He might be -

SADIE: No he's/ not he -

OLIVIA: But he/ might be -

SADIE: He's not!

Pause

You go.

OLIVIA: No, I'll stay, you go.

SADIE: You go.

OLIVIA: No, you go.

SADIE: You go -

OLIVIA: No you -

SADIE (*Firmly*): Go!

OLIVIA: Sure?

SADIE: Sure.

OLIVIA: Sure you're sure?

SADIE: -

OLIVIA: I'll go, I'll just be a minute.

I'll stay if you -

SADIE: I'm telling you to -

OLIVIA: I'll go.

OLIVIA goes.

Pause

Lid moves again. SADIE gives a small yelp.

Pause

Lid moves again. SADIE holds it down.

SADIE: Don't you dare!

Lid moves again. SADIE climbs on the lid.

Stay where you bloody are you friggin' bastard!

FOUR

1963

A new small plain bungalow in the Huntingdonshire countryside

Music: Nina and Frederik's 'Sippin' Cider', sung by two of the cast dancing like a nineteen-sixties variety programme such as The Cilla Show. The garden of the bungalow is not landscaped and has been left by the builders with lack of care.

TRISH is in the kitchen, which looks out onto the drive and garage. The kitchen is a tribute to Formica and Cornishware blue and white china, which is a colour theme throughout. It is very sparsely furnished but what is there is tasteful. The back door is open. TRISH is at the sink but is watchful, distracted. There is a sound of a playful car horn. TRISH goes to a mixing bowl on the table and immerses her hands in pastry as if she has been there forever.

Enter FRANK carrying a bag, which he puts down.

FRANK: Hello babe.

TRISH: Frank.

FRANK goes to kiss TRISH in a very familiar way but she uses the fact that she has her hands in pastry as an excuse not to. FRANK strokes her breast.

TRISH: Frank. Don't.

FRANK: I know you still find me irresistible.

TRISH: Did you see Sadie?

FRANK: Too late. Ran her over.

TRISH: What?

FRANK: Daft cow. She was on the gate, swung it open.

TRISH: She's been there all morning.

A car horn blares.

FRANK: Hear that? Guess what it is?

TRISH: A car horn?

FRANK: Not just any car horn - 100% MG, white with red leather seats car horn. I tell you, I'm like a kid with a new toy, come and see it babe. Come on babe, please, just have a butchers -

The car horn blares.

FRANK: Tell her to leave off it will you.

He puts the kettle on.

TRISH: Your daughter, you tell her.

FRANK (*Flirtatiously*): Tell her to leave off and I'll give you one hell of a personal tour of the little beauty, you know you want to.

Car horn blares again.

Oh for fuck's sake.

TRISH quickly wipes her hands and goes to the door.

TRISH: Sadie! Leave it alone love!

FRANK: Did you see it, did you?

TRISH: Very nice.

FRANK: Very nice? Is that it?

TRISH: Very nice indeed.

FRANK: Very bleeding nice?

TRISH: I said 'indeed'.

FRANK: Indeed it is. Did you see the walnut dash?

TRISH: From here?

FRANK: That is the dog's bollocks of a walnut dash, and the leather, even on the bleeding steering wheel. Add to that me and my baker boy hat, worn at a jaunty angle I tell you - (*puts it on.*)

TRISH: Very Beatles.

FRANK: You think?

TRISH: More Ringo than Paul.

FRANK (*Looking at reflection*): Yeh, I do look a bit of a poof. (*Takes it off.*) But it keeps the barnet from getting in your mince pies. Got it up to ninety on the A1, I tell you those Romans knew how to plan ahead. They knew they were making a road for me to drive me MG on.

TRISH: Bet you can't do ninety in Southwark.

FRANK: Not in Southwark anymore.

TRISH: No?

FRANK: Moved to a flat near the offices, Soho.

TRISH: Soho? When did you get offices in -

FRANK: When I got the MG I drove down the Strand with the roof down and I saw one of mine up on a billboard, one of the fag adverts, and I thought, not bad for an East End boy who was brought up to think a family holiday was picking hops in a sodding field in Kent. Not bad eh? Eh Trish?

TRISH (*Mixing dough*): Not bad.

FRANK: Not bad? That it, not bad?

TRISH: You said not bad.

The car horn blares.

FRANK (*Irritated*): God's teeth. (*Goes to door. Playfully*) Stop that you little wormly you! (*He laughs, comes back in.*) When did you teach her that gesture?

TRISH: What gesture? (*Goes to door.*) Sadie!

FRANK: I'll cut that sapling down for you. Had trouble getting the MG in. It's grown huge.

TRISH: It's a while since you were down.

FRANK: You got a saw?

TRISH: You left one last time.

FRANK: Did I? You should sort the garden, it's a mess.

TRISH: With what?

FRANK: Your legs broken?

TRISH: I have a saw -

FRANK: Thanks to me.

TRISH: And that's it.

FRANK: Get a bloke in, god's teeth they must have people who can garden in the sodding country.

TRISH: And pay him with what?

FRANK: Fuck's sake, I've just walked in.

TRISH: You've sent nothing for months.

FRANK: Haven't seen you for months.

TRISH: Sadie still has to eat when you don't see her.

FRANK: Get a job.

TRISH: What?

FRANK: You heard.

TRISH: But you said -

Car horn blares. FRANK goes to the door.

FRANK: Oi! Stop it!

TRISH: Not until she's at school you -

FRANK: Isn't she at school?

TRISH: No!

Car horn blares.

FRANK (*Growling*): Come 'ere you wormly so I can eat you.

A child laughs.

TRISH: Stood in front of the solicitor - insisted you didn't want me to work whilst Sadie was -

FRANK: Don't remember that.

TRISH: You did!

FRANK: Changed my mind. Is she in proportion?

TRISH: What?

FRANK: Her head seems a bit large.

TRISH: She's four, four year old -

FRANK: Got the car from a great bloke, a real diamond. Bernie something, runs this car auction set up, he picked up I was going places, didn't push it mind. But soon got talking, 'bout company car, sensed I was going places, a real diamond. Ecclestone, that's it. He won't go far mind, he's too short.

TRISH: Frank we need to -

FRANK: I'll do that sapling now. Do a bonfire as well.

TRISH: Why a bonfire?

FRANK: Can't have a bonfire in London, bit of fun.

TRISH: What about Sadie?

FRANK: What about her?

TRISH: She's been at that gate all morning.

FRANK: Who was the kid with her?

TRISH: Kid?

FRANK: Funny hat a bit pale? Must have run off when I drove in.

TRISH: Pointy hat?

FRANK: Foreign is he?

TRISH: Red cheeks and pointy -

FRANK: Thought you just had potato heads down here not -

TRISH: That's her cuddly toy.

Beat

FRANK: He was as big as her.

TRISH: Pom Pom.

FRANK: Pom Pom?

TRISH: He's a clown. She takes him everywhere.

FRANK: Clown? Isn't she a bit old for that?

TRISH: What, an imagination?

FRANK: Jesus, I'll get the saw.

TRISH: Go for a walk with her?

FRANK: Walk where?

TRISH: It's the country, fields, lanes -

FRANK: Christ, I forgot! I've got her a present.

Goes to bag.

She'll love it, I love it, you'll love it. Uncle Bill got it off a bloke down the market, said all the kids have them. No don't look, I need to set it up, turn away.

TRISH: Frank -

FRANK: Don't be a spoilsport. Billy said the bloke was Stan, Stan Kopec, brother of Stefan, remember?

TRISH: The Polish twins?

FRANK: That's right. Father was a pilot in the war.

TRISH (*Quietly*): Flew in the Battle of Britain.

FRANK: Brave as hell, twins were brave too, I mean Stefan -

TRISH: Stefan was stupid.

FRANK: Eh, he was unlucky.

We all climbed the factory stacks, you know us lads climbed all the stacks round there.

TRISH: He always had to go further, better, higher.

FRANK: They'd put a wooden platform over the top of the chimney. I mean,

why? Two hundred feet up, what would you need it for? A thin wooden platform. We'd climbed ten, twenty, never seen a platform.

TRISH: But it was Stefan.

FRANK: Said he was the lightest, said he'd try it out, jumped up there before... Stan went to grab him, got his hand but... We were all there, all skiving, could have been any of us.

TRISH: But it was Stefan.

FRANK: He had a Dad with a bleeding Polish Victoria Cross.

TRISH: So?

FRANK: Course!

You and Stefan, completely forgot. Before me eh?

TRISH: -

Pause

FRANK: But I was the one that got your -

TRISH: Frank!

FRANK: Well I did. Bet he would have been a boring bloody shag. Now turn away. Go on.

TRISH does so. FRANK rummages then stands up with a professional bow and arrow. Draws it and points it at TRISH.

FRANK: Turn around.

TRISH does so.

TRISH: Frank?

FRANK: Like it?

TRISH: Point that thing away!

FRANK does so.

FRANK: It's the bee's knees. Stan says all kids in the country have one of these, I'd have loved one. Bitten the arm off -

TRISH (*Looking at arrows and bow*): These are -

FRANK: Quality. No rubbish from Stan, a diamond.

TRISH (*Looking at arrows*): Frank, these are steel tipped.

FRANK: So?

TRISH: They could kill a deer at a hundred paces.

FRANK: Quality see.

TRISH: Or a small child or both at the same time!

FRANK: I'll show her how to do it.

FRANK tries the bow.

TRISH: Frank -

FRANK: Okay the bow's a bit tough but -

TRISH: She's four!

FRANK: Jesus wept - Okay I'll make her a small bow, from that sapling, I'll get on with it. (*At door.*) Oi! Sadie! Want to help your old Dad get that tree down?

FRANK exits.

FIVE

1963

Garage of Bungalow

FRANK is sawing, singing quietly. SADIE is standing watching. She steps closer.

FRANK: Back. You're in my light.

SADIE steps back. FRANK saws and hums. The song is 'Silkie.' SADIE steps closer.

Back.

SADIE steps back. FRANK carries on sawing and singing quietly. SADIE edges forward.

(Irritated): Back!

FRANK saws. SADIE begins to sing 'Silkie'. Quietly at first then with more confidence. FRANK pauses, watches, then starts to join in. They sing a sweet duet.

Pause

SADIE moves towards FRANK. He sees this but ignores it and continues to saw.

SADIE: Daddy?

FRANK *(Irritated)*: What.

SADIE: -

FRANK sings to himself. He continues to saw.

(Quietly): Back.

She goes away.

SIX

1963

Bungalow. Kitchen

TRISH is washing up at the sink.

Enter FRANK. Blood is pouring from his hand.

FRANK: Jesus wept!

TRISH: What now?

FRANK: I need the sink.

TRISH: What did you do?

FRANK (*Sharply*): What does it look like?

TRISH (*Looking at FRANK's hand*): That's deep.

FRANK: Plasters?

TRISH: You need more than a plaster.

FRANK (*Irritated*): Christ! Just get the plasters!

TRISH: Fine.

She gets him a plaster.

FRANK: Jesus, bloody country.

TRISH: I didn't ask you to make a bonfire.

FRANK: I did this sawing.

TRISH: I didn't ask you to saw.

FRANK: Fuck's sake, I'm doing you a favour.

TRISH starts to mix ingredients in a bowl.

TRISH: Where's Sadie?

FRANK: I told her to put the saw away.

TRISH: What!

FRANK: She knows where it goes. She was getting something to stand on to put it back, don't you have a ladder?

TRISH: Frank -

FRANK: She was sorting it, balancing stuff.

TRISH goes out quickly. FRANK sits at the table, gets annoyed with the plaster, grabs a tea towel. TRISH returns.

TRISH: She's fine, fine. Was trying to finish sawing the log, with the bow saw of course, but she's fine, now.

FRANK: See, you fuss.

TRISH: Yes, sorry, all children should learn to play with razor sharp bow saws

before they start school.

FRANK (*Getting up*): Fine. I'll finish up.

TRISH: But, your hand -

FRANK: I'll finish up then get back to town.

TRISH: Go?

FRANK: You 'eard.

TRISH: But, Sadie thinks you're staying for the weekend to -

FRANK: Is she very bright?

TRISH: Bright?

FRANK: A full shilling?

TRISH: Of course she's -

FRANK: Your sisters aren't that bright.

TRISH: Why do you think she's -

FRANK: Five times I had to say pass the bleeding claw hammer.

Beat

TRISH: And did she?

FRANK: After I pointed at it. Stood there like that. (*Shows.*) I bought that hammer didn't I?

TRISH: Did you not stop to think -

FRANK: Here we go.

He starts to go.

TRISH: Many adults don't know what a claw hammer is.

FRANK: I tell you what, don't let her out there with me again.

TRISH: You hardly see her, she -

FRANK: She can come to town.

TRISH: Thought Delia wasn't keen.

FRANK: She'd have her like a shot.

TRISH: Last time she stayed with you, Sadie said she gave her half a crown and told her to bugger off to the park and not come back until tea.

FRANK: So?

TRISH: Sadie didn't even know where the park was. Where were you Frank?

FRANK: You're such a bitter tart.

TRISH: She's pregnant isn't she. Well is she Frank?

FRANK: Jealousy makes you look very plain really bloody -

TRISH: Jealous of what? That she has a bloke who will shag around as soon as she starts showing?

FRANK grabs TRISH round the throat. It hurts.

FRANK: You should forget, I have. Not worth remembering. None of it -

SADIE charges into the kitchen yelling with a claw hammer and hits FRANK on the knee. It hurts. FRANK falls to the floor.

SADIE: You DARE hit my Mum you GIT!

FRANK: Argh!/ You stupid little -

SADIE: GIT GIT GIT GIT -

SADIE raises the hammer.

FRANK: Get the bloody/ hammer!

TRISH: Sadie -

SADIE: CLAW hammer, bloody/ CLAW hammer!

TRISH tries to grab the hammer but SADIE bugs it to her and stares angrily at FRANK.

FRANK: Jesus wept!

TRISH: Sadie.

SADIE: What?

TRISH: Sadie go outside.

SADIE: What if he -

TRISH: Go outside.

SADIE: But Mum?

TRISH: Outside!

SADIE reluctantly goes outside, still clutching the hammer.

FRANK: You should control your bloody little -

SADIE: I'm just outside, I'm staying JUST outside.

FRANK: God's teeth! I'm supposed to be playing squash with a client.

TRISH: When?

FRANK: Jesus wept, it's swelling up.

TRISH: If you put ice on it, it should -

FRANK: By tomorrow? You stupid - You got ice?

TRISH: Tomorrow?

FRANK hobbles over to fridge, looks in ice box.

FRANK (*Takes out ice tray*): Empty. Jesus!

TRISH: So you weren't planning on staying?

FRANK: Do you know how boring you are? (*In pain.*) Jesus! Bonfire, then I'm pissing off.

FRANK exits.

SEVEN

2015

*Cooperative Funeral Parlour
The General Election*

Music. 2015.

SADIE has her hand firmly on the coffin. She looks towards her bag. She reaches for the bag whilst trying not to take her hand from the coffin. She cannot reach easily. Ends up contorting herself trying to drag the bag over with her foot, all the while keeping her hand on the coffin. Eventually she succeeds. She roots in her bag and finds a roll of parcel tape.

SADIE: Thought so.

She wraps the parcel tape generously around the coffin, securing the lid. She uses the whole roll. Pause. She picks up the champagne and glasses. Puts glasses on coffin and opens champagne. Champagne overflows and spills on to the coffin.

Shit, shit, shit!

There is nothing to wipe it up with. She stops bothering.

Sod it. (To coffin.) Drinks are on you then.

She giggles.

Drinks are on... Get it?

Giggles.

Beat

You never found me amusing.

Enter OLIVIA. Takes in the parcel tape.

SADIE: Problem?

OLIVIA: Not anymore.

EIGHT

2015

*Cooperative Funeral Parlour
General Election*

The coffin has more decoration on it, with a few pictures. SADIE and OLIVIA are sitting crossed-legged, facing each other. They each have a photo on their foreheads.

OLIVIA: Have I given birth?

SADIE: No.

OLIVIA: Am I a father?

SADIE: No.

OLIVIA: Did we have any singles in our family?

SADIE: Only via divorce.

OLIVIA: Blokes without kids?

SADIE: Definitely not.

OLIVIA: So how can I not be a father?

SADIE: It's Uncle Billy.

OLIVIA: Wasn't he a -

SADIE: Yes and no. Well, no. Yes. No.

OLIVIA: Ooooooh.

Takes photo off of her forehead and looks at it.

OLIVIA: Was he such a legend?

SADIE (*Thinking*): No.

NINE

2015

*Cooperative Funeral Parlour
The General Election*

SADIE and OLIVIA are sitting cross-legged. They have pictures pinned all over them. Both have one on their foreheads. There are two champagne bottles open.

SADIE: Am I old?

OLIVIA: Not in the picture.

SADIE: Am I cantankerous?

OLIVIA: No.

SADIE: Am I a faith healer?

OLIVIA: Don't think so.

SADIE: Do I say Jesus will take you unless you tell me what your Mother is up to?

OLIVIA: No.

SADIE: Not Great Nanna then.

OLIVIA: You're very like her.

SADIE: What? Great Nanna?

OLIVIA: The picture.

SADIE: Not Auntie Bet, I am so not like Auntie - people say it's the nose but mine doesn't have that syphilitic wideness -

OLIVIA: Mum!

SADIE: It's a slum thing! You come from slum stock you come from syphilitic stock. You were lucky, you got away without the wide nose. Anyway she's a racist, homophobic -

OLIVIA: Ranting -

SADIE: Daily Mail reading -

OLIVIA: It's not her!

SADIE: Oh.

Beat

I'm like them?

OLIVIA: Yes.

Beat

SADIE: It's not you is it?

OLIVIA: God no!

SADIE: Why 'god no'?

OLIVIA: Okay, just no.

Beat

SADIE: There are bits of me/ in you.

OLIVIA: /No there isn't.

SADIE: Is.

OLIVIA: Not.

SADIE (*Little*): Is -

OLIVIA: Can we get on with this?

Beat

SADIE: Am I attractive?

OLIVIA: Stunning, in this photo.

SADIE: Am I kind?

OLIVIA: Oh yes.

SADIE: Am I intelligent?

OLIVIA: Definitely.

SADIE: Am I sensitive, caring and a good listener?

OLIVIA: Oh yes.

SADIE: In our family?

OLIVIA: Course.

SADIE: You sure?

OLIVIA: Sure.

Pause

SADIE: It's a picture of me is it?

OLIVIA: No.

SADIE: You sure?

OLIVIA: Oh, I'm very sure.

SADIE: Is.

OLIVIA: Isn't.

SADIE: If it turns out to be me I'll -

OLIVIA: It's so not you!

SADIE: But you said -

OLIVIA snatches photo and shows her.

SADIE: Like her?

OLIVIA: Uhuh.

SADIE: No. No no no no no.

OLIVIA: Mum -

SADIE: Okay, okay, okay, okay. Okay. You think?

OLIVIA: I do.

SADIE: Fine.

OLIVIA: Fine?

SADIE: Course. You think I'm like my mum, then you are definitely like me.

OLIVIA: But -

SADIE: Tough!

TEN

1963

Bungalow. Kitchen

Music circa 1963. We hear a child scream in horror. FRANK drags SADIE in by the scruff of the neck. She is trying to hit him with the hammer but she is too distraught to get a controlled shot in.

TRISH (To FRANK): What did you do?

SADIE: Effing bastard!

FRANK: Right that's it.

He puts her across his knee to smack her.

TRISH: No!

SADIE bites the inside of his leg. He yelps and drops her to the floor.

FRANK: She bit me!

SADIE: Bloody git bloody -!

TRISH: Sadie!

SADIE lies there sobbing. TRISH gathers her.

SADIE: He put Pom Pom on the bonfire!

TRISH: You did what?!

FRANK: It smelt funny.

TRISH: How could you!

SADIE wails.

FRANK: Your daughter's out of control.

TRISH: My daughter?

FRANK: She doesn't behave like that when she stays with me.

TRISH: When is she with you Frank?

FRANK: When do I have - I work, bloody hard. You may want to be like your family but I don't.

TRISH: I don't either, that's why I'm here, out of town.

FRANK: In the middle of bloody nowhere.

TRISH: Sadie gets to breathe fresh air not bus fumes and smog.

FRANK: I'm making a business, advertising, the way forward, don't need a silver spoon stuck up your arse. You never did get it.

TRISH: Oh I got it, got you staying out 'til all hours.

FRANK: I was working!

TRISH: I got the smell of other women on you.

FRANK: Is it surprising when you were so bloody jealous?

TRISH: I had reason to be.

FRANK: Delia gets it. 'Cos she's young.

TRISH: She's got the acne to prove it.

FRANK: Feeling old babe?

TRISH: Oh, I'm feeling all of my twenty fours years and I'm feeling I'd really like you to go.

FRANK: Oh, so you want me to go now?

TRISH: Yes, I do.

FRANK: Don't think so babe, this is my house.

TRISH: It's Sadie's home.

FRANK: My name on the deeds, I could sell it tomorrow, might have to for business purposes. Sadie keep a bag packed darling, you might have to come and live with your old man.

TRISH: You/ bastard.

FRANK: /Delia will be your new Mummy, she's having a baby for you to play with. You like babies don't you, Want to come and live with your Dad eh and your new brother or sister?

TRISH: Frank -

FRANK: Come back to London, see the sights, Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and ice cream, every day, proper ice cream from the Italians near me, best ice cream in the Universe, come live with your ol' man in a proper family, did I say about the cartoon cinemas? Twenty fours hours a day they show 'em, sit there with ice cream just watchin'. Whatcha say Sadie, eh?

SADIE (*Quietly*): Yes.

FRANK: Yes? Was that a yes?

SADIE: Yes.

TRISH is hurt.

FRANK: Well that's... yeh, lovely babe.

SADIE: I'll play with the new baby.

FRANK: Right. Well, I'll have to make a phone call first, it might be, have to be, in a bit, and we'll see how it goes eh? But babe it will be -

SADIE: Yes. I'll play with the baby every day daddy, with my CLAW hammer!

FRANK: She is like your bloody sisters.

There is a loud drone of aeroplane engines.

FRANK: What the Jesus wept is that?

TRISH: Aeroplanes.

SADIE (*Worried*): Mummy?

TRISH: Might be the air bases.

FRANK: What air bases? Knew they were round here in the war but -

TRISH: American air bases, they often do drills but not all at the same time.

SADIE: Mummy?

TRISH: It's alright, the wind is blowing the noise our way.

The noise gets louder.

FRANK: That's not alright. Could be a launch.

TRISH: A launch?

FRANK: What else would they kick off like that for? Put the box on.

TRISH: We don't have one.

FRANK: God's teeth. I'll get Bob on the dog and bone.

TRISH: Bob?

FRANK: Partner Bob.

TRISH: Bob Fisher?

FRANK: He'll be at home in front of the box.

TRISH: You're in partnership with Bob?

FRANK: He's married to my sister.

TRISH: He hates you.

FRANK: Just when he's pissed.

Picks up phone.

There's someone on the line.

TRISH: It's a party line.

FRANK: Party bloody - Who are you? I don't care, get your Khyber off of this phone. Pass. Khyber Pass - yes that's right!

Puts phone down.

(To TRISH) Bloody party line?

TRISH: It's cheaper.

SADIE: Mummy?

FRANK *(Picks up phone)*: God's teeth, you still there!

TRISH: I have to live here.

FRANK: You won't be living here if a nuclear bomb drops on your head! *(Into phone.)* You heard! Good, they've pissed off.

He starts to dial.

SADIE: Mummy? A bomb?

TRISH: It's alright.

FRANK: Bob? Frank. Has anything kicked off? Like a nuclear war or anything. Yeh, nuclear. Trish is in a right old two and eight. Yeh, I'm at hers. Yeh I know I said that but - look no box here - I know mate we're in the sticks here. Pop it on, put her mind at rest. Thanks mate.

TRISH: Mummy, a bomb?

TRISH: Shh Sadie -

SADIE: If a bomb lands I'll run, really fast, I'm a fast runner, I'll run and run and run and -

FRANK: Kennedy?

SADIE: Kennedy?

FRANK: Bloody hell.

TRISH: President of America.

SADIE: He's dropped a bomb?

FRANK: Fuck me. Thanks mate. Yeh do that. Love to Babe.

He puts the phone down.

TRISH: Well?

FRANK: A sniper got Kennedy. Think it's a loony but, dunno. Bob thinks they're not sure if the Russians are behind it, distraction technique before a first strike.

Drone of aeroplanes gets louder.

FRANK: Bollocks to this, I'm going back to town.

TRISH: Won't they hit there first?

FRANK: Don't think so, get the bases first so can't retaliate.

SADIE: Mummy let's run, run really fast, I'll wait for you, keep with you, run together.

FRANK (*Getting stuff together*): I'd offer you a lift, but it's a two-seater so...

SADIE: Come on mummy let's -

FRANK: See. She wouldn't leave you anyway.

Going.

Bye wormly, see you soon.

FRANK exits.

SADIE: Come ON Mummy let's -

TRISH: No Sadie.

Cuddling her.

No, we'll stay here and -

SADIE: But Mum -

TRISH: If we run off now the Fairies won't know where to come, will they? No. Let's take time to write a message to them, let them know the situation, send it, have some tea and if we're tired, have a little sleep and then, then we'll see.

SADIE: The Fairies?

TRISH: Yes?

SADIE: Will they come?

Beat

TRISH: Of course they'll come.

SADIE: But -

TRISH: What do you think they'll come in? A coach? Drawn by unicorns? Or a flying ship with peacocks -

SADIE: In a tank.

TRISH: A tank?

SADIE: That no bombs can break.

TRISH: Tank it is then. What colour is the tank?

SADIE: Oh sky blue, Fairies only travel in sky blue things.

TRISH: Of course.

ELEVEN

1964

Bungalow. Hallway. Shiny black floor

Music: Black and White Minstrels dancing and singing 'Trains and Boats and Planes.' SADIE is playing in the hall. TRISH comes in commando style. She's wearing a work overall.

TRISH: Sadie, we're going to play one of our special games.

SADIE: A special game, which one!

TRISH: Special game number two.

SADIE: Number two?

TRISH: Number two.

SADIE: Hurray!

TRISH: Ssh!

SADIE: Ssh?

TRISH: Remember we have to ssh, for number two.

SADIE: Sorry, ssh.

TRISH/SADIE: Ssh.

TRISH: Do you want to start?

SADIE: Me start?

TRISH: Yes, you start.

SADIE: Gosh. Okay, There's a spy.

TRISH: A spy is it?

SADIE: From somewhere foreign.

TRISH: Foreign spy. And he's in the house?

SADIE: I'm starting, you smell of chickens.

TRISH: I'm stacking eggs.

SADIE: Phew!

TRISH: Least I'm not on the gutting.

SADIE: Yuk, why not?

TRISH: Told them I was a vegetarian.

SADIE: You're not.

TRISH: Foreman thinks it's an allergy so that's okay. Now this spy?

SADIE: Russian spy, he's in the house.

TRISH: Which room?

SADIE: The big bedroom.

TRISH: My bedroom?
SADIE: Your bedroom.
TRISH: Oh my!
SADIE: Did you leave a window open?
TRISH: Oh.
SADIE: Tsk!
TRISH: What is he looking for?
SADIE: Microfilm.
TRISH: Ah, the microfilm.
SADIE: You didn't put it in your stocking drawer did you?
TRISH: Ah, the stocking drawer.
SADIE: I told you not to put it in your stocking drawer.
TRISH: You did.
SADIE: Put it in your Teddy, I said.
TRISH: I don't have a Teddy.
SADIE: You can put it in mine, they'll never find it there.
TRISH: Thank you.
SADIE: But you can't sleep with him.
TRISH: No?
SADIE: I wouldn't mind, but he wouldn't want to sleep with you, just me.
TRISH: No.
SADIE: He'd be scared.
TRISH: Of course.
SADIE: It's the dark.
TRISH: Is it?
SADIE: No streetlights like London he says.
TRISH: Does he?
SADIE: He's very scared.
TRISH: Right.
SADIE: He wouldn't be if he had a light on.
TRISH: Wouldn't he?
SADIE: He said. Or a torch.
When I'm rich I'll buy you loads of Teddies.
TRISH: To put my microfilm in.
SADIE: Ssh!
TRISH: Ssh?
SADIE: He's moving.
TRISH: Where to?
SADIE: The kitchen.
TRISH: I wonder why?
SADIE: We'll follow him.
TRISH: No!
SADIE: No?

TRISH: No.
SADIE: He'll get away.
TRISH: Ssh!
SADIE: Ssh.
TRISH: Can you hear that?
SADIE: What?
TRISH: A drawer.
SADIE: He's searching.
TRISH: He is.
SADIE: For a knife.
TRISH: A knife? I thought it was microfilm?
SADIE: That was the knife drawer.
TRISH: Microfilm in the -
SADIE: He's found it.
TRISH: The microfilm?
SADIE: Your hidden big knife.
TRISH: How did you know about the hidden big -
SADIE: Ssh! He's taken it out... he's moving this way... he's -
The doorbell rings loudly. They both jump.
TRISH: That might be his accomplice.
SADIE: It is!
The doorbell rings again insistently.
TRISH: We can't overpower them.
SADIE: No.
TRISH: So we have to use our/ brains
SADIE: Brains.
TRISH: We'll keep low/ and still.
SADIE: Low and still.
MILKMAN (Off): Mrs. White! Are you there? It's the Milkman!
TRISH: You are a very good spy.
SADIE: The best.
TRISH: Have you been to spy school?
SADIE: The best.
TRISH: And spy university?
SADIE: Going soon.
MILKMAN: Mrs. White!
TRISH: Good, that's good. Because that means -
MILKMAN: Three weeks Mrs. White!
TRISH: You'll never have to stack eggs -
MILKMAN: I'll have to stop delivering Mrs. White.
TRISH: And smell of chicken poo -
MILKMAN: I'll be back Mrs. White, do you hear me Mrs. bloody White!
Long ring on the bell. MILKMAN goes away.

Pause

TRISH: Sadie...

SADIE: His accent was rubbish.

TRISH: Was it?

SADIE: Still sounded Russian.

Beat

TRISH: He did. But if you go to university -

SADIE: Spy university.

TRISH: Spy university, if you go -

SADIE: When.

TRISH: When you go, you'll be able to do every single accent under the sun and you'll be able to understand and be understood by the very rich and the very poor in any country in any part of the world. If you go to university.

SADIE: Oh I'm going, I'm going.

TRISH: And then you can marry another spy.

SADIE: Do spies marry?

TRISH: Maybe a bit older, ten years or so, so he's done his chasing and you'll marry and not have to be a spy any longer.

SADIE: Why?

TRISH: Why?

SADIE: Why?

TRISH: Well, children and a house, a big house and -

SADIE: Ssh!

TRISH: Ssh?

SADIE: The spy in the kitchen.

TRISH: He still there?

SADIE (*Listens*): He's going.

TRISH: Definitely?

SADIE: Ssh! Listen.

TRISH: What?

SADIE: It's okay.

TRISH: Is it?

SADIE: He put the knife back.

TWELVE

1968

A field. A huge nest of straw, the biggest a nine-year-old working really hard can build on her own and some more.

Music: 1968. DANCERS. Summertime Special. SADIE is in the nest looking over the parapet. She has a fully loaded catapult and is battling an invisible enemy.

SADIE: Come on you dirty rats - top of the world Ma! In all the gin joints in all the world you walk into mine. We'll always have Brighton. Oh Rett! I'll think about it tomorrow. We have ways of making you - is that a pistol in your pocket or are you just happy to see me, oh this happy breed in which we serve -

JANICE runs on and leaps in to the nest.

JANICE: Look out!

*Both JANICE and SADIE disappear into the nest yelping.
They reappear.*

SADIE: What you -

JANICE: I'm Janice, I'm American, you having a nice day?

SADIE: I was 'til you dive-bombed me!

JANICE: Did I hurt you?

SADIE: No, but -

JANICE: Well that's cool.

SADIE: This is my nest.

JANICE: I know, it's really, really cool, I like what you've done with the walls.

SADIE: My walls!

JANICE: Certainly are, have you a door?

SADIE: A door, in a nest?

JANICE: Well a pine marten does and a reed warbler and a -

SADIE: Not sure I like you.

JANICE: Nobody likes the Americans, so my Mom says.

SADIE: Your Mom?

JANICE: Uhuh.

SADIE: That's daft, she's American?

JANICE: Canadian.

SADIE: Same thing.

JANICE: Same continent but better manners, so my Mom says.

SADIE: What you doing here?

JANICE: In England?

SADIE: In my nest!

MARCUS comes charging towards the nest and dives in.

MARCUS: Incoming!

They collapse from view. MARCUS struggles up first, standing straight as if told to. He is closely followed by JANICE.

MARCUS: Hello, I'm Marcus pleased to meet you and you are?

JANICE: Janice, good to meet you too Marcus.

MARCUS: Pleasure. American?

JANICE: Sure am.

MARCUS: You live on the base?

JANICE: No, in the village.

MARCUS: Father must be at least a colonel then.

JANICE: Sure is.

SADIE appears, dishevelled.

MARCUS: Are you at The Grange?

JANICE: You know it?

MARCUS: Part of the estate. Does it suit you?

JANICE: Like out of a spooky movie but with no fog.

MARCUS: Oh, sorry. I'll see if the estate manager can sort that.

SADIE: Oi!

MARCUS and JANICE look at her.

This is my nest!

MARCUS: Well...

SADIE: Well what!

MARCUS: Technically -

SADIE: Technically what, moron!

MARCUS: Technically, it's mine.

SADIE: I built it!

MARCUS: It's my field, well farm actually.

JANICE: Marcus -

MARCUS: Only because of death duties, avoidance of, couldn't flog it mind -

SADIE: Sod you then.

Getting out.

You can stuff the nest!

JANICE: Hey, don't go! Marcus?

MARCUS: No, don't go -

SADIE: Bloody showing off stupid!

JANICE: He so was. (*To MARCUS.*) Weren't you?

SADIE: Bloody buggering, snobby stupid!

MARCUS: Snobby? I was just stating -

JANICE: Totally snobby. Please, don't go, we could do so much. Marcus!

MARCUS: Please!

SADIE pauses.

She's right, we could, hopefully, very hopefully, you're right. I was snobby bugging, all that stuff, sorry. It's a great nest, brilliant, I mean what you've done with the walls... sorry. I am. Really.

SADIE: You said.

Beat

You swallowed an Enid Blyton book?

MARCUS: Sorry.

SADIE: You said.

MARCUS: About the books, wouldn't know, Mummy won't let me read them.

SADIE: Why not?

MARCUS: Too middle class she says.

JANICE: Oh they're fun, too middle what?

MARCUS: Crikey! Look out!

MARCUS pulls both JANICE and SADIE down into the nest. A crop sprayer goes past spraying the nest and all that are in it.

JANICE: Eeeeeuuuw -

MARCUS: Sos about that.

SADIE: We're soaked!

MARCUS: Technically shouldn't be spraying this field, should be the next one.

SADIE: It stinks!

JANICE: What is it?

MARCUS: Pesticides, nitrates mainly. We can get an extra crop in, make things grow strong and resistant to stuff, so can't be bad for us. Might stop us getting colds or measles or something.

JANICE: Does 'stink'.

SADIE: Really pongs.

JANICE: Oh 'pongs' is so totally better.

SADIE: How can you be a whole field wrong?

MARCUS: It's one of the 'Young Farmers'.

JANICE: Who?

MARCUS: Young Farmers, The ones with no farms.

SADIE: Oh them! They meet at the pub opposite us.

MARCUS: The Addison?

JANICE: That yours too?

MARCUS: Technically.

SADIE: Oh right then maybe you can stop them blaring their horns leaving way after hours.

MARCUS: Car horns?

SADIE: Always one drives straight into a ditch, idiots.

MARCUS: That's the Young Conservatives. They have farms and don't feel the need to go round corners. Young Farmers are the ones on motorbikes, they tend to drive into anything, ditches, walls, each other.

SADIE: The nest is soaked.

MARCUS: With some proper ventilation -

SADIE glares.

This is a great nest er...

JANICE: Sadie, her name is Sadie.

SADIE: How'd you know?

JANICE: I'm American, I'm a Know-it-all.

MARCUS: Great nest, Sadie, have you a door?

SADIE: It's a nest!

MARCUS: Technically speaking pine martens' -

JANICE: It's a great nest, saved me from the tractor coming straight at me.

MARCUS: Oh yes! And the one with the trailer coming at me, that was a young farmer too. Some are a tad bitter.

JANICE: Sadie it's just great!

MARCUS: It saved us!

Pause

SADIE: Might be better with a door.

MARCUS: More of an escape hatch?

SADIE: Has one.

MARCUS: Has it?

SADIE: Course.

JANICE: Aw jeez, do you have a spy problem?

SADIE: Might have.

JANICE: Me too. That's the real reason I was running.

MARCUS: That's weird.

SADIE (*Defensively*): Oh really.

MARCUS: 'Cos me too!

JANICE: Russians?

SADIE: If you like.

MARCUS: Bloody Ruskies!

JANICE: You sound bitter Marcus.

MARCUS: Bitter experience Janice.

JANICE: Ruskie experience?

MARCUS (*Showing scar*): See this?

SADIE and JANICE look.

Ruskies.

JANICE (*Showing a scar*): See this scar?

MARCUS: Ruskies?

JANICE: Ruskies.

MARCUS: Damn those Ruskies!

SADIE (*Showing scar on stomach*): See this scar?

MARCUS: Ruskies?

SADIE: Appendix.

JANICE: Damn Ruskies and their stealing of appendix!

They collapse in the nest laughing.

SADIE (*Film voice*): Right chaps, let's make the door.

MARCUS: And another escape hatch!

JANICE: Can't have too many escape hatches.

MARCUS (*To SADIE*): If that's okay with you?

SADIE (*Film voice*): Our HQ. You think we need 'em, build 'em!

JANICE: Excellent!

MARCUS: Fantastic!

They start to do so.

MARCUS (*Finding the catapult*): Gosh a cattie!

JANICE: Hey, cool!

MARCUS: Are you allowed?

SADIE: Course. Sort of.

JANICE: Mom don't know?

SADIE: Maybe.

MARCUS: I'd love one.

JANICE: Won't let you have one?

MARCUS: No.

SADIE: Too Young Farmer?

MARCUS: Think it's not necessary. Gave me a 127 rifle when I was seven, really boring, I get a 22 when I'm 11 and then it'll be a shotgun but...

JANICE: But what?

MARCUS: Doesn't matter.

JANICE: Does so.

SADIE (*Film voice*): No secrets here, except the ones we are guarding with our lives from the Ruskies, course.

JANICE: Course. C'mon Marcus.

MARCUS: You two... why do I... stupid really.

JANICE: Hey, we're cool, aren't we Sadie?

SADIE: Like icicles, icebergs, North Pole, yeh.

JANICE: Yeh.

MARCUS (*Quietly*): Don't like shooting much.

JANICE: Do you have to?

MARCUS: Expected.

JANICE: Really?

SADIE: I'd love a rifle!

JANICE (*Shocked*): To kill animals?

SADIE: No. Ruskies.

MARCUS: It's the shoots, all the birds, we never eat them and the thought of a

deer or a... But a cattie...

Beat

SADIE: Want a go?

MARCUS: Gosh, really?

SADIE: Have it rest of day, if you like.

JANICE: Hey!

MARCUS: May I?

SADIE: Yeh, but, have to earn it first.

JANICE: I'll earn it!

SADIE: Best it's him first.

JANICE: What, 'cos he's a Brit? That is so not -

SADIE (*Film voice*): He might be forgiven by the powers that be if he hits that Ruskie carrying the burning branch towards our nest. We, on the other hand, may not.

JANICE: They're burning the earth!

SADIE: Straw, can't hang your washing out this time of year. Mum goes mad.

MARCUS: Young Farmer, the worst! He reads the Socialist Worker in the loo.

SADIE: He looks... Ruskie.

JANICE: Could easily be a Ruskie.

SADIE: Therefore expendable.

JANICE: Expendable for sure.

SADIE: Use the cattie.

MARCUS: What if I take an eye out or something?

SADIE: He'll do worse on his motorbike.

JANICE: Go for his Ruskie looking legs.

MARCUS: Oh my.

MARCUS sets cattie.

JANICE: You gonna do it?

MARCUS: For the nest, anything.

MARCUS lets fly a stone.

JANICE: Wow!

SADIE: Direct hit - oops duck!

SADIE and MARCUS duck down. JANICE is left standing.

JANICE (*Notices that the Young Farmer is looking at her*): Oh, hi. How you doing? (*Aside to SADIE and MARCUS.*) He's coming over, with the fire. (*To Young Farmer.*) You like motorbikes... comrade? (*To MARCUS and SADIE.*) He's looking really, really mad.

SADIE (*Whispering*): Let's leg it!

JANICE: Leg it?

SADIE: Run.

JANICE (*Aside*): I'm so ready to leg.

SADIE (*Whispering*): Okay let's -

MARCUS (*Standing bolt upright*): No.

JANICE: No?

MARCUS: Technically my responsibility.

SADIE (*Standing up*): No!

MARCUS: No?

SADIE: Cattie's mine I'll tell him -

JANICE: No!

SADIE/MARCUS: No?

JANICE: No. I'll -

MARCUS: No. (*To Young Farmer*.) You there!

MARCUS is different, in charge, almost arrogant.

SADIE: Marcus!

MARCUS (*To Young Farmer*): Yes you! When did you start working for me? Yes me. You should know whose farm you're working on. Yes I'm that jumped up little - Stop wagging that flame at me when I'm talking to you.

He goes towards the Young Farmer.

Were you responsible for the hodgepodge that meant this field was sprayed rather than that one?

MARCUS exits to continue conversation. SADIE and

JANICE look at each other.

SADIE: Hodgepodge?

JANICE: Hodgepodge. Way to go Marcus!

THIRTEEN

1968

Later. The nest intact, in a now blackened field

Smoke drifts across the field. SADIE, JANICE and MARCUS are leaning against the intact nest. Their faces are a little blackened with smoke. They look blissful.

JANICE: Three escape hatches, ten bayonet holes, one secret store -

MARCUS: And the beginning of an elaborate -

SADIE: But functional -

MARCUS: Staircase.

JANICE: How cool is that!

SADIE (*Coughs*): Thought I was going to cough my lungs out.

MARCUS (*Coughs*): Just a bit of harmless smoke.

Coughs.

Harmless.

JANICE: But they didn't touch our HQ. Way to go Marcus.

SADIE: Well hodgepodged.

MARCUS: Not at all.

SADIE: Will you get into trouble?

JANICE: Trouble?

SADIE: Slowed the work down during harvest, could rain, ruin it, anything.

JANICE: Will you?

MARCUS: No, no, no, no, no. Course not.

Pause

SADIE: Stuffed?

MARCUS: Well, technically, you know.

Pause

JANICE: Blame me, nobody likes the Americans anyway, so my mom -

MARCUS: Absolutely not!

SADIE: Blame me too.

MARCUS: No!

SADIE (*Film voice*): You saying no to me, Corporal?

MARCUS: Yes!

JANICE: And me?

MARCUS: I absolutely am.

SADIE: My nest Marcus I decide what -

MARCUS: Exactly!

JANICE: Exactly?

MARCUS: This nest, this amazing nest!

SADIE: What about it?

MARCUS: I don't care what it costs, I don't care what they do, I don't care about anything but this, for the first time ever, this, this is so... summer!

FOURTEEN

1968

Same evening. The nest. Dark

Music. The nest is now smouldering, having been razed to the ground. SADIE, JANICE and MARCUS are sitting eating baked potatoes out of tinfoil.

MARCUS: This is so brilliant, I mean bloody brilliant, your Mother, to think of this, just brilliant!

JANICE: And to cook them in the nest.

MARCUS: Genius.

SADIE: Favourite meal baked pots.

JANICE: Totally cool your Mom and matches and baked what?

SADIE: Pots.

JANICE: Right. And hey, no trouble for Marcus - field all burnt.

MARCUS: And she's so young and so... London.

SADIE: Meaning?

MARCUS: She dresses really...

SADIE (*Guarded*): Really what?

MARCUS: I mean, no tweeds.

JANICE: Hey, my Mom tried tweeds, when we first got here. Think it was to show off to my grandma - being international not southern belle, you know?

Dad's Mom - she is, oh what does Mom say, oh yeh, 'the bitch from hell'.

Anyway Mom tried them but she said they itch in places that are embarrassing to scratch.

SADIE (*Looking at food*): My middle's a bit raw (*To JANICE.*) Is yours a bit raw?

MARCUS: I don't care if it's all raw. I'd only be sitting down to boring old roast.

JANICE: Roast?

MARCUS: Joint of boring beef, boring vegetable, boring roast pots.

JANICE: You have that every Sunday?

SADIE: No. He does.

MARCUS: Not every Sunday. Sometimes we have goose.

JANICE (*To SADIE*): What do you have?

SADIE: Baked pots. Sometimes a broiler.

JANICE: Say what?

MARCUS: Chicken, I wish we had chicken.

JANICE: Hey, I love chicken, like when your Mom does it special Southern

Fried, way better than 'Finger licking good' any day!

MARCUS: Sorry?

JANICE: Colonel Sanders? KFC?

SADIE and MARCUS look blank.

No KFC? Fast food, take away?

SADIE and MARCUS shake their heads.

Beat

SADIE: We have Wimpy.

MARCUS: Do we?

SADIE: Best thing is this frankfurter that's curled round and fits in a bun.

MARCUS: Curled?

SADIE: Uhuh.

MARCUS: Gosh.

JANICE: What do you like on it?

SADIE: On it?

JANICE: Like salsa, mayo, blue cheese dressing...

SADIE: Ketchup?

MARCUS: I love ketchup. We have it at school.

SADIE: We don't.

JANICE (*To SADIE*): You go to the local primary.

SADIE: How do you know?

JANICE: I'm starting there. (*To MARCUS*.) You don't.

MARCUS: No I board.

JANICE: Board?

SADIE: Eton? Rugby?

MARCUS: Not yet, Eton comes later.

SADIE: I was joking.

MARCUS: Look, if you get a straw and light it...

SADIE: How old were you when they sent you?

MARCUS: Usual and if you suck like so...

SADIE: What's usual?

MARCUS: Seven. See it looks like you're smoking.

JANICE: Boarding? Seven what? Come on you guys, translate into American for me.

SADIE: Marcus was sent to boarding school, like Malory Towers and St. Clare's but for boys aged seven.

MARCUS: Do they have fun there?

SADIE: Course.

MARCUS: Not like them then.

I'd love to read Enid Blyton.

SADIE: It's all about girls.

MARCUS: Oh I love girls. (*Embarrassed*.)

SADIE: Swallows and Amazons?

MARCUS: What?

JANICE: Oh I love Swallows and Amazons! Have you read -

MARCUS: No.

JANICE: Don't your folks let you read anything?

MARCUS: Only by dead people, which is really not fair because I know Father reads the Young Farmers' Playboy when he uses their loo.

JANICE: Do you watch TV instead?

MARCUS: Don't have one.

JANICE: That's deprivation.

SADIE: Will it be Eton or Rugby?

MARCUS: Oh Eton. Rugby's for new money.

SADIE: And after Eton? Oxford or Cambridge?

MARCUS: Cambridge of course.

SADIE: And then he'll come back here and do what he's doing now, running a farm.

MARCUS: Oh no.

SADIE: No?

MARCUS: Well, yes but no. I want to serve.

SADIE: Army?

MARCUS: God no. Would be Navy but no, I want to help society.

SADIE: How?

MARCUS: Be an M.P. of course.

JANICE: No way! You were sent away at seven!?

MARCUS: Yes.

JANICE: Your parents sent you to a big ol' school -

MARCUS: Not that big, prep.

JANICE: At seven! Weren't you homesick?

MARCUS: For a day, you were allowed to be homesick for a day.

JANICE: But seven?

MARCUS: It's expected, just expected.

JANICE: I think it's kinda like really cruel.

MARCUS: Oh, really. Well, my Mummy says Americans are sentimental, they are too fond of bright colours, Mummy says there is no room for sentiment or bright colours. You would never see my Mummy in a brightly coloured headscarf.

JANICE: Your Mom is -

SADIE: Hold on! Does your Mum wear a headscarf tied on her chin and have a black Lab?

JANICE: Oh lab now! C'mon translate!

SADIE: Labrador, dog, friendly usually, kept by people with Land Rovers and who say 'get out the way you stupid little oik!' (*To MARCUS.*) She got one called Sheba?

MARCUS: Why?

SADIE: Dog went for me.

JANICE: Your Mom has a crazy lab?

MARCUS: Were you wearing shorts?

SADIE: Yes.

MARCUS: Ah.

SADIE: Ah? She had a good go at me, look.

Shows scar.

MARCUS: Least it wasn't the Jack Russell.

JANICE: Your Mom has more psycho dogs?

SADIE: It's not the dogs that are psycho.

MARCUS: Meaning?

SADIE: Do you want to translate for Janice what 'spawn of a divorced slut' means?

JANICE: Say what?

MARCUS: That's not what she thinks.

SADIE: Really.

MARCUS: No. She has no mind of her own. It's why Father married her, so he says -

JANICE: That's your Dad's opinion of women?

MARCUS: No, don't be - it's -

SADIE: It's the silly cow that is your Mum that said it.

MARCUS: It's not just her.

SADIE: Oh really!

MARCUS: Really. It's everyone!

SADIE (*Goes very calm*): Everyone. Oh that's alright then.

She turns away.

Beat

MARCUS: Look Sadie -

SADIE picks up a stick and whacks the back of MARCUS's legs, he yelps and falls to his knees. SADIE grabs one of his arms and pulls it up his back. It hurts.

SADIE: Everyone! Everyone! Your stupid cow Mum and her coven!

MARCUS: Argh!

JANICE: Sadie -

SADIE: Who!

MARCUS: Please! -

JANICE: Sadie!

SADIE (*Pulls MARCUS's arm without compassion*): Who!

MARCUS: The WI the WI!

JANICE: WI? WI?

MARCUS: Women's Institute!

SADIE: Witches Institute! His Mum is the chief witch.

MARCUS: Technically Lady Chair!

SADIE: Stupid cow witch chair - say it!

SADIE pulls MARCUS's arm. He screams in pain.

JANICE: Sadie!

SADIE: Say it!

MARCUS: Cow witch chair, she's a cow witch chair!

He screams in pain.

JANICE: Sadie stop! Please stop, for me! Stop!

SADIE looks at her. Pushes MARCUS forward onto his face. She moves back and sits on her haunches, breathing hard and glowering at MARCUS.

JANICE: Marcus?

MARCUS: I'm fine, fine, just a joke

Rubbing painful shoulder.

A joke. Just... ha ha. Joke, fine, all fine, Sadie, good joke eh?

SADIE just glowers.

Long pause

JANICE: Loads of people in America are divorced.

MARCUS (*Trying not to show he is still in pain, conversationally*): Oh really?

JANICE: Sure. Pretty much everyone.

MARCUS: Gosh. I didn't know that.

JANICE: My parents are the weird ones still being married. Mom says it's with him being posted so much, she's hardly sees him otherwise -

MARCUS: Really?

JANICE: Really.

MARCUS: And America is ahead on pretty much everything.

JANICE: Pretty much.

MARCUS: Bet when I'm older I'll be divorced loads of times.

JANICE: Guess you will, me too, so divorced.

Long pause

MARCUS: Sadie...

SADIE: They wouldn't let her join.

JANICE: The Witches Coven?

SADIE: Yes.

JANICE: Why?

SADIE: Why'd you think?

JANICE: Just 'cos she's divorced?

Pause

Marcus, I feel I have to say, your Mom and her friends, they give witches a really bad name.

MARCUS: Not 'cos she's divorced.

SADIE: So is.

MARCUS: Don't think so -

SADIE: Is!

MARCUS: 'Cos she's pretty. She's really, really, pretty. They're not, she is.

JANICE: She so is.

MARCUS: Technically, I think they're scared of pretty. The coven. Technically scared.

Pause

SADIE: We don't have a TV either.

JANICE: You don't?

SADIE: Just said.

JANICE: Jeez, you Brits!

MARCUS: Bet you've got colour.

JANICE: You betcha! Biggest latest brightest. They sell them on the base.

Nothing like it here, massive!

SADIE: That is so -

MARCUS: American.

SADIE: You betcha!

MARCUS: Betcha too!

JANICE: Oh really? Really!

MARCUS/SADIE: Really!

JANICE: Want to come and watch it?

MARCUS jumps up.

MARCUS: Oh my!

JANICE: It's Lassie, again.

MARCUS: Oh double my!

SADIE: Will your Mum - ?

JANICE: She's cool, no coven. C'mon.

Exit all.

FIFTEEN

1977

The Mall, London

Music. 1977. DANCERS with Union Jacks, bunting etc. It rains. The DANCERS carry on in a seamless fashion with their dancing. Always smiling. They turn into a crowd celebrating the Silver Jubilee. SADIE and TRISH are soaked. TRISH is holding a Union Jack flag. She is happy.

TRISH: That was so...!

SADIE: Enjoy it?

TRISH: We should have thought, brought sandwiches, and a thermos, did you see those next to us?

SADIE: Had the lot.

TRISH: And all in Tupperware, I didn't know you could get so much different Tupperware.

SADIE: Didn't know you could get Tupperware full stop.

TRISH: Yes you do, my brown bowl for salads.

SADIE: That's Tupperware?

TRISH: It's expensive but I might do Tupperware parties, you hold them at home and -

SADIE: You don't like people coming into the house.

TRISH: You know why.

SADIE: You think it's bad,/ it's not bad.

TRISH: Marion said I could hold them at hers, her husband's a civil servant, everything matches, she takes my advice on decor.

SADIE: Well, good, that's good, the party.

TRISH: Maybe, we'll see.

SADIE: What's to see? Do it, Mum.

TRISH: Mmm. You could do worse than marry a civil servant.

SADIE: Really.

TRISH: A high up one mind, they earn more and older, older and wiser would suit you/ when he's done his chasing.

SADIE: When he's done his chasing, maybe I'll be a high up civil servant.

Pause

TRISH: She looked so... I mean up close so...

SADIE: Queenly?

TRISH: She was this close to me, this close.

SADIE: I know, I was this close too.

TRISH: I mean, the horse, and the red, and the side saddle, I mean, side saddle!

SADIE: Sitting side saddle for twenty five years now that must be a pain in the arse... get it... side saddle -

TRISH: If you're going to sneer.

SADIE: I'm here, in the rain, for queen and country, I even cheered.

TRISH: You whistled, I cheered.

Pause

London looks so... I mean The Mall looks so...

SADIE: It does.

TRISH: Even in the rain. We must look like drowned rats.

SADIE: London rats.

TRISH: London rats?

SADIE: They're special.

Pause

Poison doesn't touch them, big as cats and vicious.

TRISH: You used to be nice when you were young.

SADIE: I'm nice now.

TRISH: Mmm.

Pause

SADIE: Do you miss it?

TRISH: London?

SADIE: You obviously love it.

TRISH: My life here was, I mean there was your Nan, then your Dad... I don't miss that bit. But her, I love her. That bit of London, the bit that's always there, I mean unless the IRA blows her up. She'll go on perched side saddle. And all the three day weeks and the strikes and the sheer stupidity that is the E silly C and as for that ever-changing bunch of fools who hide under Big Ben... And the horses, they are so enormous and black and they will always be enormous and black, always. The IRA would be really stupid to blow them up, really stupid.

SADIE: Talking of stupid, I said I'd go and see the old man.

TRISH: Don't say old man.

SADIE: He says it, called Pops it.

TRISH: He says a lot of things that aren't palatable.

SADIE: I might ring him, call it off.

TRISH: No, you should go.

SADIE: I don't feel like it.

TRISH: He is your father.

SADIE: He is a wanker.

TRISH: You're so like him.

SADIE: Swearing doesn't make you/ a wanker.

TRISH: It's not just the swearing.

SADIE: Why do you say why do you say that?/ when it's just not true.
TRISH: You look like his side, you look like -
SADIE: Yeh Pops, I know, how does saying I look like a pisshead postman from Southwark help?
TRISH: You're too sensitive.
SADIE: I'm going, I'll see you at Nan's.
TRISH: Say you came down with friends.
SADIE: Why?
TRISH: To celebrate somebody's birthday or something.
SADIE: I did, hers.
TRISH: Don't twist my words, don't -
SADIE: I'm not/ twisting anything.
TRISH: Say you decided to have a picnic with/ friends or -
SADIE: Why can't I say I came down with you, my Mum, to see the trooping?
TRISH: Because he'll make some snide comment or sneer or -
SADIE: You won't be there to hear it.
TRISH: Oh don't bother if you don't want to,/ if you can't be bothered.
SADIE: It's not about bothering,/ it's about -
TRISH: You're so insensitive sometimes, so insensitive.
SADIE: Sensitive, insensitive, which one Mum?
TRISH: I'll be at your Nan's.

Exit TRISH.

SIXTEEN

1977

Soho. Advertising company. FRANK's office

Music. The office is plush, with leather sofas, large desk and a large drinks cabinet. FRANK is at the desk working. Enter the RECEPTIONIST with SADIE.

RECEPTIONIST: Sadie White is here.

FRANK: Hello babe!

RECEPTIONIST: Says she's your daughter.

FRANK: Cheeky blighter, they're all after the inheritance.

SADIE: Inheritance? (*To RECEPTIONIST.*) First I've heard of it.

FRANK: That's because I've promised it to the others, you're my least favourite.

SADIE: There are loads of us and I'm the youngest by far.

RECEPTIONIST goes near FRANK and whispers.

RECEPTIONIST: Bastard.

RECEPTIONIST exits.

SADIE: You shagging her, Dad?

FRANK: Can I help it if they find me irresistible?

SADIE: They're getting younger.

FRANK: Have you put on weight?

What size are you?

SADIE: Same as I was last time.

FRANK: What do you think of the office?

SADIE: Lots of chrome.

FRANK: Bet you don't see much of it in the sticks. What time is it?

SADIE: Five-ish.

FRANK (*Indicating drinks cabinet*): The magic hour. Want a swift one?

SADIE: Please.

FRANK: Go on then, you sort.

SADIE (*At drinks cabinet*): Wow! You've got everything here.

FRANK: All on the company. Seem to think higher up you are more booze you need.

SADIE: You're doing well then.

FRANK: Mainly for clients, I rarely imbibe, affects my squash.

SADIE: How you doing in the league?

FRANK: Not bad. Mind you, had to lose to one of the Saatchis the other day.

SADIE: Who?

FRANK: Saatchi & Saatchi - brothers in this business - played the eldest. Could have wiped the floor with him, I didn't even break into a sweat, but. This is a dry ol' do.

SADIE: What?

FRANK: Get pouring?

SADIE: What do you want?

FRANK: Anything.

SADIE: G&T?

FRANK: Go on then.

SADIE: How do you want it?

FRANK: In a glass.

SADIE: Fine.

SADIE pours two large strong Gin and Tonics and hands one to FRANK.

FRANK: Cheers babe.

SADIE (*Looking at glass*): Crystal, too.

FRANK: Surprised you recognise it.

SADIE: Meaning?

FRANK: Must be paying your Mum too much if you know what crystal is.

SADIE: Don't recall you paying her anything.

FRANK: How is the old mare, still smell of chickens?

SADIE: And again - why is your secretary here today?

FRANK: Advertising doesn't sleep.

SADIE: Didn't think she was here to sleep.

Looking on desk. Holds up picture of Thatcher.

You doing a job for her?

FRANK: Why I lost to Saatchi - got a bit of the campaign.

SADIE: Hope you are charging way over the odds?

FRANK: Nothing.

SADIE: Nothing?

FRANK: Nothing.

SADIE: Why charge her lot nothing?

FRANK: We want her lot in power.

SADIE: Pops votes Labour, always has.

FRANK: My Father is a/ pisshead postman from Southwark.

SADIE: /Pisshead postman from Southwark, yeh, but you're from -

FRANK: Somewhere I'm not going back to.

SADIE: But she wants -

FRANK: People like me to get on. This business, when I first got in to it there were loads of people like me, I mean Alan Parker, what a diamond, done great adverts, your Grammar school boys from not very much, Saatchis are Grammar

school, good blokes, was a business you could get on in with a bit of talent, ducking and diving and sheer bloody hard work, and her with her grocer Dad, I'm bloody good at my job and that is what counts, with her in power, it'll count, it will.

SADIE: Still got a load of Lord Lucan lookalikes holding on to her skirt.

FRANK: She's a flirty little tart, have you seen her? Only one she doesn't flirt with is Francis Pym.

SADIE: Can you blame her?

Beat

You got to find a slogan?

FRANK: We're getting there. This one's quite good. One of our best Fay, Fay Weldon, but it's a bit wordy, I always have to say, Fay babe, you trying to be a novelist? Cut down on the words Fay, mind you she did a corker on the egg advert, you know - go to work on an - ?

SADIE: That was her?

FRANK: It was.

SADIE: Not the milk one?

FRANK: No.

SADIE: Talking of milk, I'd stick with 'Thatcher, Thatcher the milk snatcher', works for me.

FRANK: Teach you that in that country bumpkin school?

SADIE: Not at school anymore Dad. Going to Uni in September.

FRANK: You going early?

SADIE: No.

FRANK: Have you done A levels?

SADIE: Course.

FRANK: Your mum didn't tell me.

SADIE: No. I did.

FRANK (*Knowing it isn't*): So is it Oxford or Cambridge?

SADIE: You know it's not.

FRANK: One of the nondescript regional red brick ones then?

SADIE: 'Nother drink?

FRANK: Do the honours.

SADIE pours two very large G&Ts. Hands one to FRANK.

FRANK: Good to see you babe, as the posh twats say 'bottoms up'.

They drink.

SEVENTEEN

Later. Office

SADIE and FRANK are drunk and giggling.

FRANK: You like the chrome really.

SADIE: Very Habitat.

FRANK: Very Heals, they don't scrimp in this business. (*Indicating sofa.*) Guess what this is, go on guess.

SADIE: Leather?

FRANK: From Harrods. Get us another.

SADIE does so.

SADIE: I'm impressed with the drinks cabinet.

FRANK: Take some.

SADIE: Can I?

FRANK: Course. Much as you like. The stuff is for the posh twats anyway.

SADIE: Thought you said -

FRANK: They've smelt the money in this business, opening companies in big flashy offices, with the change from their trust funds, doing the usual and populating it with sodding Oxford and Cambridge drinking club wankers, hence big drinks cabinets, the posh twats always want a freebie, s'why they got so rich, but I tell you what, whether they sneer at my accent or not they'll have to take it and shove it up their diamond encrusted arses because I'm bloody good/ at my job and that's what counts.

SADIE: /At my job and that's what counts.

SADIE hands him a drink.

FRANK: Cheeky mare. Hey look at what your old man has got. You will love this babe, love it!

He presses a button. A TV appears from behind a cabinet.

SADIE: Wow! That's -

FRANK: I love it. Every time I put it on - like a kid with a new toy, see?

FRANK makes the TV move in an out quickly. They giggle.

SADIE: You can watch TV at work? Now that's impressive.

FRANK: It's mainly to show clients our reels but I watched Liz on it today.

SADIE: You watched the Jubilee?

FRANK: Certainly bloody did. I love her. Don't give much for her chinless wonder of a husband and I wouldn't give her daughter one even if she begged

me -

SADIE: Oh please -

FRANK: But Liz... something about a woman riding side saddle.

SADIE: That's lust not love.

FRANK: I know what love is. I loved your Mother.

SADIE: You were a shit to my Mother.

FRANK: Yeh, but, I loved her.

SADIE: Yeh, right.

FRANK: We met outside the school gates.

We were so alike.

We realised in an instant we shared one overwhelming but instantly uniting thing.

SADIE: Really? That's so... What was it?

FRANK: Poverty. (*Laughs.*) I was the first of my family to get to Grammar school.

SADIE: Well done.

FRANK: I thought so. 'Til I told Pops.

You know the first thing he said?

SADIE: No - wasn't there.

FRANK: Don't get above yourself.

SADIE: Me?

FRANK: Me.

SADIE: He said that to you?

FRANK: First thing.

SADIE: What's that mean?

FRANK: You may well ask and by way of explanation the ol' Man said, School doesn't teach you how to stand a round at any given moment. Get us another one, babe.

SADIE does so, as generous as ever.

Bugger all in common, I mean bugger all.

SADIE: That's not true.

FRANK: Jesus! Don't you dare tell me I'm like a/ pisshead postman from Peckham.

SADIE: /Pisshead postman from Peckham.

You were both in the army, you national service an' Suez, and him second world war, all uniform stuff.

FRANK: After I came back from Suez, and him having been a Desert Rat, I did think - at last - something to talk about. Sand, shagging, killing.

I thought for a long time how to start that conversation.

SADIE hands him his drink, she stays standing.

A very, very, long time. He'd never talked about it see, not a word. So I said Pops...

Beat

SADIE: And...?

FRANK: Dry old do -

SADIE: You got one.

FRANK: Oh, right.

Gets drink.

I said Pops. Now we've both been to war...

Pause

SADIE: That's a good start.

FRANK: No it wasn't. He laughed, a laugh right from his fat gut. Said Suez wasn't a war it was a bleeding pointless picnic compared to the second.

SADIE: Bit harsh.

FRANK: Unusually for the silly old fart he was right. We knew that when we were over there, but to... I wasn't having that. So we argued.

Beat

SADIE: So you never found out... in the war?

FRANK: Oh yes. I said, shouted actually, 'tell me one useful thing your lot did, one overriding memory you have from the war that you feel shows the skill, bravery and determination of you and your mates. Just one!

Pause

SADIE: And...?

FRANK: They put the mess tent up quicker than any other bunch. 'Cos got an extra beer ration that way.

SADIE: That was it?

FRANK: That was it.

SADIE: There must have been -?

FRANK: That was it.

SADIE: But -

FRANK: That was it.

SADIE: Maybe awful things happened to him, maybe -

FRANK: Course they did, Jesus wept, it was world bleeding mass slaughter.

SADIE: Maybe you needed to just talk, you know, talk gently and talk calmly and -

FRANK: Oh I talked alright. He was always ticked off that I got in the Paras and he was bog standard infantry. Really got on his wick. So every time we watched a war film I'd talk, saying something like - John Wayne Green Berets - they should be alright, they're like the Paras. Or Lee Marvin, Dirty Dozen, he's just bog standard infantry - he'll get his head blown off.

SADIE: That's talking is it?

FRANK: Nothing in common - thick bast -

SADIE: Ah, now, he can't have been that thick - produced you - you got to Grammar. Or was it your Mum who had the brains?

FRANK: My Mum! (*Laughs.*) My dopey ol' Mum! My stupid cow of an idiot Mum!

SADIE: Okay, okay, I never met her did I?

FRANK (*Suddenly serious*): Hate to tell you this babe... you best get a drink and sit down.

SADIE sits, hands him a drink.

FRANK: Babe... keep this to yourself, I mean tell nobody, nobody. Especially no bloke you shag, that's if you want to see him again. And if you want to have kids, I never even told your Mother but... We're from Gaelic wombs.

Pause

SADIE: We're Scottish?

FRANK: Fuck no.

SADIE: We're Irish?

FRANK: My Gran sitting near the range with her pipe and slipping into Gaelic when she'd had a stout, bit of a give away. Golden rule for me, no one came home. No one found out, not even your Mum.

SADIE: Your Gran was Irish?

FRANK: Worse.

SADIE: Your Mum was Irish?

FRANK: Ssh! Lucky with Pops, cut his head off and you could read Southwark through and through. I asked him one day what was he bloody thinking!

Beat

SADIE: But that's...

FRANK: I know

Touching her hand.

Sorry babe. Really, really sorry babe, like I said that's -

SADIE: That's... brilliant!

FRANK: Is it fuck.

SADIE: That means we have this whole ethnic thing going on.

FRANK: We're not talking ethnic we're talking bog skipping idiots.

SADIE: But that's street cred! I know this Scottish bloke, every time he's pissed he says, 'your lot made my lot eat grass'. Now I can say, 'mine ate more grass than yours'. How good is that!

FRANK: No listen. You don't admit to having even a bit of Irish in you!

SADIE: Why not?

FRANK: Think about it.

Beat

SADIE: NORAIID?

FRANK: Worse.

SADIE: The IRA?

FRANK: Worse.

SADIE: Worse?

Pause

FRANK: The jokes.

SADIE: The jokes?

FRANK: What's the difference between a smart Irish man and a unicorn?
Nothing, they're both fictional characters.

Paddy rings Aer Lingus and says to the operator 'how long does it take to fly to London?' The operator says 'just a minute', 'thank you,' says Paddy and hangs up.

Paddy and Mick driving to London on the motorway and they see a sign saying 'London Left'. 'Oh be jeeesus' they say, so they turn around and go home.

SADIE: Yeh, but -

FRANK: Paddy went to London to blow up a double decker bus and burnt his lips on the exhaust pipe.

SADIE: They're just jokes, admittedly not very good -

FRANK: Two men were scuffling outside a pub when along came a huge Irishman - fists like hams - who started taking his coat off.

'You're fighting about Ireland, aren't you?' he demanded.

'No, no,' said both men in unison. 'Honestly, it's a personal matter, nothing to do with Ireland at all.'

'Huh,' muttered the Paddy, and shuffled off. Two seconds later he was back, tearing off his coat saying:

'So Ireland's not worth fighting about, eh?'

That's ours that is, thickest of the lot.

Pause

SADIE: Maybe our people had to come over because they had to.

FRANK: Our people, our shagging people?

SADIE: Like a potato famine or something?

FRANK: No.

SADIE: Maybe some randy Landlord was trying to impregnate all of the young girls in the family.

FRANK: No the women were as ugly as fuck. No, it was the men, I had this uncle. To me, a young kid, he was amazing, he was the most charming man, funny, handsome. He had these thick, thick black curls that danced when he walked, and his voice, I mean the women... but when he had the drink on him. Talking of which, get us another.

SADIE does so.

I think I might be a little bit - simple, stupid bloody story. He was in a bar -

SADIE: In Ireland.

FRANK: Keep up, in Ireland. Had a few, argued with this bloke, huge bloke by all accounts, asked for it by all accounts. My idiot uncle asked the bloke to step outside, him being half the size of the other bloke, supposedly he was a demon when riled, supposedly something to see. Toe to toe they were, blood everywhere, ended with my uncle flattening the big bloke. An' he didn't get up. Trouble was the big guy had cracked his head as he went down. Brains fell out.

SADIE: Killed him?

FRANK: Pavement did, but Irish plod went after my uncle. So family got

together to share their one brain cell, decided the best way to hide him was for them all to emigrate. I mean, all of them?

Anyway, you'd think America. Australia? No.

You know how bright they were? They decided, in order to really hide themselves, disappear into London, that what they needed was to change the family name. It was Kerry right. Now by this time, with all the excessive thinking going on the brain cell was exhausted, completely wrung out, so after much arguing and much drinking and then a bit more arguing, and then lots more drinking which meant they lost a few more days. Anyway, they came up with a new name. Know what it was?

SADIE: No.

FRANK: Skerry. Kerry to Skerry. I ask you.

SADIE: But they came here.

FRANK: Docked on the Thames. Fell out the boat and didn't shift any further. Too bloody lazy.

SADIE: But it worked didn't it?

FRANK: What did?

SADIE: Your uncle. Free?

FRANK: Forgot his new name when pissed, which was often, got into fights, often, got nicked. That is the thick as shit we come from. But I got to Grammar school. And your Mum was the first of her lot. We met there. She comes from thick stock too.

SADIE: Nan's not thick.

FRANK: She's a cow.

SADIE: Yeh. A vicious cow. A cunning, scheming, chilling, vicious cow. That takes brains.

FRANK: Wonder your Mum still sees her.

SADIE is about to say something, changes her mind.

Pause

FRANK: So there your mum and me were outside the school gates and we just looked at each other and...

SADIE: Sensed you were soul mates?

FRANK: No.

SADIE: Sensed a special -

FRANK: No.

SADIE: What then?

FRANK: Sensed we had no school hats.

We were the only ones without them. Uniforms were grey. Pops wouldn't spend good beer money on a uniform when I had a decent brown suit. Decent, it was shiny, cheap crap. Can you imagine being in a school full of lads in grey and you're in the brown whistle and flute with only two shirts that weren't washed till Saturday, if then. I got really good at turning those collars but... Your mum's lot had her in some sort of blue thing. But it was the hats what did for us babe, that

was our downfall. That's what we got regular detention for, no beret or cap. So we came out the same time, late, just us.

Pause

SADIE: I'd have stopped going told them to/ fuck it.

FRANK: /Fuck it. I did. Eventually your Mum did too, but it took a while. She was really bright I mean really.

SADIE: Says you were too.

FRANK: Not like her. But I didn't need school. Bollocks to best years of your sodding life. (*Indicating himself.*) I made this one earlier.

SADIE: With sticky back plastic.

FRANK: Your Mum, that woman she could have... should have... could have...

SADIE: Could have what?

FRANK: She could have stopped being bloody jealous all the time.

SADIE: Jealous?

FRANK: Yeh jealous.

SADIE: What? Of you shagging other women? What a bitch.

FRANK: Her jealousy drove me to it.

SADIE: How do you figure that one Frank?

FRANK: Frank now is it?

SADIE: How long were you married before you started putting it about?

FRANK (*Amused*): I'm your old man, you shouldn't -

SADIE: How long?

FRANK: We were too young.

SADIE: How's Delia?

FRANK: Happy in the big house in Surrey, kids in private school. Go down weekends, mostly. Why? Jealous?

SADIE: Does she know about your secretary of the special services?

FRANK: How old are you?

SADIE: You know how old.

FRANK: You must have been at it for a while, bet you've shagged more than one.

SADIE (*Amused*): I'm your daughter, you shouldn't -

FRANK: You're sounding as bitter as your Mum.

SADIE: She's glad to be rid of you.

FRANK: She'd have me back like a shot.

SADIE: You think.

FRANK: I know.

SADIE: I know different.

FRANK: I know I'm the best shag these women have ever had.

SADIE: Oh come on!

FRANK: Eh! It's not my fault that most men are completely crap at sex. Really the competition isn't that great. You hear them talk but...

SADIE: You make women look stupid.
FRANK: They don't have to hang around.
SADIE: You certainly don't.
FRANK: What did I ever do to you?
SADIE: You did never do nothing.
FRANK: Never do nothing? Are you going to the University of Crap?
SADIE: Oooh smart mouth.
FRANK: I'm not sure you're mine.
SADIE: Music to my ears, that.
FRANK: You're pissed.
SADIE: And you're not?
FRANK: You're unattractive when you're pissed.
SADIE: Good. Might mean you won't try and shag me.
FRANK: You can piss off now.
SADIE (*Pulls out card*): I've joined the Labour Party!
FRANK (*Picks up card from desk*): Fully paid up Tory.
SADIE: You bastard!

SADIE goes to leave. Enter UNCLE BILLY. He is dressed as a Pearly King. He has a bag of tins with no labels on them.

UNCLE BILLY: Hello Darling!

Grabs SADIE in his arms and starts to dance with her. He sings.

Daisy, Daisy give me your answer do, I'm half crazy all for the love of you - and who wouldn't be.

Frank, me ol' son!

FRANK: Billy.

UNCLE BILLY (*Sings and dances around FRANK*): My ol' mans a Dustman he wears a Dustman's hat

FRANK joins in.

FRANK/UNCLE BILLY: He sold it for it fiver to get a bit of that.

UNCLE BILLY (*Sings Beatles*): Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away,

FRANK/UNCLE BILLY: Now it looks 'sas though they are here to stay, oh I believe in yesterday, why she had to go I

Don't care, I bleeding don't -

FRANK: What's with the whistle?

UNCLE BILLY: Ah, now -

SADIE: I didn't know you were a Pearly King. That's amazing!

FRANK and UNCLE BILLY laugh.

What's funny?

FRANK (*To BILLY*): No sense of humour.

UNCLE BILLY: She a feminist?

FRANK: She's Mozart and Lizst.

UNCLE BILLY: Oh. Least she's not a feminist -

SADIE: I am here.

UNCLE BILLY: Course you are...

SADIE: Sadie.

UNCLE BILLY: Course you are Sadie. Do you like it, feel the material.

He gets close to her. The suit smells.

SADIE: It's lovely but...

UNCLE BILLY: Is that niff you darling?

SADIE: No!

UNCLE BILLY: Eh. (*Chuckles.*) Is that niff you darling, eh Frank, is that niff -

He indicates SADIE. FRANK chuckles too.

SADIE: What?

FRANK: Was it still warm when you got it?

UNCLE BILLY: Eh! Didn't get this one from the Crem.

FRANK and UNCLE BILLY laugh.

SADIE: You got that off a dead - ?

UNCLE BILLY: D'you know I'm soaked, s'pouring out there. Hey Frank.

Going to sofa, stroking it, looking at SADIE.

Lovely leather son, lovely. In it lovely darlin'?

SADIE: Lovely.

UNCLE BILLY: Lovely, and this chrome...

He shines it with his sleeve.

FRANK (*To SADIE*): Get the man a drink.

UNCLE BILLY: All the rage, chrome.

SADIE: What would you -

UNCLE BILLY: Anything darling, anything.

SADIE goes to drinks cabinet.

UNCLE BILLY: Where'd you get the settee from Frank?

FRANK: Harrods.

UNCLE BILLY: Hear that darling.

SADIE: I heard.

UNCLE BILLY: Top dollar darling, Eh Frank, top dollar.

FRANK: Getting there, Billy. Getting there.

SADIE hands UNCLE BILLY a drink.

UNCLE BILLY: Is it brandy?

SADIE: No, G&T.

UNCLE BILLY: You got brandy Frank?

FRANK: Get Billy a brandy.

SADIE: But he said -

UNCLE BILLY: Eh, got something for you in my bag Frank.

He gets bag. SADIE gets a brandy.

FRANK: The magic bag eh Billy?

UNCLE BILLY (*To SADIE*): Got something for everyone in my bag darling.

SADIE: And this time?

UNCLE BILLY: Food. Tinned food.

Gets out a tin with no label on it.

Now I know for a fact these are not your rubbish.

SADIE hands BILLY a drink.

Ta love - quality these are - some are peaches or similar and some are like steak - kosher source, he owed me a favour. Thought the lady wife might - eh? You could have some for that little lady out front Frank - if she cooks for you - know what I mean.

FRANK and UNCLE BILLY enjoy this.

SADIE: No labels?

UNCLE BILLY: All Heinz or Campbells, straight up.

SADIE: But you won't know until you open them what -

UNCLE BILLY: See it as a culinary adventure, put the 'aneous into your spout. Eh Frank?

FRANK: Appreciate it Billy.

UNCLE BILLY swigs brandy.

UNCLE BILLY: Oooh that's warmed one cockle.

Looks at empty glass.

FRANK: 'Nother Billy?

UNCLE BILLY: Only if you're having one.

FRANK: Sadie.

Indicates to get UNCLE BILLY another. She does so.

UNCLE BILLY: Just a small one babe.

FRANK: Where'd you get the whistle?

UNCLE BILLY: Off a bloke.

SADIE gets and hands him a drink.

Not that small darling.

SADIE goes and fills it up more.

Up Notting Hill. He was as black as the ace of spades - didn't know what he had - only cost me a nicker and a couple of rums.

Drinks his drink.

FRANK: Bargain.

UNCLE BILLY: Been going down a storm on the Mall. Pound for a picture and a fiver for a song. If I come over all Dick Van Dyke the Americans hand over ponies.

Starts singing the Chimney Sweep song from Mary Poppins with some actions. FRANK joins in. BILLY holds out handfuls of notes on finish.

Came in here to visit it your Thomas.

SADIE: Thomas?

FRANK: Crapper - toilet.

UNCLE BILLY: You imbibing boy?

FRANK: Sadie this is a/ dry old do.

UNCLE BILLY: Dry old do.

FRANK pours him a drink. Passes it to him.

Not that small, son.

FRANK (*Passing him the bottle*): Here you go.

UNCLE BILLY: No, no, no, no. (*To SADIE.*) You do it babe, one for Billy eh.

SADIE sorts a drink. UNCLE BILLY takes it.

That's my girl. Trained her well Frank.

SADIE: Nobody trained me Uncle Billy.

UNCLE BILLY: Uncle Billy? I'm Uncle to many eh Frank, just ask his ol' Mum.

Eh Frank, Eh?

FRANK: Leave off Billy.

UNCLE BILLY: Eh your Mum always had the hots for me.

FRANK: You talk bollocks.

UNCLE BILLY: She did! An' who can blame her, my brother never knew how to make a bird happy (*To SADIE.*) Know what I mean girl.

FRANK: That is so out of order.

UNCLE BILLY: Wouldn't mind getting out of order with you darling.

SADIE: You dirty old fart.

FRANK: Eh!

SADIE (*To UNCLE BILLY*): Yeh, eh!

FRANK: No you eh. Don't talk to him like that.

SADIE: What?

FRANK: Sorry Billy, spent too much time with her stupid cow of a Mother.

SADIE: -

UNCLE BILLY: No worries son, eh. She your daughter?

FRANK: Says so.

UNCLE BILLY: You Trish's?

SADIE: Yes.

UNCLE BILLY: I loved Trish. Lovely girl, lovely.

Holds up glass.

/Dry ol' do this.

FRANK: Dry old do this. Sadie?

SADIE (*To FRANK*): I don't believe you.

FRANK: Jesus wept. I'll get it.

Gets UNCLE BILLY a drink.

UNCLE BILLY: Don't take me seriously babe.

FRANK: Takes herself too seriously.

SADIE: Least I'm not a joke.

FRANK: Total lack of sense of humour. Takes after her -

SADIE: You know Billy, the more I'm with you, the more I think Frank is so like you.

UNCLE BILLY: You think?

SADIE: Definitely, tone of voice, the odd gesture...

UNCLE BILLY: Well he's family ain't he. Like I said, we keep it in the family.

SADIE: But it's more than that...

FRANK: Careful.

UNCLE BILLY: Is it?

SADIE: Keep that suit Billy, it's an heirloom.

UNCLE BILLY: Oh, it is babe, it is.

SADIE: You should pass it on to Frank. Don't think he'll linger here see.

FRANK: You're a stupid -

SADIE: You can take the boy out of Southwark, but you can't take Southwark out of the boy.

FRANK: Women are ugly when they're bitter, don't you think Billy?

SADIE (*Sings*): Oh, my old man's a postman, he wears a postman's hat, he gets pissed every weekday, I'm going to be just like that!

FRANK: You fucking little cunt!

SADIE: You burnt Pom Pom!

FRANK: It stank!

SADIE: Of me!

FRANK: Exactly! That stink used to follow me all the way down the A1 to London. Was Watford gap before the air cleared.

RECEPTIONIST comes in, SADIE goes to leave.

SADIE (*To RECEPTIONIST*): You know he's got the clap.

FRANK (*To RECEPTIONIST*): I haven't.

SADIE: Riddled with it, but very willing to share.

She exits.

FRANK: Really I haven't she's -

UNCLE BILLY: I've got something for that in the bag.

EIGHTEEN

1980

Field as before. Summer

Punk music. There is a nest of straw. Bigger and more complex than the last - improbably so. SADIE, dressed as a tidy punk/new romantic. She has a bit of attitude about her to go with the clothes. She is putting the finishing touches to the nest. When done, she produces a bottle of gin, half full. She takes a swig. Finds it strong.

SADIE (*Like on stage at a rock concert*): Hello Plymouth Gin! Massive applause! Plymouth Gin, I love you! Thankyouverymuch!

She produces a large bottle of tonic. Fills the bottle of gin up.

Takes a swig.

(*Not so impressed*): Lemon, lemon, lemon, lemon.

Searches in the nest for a lemon. Produces one.

Taddaah!!! Knife, (*Looking.*) Knife, knife, knife. Oh bollocks.

MARCUS (*Off*): Incoming!

MARCUS, dressed in chinos and a bit of cashmere, runs and leaps into the nest, grabbing SADIE on route. They collapse into the nest. Struggle to their feet.

Damn Ruskies eh!

SADIE: They still out there?

MARCUS: Nearly got me. Been desk bound, reactions tad slow. Good to be back on operations.

SADIE: Damn glad to have you back!

MARCUS: Me too!

They instinctively move to be close, suddenly become awkward.

SADIE: Desk bound? What about punting?

MARCUS: Ah punting, yes, had a go. Had an unfortunate incident with a pole, lost a heap of smoked salmon.

SADIE (*Amused*): Oh.

MARCUS: And quails' eggs.

SADIE: Oh my!

MARCUS: Bottle of Krug.

SADIE: Not the Krug!

MARCUS: And a prospective girlfriend.

Beat

SADIE: Poor you.

Bit awkward for them both.

MARCUS: Janice here yet?

SADIE: Dunno, did you check... the banqueting hall?

MARCUS: You've built a banqueting hall?

SADIE: I felt the loss of one last time.

MARCUS: Didn't like to say...

SADIE: A Ruskie would have.

MARCUS: Damn rude those Ruskies.

SADIE: Drink?

SADIE passes him the bottle. He takes a swig.

MARCUS: No lemon?

SADIE shows the lemon.

Genius!

SADIE: Not genius.

MARCUS: No?

SADIE: No knife.

MARCUS: Ah.

Producing one.

Taddaah!

SADIE: That's... big. But Marcus I love you!

MARCUS feels this more than SADIE. SADIE takes knife. Enter JANICE, popping up from inside the nest.

JANICE: And I love you too!

MARCUS: You're here?

JANICE: In the banqueting hall. Love where you've put the pictures. Hey guys, give me a restrained British hug!

Huge embrace from SADIE. MARCUS is more restrained.

MARCUS: When did you two come down?

JANICE: Say what?

SADIE: Oxford wank for break up.

MARCUS: I've been waiting for you.

JANICE: With your big...

MARCUS: Knife Janice, knife. Present from Father.

SADIE: He still hate women?

MARCUS: More the Common Market now.

SADIE: What have they done?

MARCUS: Actually, think he's still bitter about 1066. Knife is last desperate attempt to make me a man. If I don't like guns I must at least like knives.

JANICE: And do you?

MARCUS: Not really.

SADIE: I love knives! First thing I did when I got my grant was buy a Swiss army knife, mainly for the corkscrew but they have a parcel carrying hook on it.

MARCUS: When does anyone get a parcel tied with string now?

SADIE: Never, But if I did -

JANICE: Can you believe it, can you believe it!

SADIE: See, she's impressed.

JANICE: So damn! We have finished! Graduated, have letters after our names!

(*To MARCUS.*) What you get?

MARCUS: That is very American.

JANICE: Why?

MARCUS: Well, you don't really ask.

JANICE: I'm asking.

MARCUS: Double first, somehow, touch of luck really. You?

JANICE: Yeh, a first, revised like a dog, mind. Means I go on this research trip where we try to save something endangered.

MARCUS: Oh well done.

JANICE: It so is! Just think, one minute endangered, then I turn up, not endangered! What about you girl?

SADIE: Drink?

JANICE: Sure.

SADIE pours one for her.

I brought a bottle.

MARCUS: Me too. There's lemon. I'll sort.

JANICE: Cool.

MARCUS sorts.

Well?

SADIE: No ice I'm afraid.

JANICE: You think?

JANICE produces cool bag.

MARCUS: What's that?

SADIE: Ice?

JANICE: Uhuh.

SADIE: Well done that woman!

JANICE: Now girl, answer.

SADIE: What?

MARCUS: You know what. Answer the American.

JANICE: Thank you English cousin.

MARCUS: Anything for our special relationship. (*To SADIE.*) Well?

Beat

SADIE: Okay.

JANICE: Okay?

SADIE: Okay, I turned up for the exams.

JANICE: Did you revise for them?

SADIE: Look I was really busy there.

JANICE: Doing what?

SADIE: Protesting.

MARCUS: About what?

SADIE: Everything.

MARCUS: Define everything.

SADIE: Listen to you 'define'.

JANICE: Oh I sure protested against whaling, I so won't eat a Norwegian prawn ever again.

SADIE: You're vegetarian.

JANICE: If I wasn't, not a single Norwegian prawn would pass my lips.

MARCUS: But, things are looking up.

JANICE: Not for prawns.

SADIE: For who?

JANICE: Top up?

MARCUS (*To JANICE*): Please. (*To SADIE*.) Didn't you vote for her?

JANICE sorts drink.

SADIE: Do turkeys vote for Christmas?

MARCUS: Thought you'd be pleased, a woman in power.

SADIE: She's no woman she's a -

MARCUS: Change, for the best.

JANICE (*To SADIE, indicating drink*): Girl?

SADIE (*To JANICE*): Please. (*To MARCUS*.) Best and Thatcher in same sentence, come on.

JANICE sorts SADIE's drink.

MARCUS: She's sorting things.

SADIE: You think.

JANICE: And you, Janice? Why thank you I will. Don't forget the ice.

Pouring.

And what does 'a dash' mean anyway?

JANICE pours herself a drink. They all drink quickly in the next section, with JANICE repeatedly filling glasses.

MARCUS: Labour didn't, the unions ran riot. Word is she has plans for the unions.

JANICE: Word from who?

SADIE: From his new mates, interns, parliament.

MARCUS: Good blokes, bright, ambitious, energised, can drink for England, party into the small hours and still write speeches for cabinet ministers on family values.

JANICE: Thought she promoted grammar school folk like her?

SADIE: They let her have some in order to dupe the desperately aspiring middle class vote. Plan is, let the country get pissed off with them, then normal private school rich rugger bugger service will be resumed.

Beat

MARCUS: Hopefully, for me, yes.

JANICE: Still aiming for office then?

MARCUS: Just want to serve.

SADIE: Then pour us another.

JANICE and SADIE find this very funny.

MARCUS: You're not the only ones who believe in fairness, justice -

SADIE: You're funny, very funny.

JANICE: I'll pour.

MARCUS: What are you going to do then?

SADIE: P.G.C.E.

MARCUS: Teaching? You?

SADIE: Hey look, I want to indoctrinate too.

JANICE: Drink?

SADIE: Thanks. (*To MARCUS.*) Anyway, you'll soon need to look for another job.

MARCUS: Why?

JANICE hands MARCUS a drink.

Thanks.

SADIE: One term, that's all, one term.

MARCUS: You think.

SADIE: I know. No way will they get back in again. The British nation can absolutely not be that stupid.

JANICE: I dunno, they're stupid enough to destroy marine habitat, look at Sellafield, with all the prawns changing sex just like that.

Clicks fingers.

SADIE: What is it with you and prawns?

MARCUS: Labour formed a coalition with the Libs for God's sake, sheer desperation.

SADIE: Yeh, okay I'll give you that but -

MARCUS: The country needs a strong party and they'll respect our decisiveness. Churchill was decisive.

SADIE: Decisiveness?

MARCUS: Decisiveness.

SADIE: Churchill?

MARCUS: Yes, Churchill.

Beat

SADIE: Actually, you're probably right.

MARCUS: I am?

SADIE: Country only wanted Churchill in war, she'll start a war when it comes to the election, won't she, so she gets back in. You're mates saying that eh?

MARCUS: Your imagination is as fertile as ever, Sadie, and as for your naivety -

SADIE: Oh my naivety -

MARCUS: Yes naivety, naivety.

SADIE: You're naive.

MARCUS: I'm not.

SADIE: Naivest person I know.

MARCUS: Not.

SADIE: Am.

MARCUS: Not!

SADIE: So am!

JANICE (*Quite drunk now*): Hey, hey, hey, you two. Step back a little here.

There are much, much, MUCH more important things than party politics here. Here, right here, in this nest, us graduates, us bright young things, us the hope for the future. Come here.

She puts her arms around them both.

See? There is us. Us!

She kisses both of them, lingering a little when kissing SADIE.

Us... and global warming and the destruction of the rain forest and natural resources running out and -

MARCUS: Prawns, don't forget the prawns.

SADIE: I lay awake at night thinking about those prawns changing sex like that.

Clicks fingers.

I mean, can you imagine their surprise?

JANICE: Oh, yeh, I forgot sarcasm is a national pastime for you people.

MARCUS: Not at all. Irony is a national pastime, for example, look at the irony pouring out of Sadie's clothes.

SADIE: Says the Sloane Ranger, wearing more cashmere than a minor comedian playing a charity golf match.

JANICE: If we are talking design disasters can we get serious for a moment, I mean can we? Can we!

SADIE: Course.

MARCUS: Absolutely.

JANICE: Thank you. So. Can we sort this nest?

SADIE: It's sorted!

JANICE: It is so not. Where are the finishing touches?

SADIE: Like?

JANICE: Like...

MARCUS: Like a statue to Kier Hardie or Lenin or maybe just a red flag.

SADIE: Right that's it.

SADIE disappears into the nest.

JANICE: Did you have to? I was talking a few balustrades or a simple moat, a moat would be something else wouldn't it?

MARCUS: Absolutely, but there's no water here for a moat.

SADIE appears with a bucket of water and soaks

MARCUS.

JANICE: You've piped in water! Way to go girl!

MARCUS: A new field irrigation system. Thought we had only got it to the next field.

SADIE: You had.

MARCUS: Oh.

SADIE: It's just a few holes drilled, bit of piping moved, problem Marcus?

Beat

MARCUS: No.

SADIE (*Defiantly*): Sure?

MARCUS (*Smiles*): Absolutely no problem Sadie, honest.

SADIE: There's some towels in the master bedroom. Fluffy ones.

MARCUS: But it's summer. I'll just...

Takes his shirt and trousers off. Lays them out on the edge of the nest to dry.

See? Summer's wonderful!

JANICE: Certainly is.

SADIE (*Offering*): Fag?

MARCUS: You smoke?

SADIE: No.

MARCUS: Me neither.

SADIE: Sometimes with alcohol.

MARCUS: Me too. Hardly touch them really. Thank you.

MARCUS takes cigarette.

SADIE: Me too.

Pause

So for breakfast?

MARCUS: Guinness and a fag.

SADIE: Me too. And lunch?

MARCUS: Oh still Guinness and a fag.

SADIE: Dinner?

MARCUS: Wine and a fag.

SADIE: Oh.

MARCUS: Sometimes Guinness.

SADIE: Me too! With a whiskey chaser?

MARCUS: Of course. (*To JANICE.*) Do you...?

JANICE: And add to global warming?

MARCUS: No course not, sorry.

Beat

JANICE and SADIE fall about laughing. JANICE goes to nest and produces 200 Marlboro.

JANICE: Tadaaah! God bless duty free!

SADIE (*Producing lighter*): And God bless Zippo!

JANICE (*Producing lighter*): To Zippo!

MARCUS (*Producing lighter*): Zippo gawd bless her and all she combusts!

They all light their cigarettes and take a long drag.

SADIE: You can feel those lung muscles becoming deliciously paralysed.

MARCUS: Blissful!

JANICE: Sublime!

MARCUS: Hear hear! Cheers!

JANICE/SADIE: Cheers.

They drink, are really quite drunk.

Pause

JANICE: I want to join Greenpeace.

Pause

I want to join Greenpeace!

SADIE: Are we stopping you?

JANICE: Really join. Like go on a boat and ice floes and stop the bloody slaughter of whales and seals and everything.

SADIE: On an ice floe? When will we see you?

JANICE: Then I'll come back, see you, and protest, really protest! Stop nuclear missiles with my bare hands, get chained to a huge fence, I mean huge with barbed wire on top. Get arrested by an unfit but aggressive policeman, and be turned into a postcard and sold in alternative bookshops, I really, really want to protest!

MARCUS: Good for you.

JANICE: Good for me? Good for me! I'm doing it for all of us, for personkind, for -

MARCUS: Hear, hear!

JANICE: Well not for you.

MARCUS: Et tu Janice?

JANICE: You don't care about the sex life of a prawn!

MARCUS (*Trying to sound like a politician*): I do honestly care about the personal mac... machinations of a prawn I do but, I ask you this...

JANICE: Yes?

MARCUS: What are they for?

JANICE: For?

MARCUS: Yes for? You don't measure yourself by what you are against but what you are for. That's a free society that is and I hold my hands up, that is what I'm for and they, the prawns, can be part of that, if they so wish.

JANICE goes to interrupt.

Let me finish by being straight with you Janice, whilst I care passionately about the prawn, I care more about people. Call me old fashioned but that is my spe... species and yes I put it first. How can we save anything if we don't save ourselves?

JANICE: You have to do both.

MARCUS: That's too big.

JANICE: Too big? Too big? Say that to the humpback whales.

MARCUS: If they were poor and living in my constituency I would.

But there are poor PEOPLE, living in council... you know so poor they have absolutely no -

SADIE: Cashmere?

MARCUS: You may mock, but I would help them first, people, to help themselves, stand on their own two feet.

SADIE: What if there is a family in the house, maybe a grandma?

MARCUS: Or as many feet - in the house - that need standing on - you see on their... multiple feet they can help other... feet.

SADIE: As long as they have feet, what if they have no feet, some people have no feet, not one foot.

JANICE: Not even hands.

SADIE: No hands.

JANICE: Loads of people in America with no hands.

SADIE: I bet. So tell me Marcus, what if they have no feet and no hands, what then?

Beat

MARCUS: What. The whole family?

SADIE: Uhuh.

MARCUS: Even the grandmother?

SADIE: Yep.

MARCUS: Gosh.

SADIE: Gosh.

MARCUS: There are families like that?

JANICE: Uhuh.

MARCUS: In England?

JANICE: But hey, we have hands.

SADIE: We do. Lots of them.

JANICE: Loads. And we don't want to waste our hands.

SADIE: Nope.

MARCUS: It's our duty not to.

Pause

JANICE goes over to SADIE and puts her arms around her.

SADIE: What do we do with them then?

JANICE: I have an idea.

MARCUS: A solution?

JANICE: Oh yes.

JANICE kisses SADIE. JANICE goes to nest.

Sadie?

SADIE: Yes Janice?

JANICE: Really like what you've done with the bedrooms here.

SADIE: I've only really done the master bedroom, the others aren't - they need

a touch of -

JANICE: We only need the one.

SADIE: Do we?

JANICE: We do.

Beat

SADIE (*Realising*): Oh.

JANICE: Yes oh. You two want to come and lie down?

MARCUS: I must say I'm not really very tired.

JANICE: Oh Marcus, Marcus, Marcus. As shiny new graduates of one of the finest education systems in the western world, I'm suggesting we mark the occasion by going into the nest and shagging our brains out, being as we don't need them anymore. What do you think?

Beat

MARCUS: Lovely.

JANICE: Excellent, follow the trail of clothes.

JANICE goes. SADIE and MARCUS get up.

SADIE: Shall we - ?

MARCUS: Sadie?

He moves to her and kisses her with feeling.

SADIE: Where did that come from?

MARCUS (*Chest*): In here.

SADIE: Really?

MARCUS: Really.

SADIE: Really, really?

MARCUS: Always.

SADIE: I didn't -

MARCUS: I know.

SADIE: That's... a lot.

MARCUS: Too much?

SADIE: No. I'd hoped.

MARCUS: Really?

SADIE: Really. But...

MARCUS: But what?

Beat

SADIE: I think we should try it the American way.

MARCUS: Of course.

SADIE: Would be rude not to.

MARCUS: Very.

SADIE: Can't have that.

MARCUS: No. Certainly not.

SADIE: She is -

MARCUS: She is. And I wouldn't -

SADIE: No. After you?

MARCUS: No, I insist.

SADIE: Thank you.

MARCUS: Not at all.

They go into the nest.

NINETEEN

1992

SADIE's flat. General Election

DANCERS. Music: 'My Guy' with an early nineties twist. SADIE is part of the dance and is giving a performance filled with hope and gusto even if not with skill. The DANCERS leave. SADIE is humming. She is happy, excited. The TV is on in the background but everyone on TV appears on stage. Enter JANICE. Smart travel gear - linens etc. She has a large backpack, which has travelled the world with her from when young.

SADIE: Woohoo!

She jumps on JANICE with a huge hug.

JANICE: Good American hug.

SADIE: Did you like the woohoo?

JANICE: Loved the woohoo.

SADIE: How was Nicaragua?

JANICE: Poor. Corrupt. But there's hope.

SADIE: And Colombia?

JANICE: Less poor, corrupt, but there's hope.

SADIE: And America?

JANICE: Corrupt.

How's teaching?

SADIE: We have a National Curriculum.

JANICE: That's nice.

SADIE: My subject's not included.

JANICE: Oh?

SADIE: I do a lot of role play about bullying and sexually transmitted diseases.

JANICE: Interesting.

SADIE: Not really. Look forward to the pattern of the day being altered by some kid kicking off with a weapon.

JANICE: Does that happen often?

SADIE: More than they admit.

I am so bloody excited!

JANICE: Obviously.

SADIE: We're alright! We're alright!

JANICE: Who's we?

SADIE: Kinnock - Labour Party are ahead in the polls. Can you believe it! They could have a slim majority.

Had this amazing rally in Sheffield. It was wild. Kinnock arriving by helicopter. 10,000 yelling, We're alright! We're alright! 'Mazing.

JANICE: Sounds... American.

SADIE: Was a bit.

JANICE: You like that?

SADIE: No. But it was mad!

JANICE: And their policies are?

SADIE: You've become cynical. George Bush has made you cynical, South America has made you -

JANICE: Maybe but, simple question.

SADIE: They are Labour. First time since I could vote, Labour!

I haven't been this excited since, since, since ever!

Enter COMMENTATOR.

COMMENTATOR: Exit polls are predicting a Labour win with a small majority but needless to say both parties are claiming a possible victory. We'll catch up with a few MPs on the hustings...

SADIE: Drink?

JANICE: Tea would be great.

SADIE: Really?

JANICE: No way! What have you got?

SADIE: Champagne.

JANICE: For me?

SADIE: For the victory.

JANICE: Bit premature?

SADIE: The Tories are led by John Major, I mean John Major.

JANICE: Who?

SADIE: Exactly! Now Kinnock, he has that whole Welsh public speaking thing. Talk for hours without drawing breath. Mind you, I've always fancied his wife more. She is a bit of 'alright!'

JANICE: Drink girl! I'm dying here.

SADIE: We'll start on the Cava. Was going to have it after the champagne.

JANICE: When too drunk to notice?

SADIE: Oh, I've missed you.

Seen my glasses?

SADIE pops Cava, pours etc.

JANICE: Are they crystal?

SADIE: To celebrate.

JANICE: Are you so sure they will win?

SADIE: They have to. The only government I've known has followed a philosophy 'measuring the price of everything and the value of nothing.' For

once, for the first time ever, I feel... like there's hope.

JANICE (*Noticing TV*): Hey. Is that Marcus?

MARCUS appears with ANABELLE at his side. She is clinging to him but in a confident way.

SADIE: Is it?

JANICE: It is Marcus. Wearing a blue rosette.

SADIE: Course. Tory.

JANICE: So he's finally standing.

SADIE (*Quietly*): Seems like it.

JANICE: Who's that with him?

SADIE: Don't know. His press secretary?

COMMENTATOR: Surely this is an unwinnable seat for you?

MARCUS: Technically, no seat is unwinnable.

JANICE: Do press secretaries stroke their clients' arms like that?

COMMENTATOR: The polls are placing Conservatives ten percent down on Labour. And you are standing for a seat in a Labour stronghold.

JANICE: Why they given him an unwinnable seat?

COMMENTATOR: Is that because you are seen as a maverick within the party?

JANICE: Now she's stroking his -

MARCUS: Technically the press call me a maverick, not my party.

JANICE: So yes then.

MARCUS: And may I make clear, my party is for the individual, the individual who wants more from life, the individual who wants to get on, make the best future for themselves and their family. And may I make clear I feel this more keenly than ever now I am soon to have my own family -

ANABELLE squeaks with pleasure.

JANICE: Did she just squeak?

COMMENTATOR: Anabelle Merchant.

ANABELLE squeaks.

JANICE: And again! A grown woman squeaking.

COMMENTATOR: Firstly, congratulations.

ANABELLE: Thank you.

COMMENTATOR: Is your father in full support of your -

ANABELLE: Fiancé. Fiancé. Marcus is my - yes, he is.

COMMENTATOR: Is he backing him?

ANABELLE: Father is happy for me, if I'm happy and I'm very, very happy to be the future Mrs. Marcus Parham.

MARCUS: He's been very generous, welcoming me into the fold.

COMMENTATOR: Anabelle soon-to-be Parham -

ANABELLE squeaks.

Is your father still the Conservative Party's main English donor?

ANABELLE: Marcus has independent means, my man is his own man. Except he's my man now. (*Squeaks.*)

JANICE: Dear lordy!

COMMENTATOR: Will you be using your own considerable fortune to back your husband?

ANABELLE: I'm just, some of daddy's boards I don't - I mean -

MARCUS: Let me make clear that technically I am marrying Anabelle because she is a wonderful, wonderful woman.

ANABELLE squeaks.

Lights down on ANABELLE and MARCUS.

JANICE: Did he say anything to you?

SADIE: No.

JANICE: He said nothing in his letters.

SADIE: He wrote to you?

JANICE: More than you.

SADIE: Postcards, I did postcards.

JANICE: No you didn't.

SADIE: Didn't I?

JANICE: You know you didn't.

Pause

Girl? Did you ever tell him?

Beat

SADIE: I'd have sent you a postcard if I had.

Getting bottle of champagne.

Here, help me with this.

JANICE: Champagne? What happened to -

SADIE: Champagne. Little bit of hope for the hopeless.

Cork pops. SADIE tops up glasses.

Pause

JANICE: Okay.

Raising glass.

Here's to the return of hope for both of us.

SADIE: You?

JANICE: Yeh, lost her in Nicaragua but hey, she'll turn up, probably with my cutlery.

SADIE: What?

JANICE: In fairness the Trust did warn me against taking buses but hey, my job in the charity is to assess need. How can you assess need from behind tinted windows? So I took buses, in Nicaragua. First it was my computer, it was in my bag, concealed but, okay, I look different, smell richer than your average person who has to travel on a bus in Nicaragua. So the bag slipped away. And so gently, it was almost a privilege to be robbed. Then it was my purse, which was such a drag, not because of the money, I mean these people are poor beyond poor but it was the ID cards and all that crap? But that slipped quietly away too.

Topping up drinks.

SADIE: But the cutlery?

JANICE: You see no cafes or restaurants had cutlery. They'd done something with the metal, a corrupt regime does 'stuff' with metal, raw materials, any material and damn the fact that people might want to use cutlery to just feel better, so, no cutlery. Anyway I learnt to carry my own cutlery, that's what people do there, carry their own cutlery and I was on this bus and I thought I'd learnt, assimilated, understood. I had everything concealed, computer left in office, ID stuck to my waist with elephant tape, money in crotch and cutlery in my bra. I'd even stopped using deodorant, so I smelt the same.

SADIE: That was temporary right?

JANICE: And I was on this bus and there was just me and this woman, with two little kids, aged about six and four. And I smiled at the kids, as you do, particularly in South America, they love kids, you have to love kids to assimilate. And the next thing I knew the woman was on me with her hand down my bra. I mean, how did she know? She wanted that cutlery so bad, and I thought, you know what, I'm here to assess your country's needs, for the charity, which to be honest, were pretty damn obvious, like they need everything. But I'm trying to assimilate for fuck's sake, and you're shoving your hand down my cleavage and nicking my Sheffield steel. And you know me, I was there to, you know, help, but I could help about as much as... But I heard myself saying, 'no way bitch!', I mean me. Like I was in a Die Hard movie. So we struggled a bit on the floor of the bus.

SADIE: Was she muscled from hard work? Street fighter?

JANICE: Skin and bone. Bit feeble really. I had her pinned down and was just about to smack her one when I saw the kids looking at me. And I thought, do I want them to see their mother being thumped, by an American, considering how their country was? I mean it didn't sit well with me being a metaphor. So I let her have the cutlery.

SADIE: But, that was good of you, for the kids' sake. I mean, those kids -

JANICE: Those shitty little kids.

SADIE: Shitty?

JANICE: The eldest bit me, the youngest took my bra.

SADIE: So, three years in South America and you were left with no ID no cutlery and no bra. Hopeless indeed.

Pause

JANICE starts to laugh, SADIE joins in. Tops up drinks.

SADIE: I've missed you.

JANICE: How much?

Beat

SADIE: This much.

She leans forward and kisses JANICE, a sweet lingering kiss.

JANICE: Quite a bit then.

They kiss again.

JANICE: They're not married yet.

SADIE: No.

JANICE: I could get in touch, get us together. You could -

SADIE: No.

JANICE: You sure?

SADIE: He's gone back to his own. They always do.

JANICE: But with us he is -

SADIE: Was. He was. We were the bit of rough. The entertainment. Normal service is now resumed.

Pause

JANICE: She did squeak horribly.

SADIE: Didn't she just.

JANICE: Console yourself the American way?

SADIE: What? I'd thought you'd assimilated? I'd hoped for some South American sultryness. How disappointing.

JANICE: Oh, girl, you know I'm not one to disappoint.

They kiss more passionately. Music.

TWENTY

1992

Later. SADIE's flat

A mound of duvet on the floor. It has obviously been a passionate night.

COMMENTATOR comes on with microphone and starts to whisper into SADIE's ear. We cannot see SADIE or JANICE yet.

COMMENTATOR: Just to confirm, with all results in apart from the re-count in... no that's in now, we have a result. Going against all exit polls, the Conservatives have been returned with a majority, that's a Conservative majority, albeit a vastly reduced one, but still the Conservatives are in power.

SADIE sits bolt upright, very dishevelled and hungover.

SADIE (To COMMENTATOR): What?

COMMENTATOR: Just to confirm -

SADIE: The last bit?

COMMENTATOR: The Conservatives have been - that bit?

SADIE (*Irritated*): Yes, yes that bit.

COMMENTATOR: Four more years of Tory rule, babe.

SADIE: Noooooooooo!

JANICE arises. Aware of her hangover.

COMMENTATOR leaves, still commentating.

COMMENTATOR: At present we have no comment from the opposition, still the opposition even though they were convinced they were preparing for government. We do have the phrase 'pulling a Kinnock' already being bandied about - as in celebrating an event too early. Will Sheffield come back to haunt him? Will it go into the Oxford English Dictionary? Will that be his epitaph? Will he stay to fight again? Or will he slink off to Europe? More importantly will his wife stand? Now she's a bit of -

JANICE: What's up?

SADIE: We lost!

JANICE: Oh my.

SADIE: Oh my? Oh my! Another four years of... Noooooooooo!

JANICE: Girl, can you be distraught a little more quietly?

SADIE: But we lost!

JANICE: But you were winning?

SADIE: Bastards! They lied!

JANICE: Who?

SADIE: The exit pollers.

JANICE: Well, of course.

SADIE: But why? Why lie about what you voted?

JANICE: Would you admit to voting for John Major?

SADIE: Janice, we lost.

JANICE: That is a real... shame.

SADIE (*Lost*): But we... lost.

JANICE: I'll make tea.

She gets up but feels her hangover and tries to carry her head to kitchen.

SADIE: We lost. Lost. Lost. Lost. Lost... Lost.

JANICE returns, tea-less.

JANICE: Let's go out for breakfast. The kettle is way too loud.

SADIE: We lost.

JANICE gathers some clothes for herself and SADIE.

JANICE: Come on girl.

She starts to dress SADIE.

SADIE: But we -

JANICE: Lost, I know. Is this mine?

She puts the top on herself and gets another for SADIE.

SADIE: We so...

JANICE: Lost.

Dressing SADIE.

Arm in.

SADIE: But that means -

JANICE: You lost.

SADIE: No it means -

JANICE: I know, you lost.

SADIE: No, think. It means...

JANICE: Oh. You think?

SADIE: That would be so...

JANICE: He might not have.

SADIE: It would be so -

JANICE: It was unwinnable, they said it was -

SADIE: He's going to marry the cash cow!

JANICE: She of the squeaking pearls?

SADIE: I bet he has, I bet he's... Oh this is so...

JANICE: C'mon. Food, then despair.

SADIE: No.

JANICE: No? I so need something to soak up all the Cava.

SADIE: No, I've had enough.

JANICE: Girl, my head, don't you care?

SADIE: I care, I really, really do, but where does caring get you? They don't care and they win, all the friggin' time. Well no more will I be on the losing side.

And now Marcus. Fine. He was in the nest and now he's gone back to the dark side. I bet she went to finishing school, Cordon Bleu school and secretarial school and now does aerobics five times a week before being moisturised and exfoliated and all so she can go home and open her legs for Marcus for breeding purposes. I mean, if he's in Star Wars she's C3P0. She is as voluptuous as C3P0 and probably as good a shag as C3P0. But they keep winning.

JANICE: You could have told him about -

SADIE: I could have and then what? He would have soon yearned for that in the cashmere, she is his sort.

JANICE: You don't know that, you -

SADIE: Oh, you're so American with your lack of... They breed with themselves. You don't get teeth like that through natural selection, that's inbreeding. You and me babe, I tried to educate the young, you tried to make people feel as if they deserve cutlery. I mean who were we friggin' kidding? Here, they've got rid of the working classes by outsourcing everything, including the call centres where everyone is called Steven but has an Asian accent you can cut with a knife. They are so creating a friggin' underclass but, hey! Easily sorted by making drugs dirt cheap, I mean, they're giving them away outside my school gates. But don't relax if you're above the drug line, oh no! You should 'get on'. Strive. Strive. But for what? A patch of land with bricks and mortar, to pass on? That is so not their focus. They are sniggering behind their manicured hands as we stare in estate agents' windows to see how much our piddly little Barratt boxes have gone up. Before we go home and crack open a tin of beans, calling the experience 'retro' instead of plain broke. That's just before we go off to our second job in order to pay for the mortgage on the IKEA-filled pile of rubbish and for what? Have you ever been stuck in the one-way system in IKEA? It's hell! And for what? To sell your house to pay for health care.

JANICE: Hey, that's America, you have the NHS.

SADIE: They are going to dismantle it.

JANICE: Dismantle the NHS? Now you're joking, world wide it's - I mean they wouldn't dare.

SADIE: There's rumblings. I bet we end up selling our homes to pay for a shared room in an old people's home, inappropriately called Sunnybank. Which smells of wee and cabbage and you lie in a bed across a soulless room from a skanky old woman you would have crossed the street to avoid as she still finds fanny jokes hilarious. Well sod caring, sod it all. I'll not buy another *War Cry* outside of M&S anymore.

JANICE: I'm not sure I'm quite ready to stop caring.

SADIE: You have no cutlery! All we have left is the moral high ground. And they are laughing at us because they have the sodding ark! I can feel the water

lapping around my feet. Well I'm not going to get my plimsolls damp. Not anymore.

JANICE: And what about Olivia?

SADIE: What about her?

JANICE: What are you teaching her, showing her?

SADIE: I'll show her how to beat them at their own game. I'll make them need what I have to offer without even realising. As they drug us with want I'll do the same to them. I'll supply a product they'll become desperate for, they won't be able to survive without. I'll be insidious and they'll be grateful without even realising. Certainly won't expect them to say thank you. But, I'll be there, on their shoulder and in their minds and they'll be paying me for the pleasure.

JANICE: So what on earth - ?

SADIE: No more will I dream of a better society, No more will I be caring, sharing socialist Sadie. She has left the nest. Thankyouverymuch. No. No more. No more will I be on the losing side, no more will I search for hope. No. Instead, instead, I will become that party planner!

TWENTY-ONE

1994

Coffee Shop

Music. 1994. Enter DANCERS. They use the coffee shop as they would in a pop promo. They become customers. SADIE is sitting reading over accounts, mobile phone to hand. Phone rings.

SADIE (*Punctuated with suitable pauses where necessary*): Hi, Tamara. Outcome? Both of them? They said what? Exactly how do they know they'll be sick at the weekend - it's two days away? Sickening? Too right they are sickening. No just my little... But both of them? Stress? Stress! How stressful is mingling with a tray of mini brochette or Moët? Okay, at an Embassy. Yes I'm very aware it is our first Embassy. Look. Get back on to them and tell them to get their sorry little arses into work unless their legs have dropped off and if they decide not to turn up then I hope their legs do drop off. You can temper it if you like, Tamara, as long as the result is... Tamara... Tamara... Tamara... look just let me know the outcome.

Enter FRANK, unseen by SADIE.

FRANK (*He changes his voice*): You wanted to see the manager.

SADIE: I certainly did. It started with my skinny mocha which was not a skinny mocha but let me explain further because it's important.

FRANK: Certainly.

SADIE: Firstly you have failed as a manager as the dark-haired waitress has not been trained properly. Unless muttering 'whatever' and 'bitch from hell' are in your training manual. Secondly.

FRANK: Secondly.

SADIE: My small skinny mocha was not a skinny mocha but a grande fat latte and I know a grande fat latte when I see one.

FRANK: I'm sure you do madam.

SADIE: Thirdly...

FRANK: Thirdly?

SADIE: Thirdly I'd just like to re-emphasise firstly and secondly.

FRANK: I'm sure you would madam. So if madam would allow, may I distil madam's comments?

SADIE: Of course.

FRANK: To clarify... madam's small skinny mocha was a real fucker of a

shocker.

SADIE turns around.

SADIE: Frank?

FRANK: Alright babe?

SADIE: Frank?

FRANK: Alright babe?

SADIE: But, Frank?

FRANK: Babe.

Indicating paperwork in front of SADIE.

Accounts?

SADIE: Been a while.

FRANK: Has it?

Indicating accounts.

Healthy?

SADIE: Yes thanks.

FRANK: The accounts.

SADIE: Oh, yes. On paper anyway.

FRANK: Right.

Beat

School accounts?

SADIE: Not school. Don't teach anymore.

FRANK: Thank fuck for that.

SADIE: Own business now. Turning away work.

FRANK: Own business? Well done, babe. Well done indeed.

SADIE: Thanks.

FRANK: Thought teaching made you a dull bugger.

SADIE: Can I get you something Frank? The service is abysmal, I asked to see the manager but he must be totally friggin' useless as he hasn't even appeared yet. Or we could go somewhere else?

FRANK: Can't babe.

SADIE: Can't.

FRANK: I'm the friggin' useless manager.

SADIE: Really?

FRANK: Temporarily.

SADIE: But -

FRANK: You're right. No bloody work ethic this lot. That little cow who served you? Tells me I'm 'stressing her out' when I get on to her about being useless. I say 'stressing out' occurs when you think a sniper has you in his sights and your brains may be splattered all over the table not milk froth. 'Stressing out', I ask you.

SADIE: Tell me about it. But, Frank -

FRANK: Hold on babe, the stupid cow is fucking up with cinnamon now.

Exit FRANK. SADIE's mobile rings.

SADIE: Hi, Tamara. Sorted?... They what? What! You are joking?

Beat.

No. No. No. No. Yes I'm sure it was good they felt they could confide in you but... Yes, privileged, but if you plan to elope surely the point is to... No I'm not... Yes, touching... romantic... No I'm sure it could happen to... Tamara. Tamara. Tamara. Tamara. TAMARA. Did you give them the bollocking they deserved?

Beat

No it is not in your... Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine FINE! But the fact is we are two waiting staff down!

Beat

Tamara. Tamara. Tamara... Does sniffing really help?

Beat

Sorry. Does sobbing really help? Right I'll sort. I'll sort. I'll sort. I'll sort. I said I'll -!

Phone has been put down.

FRANK: Trouble?

SADIE: No! No. No. No. Frank?

FRANK: Babe.

SADIE: The job? The office?

FRANK: Oh that.

SADIE: The leather?

FRANK: The leather.

SADIE: The chrome?

FRANK: The chrome.

Beat

America sneezed and we caught a cold.

SADIE: America?

FRANK: Keep up babe.

SADIE: Sorry but -

FRANK: Those accounts.

SADIE: Yes?

FRANK: All pay on time?

SADIE: Mostly.

FRANK: Which ones don't?

SADIE: But they're repeat business.

FRANK: Repeatedly don't pay?

SADIE: I've only been going a while, I don't -

FRANK: The big ones. The ones that can afford it don't cough up.

SADIE: So the Americans didn't cough up?

FRANK: No. And when we got into trouble, bought the company. And said words like 'downsize', 'rationalise' and 'have a nice fucking day'. I ask you.

SADIE: So they slashed and burned?

FRANK: When there's a recession, people close ranks. Remember the chinless wonder above me?

SADIE: No.

FRANK: He crept in. Then another, and another. I brought in most of the accounts and they brought in most of their families. And when the recession shit hit the fan there were more Mary Poppins vowels being heard by the Americans than ones like mine. Dick Van Dyke has a lot to answer for.

SADIE: But the Americans will find out when accounts don't -

FRANK: C'mon babe, they bought the wrong fucking London Bridge and stuck it in a desert.

Beat

SADIE: So you're doing this.

FRANK: End here Friday. Temp cover. I do a bit of everything, bit of anything. Bit of decorating, bit of nannying -

SADIE: Children?

FRANK: I've had them.

SADIE: You don't like them.

FRANK: Only my own.

Beat

Bet your Mum's disappointed you gave up teaching.

SADIE: She sees teaching as steady. Business unsteady.

FRANK: She always wanted to be a teacher.

SADIE: Did she?

FRANK: No fucking ambition.

SADIE: What you doing at the weekend?

FRANK: Oh, you know, busy babe, busy babe.

SADIE: Oh. Doing what?

FRANK: Got some appointments.

SADIE: Business?

FRANK: Maybe.

SADIE: I don't want to be social, with you. It's business.

FRANK: What business?

SADIE (*Writing a word down*): Say this word for me.

FRANK (*Perfectly*): Brochette. And you've spelt it wrong. All weekend?

SADIE: Sunday. Cash in hand. And if it works out...

FRANK: I can't promise anything babe, I'm waiting for a call.

SADIE: From?

FRANK: Alan Parker. And a few of the others - you know - irons - they'll get back to me.

SADIE: Oh?

FRANK: Course.

Beat

In a pickle?

SADIE: It's an Embassy. My first. I'm two waiting staff down.

Pause

FRANK: Cash in hand?

SADIE: Wear what you have on, I'll provide the Dicky Bow.

FRANK: When's it start?

SADIE: You start at seven.

FRANK: You're on.

SADIE: Brilliant!

FRANK: I can get a quick shag in before then.

SADIE: Delia?

FRANK: Fuck no. Got rid of her. This one owns a hotel. Ugly as fuck but grateful. You know?

SADIE: No dad, I don't.

FRANK: I'm helping you out, remember.

TWENTY-TWO

1994

American Embassy. Reception

Music. DANCERS are dressed as if for a Latin American dancing competition, very sparkly. They dance. They become guests. Throughout the scene they mingle but move in such a way you that you never forget they are dancers. A sway here, a moment of tap there. All to punctuate and manipulate the pace of the text.

Enter JANICE and SADIE.

SADIE: This booking... American Embassy, I mean...

JANICE: Thank you?

SADIE: That's it. Thank you. I mean, American Embassy.

JANICE: My charity is paying.

SADIE: Are they?

JANICE: The Embassy just 'hosts'.

SADIE: Oh. Will the Ambassador be here?

JANICE: He's an expensive extra, but we paid it. For his ear.

SADIE: Great. An Ambassador's ear.

JANICE: We usually get his deaf one, but him being present brings the ears of some of the African countries. They'll get the same ear as us but whenever an American Ambassador's ear is in the building, there will be a smattering of European ears so they might end up with one of those, which hopefully will make them a little bit more willing to let our workers in, but hey.

SADIE: Is a British ear coming?

JANICE: Yes. New appointment, I didn't know. Northern Ireland office.

SADIE: Northern Ireland? Oh poor bugger. Nobody will care about his ears, not even his own party.

JANICE: About him -

SADIE: He's a sacrificial lamb, someone they want to get rid of.

JANICE: Actually I -

SADIE: Actually I have something to tell you.

JANICE: But, me too -

SADIE: Me first. I had an absolute nightmare staffing this job -

JANICE: No staff?

SADIE: People just don't want to -

JANICE: You telling me there's no staff?

SADIE: No.

JANICE: No?!

SADIE: Yes, there's staff. Just...

JANICE: Just?

SADIE: You'll never guess.

JANICE: Olivia?

SADIE: Good guess. But not a brilliant guess.

JANICE: Not her?

SADIE: Yes her. She'll be serving.

JANICE: Serving? Here?

SADIE: I've trained her well, she's very professional.

JANICE: Yeh, but, is she old enough?

SADIE: Embassy territory, child labour is allowed. No. You'll never guess, go on guess.

JANICE: No. I won't. Not when I'm running a function and it is about to start, no way will I guess.

SADIE: Dad.

JANICE: Dad?

SADIE: My dad.

JANICE: Your dad?

SADIE: Uhuh.

JANICE: But I thought you weren't speaking to him, like forever.

SADIE: Wasn't. Hadn't seen him for years and years.

JANICE: Can he do this?

SADIE: He knows his brochette from his vol-au-vents. And he's on his 'uppers'.

JANICE: His what? Speak English!

SADIE: An idiomatic reference to the condition of someone's shoes - origin when shoes were considered a serious status symbol - down on his uppers - soles worn out - see?

Beat

JANICE: No. All the same -

SADIE: Trust me. Trouble is...

JANICE: Oh, trouble? You surprise me.

SADIE: He's not actually met Olivia.

JANICE: He's not met her?

SADIE: I just said that.

JANICE: But he knows you had her, right?

SADIE: Not exactly.

JANICE: Does she know he's your dad?

SADIE: Not exactly.

Beat

JANICE: Why not just tell them?

SADIE: I want to keep it simple.

JANICE: This is simple? Not exactly.

SADIE: They'll be busy. I've told her not to call me Mum - for business reasons - and him not to call me babe, cow or tart - for business reasons.

JANICE: That's crazy.

SADIE: Could be crazier.

JANICE: Actually, girl it is. The other guests -

SADIE: The Africans?

JANICE: No.

SADIE: The Europeans?

JANICE: Sort of. There's one guest - well two - I really didn't know and now this, which I really didn't know -

SADIE: Someone's gesturing.

JANICE (*Looking*): Oh.

SADIE: If I don't get the chance - thanks, Janice - this job could change so much for me.

JANICE: You're right there, look -

SADIE: Frantic gestures now.

Enter OLIVIA.

OLIVIA: Hey Janice!

JANICE: Well look at you!

Hugs her.

SADIE: With more than a touch of panic.

JANICE (*To OLIVIA*): I'll catch you later, yeh?

OLIVIA: Yeh, later.

JANICE moves away.

OLIVIA: Hey, Mum -

SADIE: What did I say!

OLIVIA: Sorry. Excuse me madam.

SADIE: Better. Yes?

OLIVIA: The guests are arriving. Shall we begin to circulate with the brochettes and the Moet?

SADIE: Please do.

OLIVIA moves off to serve. Enter FRANK to serve. He does it impeccably. Gives SADIE a discrete wink.

This is going to be a defining moment for me. For me. Me on the winning side. Gold medal. Top of the podium. Hands held aloft in triumph. As the crowd scream -

Enter MARCUS and ANABELLE.

SADIE: Oh fuck!

FRANK appears at SADIE's side.

FRANK: Lovely set up you got here babe.

SADIE: I'm not babe! I'm madam.

FRANK: You're a right little madam but modom has done alright. Really. Who you looking at?

MARCUS sees SADIE. He goes over to JANICE.

SADIE: Remember, low profile, let them talk. Janice wants the ear of the Ambassadors.

FRANK: Any particular one?

SADIE: She'd love the American but...

FRANK: We're all in their friggin' pockets and they know it.

SADIE: Have you planned the serving, like I told you?

FRANK: We've got it sorted.

SADIE: We?

FRANK: Me and the girl.

SADIE: Which girl?

FRANK (*indicating MARCUS*): Bet that chinless wonder is from England.

SADIE: -

FRANK: Poor bugger, look at his bit. Bet she's frigid. Not like the French bloke's wife. I wouldn't mind giving her one and she's been looking at me like she might.

SADIE: Oh. Really.

FRANK: But they don't shave under their arms, French women. Last one I shagged was a right goer but just as I was bringing her magnificently to orgasm, she flung her arms in the air and for a terrifying moment I thought I was being attacked by two Peruvian gerbils.

SADIE: Frank, you are such a -

FRANK: Whereas Olivia...

SADIE: What about her?

FRANK: She's a knowing little thing. I've told her to see to the blokes. See the effect she has

They see.

Bet she's been shagging for a while.

SADIE: No, she hasn't.

FRANK: You just watch. She's got them eating out of her hands.

SADIE: That doesn't mean -

FRANK: And the women. You watch me, I bet I can even unfreeze that frozen British tart there. Excuse me modom.

FRANK moves off. Beep of a text. Texts are projected across space. SADIE looks at her phone.

JANICE - TEXT: Sorry.

SADIE - TEXT: You could have said.

JANICE - TEXT: We were promised a little more than Northern Ireland.

SADIE - TEXT: Don't let him talk to Olivia.

JANICE holds her hands out helplessly.
SADIE - TEXT: Friggin' TRY!!!!!!!
OLIVIA goes towards MARCUS. JANICE intercedes. She does this throughout. Asks her to get something. MARCUS stares at SADIE, then starts texting.
MARCUS - TEXT: It's good to see you.
SADIE - TEXT: Who gave you my number?
MARCUS indicates JANICE. SADIE glares at JANICE.
MARCUS - TEXT: Really, really wonderfully good to see you.
SADIE - TEXT: Don't be daft.
MARCUS - TEXT: Technically I've always been daft about you.
SADIE looks at MARCUS. ANABELLE notices.
MARCUS - TEXT: Don't look like that.
SADIE - TEXT: You taking the -
MARCUS - TEXT: No.
SADIE - TEXT: Bit sudden.
MARCUS - TEXT: Thirty years too sudden?
SADIE - TEXT: Why here? Why now?
MARCUS - TEXT: When she said you'd be here -
SADIE glares again at JANICE.
MARCUS - TEXT: Realised life's too short.
SADIE - TEXT: What? Because they gave you Northern Ireland?
MARCUS - TEXT: Now who's taking the - Always been mad about you.
FRANK appears at SADIE's side.
SADIE: Soft head.
FRANK: I'm wounded, no one has ever accused me of being soft.
SADIE: Not you.
MARCUS - TEXT: I promised myself, if I saw you again I'd tell you.
FRANK: Who are you looking at?
SADIE: No one.
FRANK moves away.
MARCUS - TEXT: It hurts my head I'm not with you.
ANABELLE moves to MARCUS.
MARCUS: I love you.
ANABELLE: Love you too, darling. Texting?
MARCUS: I... just have to send this.
ANABELLE: Just the one?
MARCUS: Technically, it might be more than one.
ANABELLE: Darling. We agreed.
MARCUS: On what?
ANABELLE: We don't want to linger in Northern Ireland now do we? We have people here we should talk to, not text. Last one.

ANABELLE moves away. OLIVIA moves to SADIE.

MARCUS - TEXT: I love you. I've always loved you.

OLIVIA: Madam.

SADIE - TEXT & SPEAKING: You are deranged and lacking in judgement.

OLIVIA (*Hurt*): Mum?

FRANK returns.

FRANK: Mum?

SADIE: Ma'am. She said Ma'am.

FRANK: Shouldn't that rhyme with ham?

SADIE: What the frigg would you know about that?

MARCUS - TEXT: Feels right not deranged. Are you related?

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: What?

MARCUS - TEXT: There's a... familiarity.

SADIE - TEXT: It's Frank.

MARCUS - TEXT: The waiter?

OLIVIA: Ma'am. Someone gave me a tip. Can I keep it?

FRANK: How much?

SADIE: Shut up!

MARCUS - TEXT: Frank? Father?

SADIE - TEXT: Yes.

MARCUS - TEXT: The 'fuckwit'?

SADIE: How much?

FRANK (*Enjoying this*): When I say it...

OLIVIA: This much.

Showing notes in hand.

FRANK: Jesus!

SADIE: Who gave you that!

FRANK: But, don't point babe. Don't point.

MARCUS - TEXT: Look I don't want to burden you with the weight of my worthless love.

OLIVIA: Him, over there.

SADIE: Did he say anything?

SADIE - TEXT (*Hurriedly*): No burden. Not worthless.

OLIVIA: Said there was lots more if I served him well.

FRANK: Told you she had a way.

OLIVIA: Can I keep it Ma'am?

Pause

SADIE: Ask him... tell him, your Mum would like a word.

FRANK: Mum! See, I knew it!

SADIE: Yes, Mum. (*To FRANK*) So what, so friggin' what?

MARCUS - SPEAKING: Good, because I can't stop. Not now, not anymore. But don't anticipate a pattern of behaviour as if you unthinkingly have won my

love and have to carry a travelsick goldfish that you need to somehow look after.
SADIE: And if I'm Mum, smart arse, that means you're what?
OLIVIA: What! Him? My Dad!?
SADIE: Don't be daft!
FRANK: I'm too young to be a grandfather. (*To OLIVIA.*) Call me Frank.
OLIVIA: Ma'am?!
SADIE: And that man there offered your granddaughter a shed load of money, hoping for a little bit more than silver service.
FRANK: I'll kill the fucker.
ANABELLE moves to MARCUS, noticing he's looking at SADIE as well as texting.
ANABELLE: Still at it?
OLIVIA: No! This is Mum's business.
FRANK: She can hold my poncy waistcoat.
OLIVIA: Mum? Business?
SADIE: -
OLIVIA: She worked hard to make this happen. Mum? Mum!
FRANK: No. You're right. (*To SADIE.*) She's right. It's business. Comes first, always first. (*To OLIVIA.*) But leave it to me, babe. I'll deal with it business like. You just get on and keep serving with that lovely smile.
OLIVIA: Please, don't do anything that'll -
FRANK: S'alright babe, s'alright. I'll just find out what country he's from. How's that? Just what country. Alright?
OLIVIA: Alright. Mum?
SADIE nods.
OLIVIA and FRANK move away.
SADIE: I surely will suffer for this.
DANCERS fill the stage, distract MARCUS.
ANABELLE finds her way through and approaches SADIE.
ANABELLE: Hello.
SADIE: Hello.
ANABELLE: My husband keeps looking at you. Do we know you?
SADIE: Do you know me?
ANABELLE: Yes. Do we?
Beat
SADIE: I'm the party planner, madam.
ANABELLE: Do you work out of South Ken?
SADIE: No. We don't.
ANABELLE: Course not. Then we don't.
FRANK returns.
FRANK (*All charm to ANABELLE*): Would madam appreciate a...
ANABELLE: Brochette. No thank you.

FRANK: I'm impressed. Madam has been finished?

ANABELLE: Beg your pardon?

FRANK: S'cuse me for being forward but, finishing school?

ANABELLE: Most of us here have been.

FRANK: But your accent is so accurate. I was born there. I thought you were...
If you don't mind me saying, you're a natural.

ANABELLE: Well, the skiing helped of course.

FRANK: No. You must have an expert ear.

Beat

ANABELLE: Actually, I will have a brochette.

Takes one.

FRANK: Thank you madam.

He speaks to her in flattering foreign tones. ANABELLE squeaks and moves away.

SADIE: You are such a slut.

FRANK: Can't help myself. But, I was right. Frigid as fuck, that one.

He starts to move away.

SADIE: Frank -

FRANK: Sorted. Business like. You know your old man understands business, if nothing bugging else.

FRANK moves away. MARCUS appears. SADIE and MARCUS look across the room at each other when texting.

SADIE: Your wife.

MARCUS: Don't care.

SADIE: She does.

MARCUS - TEXT: I don't. No silly bugger games here. Not from me.

SADIE - TEXT: Is this the truth?

MARCUS - TEXT: It's always been you. Believe it.

SADIE - TEXT: God almighty!

MARCUS - TEXT: Give in to it. I have.

SADIE - TEXT: I'm not you.

MARCUS - TEXT: I am mad about you, I want you, I love you. That's where I am, where I have been and always will be.

SADIE - TEXT: You tip me into space with your text.

MARCUS - TEXT: I love you hugely, alarmingly, painfully and probably in other ways too that I can't think of. You need to know this.

JANICE appears from the crowd and comes between them.

JANICE: Well I don't know if the Ruskies have noticed but I'm sure every other damn country in the room has. Two people standing at a party texting all the time and staring at each other? In the same room? Are you for real? Nobody does this. Nobody. Try talking. It's less obvious, except Marcus, your wife is squeaking for you.

MARCUS: I'll -

JANICE: Go!

MARCUS goes.

JANICE: You okay?

SADIE: Fine.

JANICE: Fine?

SADIE: Fine, yes fine, yes fine, fine, fine.

JANICE: I'm really sorry.

SADIE: It's fine, I think.

JANICE: Fine?

SADIE: I think.

JANICE: The spread is great.

SADIE: You happy with it?

JANICE: The spread? Yeh.

SADIE: And the service?

JANICE: I'm... not sure.

SADIE: No? What was wrong with it?

JANICE: Any idea what your Dad said to the American Ambassador?

SADIE: The American -

JANICE: Ambassador, yeh. I saw him talking to him and thought it looked a bit...

SADIE: Look, Janice -

JANICE: And then the next thing, the Ambassador said he had to leave, but promised me his ear. We have a breakfast meeting tomorrow. A real breakfast meeting. With me. The American Ambassador.

SADIE: Blimey.

JANICE: Yeh, Blimey. I mean... How did he -

SADIE: Business. It's business. Frank understands business. That's all.

TWENTY-THREE

1996

Field. Big modern round bale of seemingly impenetrable hay

Music circa 1996. Enter SADIE with hamper. She looks at bale of hay. Inspects it. Pokes it. Puts hamper down. Gets out Swiss Army knife. Tries to make inroads into bale with little success. She becomes more aggressive, tries really hard but is defeated. Throws knife into the ground. MARCUS appears round the side of the bale with bottle, glasses etc.

MARCUS: Didn't think you would come.

SADIE: Why wouldn't I?

MARCUS: You didn't reply.

SADIE: Janice asked me to come.

MARCUS: I asked you to come.

SADIE: She phoned up.

MARCUS: I phoned up, left a message.

SADIE: What did it say?

MARCUS: I, I can't/ remember

SADIE: You didn't leave one

MARCUS: I did.

SADIE: Didn't get it, not one.

MARCUS: Not one?

SADIE: Not one, can't remember the last message I got from/ you.

MARCUS: I sent you loads of messages and loads of/ texts.

SADIE: Sending them to someone else.

MARCUS: You changed your number?

SADIE: It's my business number, why would I change my number?

MARCUS: Not your personal number?

SADIE: Nothing is personal, is it?

Pause

MARCUS: Good you could come.

SADIE: You been here long?

MARCUS: Couple of hours.

SADIE (*Indicating bale*): And you've done nothing with it?

MARCUS: Not a lot you can do with it.

SADIE: How unimaginative of you.

MARCUS: They're really tightly packed, really dense. Moved around the field by a huge forklift.

SADIE: We could attack it with the forklift. Saw one over there.

MARCUS: Not my forklift.

SADIE: So? So what?

MARCUS: All this, not my decision anymore.

SADIE: You own the field.

MARCUS: Technically, but...

SADIE: Bollocks technically, let's get the forklift, I'd love to drive that forklift.

MARCUS: It's all on a terribly long lease.

SADIE: To who?

MARCUS: The Far East. They ship out the grain, make it into your morning cereal, then ship it back.

SADIE: Is that sound financial sense?

MARCUS: It's the only financial sense for me.

SADIE: Seriously?

MARCUS: Seriously.

SADIE: You said you wanted to come back, to the farm.

MARCUS: Oh I do, I really do. It's the plan. Good you could come.

SADIE: You said.

MARCUS: Really good.

Beat

SADIE: You took a while.

MARCUS: I am sorry. They kept me stupidly busy.

SADIE: In Northern Ireland?

MARCUS: -

SADIE: Did you get anything done?

MARCUS: In Northern Ireland?

Beat

Actually, they found out I owned this farm. And was absent. Apparently pushed a few historical buttons. I thought as their concentration was primarily on killing each other they might have forgotten that sort of thing, but no. Absentee English landowners...

How's the business?

SADIE: Oh, you know.

MARCUS: No, I don't.

SADIE: How come you're back now? Have you been sacked?

MARCUS: Technically no. Hugely secret reshuffle is in the air. Consequently everyone knows about it.

SADIE: Including the opposition?

MARCUS: Of course.

SADIE: Reshuffle? Before the election?

MARCUS: Uhuh.

SADIE: Smells of panic.

MARCUS: We may lose. But word is we're still planning.

SADIE: For what?

MARCUS: Just in case.

SADIE: You're going to get stuffed.

MARCUS: Thought that would please you, thought of socialism restored albeit briefly.

SADIE: What? Socialism? Haven't you heard? It's not 'socialism' anymore, Blair said. It's 'social - ism'? 'Social - dash - ism'. 'Social - bloody - ism'. Why has he put the gap in the middle of the word Marcus? Any ideas?

MARCUS: I've no idea, you've always said I have no idea.

SADIE: So he can squeeze whatever is in the middle. And what's in the middle Marcus?

MARCUS: Pate?

SADIE: You deliberately being an arse?

MARCUS: Technically...

SADIE: The blank collar workers, Marcus.

MARCUS: The what?

SADIE: Blank collar. Neither middle nor working class, definitely not rich, who are floating in a classless sea of uninspiring, precarious jobs, scrabbling to pay the bills.

MARCUS: You think?

SADIE: You know this, Marcus.

MARCUS: His policies seem -

SADIE: Familiar?

MARCUS: Well -

SADIE (*Improvises a glove puppet out of a sock, shirt or straw. Talks to puppet*): Hi Lassie, what's the latest from blokey Blair? Tough on crime, Lassie? Oh and what's that Lassie? Crack down hard on benefit claimants? You call this an urgent message Lassie? This is old news Lassie, old news! Go and find some kittens to save from drowning.

MARCUS: Maybe they're the right things to -

SADIE: It's seamless between Major and Blair. They're already calling it 'Blajorism'. Hop off you cheeky little Natterjack toad you - call yourself endangered? And don't give me those big gorgeous dormouse eyes, socialism should clearly be at the top of the endangered list, not you.

Beat

MARCUS: It is good to see you. Drink?

SADIE (*Gets hamper*): I have food.

MARCUS: Excellent... did we ever do food here?

SADIE: 'Til we discovered alcohol.

MARCUS (*gives SADIE a glass*): Ah yes, brilliant baked pots.

Raises glass.

SADIE: Baked pots.

MARCUS: How is your Mother?

SADIE: Not sure.

They drink.

Pause

MARCUS: How is business?

SADIE: Becoming crowded.

MARCUS: Is it?

SADIE: You know it is.

MARCUS: Ah.

SADIE: Yes, ah.

MARCUS: I thought she'd lose interest, she usually does. We've got a barn full of abandoned enterprises. What does one do with a thousand potpourri purses and matching leggings?

SADIE: I still have the Embassies, but that's thanks to Janice.

MARCUS: That's good, good.

SADIE: But your wife has her father's contacts.

MARCUS: Mmm.

SADIE: And yours.

MARCUS: Oh now hold on, not mine, absolutely not mine. I tell everyone to hire you, not her. I hand out your cards, every given opportunity.

SADIE: You have some of my cards?

MARCUS: I had one, from Janice. I had to get more printed. It was cheaper to get a batch of 5,000 each time.

SADIE: Each time?

MARCUS: Four times actually.

SADIE: Twenty thou -

MARCUS: Uhuh.

SADIE: Does she know this?

MARCUS: Technically?

SADIE: Technically.

MARCUS: A little.

SADIE: A little?

MARCUS: She burnt the first batch of cards. Well first two.

SADIE: Ten thou -

MARCUS: Uhuh. I am sorry.

They picnic.

Pause

SADIE: And you.

MARCUS: What?

SADIE: Good you could come.

MARCUS: I really, really wanted to come before.

SADIE: Thought you regretted saying. Texting -

MARCUS: No. Not at all, I didn't regret, not one little bit, not one, really/ not -

SADIE: Doesn't matter if you did, doesn't. Really doesn't. Really, really, really, doesn't. I mean, look, it really doesn't matter, really.

MARCUS: It does matter.

SADIE: I get on with my life Marcus, Busy? So bloody busy and parties?

MARCUS: That's work.

SADIE: Not my parties, no, no, no, other parties. All the time and interest, I have so much interest in me, me, Like serious interest -

MARCUS: I don't doubt -

SADIE: And busy and interest, you know, I seriously yearn for a night in, in my PJs with a Poirot, I seriously do.

MARCUS: Every time I see you, you are a surprise and a delight. Sometimes a dreadfully curmudgeonly delight, but a delight all the same. You are the most important thing to me. Always have been always will be.

SADIE: -

MARCUS: When I saw you again... what I've texted since - you got them didn't you?

SADIE: Maybe.

MARCUS: I love you with a terrible and ferocious softness. It's all true, more than true.

SADIE: More than?

MARCUS: Missed you like hell. So wrong.
So wrong not to be with you.

Pause

SADIE: What now?

MARCUS: What now?

SADIE: Is there a 'what now'?

MARCUS: Course there's a 'what now'. I want a 'what now', I definitely want a 'now'. I'm planning for a 'now'. I want to plan with you, for a 'what now', us to have a 'what now'. I want that very much, planning, planning, planning... I've always dreamed of a... it's just...

SADIE: Just?

*Suddenly the middle of the bale of straw is kicked out and
JANICE appears with champagne.*

JANICE: Bloody escape hatches. I think I'm stuck.

MARCUS (*Helping her*): Imported. Ruskie I bet.

SADIE (*Helping her*): Thought you were flying in later?

JANICE: Well now I am all Ambassador-ed up these days, I bumped into one at the airport and he offered me a diplomat seat on an earlier flight. So I said, thank you very much and gave my economy squeeze to a backpacker. Still can do the odd good deed.

SADIE: How's the charity?

JANICE: More political than charitable.

MARCUS: Surely they have to be both if they want to -?

JANICE: So why has nothing been done to this bale?

MARCUS: I thought they were impenetrable.

JANICE: Not to a machete and the invasion tendencies of an American. But it has made me thirsty.

MARCUS: I'll sort.

He does so. They drink.

SADIE: A machete eh?

JANICE: Surprised you hadn't thought of it.

SADIE: I'd love a machete! How cool would that be!

JANICE (*passing the machete to SADIE*): Here, have it.

SADIE: Really? Why?

JANICE: Why not?

SADIE: But? The nesting?

JANICE: I'll just drink.

SADIE: Really?

JANICE: Really.

Pause

SADIE: What's up?

JANICE: Nothing's up.

SADIE: Marcus?

MARCUS: Ya?

SADIE: She says nothing's up.

MARCUS: I heard. Janice? Not nesting?

SADIE: And nothing's up, she said.

MARCUS: Technically impossible I'd say.

SADIE: Im-friggin'-possible, I'd say.

JANICE: Hey Marcus, how's Ireland coming together? Velcro working?

MARCUS: Think I'm coming back.

JANICE: Been sacked?

MARCUS: No!

JANICE: To the farm?

SADIE: He's sold out to the Far East.

MARCUS: Not sold, not - no, no, no, no. Leased out. Leased.

SADIE: Looooong lease.

MARCUS: Not that long -

JANICE: Sold out then.

MARCUS: There's a reshuffle.

SADIE: Secret shuffle.

MARCUS: Very secret.

JANICE: Yeh. I heard in Honduras.

What are you hoping for?

MARCUS: The party is keen to demonstrate its commitment to family values.

JANICE: That's where the Republicans and the Conservatives are so alike. They love family. They usually have a few each to prove it.

MARCUS: One last area we have currency in, difference in, to Labour. One we wish to highlight at this but particularly the next election.

JANICE: Planning for the next, eh?

MARCUS: We may lose this, but historically... we'll be back, straight back in next time and if not then definitely after that and then we'll be in a damn long time again.

JANICE: In for the long term, Marcus?

MARCUS: Technically -

SADIE: You're planning for long term?

JANICE: Political long lease, what post?

SADIE picks up machete. Not noticing, MARCUS takes some food.

MARCUS: I'm hoping, fingers crossed, for one of the newly rumoured posts, with titles such as 'community', or 'people' or something similar, fingers crossed. I can do 'people', 'community' that sort of thing, I'm convinced I can.

JANICE: Well that's swell Marcus.

Beat

MARCUS: Is that sarcasm?

JANICE: Maybe.

MARCUS: Bit British?

JANICE: C'mon. What are your chances really?

MARCUS: Of getting back in?

JANICE: Of a post.

MARCUS: You have to have hope.

JANICE: They always give you something a bit, well, crap.

MARCUS: I really do feel I could serve 'people'... 'community'. Like you.

JANICE: Me?

MARCUS: Mixing the political with the caring.

JANICE: Really?

MARCUS: Really.

JANICE: Like me huh?

MARCUS: Just like you. I admire the way you manage that.

Beat

JANICE: I've left the charity.

MARCUS: Really? But -

JANICE (*Firmly*): But what?

SADIE: But, Janice?

JANICE: I know, I know but...

SADIE: But./ But -

MARCUS: But? But? But this is wrong!

JANICE: Hey! I worked frikkin' hard to make a difference!

MARCUS: That's not what I meant/ that's -

JANICE: And I didn't okay! Simple. I didn't.

SADIE: You did. You made a huge/ difference.

JANICE: No. I didn't.

SADIE: The Ambassadors, the Embassies, I was there, catering, I saw -

JANICE: Most came to offers of further meetings. And then further meetings, and then further and further meetings and then... People died of disease whilst I was at a breakfast meeting, or a lunch meeting, or a banquet. I mean, I put on twenty pounds in weight whilst I begged them to think about the desperate plight of the starving.

SADIE: But -

JANICE: No 'buts'!

SADIE: What about the cutlery!? (*Weakly.*) That must have made a difference.

MARCUS: Janice? Giving up? This is so wrong of us!

SADIE: Us?

MARCUS: Our year. Born when we were. There's a huge gap in Westminster of about eight years. There's only me in that gap. And Labour's Jackie Smith.

SADIE: Who?

MARCUS: Exactly. But that's what I mean. What happened to us, our generation? Why aren't more of us serving?

SADIE: Probably are but in Starbucks.

MARCUS: I'm serious.

SADIE: Okay, I'll be. Thatcher, Iron whatsit not for turning and privatisation. Major, did he say anything? Oh yes, 'put up or shut up' and privatisation. And now Blair. There's talk of a sofa and privatisation.

JANICE: A sofa?

SADIE: A shadow sofa, everything decided on an overstuffed shadow sofa, not in a shadow cabinet. I mean where is the debate? Where is the democracy? Gone down the back with the loose change and the strangely smelling fluff.

MARCUS: Fine. And what are you doing about it?

SADIE: Oh, I'm invariably slumped on my small IKEA sofa, in front of the TV, with a glass of Muscadet, muttering 'wankers' every time a politician appears.

MARCUS: Including me?

SADIE: You're never on TV.

MARCUS: Well, I believe we have responsibilities.

SADIE: Oh you exude an air of responsibility, you always bloody have, but you have no vision or coherent philosophy.

MARCUS: I'm sorry, I'd have to disagree there, with 'community', 'people' -

SADIE: Your promises are empty and come to nothing. Bloody nothing.

MARCUS (*Realising she is talking about them*): Oh, no. Now listen. They do, they will, really will.

SADIE: No they friggin' won't.

MARCUS: Sadie, they will, they really, really will, I just have to -

SADIE: You know what Marcus? In the absence of any clearly defined political debate, in future most votes will be cast by the 'don't knows'. They'll vastly outnumber the ones who make a clear decision between parties. But, you know what Marcus? They'll clamour for you as leader Marcus because yes, you have an air of completely inbred responsibility. But the irony is, you don't bloody know, do you Marcus? Don't really, really know what you really, really want, apart from having your cake and friggin' eat it!

She plants machete in the bale.

JANICE: Are we still talking about...?

SADIE: What happened to 'what now' Marcus?

MARCUS: Definitely planning for a 'what now', definitely. But a 'soon now' not a 'now, now', but definitely planning. It absolutely/ is what -

SADIE: It's bollocks, that's what it is, all bollocks!

MARCUS: It's an opportunity. I tell you, opportunity is bloody rare these days!

JANICE: No easy war to win to boost your ratings.

MARCUS: See Janice understands.

There's whispers that Labour is talking of gay civil partnerships.

JANICE: You against that?

MARCUS: Me? No. No, I'm all for... you know I... But, it's not about you or me. Word is the female vote will swing future elections, wives, mothers. So we're looking for a full frontal on marriage, family, that sort of thing. An opportunity.

JANICE: What about single mothers?

MARCUS: I know it sounds... but you must know in your line of work that politics is... They are not a group who tend to vote. Harsh I know but...

JANICE: Too busy bringing up someone else's bastard?

MARCUS: Oh c'mon, everyone in this country has choices these days.

JANICE: I can't believe you said that Marcus.

MARCUS: I know there are exceptions, rape and... well rape but -

JANICE: You ever shagged anyone without protection Marcus?

MARCUS: It's not personal Janice. Anyway I've always been pretty responsible -

JANICE: Then let me rephrase that. You shagged me and her without using anything, right here in this little ol' field.

SADIE: Janice -

MARCUS: That was a long time -

JANICE: Forgotten it Marcus?

MARCUS: No, pleasurable, very pleasurable but a long time -

JANICE: How do you know we don't have a couple of your bastards running around?

SADIE: Janice.

MARCUS: I'd know if -

JANICE: You so in control of your sperm, Marcus?

SADIE: Janice.

JANICE: Did you have a stern word? 'Now let's not have a hotchpotch here boys, whatever those cheeky little eggs tell you just swim away, you hear, swim away'!

MARCUS: Neither of you could keep a secret like that/ I mean -

JANICE: Really Marcus!/ Really!

MARCUS: Well she could but -

JANICE: Oh why is she always the mysterious one hey? What is so special about her?

SADIE: Janice?!

MARCUS: Nothing just -

SADIE: Nothing!

MARCUS (*To JANICE*): Just - you're like an open book.

JANICE: Better a book than a postcard.

MARCUS: Postcard!

JANICE: From the same place every year! You haven't travelled at all.

MARCUS: We went to Mauritius, The Caymans -

JANICE: Politically Marcus, Politically!

MARCUS: She hasn't!

JANICE: Oh she's tried. Failed but tried.

SADIE: Failed?!

JANICE: I have too now!

SADIE: But I -

MARCUS: I haven't!

JANICE/SADIE: You have!

JANICE: Politically you travelled right up to the age of nine and then sunk backwards.

MARCUS: Nine!

JANICE: At least she got to twenty.

SADIE: I so got further than twenty!

MARCUS: Technically - don't think you got that far.

SADIE: I'm still friggin' political!

JANICE: You're a party planner!

SADIE: I've beaten them at their own game!

JANICE: Yeh, right.

MARCUS: Only 'cos I gave your cards out.

SADIE: You let the squeaking pearls burn them! You are so like your Dad.

MARCUS: I so am not!

SADIE: So are - just not so honest.

MARCUS: That is so -

JANICE: True.

MARCUS: What!

SADIE: Pretending to be 'people' and 'community', marrying a wad of cash then shagging behind her back. At least your Dad openly wanked to Playboy magazine

in the stables - bet you have a subscription on your iPad, sneak it in meetings, don't you!

MARCUS: -

JANICE: Marcus?!

MARCUS: I'm not perfect, but you could at least respect what I'm trying/ to do!

JANICE: Respect? Respect!

MARCUS: Yes respect! I respected your attempts at charity!

JANICE: Attempts! Oh really, attempts!

MARCUS: Really, really! But if you won't try to -

JANICE: And what respect did your sperm show -!

SADIE: Aaaaaargh!

SADIE exits.

MARCUS: It's always been very respectful.

JANICE: Yeh, right!

MARCUS: I've hardly ever -

JANICE: Oh really -

MARCUS: Are you saying -

JANICE: What am I saying Marcus - what!

MARCUS: Did I make... you...

JANICE: Hell you are so damn thick.

MARCUS: Then -

A farming forklift truck is heard really loudly.

Oh my!

JANICE: What?!

MARCUS: She's gone and got the damn forklift.

JANICE: That can move... fast over those -!

Noise gets louder.

MARCUS: Technically straight for us!

JANICE: You deserve it.

MARCUS: Do you?

JANICE: Shit no!

MARCUS: Then best we -

JANICE and MARCUS go to run away. Forklift stops.

SADIE jumps down from it and onto the stage. She has a hard hat on.

SADIE: Now are we going to make this a brilliant, fantastic, amazing nest and have a really, really good bonding time or what?!

TWENTY-FOUR

2012

Frank's flat. Darkness

Music. Classical. There is a large fan slowly turning backwards and forwards. There are oversized notes everywhere in SADIE's handwriting, e.g. 'Close the fridge door', 'Good foods to eat', 'Turn cooker off'. An errant speaking clock intermittently interrupts.

Enter SADIE.

SPEAKING CLOCK: It is Wednesday, 11.45 precisely.

SADIE: Frank?

No response.

Frank?

No response.

Dad.

FRANK appears right behind her; she is startled. He is dressed in a beanie hat, jumper, hooded sweatshirt, dressing gown and no trousers or underwear.

SADIE: You gave me a fright.

FRANK (*Unfocused*): Did I?

SADIE: You been sleeping?

FRANK: A bit.

SADIE: What's a bit?

FRANK: A kip.

SADIE: Just a kip? Or several kips all joined together?

FRANK: What you doing here babe?

SADIE: I brought some sandwiches./ Pret a -

FRANK: Going to get something to eat, you want something to eat?

SADIE: I got us a -

FRANK: Crumpets?

SADIE (*Holding up sandwich*): Don't you want - ?

FRANK: I'll put some ketchup on them.

SADIE: Oh good, that's good.

FRANK: Why?

SADIE: Why?

FRANK: You copying me?

SADIE: Ketchup is good for you.

FRANK: Is it?

SADIE: Fruit portion.

FRANK (*Disappointed*): Oh.

SADIE: Can have the sandwiches?

FRANK: Healthy ones?

SADIE (*Gets one out, reads description*): The finest Parma ham, delicately drizzled with extra virgin olive oil-based dressing, gently nestling on a bed of freshly picked Sicilian rocket and sweet Tuscan tomatoes.

FRANK: Sounds very healthy.

SADIE: 'Tis. Thought it would be good for -

FRANK: I'll stick with the ketchup. Want some?

SADIE: You're alright, I'll have the -

FRANK: Tuscan bollocks.

SPEAKING CLOCK: It is now midday.

SADIE (*looks at watch*): I've got you some soup, butter, milk, bread, a few ready meals.

FRANK (*Unenthusiastically*): Lovely. Put them somewhere.

He begins to wander off.

How are you for cash?

SADIE: I'm fine Dad.

FRANK: You sure?

SADIE: Very sure. Are you okay for cash?

FRANK: Course.

SPEAKING CLOCK: It is twelve midday precisely.

SADIE (*looks at her watch*): Why's the fan on?

FRANK: Fan?

SADIE: Fan.

FRANK: Oh, fan!

SADIE: Yes fan.

Pause

It's February, Frank?

FRANK: Why's it on then?

SADIE: I'm asking you.

FRANK: I'll turn it off.

SADIE: I'll do it.

FRANK: No, you're alright babe.

He bends down to turn off the fan. It is a struggle getting up.

SADIE goes to help him.

FRANK (*Joking*): Stop molesting me, woman.

SADIE: Well, you know, it's been a quiet week.

FRANK (*Irritated*): No, leave off now.

SADIE does so.

SADIE: I'll go and put these in the fridge then.

FRANK: What?

SADIE: The food.

FRANK: Food? I'm having crumpets.

Beat

SADIE: I'll start them now shall I?

FRANK: You want some?

Beat

SADIE: No, you're alright.

FRANK: I've got no butter so I was thinking of having ketchup, I've got ketchup.

What you doing here babe?

SADIE: Come to see you.

She starts to sort crumpets.

FRANK: Why?

SADIE: Why not?

FRANK: Lovely to see you.

SPEAKING CLOCK: It is Wednesday 1.15pm

SADIE: That clock's wrong.

FRANK: Is it?

SADIE: I'll have a look at it. Do you really want ketchup on your crumpets?

FRANK: Ketchup?

SADIE: On the crumpets.

FRANK: -

SADIE: Would you prefer butter?

FRANK: Have I got some?

SADIE: Now you have.

FRANK: How's work?

SADIE (*Lying*): Good.

FRANK: Is it?

SADIE: Very. Good. Very, very good.

FRANK: Good, that's good.

Beat

When you getting out?

SADIE: Out?

FRANK: Of that school. You don't want to linger, girl, people will think you're wet. Change direction.

He goes to fridge.

SADIE: Dad I'm -

FRANK: Career, change career. Let me know when, I still have contacts, all gone into film now. Alan Parker, David Puttnam. Do you want butter for those or ketchup?

SADIE: Dad I'm not in a school.

FRANK: You know what they say, those who can't do, teach.

SADIE: Dad, I'm not in a -

FRANK: And to be fair most teachers are utter wankers. Were yours wankers?

SADIE: Well, mainly yes but -

FRANK: Mine, all total wankers. You don't want to be a wanker, babe. I'll talk to Steven.

SADIE: Steven?

FRANK: Spielberg. He owes me one after Indiana Jones. Great job I did. Mind you he completely ripped me off over Private Ryan.

SADIE: How?

FRANK: Didn't ask if he could use my story. That was me, National Service, Paras, right in there. Never forgave me for helping Lucas get Star Wars, bitter bastard. It's 'cos I'm taller than him. Short men, eh.

SADIE: Dad, have you had your tablets?

FRANK: Eh, now, I'm soon to knock those on the head.

SADIE: Really?

FRANK: Really.

SADIE: Who says?

FRANK: Doctor.

SADIE: Really?

FRANK: You just said that. Repeating yourself babe, gets boring for a bloke.

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: Doctor said one more visit and I'm off his books.

SADIE: When did you go?

FRANK: Where?

SADIE: The doctor's.

FRANK: Other day. He was impressed with how well I was doing. Said Frank, you're beating this thing.

SADIE: Beating diabetes?

FRANK: I said listen, I don't do illness, never have.

SADIE: Where's your pill container?

FRANK (*Smiling*): Ah.

SADIE: Ah, is it?

FRANK: Might be.

SADIE (*She finds it*): Amazing, just as I left them. A complete set.

FRANK: The doctor said it's up to me if I take the white ones.

SADIE: Did he now.

FRANK: He did.

SADIE: This is when you saw him.

FRANK: It was.

SADIE: The other day.

FRANK: I said it was. You're forgetting.

SADIE: You know that's bollocks.

FRANK: -

SADIE: You haven't been.

FRANK: -

SADIE: You haven't taken your tablets.

FRANK: -

SADIE: I'll ask again, exactly what have you been eating?

FRANK: Shed loads.

SPEAKING CLOCK: Afternoon. Mid-afternoon now.

SADIE (*Opens fridge*): None of the stuff I bought, it's all rotting. The bloody M&S stuff is rotting. I mean, leaving M&S to rot!

FRANK: It's all crap.

SADIE: You must be eating crap.

FRANK: I'm shagging not.

SADIE: Really Frank? What are you shagging eating then?

FRANK: -

SADIE: Eh? What then, what? Shall we look then Frank?

Opens cupboards.

Oh look, a half-empty tin of peaches in syrup, with a side order of mould, oh and nice of you to share the Bounty bars with the mice, all nicely nibbled, oh and look, a huge encrusted bowl of Tate & Lyle's best refined white sugar, and the red is... oh you've been dipping strawberries in it. Crap that's what!

FRANK: Strawberries aren't crap.

SADIE: You're eating stupid sugar crap!

FRANK: Nothing! I'm eating nothing! I want to eat nothing, I want to eat bloody nothing! So shove your Tuscan friggin' tomatoes up your tight unloved arse and piss right off.

SADIE: Fine, eat bloody nothing, eat completely bloody nothing, why should I friggin' care!

FRANK: You shouldn't, I never liked you, never!

SADIE: Tell me something I don't know!

FRANK: Alright! You're a bossy, jumped up ugly cow whose arse has disappeared and tits have dropped!

SADIE: Everything of yours has dropped including your marbles, in fact they are bouncing off everything including your sorry saggy balls which you insist on flashing!

Pause

FRANK: I'm eighty.

SADIE: Friggin' good for you.

FRANK: I'm eighty.

SADIE: You said.

FRANK: We don't make eighty-one.

SADIE: -

FRANK: My lot, we don't make eighty-one. None of us make eighty-one.

SADIE: Good job I take after Mum then.

FRANK: Hey, I loved your Mother.

SADIE: Oh please...

FRANK: I remember loving her.

SADIE: I remember otherwise.

FRANK: You choose to remember otherwise.

Listen babe, Billy, my old man, all gone at eighty.

SADIE: So?

FRANK: Jesus wept, bloody idiot diabetes, what kind of piss poor disease is that? Least Billy and the ol' man had the decency to die of heart attacks watching racing on TV.

SADIE: At the same time?

FRANK: No you silly - Both eighty. Massive bloody heart attacks. Probably surprised they backed a winner - they got a slap up wake out of Billy's ticket, he'd have been pissed to miss it - But, that's a bloke's way to go. What am I dying of? Too much fucking sugar, what kind of a pathetic death is that?

SADIE: It's insulin not -

FRANK: For Christ's sake I don't want to think about what it is, I don't want to care what it is. Don't you get it? I don't want to put anything in my mouth anymore, nothing, not even a beautiful woman's cunt in case she's got it smothered in golden syrup and I used to bloody love that. I mean what is there the fuck to live for?

FRANK is out of energy. He sits.

Pause

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK (*Matter of fact*): I mean, what's the point?

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: There is no bloody point.

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: Seriously.

SADIE: Seriously -

FRANK: No seriously. I'm bugging serious.

SADIE: Can I bugging finish?

FRANK: Who's stopping you?

SADIE: Okay, okay, lets be frank here.

FRANK: I am Frank here

He giggles. SADIE is not impressed.

Ahh, gets me every time.

SADIE: Are you talking about taking...

About you...

FRANK: What?

SADIE: 'Cos if you are and you really, really, really want to...

FRANK: -

SADIE: Dad, are you saying -

SPEAKING CLOCK: Friday, 7.15 a.m. Arise.

FRANK: Have you got somewhere to be babe?

SADIE: I came to see you, just for a/

FRANK: /Crumpet, you want crumpets?

Beat

SADIE: Do you?

FRANK: I've eaten. Babe.

Do you need some cash?

SADIE: I'm fine Dad. Do you have any?

FRANK: Course, I'll just find you some then I'll get some kip - here it is.

He gets a wallet out but fumbles with it a bit.

SADIE: Shall I...

SADIE takes the wallet, looks in it.

Do you want to go out to eat?

FRANK: You're alright.

SADIE: Usual cafe, big English?

FRANK: It's so cold, you noticed it was cold? Don't fancy it when it's cold. But I'm getting exercise.

SADIE: Really?

FRANK: Definitely.

SADIE: What kind?

FRANK: What what?

SADIE: Exercise.

FRANK: That's right.

SADIE: What exercise?

FRANK: Sleeping.

SADIE: Sleeping.

FRANK: I'm sleeping this diabetes away.

SADIE: You can't sleep/ diabetes -

FRANK: /You sort yourself with that money.

SADIE: I'll get some for you.

What's your number?

FRANK: Number?

SADIE: Pin number.

FRANK (*He struggles to remember*): What is it? (*Struggles.*) What is it? (*Getting increasingly frustrated.*) What is it, what is it, what is it, what is it WHAT IS IT! Why can't I friggin' - !

SADIE: Don't worry I'll sort -

FRANK: But I can't...

SADIE: I'll ring the bank, get the number. I'll leave/ you some -

FRANK: No, you get yourself some cash how much do -

He visibly sags.

SADIE: Need a rest Frank?

FRANK: A kip, just a kip, little kip, that's all.

Starts to go.

Change direction.

SADIE: What?

FRANK: Career, change career. I changed career.

SADIE: That's right, you did. You worked in a pie -

FRANK: Went to Spain.

SADIE: Spain?

FRANK: Guess what I did.

SADIE: In Spain.

FRANK: Go on, guess.

SADIE: I really don't want to guess.

FRANK: Surprised your Mum didn't tell you.

SADIE: When was this?

FRANK: I took the Spanish on at their own game.

SADIE: How?

FRANK: Go on, guess.

SADIE: World cup winning footballer, rather fit, well-mannered tennis player, what?

FRANK: I was a Matador.

SADIE: Bullfighter?

FRANK: No Waiter - course Bullfighter you stupid -

SADIE: A Bullfighter.

FRANK: A Matador. They took me to their hearts.

SADIE: Did they now.

FRANK: You know why? In the ring, I dominated the bull, dominated it, Para training see, but I hear you say, don't most Matadors attempt to dominate the beast? Yes they bleeding do, but me, I dominated it, then... Guess what?

SADIE: What?

FRANK: Guess.

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: I kissed it. Bit of a strut, flourish of the cloak. (*Does so.*) And kissed it. The crowd went wild, do you know what my Matador name was?

SADIE: No.

FRANK: Go on guess.

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: Go on.

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: C'mon you miserable cow guess.

SADIE: Week's package holiday all inclusive. Heard you tell your girlfriend, can't remember which one, they managed to blur after a while, but you said,

package Spain, package the kids you said. We saw a Bullfight.

SPEAKING CLOCK: It is now the weekend, enjoy.

Pause

FRANK: Got fed up with the bullfighting, blood and sand, blood and sand. Well, just the sand got in the stupid arse trousers something rotten. Never understood the Spanish men, no respect for their bollocks. Thought fuck it. Changed career again.

SADIE: Really?

FRANK: Really.

SADIE: Back here?

FRANK: No, I said they loved me there, Keep up. Guess what I did.

SADIE: No.

FRANK: Go on guess

SADIE: No. No guessing. No.

FRANK: A Flamenco Dancer.

Beat

SADIE: Flamenco Dancer.

FRANK: You going deaf babe?

SADIE: Dad -

FRANK: Beat them at their own game.

SADIE: There was entertainment.

FRANK: No, no, no, no. There was a competition - Flamenco competition. Big news. It was a saint's day, once in a hundred years, big fiesta, 'mazing how passionately pagan staunch Catholics are. I out-danced the regional champion. The crowd went wild...

SADIE: There was a flamenco dancer - woman - you were pissed, you got up, started dancing with her -

FRANK: They remembered my Matador name...

SADIE: Waiter intervened - think it was his sister - you flattened him, half your age mind - but you're right, the crowd did go wild then.

FRANK: El Franko it was. All chanting it, the whole crowd. Franko! Franko! Franko! Franko!

FRANK suddenly comes over very tired, staggers. SADIE goes to him.

SADIE: Bed Dad?

FRANK: Right. Kip.

He stands, steadies himself. Goes towards bedroom.

SADIE: See you soon Dad.

FRANK: Babe...

Turns. Looks blankly at her.

Babe?

SADIE: Dad?

He still looks blank. Goes. SADIE is left standing there.

TWENTY-FIVE

2015

Co-operative Funeral Parlour. The General Election

SADIE is sipping champagne and looking at the coffin. Enter OLIVIA.

OLIVIA: What's up?

SADIE: Lid kept shifting when I drew on it, so I...

OLIVIA: Drew where?

SADIE: Stuck things, stuck things on it.

OLIVIA: Stuck where?

SADIE: Oh, you know. Drink?

She gets them.

OLIVIA: You still scared of him.

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: You heard.

SADIE: Scared?

OLIVIA: Scared.

SADIE: Yeh, right.

OLIVIA: Scared.

SADIE: And what do you base that on?

OLIVIA: Obvious init.

SADIE: 'Init'? 'Init'? What kind of language is -

OLIVIA: Diversion tactics.

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: First year psychology - so obvious.

SADIE: Don't you diversion tactics me.

OLIVIA: Scared, scared, scared, scared, scared!

SADIE: Don't you scared me!

OLIVIA: Wouldn't even look at him dead!/ So scared.

SADIE: Have you?

OLIVIA: Not my Dad.

SADIE: It's easy for you/ to -

OLIVIA: Why, 'cos I hardly knew him?

SADIE: 'Cos you don't have a Dad.

OLIVIA: Oh, so that's a bonus?

SADIE: Yes it/ is.

OLIVIA: You really think -

SADIE: I bet on your psychology course with all that Freud bollocks they told you it's always the mother, always the bleeding mother. Well it's not./ It is so very not.

OLIVIA: They don't all blame/ the -

SADIE: Most of them do don't they eh? Eh?

OLIVIA: It's more complicated than/ that it's -

SADIE: One bleeding module wasn't it?

OLIVIA: Well -

SADIE: One free elective on psychology for the hormonal and spotty pontificating on a relationship that you have no... So yes feel bloody lucky that you haven't a clue whose sperm happened to swim my drunken vagina's way.

OLIVIA: Why not? Why not tell me?

Beat

SADIE: You're thinking it'll be someone interesting.

OLIVIA: No, I'm just -

SADIE: Yes you do. You think it'll be some dynamic, stinking rich, drop dead gorgeous bloke so massively overjoyed when you appear out of the blue and say 'hello daddy'!

OLIVIA: I wouldn't care who he is or what he does -

SADIE: Really?

OLIVIA: Really.

SADIE: What if he was a mass murderer?

OLIVIA: Mum -

SADIE: Paedophile.

OLIVIA: Be serious.

SADIE: Okay. Policeman.

OLIVIA: I kissed a policeman one New Year's Eve, he was very -

SADIE: Chief Inspector.

OLIVIA: Oh c'mon -

SADIE: Tax Inspector.

OLIVIA: Mum -

SADIE: Computer programmer.

OLIVIA: For god's -

SADIE: Conservative MP.

Beat

OLIVIA: Don't be daft.

SADIE: Might have.

OLIVIA: Shag a Tory? Why would you, I mean, why would you?

SADIE: Yes, why would I, why would I. I mean really why would I.

OLIVIA: What I'm/ saying -

SADIE: What I'm saying/ is -

OLIVIA: I'm saying I would have liked the choice/ to know -

SADIE: You have no choice when you know them - no choice./ I've saved you so much -

OLIVIA: Look at him.

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: If you're not scared, look at him.

SADIE: You challenging me?

OLIVIA: Would I?

SADIE: Course you bloody would.

OLIVIA: Just, prove it.

SADIE: Prove what!

OLIVIA: You are scared.

SADIE: So not!

OLIVIA: So am!

SADIE: This is -

OLIVIA: Prove it, prove it, prove it!

SADIE: I don't have to, not/ to you not to -

OLIVIA: You feel you can talk crap -

SADIE: Oh, I talk/ crap?

OLIVIA: More than crap/ about -

SADIE: You don't/ you think -

OLIVIA: Scaredy crap, scaredy/ crap -

SADIE: Oh very mature/very -

OLIVIA: Open it!/ Open it, open it open it, open it open -!

SADIE: Fine! Fine.

Gets knife and goes to coffin.

Fine.

Cuts tape.

Scared huh?

Throws lid off.

Huh!

She looks inside.

Pause

OLIVIA: Mum?

Pause

Mum - I'm... you okay?

Pause

Mum I didn't mean to...

SADIE: Shhh

Pause.

OLIVIA: Is he... does he look...?

SADIE: No.

OLIVIA: No.

Beat

No what?

SADIE: He doesn't look...

OLIVIA: Often, in death, people don't, bodies don't - I mean, they use makeup and stuff. One my friends' Grandad, they put dark glasses on him, he never wore them, but they thought... well I don't know what they thought but...

SADIE: Take a look.

OLIVIA: Me?

SADIE: Scaredy cat?

OLIVIA: No just -

SADIE: I've looked, now you look.

OLIVIA: Hey. Not my Dad.

SADIE: You want family? He's family.

OLIVIA: Yeh, but -

SADIE: Like I said, no choice. Family. No choice. Now Look.

Beat

OLIVIA: Does he look weird?

SADIE: Yes.

OLIVIA: Yes?

SADIE: Yes.

OLIVIA: How weird?

SADIE: But it's family.

OLIVIA: You've made your point.

SADIE: Have you accepted the point?

OLIVIA: -

SADIE: Have you? Have you? Have you?

Pause

OLIVIA: How weird?

SADIE: He'd have never worn a lilac dress.

OLIVIA: What?

OLIVIA looks in the coffin.

Oh.

SADIE: Yes, oh.

OLIVIA: No.

Pause

Is it a woman?

SADIE: He'd have been really pissed off to be put in that. I mean a high neck and the makeup...

Pause

OLIVIA: Shall I ask if... I mean we've -

SADIE: I'm not decorating another coffin.

OLIVIA: They may have buried him already.

SADIE: Does it matter? Does it really?

OLIVIA: But Mum. He's your Dad.

SADIE: Don't start.

OLIVIA: Start what?

SADIE: I don't mind burning this one.

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: Really.

OLIVIA: What, empty?

SADIE: Whatever.

Beat

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: -

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: Oh for g - sake, really!

OLIVIA: We can't bury that thing in lilac and call it Frank.

SADIE: -

Pause

OLIVIA: What if it was you?

SADIE: Me?

OLIVIA: Yes you.

SADIE: God, I didn't think of it like that.

OLIVIA: See.

SADIE: Yes, you're right, I'd be really worried. I'd really want you to sort it out, find me.

OLIVIA: See you would wouldn't you.

SADIE: Yes, I really would... because I'm alive, you muppet.

OLIVIA: If you were to be buried in someone else's bad dress -

SADIE: Ssh!

OLIVIA (*Jumps*): What?!

SADIE: She might hear you.

OLIVIA: Oh very funny, very -

SADIE: Might have been her favourite.

OLIVIA: I know what you're doing Mum I know -

SADIE: What? What am I doing?

OLIVIA: You're trying to wind me up.

SADIE: Why? Why would I do that to my own flesh and blood?

OLIVIA: Because I...

SADIE: Because you what?

OLIVIA: Okay fine, you got me I/ admit

SADIE: Admit what?

OLIVIA: Want me to/ say it?

SADIE: Yes I want you to/ say it.

OLIVIA: Okay I'll say it! I wanted to wind you up!

Beat

SADIE: Don't judge me, don't you dare judge me. Now bugger off and ask them why, why they decided to turn Frank, your Grandfather, your flesh and blood, into a badly dressed transvestite.

TWENTY-SIX

2015

Co-operative Funeral Parlour. The General Election. Later

SADIE is looking into the coffin, drinking champagne. Enter OLIVIA.

OLIVIA: Once again they are really, really, sorry and they hope to locate the shirt and jacket as soon as possible.

Looking in the coffin.

He's skin and bone.

SADIE: He gave up.

OLIVIA: Why?

SADIE: Why not?

Pause

OLIVIA: They asked if you wanted a vest.

SADIE: A vest?

OLIVIA: They offered one.

SADIE: He's going to be incinerated. I doubt if he'll have a chance to feel the chill.

Pause

OLIVIA: Just to say, when they come in, can you look really bereaved?

SADIE: What does bereaved look like?

OLIVIA: Just... bereaved.

SADIE: Is this face not bereaved?

OLIVIA: The champagne is maybe not -

SADIE: I'm not putting this down. You ordered it.

OLIVIA: I know. Then look weird whilst chucking it down your throat.

SADIE: Weird? Bereaved isn't weird.

OLIVIA: Yeh, but, I said the trauma of seeing that woman in there instead of your dad triggered your dormant mental illness.

SADIE: My what?

OLIVIA: Manic depression to be exact.

SADIE: What?

OLIVIA: Oh and you're bi-polar, on a bad day and I'd say this is a bad day.

SADIE: What!

OLIVIA: I thought schizophrenia was going a little too -

SADIE: Why do I have to be -

OLIVIA: I said we'd sue.

SADIE: Can't you just threaten to sue 'cos they don't know how to sex test their cadavers? Do I have to be bonkers?

OLIVIA: I tried that. But a stropky little black clad weasel eventually spilled that actually, they often muddled people up but mostly it didn't matter as most normal bereaved folk don't want to stare at their dead relis. So I thought, 'normal', Mum's not 'normal'. Light bulb moment, said you had your 'problems' and they dropped the price. Like that.

Clicks fingers.

SADIE: Did they?

OLIVIA: They did. Are you proud?

SADIE: Impressed.

OLIVIA: Then be prepared to be very impressed.

SADIE: Really?

OLIVIA: I was on a roll. I said, have you heard of FEMEN? They said no.

Beat

SADIE: Well?

OLIVIA: Do you know?

SADIE (*Lying*): Course.

OLIVIA: No you don't.

SADIE: -

OLIVIA: Sextremists?

SADIE: Extremists?

OLIVIA: Sextremists.

SADIE: That's clear then.

OLIVIA: Movement originally from the Ukraine. Protest by going topless, writing feminist slogans across their tits. Brilliant.

SADIE: He'd have taken the piss. He'd have liked the tits, but have taken the piss.

OLIVIA: Can't believe you don't know. They're all over the internet.

SADIE: You're on the internet all hours, I'm working all hours.

OLIVIA: God, you and your neoliberalism.

SADIE: Neo - neoliberal? Who are you calling neoliberal!

OLIVIA: Oh c'mon, it's in your DNA.

SADIE: It is so not!

OLIVIA: Your generation, exposed to years of it. Worse than radiation.

SADIE: How dare you call me a -

OLIVIA: So are!

SADIE: So friggin' not!

OLIVIA: So what happened to you then?

SADIE (*Pointing at FRANK*): That happened to me. You happened to me.

OLIVIA: So your apathy is my fault? That's rich.

SADIE: Following some group on the internet is not being an activist. Tweeting

'love your slogan-upped tits, sister' is not being an activist.

OLIVIA: I know, I know, that's why I've joined. I'm going to train.

SADIE: Train?

OLIVIA: In France. They have bases in France, Germany, Canada.

SADIE: You're going to train to get your tits out?

OLIVIA: When did you become so bloody cynical?

SADIE: How does getting your boobs out kick start a burgeoning political career?

OLIVIA: It's about women-related politics, not women in politics.

SADIE: Can't change anything unless you're in. I voted on the way here.

OLIVIA: Oh c'mon! They won't let us in. You know this. The middle ground is overpopulated with the deliberately and determinedly blinkered, refusing to see the stonking rich getting stonking richer whilst they do the turkeys voting for Christmas thing at the polls. But yeh, guess what, I get my tits out and they notice. They'd notice you if you did too.

SADIE: Your tits are wondrously pert. If I got mine out they'd just hand me a support bra.

OLIVIA (*indicating FRANK*): You said even he would notice the tits.

SADIE: And be sarcastic. Viciously sarcastic.

OLIVIA: But he'd read the slogans though.

Pause

SADIE: Did you flash at the undertakers then?

OLIVIA: Pretty much.

SADIE: Did you?!

OLIVIA: I don't have anything written on them at the mo. But I threatened to. Said I'd follow their hearses flashing, 'They fuck the dead.' Got a full refund.

SADIE: Full - ?

OLIVIA: Refund.

SADIE: That's...

OLIVIA: Brilliant?

Beat

SADIE: Now I'm friggin' proud!

OLIVIA: Me too!

SADIE goes over to the coffin. OLIVIA joins her.

OLIVIA: He looks...

SADIE: Skin and bone.

Pause

OLIVIA: His chest...?

SADIE: Yes?

OLIVIA: No hair.

SADIE: No. Hairy arms but chest, no.

OLIVIA: Oh.

SADIE: Why?

OLIVIA: Just an observation.

Pause

Always sarcastic?

SADIE: Always.

OLIVIA: About women?

SADIE: Not sure he liked them much.

OLIVIA: But he was a serial shagger.

SADIE: Yes.

*OLIVIA gets a thick black felt tip pen and offers it to
SADIE.*

Think I'm all drawn out.

OLIVIA: Really?

SADIE: Really.

OLIVIA: Think you're not.

SADIE: No?

OLIVIA: You going to let him get away with it?

SADIE: With what?

OLIVIA: Not liking you, us.

SADIE: He got ill, feeble.

OLIVIA: Did he learn? Did he change?

Beat

SADIE: No. Not really.

OLIVIA: But you can. You can change. Here, draw on them.

SADIE: My tits? He can't see them.

OLIVIA: Not yours.

SADIE (*Realising*): Oh.

OLIVIA: Uhuh.

Gives her the pen.

SADIE: But what if someone -

OLIVIA: You're bonkers, remember.

SADIE: I am, I really am.

OLIVIA: I hope so, really hope so Mum.

Enter COMMENTATOR.

COMMENTATOR: For weeks now nobody has been able to call this election. Will we have another Tory/Lib coalition? Will we have a Tory victory outright? Will Labour have to get into bed with the opposition? But now, yes now, we have some feedback from the exit polls and signs are that -

SADIE: Bigger off!

COMMENTATOR: But the exit pollers?

OLIVIA: You 'eard her.

COMMENTATOR: But -

OLIVIA: Bigger right off!

Exit COMMENTATOR.

SADIE: You going to vote?

OLIVIA: If you...

SADIE takes pen and draws on FRANK's chest.

OLIVIA (*Looking*): Oh that's goooood!

SADIE: You think?

OLIVIA: Really, really, REALLY, rude, but goooood.

SADIE: Thank you.

OLIVIA: Now I'm proud.

SADIE offers OLIVIA the pen.

OLIVIA: May I?

SADIE: You may.

OLIVIA writes on FRANK.

OLIVIA (*Reading*): Interesting.

OLIVIA: You think?

SADIE: Moral high ground.

OLIVIA: Thank you.

SADIE: Got an e in it though.

OLIVIA: Has it?

SADIE: Think so.

OLIVIA changes it.

OLIVIA: Yeh. It does.

They look at their work.

SADIE: So. How about a moustache?

TWENTY-SEVEN

2015

Petticoat Lane Market

Music circa 2015. BILLY BOY stands at a full stall, which is surrounded by empty market stalls. DANCERS move like on the latest music channel. Dancing/writhing on the stalls etc. The PLATE SPINNER is lost in the crowd. No one helps him.

BILLY BOY: What on earth you say! What on bleeding earth you say. Say what on bleeding earth you got there, Billy Boy? No others, no others, none. Specialist see, specialist. Specialist wiiiiiiiiith offers. Offers, offers, offaaaaaars! Not a sale no. Oh my days, no! Sales desperate see. Going out of business see. All these stalls did a sale see. But not this stall, no. Completely bona this stall. Mega bona. Bona, bona, bona, babe. See all this? Eh, pretty lady, don't look at that, look at this. Just me, just here, just right here, just me. S'cuse me babe, s'cuse me babe, s'cuse me! I will show you how you deal with recession. See this stall? This bit of wormy wood. Jerusalem this, history this, my ol' man did this. Dead he is and this 'ere...

Indicating surroundings.

...the desert of democracy. You only find this stuff in 'outer' England now. 'Outer' what you say? 'Outer friggin' England, babe. The north, the east, the west and Cornwall, Gawd bless it. This bit of England, no.

Indicating himself.

This bit of England is savvy, this bit, will emerge like the Phoenix, the Phoenix that is progress. None of yer 'Arry Potter malarkey round 'ere. None of your Shardy arse phoenix reflecting its own pointy metal self in its bent and blind windows. Recession? Bollocks! Change issit. Not small change me, not pennies, big change, massive change. Only a crisis - perceived or otherwise - produces - real dynamic, fucking amazing, change. Shock tactics see. And you pretty lady, what is you but ready for a fresh start, your own special bit of shock and I can give it to you, eh babe?

You know this. I can see it in your beautiful eyes. You is bare nice, knowing. You beautifully, bloody know I don't want to give small change pretty lady. And no, I don't want to short-change you babe. No, no, no. Oh my days I can't believe I'm offering you this! But I am. Just you babe just you, you've got a face, a face I just can't resist. And your mate there if she is willing. Not risk averse are you babe?

You can't always tell.

I'm offering you the bargain of the century, the offer of the century. I'm offering you, your chance to be involved in the experience of the century. Your chance to be an amazing piece of the amazing jigsaw that is... Well sick pretty lady, well sick! Now c'mon Billy Boy I hear you cry! Stop messing with me Billy Boy, what is you up to? Is you bare, bare, insane Billy Boy?

Gets out mobile devices.

Tablets!

Starts to pile them up as UNCLE BILLY did at the beginning with the china.

And what do tablets make you Mrs? Bettaaaaaaaaaaaaar! Better, better, better! Now I don't want to rip you off. I'm not a complete and utter banker. This is proper global this. National boundaries? - All in the mind see - Beyond the posse of the emerging nations this. This tablet? Clean sheet. No history, no inner, no outer, no boundaries to this tablet see, call anywhere. Nigeria? No worries, Mexico? No worries. Crouch End? No worries. Text anywhere, email anywhere, and the piece de resistance... see anywhere. Oh my days Billy Boy! you say, what is you saying? I'm saying this is the way forward, no looking back, looking forward into anything you want to look. This is the new look, the latest, the best!

Getting the tablets out. Throwing them in the air etc. as UNCLE BILLY did with the china at the beginning. Once again, if tablets are dropped, no apologies.

But I don't wanna give you one tablet babe, I don't want to give you two. How many in your family pretty lady? Four? And yours babe? How many, six? Oh eight! Someone got busy! Giving away, just giving away sweet little tablets to make you feel bettaaaaaar! Bare mad issit. But yours?

All the time getting tablets out, throwing them in the air, catching them, piling them up in his arms.

And yours? And yours? An' yours - an' yours an' yours! Oh my daaaaaaays! I want to give you all these! And what do I want in return? You won't find this offer on Freeview, cable, Sky channels or any bloody internet site in the known Universe! An' all I want babe - and it ain't much - all I want is an itsy bitsy private contract with you. Cheaper than any other bugger init. So you and me babe, you and me - and your mate as well - we will have our own virtual competitive market. Not this market, competitive market. Com - pet - ta - tive. Sweet or what! Whadya say babe, eh? Whadya say? Bare sweet issit!

End.

Chapter Six

The creation of *Petticoat Lane*

Intent and the writing of *Petticoat Lane*

In *Petticoat Lane* my intent was to concentrate fully on adapting rather than appropriating some of my memories and consider if I could identify and explore through adaptation some of the social and political conditioning in my autobiography and where the aggressive male figure fits into the conditioning process. I decided to continue to pursue the idea of how the quiet voice may be listened to in order to bring about the possibility of change, as I feel I have only begun to explore the question. This approach takes on the challenge offered by Lisa Goldman: “I’ve often observed how this writerly sense of incompleteness, of trying to achieve some kind of closure, translates into the story of the main character’s unconscious need – the wound that needs to be healed, the shadow self” (27). I aimed to explore my “shadow self” in as unconstrained a way as possible in order to make sense of the present and offer possible futures for my characters and my audience, ultimately aspiring to lead to a sense of completeness.

In the following statement Deirdre Heddon is referring to the creation of an autobiographical performance rather than a dramatic text, but I believe her sentiments are applicable to the creation of *Petticoat Lane* when she says that:

The work... is to explore (question, reveal) the relationship *between* the personal and the political, engaging with and theorising the discursive construction of selves and experience. The personal has political purchase when its place in history and culture is examined, when its ontology is dissected rather than taken as a given, when the epistemology of experience is plotted (162).

Taking on board these comments I decided to be more politically overt and expansive in *Petticoat Lane* compared to *That Berlin Moment*. Consequently, *Petticoat Lane* covers over fifty years from the first political event I remember, the local American Airbase’s response to the assassination of President Kennedy, to a future political event, the next (2015) general election in Britain. Unlike Minghella I intertwined the political backdrop with the

characters' narrative in order to consider whether it is not only social but also political conditioning that constrains us.

Since I was dealing with the lives of living people other than myself I needed to understand that they too were subject to social and political constraints, otherwise the danger was that, as James Thompson says in the context of his applied theatre work: "Without extreme care theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences and remembrances can blame, enact revenge and foster animosity as much as they develop dialogue, respect or comfort" (25-26). I needed to consider whether or not others I had grown up around had tried to identify and remove the more destructive constraints imposed upon them, but I also needed to remind myself of the work of Paul Ricoeur regarding forgiveness in relation to the historical context of the community.

I have always drawn on visual artists for inspiration. For *That Berlin Moment* my reference point was Tracey Emin but my engagement with her work is relatively recent. Considering the expansive nature of my intent for *Petticoat Lane* I decided to draw on my memories of an artistic influence that ran through large swathes of my autobiography and memories. For inspiration I drew on a serendipitous moment from my childhood, which has led to a more deliberate research process.

Without realising, as a child I had been captivated by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson. My family comes from London. My mother was evacuated in the Second World War to the village she took my sister and me to live when my parents split up. I remember when we moved there she was an anomaly: from London, young, attractive, and divorced with two young girls, she appeared to be a threat to many, particularly the members of the local Women's Institute. The stories she told us of being evacuated were imbued with a warmth that conflicted with the reception we received in the village. As a consequence of this I sought out stories of everyday life from the Second World War. When I was seven, I bought for a penny a pile of old magazines from the 1940s in a village jumble sale. Some included pictures by Henri Cartier-Bresson, which I recognised and rediscovered when in my twenties I became interested in photography.

I have always seen exhibitions of Cartier-Bresson's work whenever possible over the years. Most recently was at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 2014, where a note in the gallery in which his early work was hung explained his early working practice. Cartier-Bresson initially studied painting and drawing and then discovered photography. Apparently, his first idea was to frame an image or space and wait for a human or humans

to enter the frame and engage with it. I felt I had done something similar with *That Berlin Moment*. I had constrained the characters in the frame of a sterile small environment. But reflecting on the work of Cartier-Bresson made me realise that what has always been particularly interesting for me is how in his later work he managed to place the personal and social experience in the context of the political. For example, when he covered the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth he focused on the subjects lining the London streets rather than the king and queen. He had a “more subtle approach” than most press photographers, “reflecting a curiosity for incidental details, and a taste for celebrating personal histories as well as the history of nations, a sort of anecdotal humanism” (Jeanneney 12).

As well as accessing text on Cartier-Bresson’s work I bought a few postcards of some of his images. Alongside one of his photographs was an unsourced quotation from him: “I was there, and that was how life was at the moment when I saw it.” This confident and unapologetic statement places the recording of an event as an undeniable moment of actuality for the artist regardless of whether it is the “truth” or not. Of course this connected up to my research on the absence of truth in memory and I found the statement emitted a confidence that I wished to take into my new creative work. Cartier-Bresson’s photographs became more spontaneous and filled with movement as his career developed (Arbaizar et al). This was something with which I wanted to imbue *Petticoat Lane*. I introduced fleeting figures inhabiting and reflecting the everyday of my memories, the television programmes, the music, street events such as markets and the spaces I used to play in, as well as the world of work and living spaces such as flats and houses. The random moments of memory denoting time and place are punctuated by how the characters connect to a scattering of political events of the time and most importantly reflect whether the era depicted defined and constrained the characters and the impact it had on what choices people were able to make.

The characters in *Petticoat Lane* are based on me, on principal male figures in my life including my father, uncles and lovers, but also on significant women who played certain roles in my life. Therefore I would move through my memories and beyond, pausing at moments when I interacted with others, but in order to have a clear look at my memories and autobiography, I will then stand back, to see what is worth referencing in terms of the structuring of the play, the characters and the narratives in order to consider if I could identify, investigate and challenge the constraints which had I believed either been

imposed on me or I had imposed on myself. Such clarity of focus regarding autobiography and memory will in turn influence and aid the honing of a distinct personal voice as a playwright because, as Alan Plater explained in interview:

When you write, if you do it properly, you have to do it respecting your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles peer group, the social and economic history that surrounded you, the physical places where you were born and brought up, all that stuff which means you are quite different from anyone else in the human race and the trick or the challenge, the quest is to sound like you and nobody else.

The play's title is *Petticoat Lane* after the famous street market in London. The actual street market I used to visit as a child when I lived in London was Church Street market. I also had relatives who had market stalls or kiosks in various parts of London. But I used the title *Petticoat Lane* to indicate that the main focus of the play is on the female characters created. My intent was to "do it properly," to dispassionately explore the main theme – how may the quiet voice be listened to? – and to offer the possibility of change for my characters.

Characterisation, adaptation and appropriation

In the process of adapting my memories I was aware that, as Cavarero points out, "the one who walks on the ground cannot see the figure that his/her footsteps leave behind, and so he/she needs *another* perspective" (3). If I was being resistant in adapting my autobiography in *That Berlin Moment* I needed another perspective for *Petticoat Lane*, a differing approach to choosing and adapting my memories in order for them to fit the new medium of a dramatic stage text. I decided that all the characters were to be transposed adaptations (Sanders 20) except for Olivia who is not based on anyone I know. Consequently, I consciously approached my memories as if they were text and then looked to transpose the text into a dramatic form. The following are just some examples of how I achieved this.

In order to transpose my memories effectively it was initially important to identify the function of the characters. Sadie is the main character and an adaptation of me. In order for me to maintain a distanced perspective on the character it was important to consider

how the other characters interact with her and to what purpose in terms of the themes of the play. To make this happen I identified the thematic purpose of each character as I did in *That Berlin Moment* but in order to develop my adaptation process, I then looked in my memories for structured “story events”, as defined by Robert McKee. McKee states that: “A Story Event creates meaningful change in the life situation of a character that is expressed and experienced in terms of a value.” Story values, he explains, “are the universal qualities of human experience that may shift from positive to negative, or negative to positive from one moment to the next” (34).

Drawing on my memories as if they were text, I looked for structured events where the story value turned from positive to negative or the other way around. An example can be found in the structuring of the scenes with Frank, the young Sadie, and Trish. The character of Frank is an adaptation of my father. My father’s visits to us when I was young followed a specific pattern. He would be playful on arrival, then become bored and argumentative and leave earlier than expected. Using this simple structure, which has a beginning, a middle, an end and a value change, I then chose moments from a few remembered visits. I chose incidents that all happened but to provide more dramatic tension they were amalgamated to emphasise the value change for Sadie.

The scenes of Frank visiting Sadie and Trish have a number of purposes. They place the characters in a political and social context. They demonstrate Frank’s character when young: his values, attitudes and opinions, and his quest for change career-wise. Most importantly they show his relationships with Sadie and his ex-wife Trish, and the choices that he makes in relation to them when he is placed under pressure: for example, when he discovers that the aeroplanes are starting their engines because the Kennedy assassination might be the precursor to a nuclear strike, he chooses to go to a place of greater safety by himself. A similar structure is used in a later scene, when the teenage Sadie goes to Frank’s office and Uncle Billy arrives. The structure is drawn from my memoirs of many meetings with my father and his friends and relatives. The meeting would start well, but the difference in attitude (both political and personal) between me, my father and his friends and relatives would soon become apparent, particularly if drink was involved. The meeting would go from a positive start, then there would be conflicting attitudes and opinions aired, and the scene would end with a different value-charged ending for myself and others.

Uncle Billy is an adaptation of grandfathers and various uncles or relatives given the name ‘uncle’ who were friends of my father and whom I knew growing up. The

character of Uncle Billy is created and introduced to provide a wider context of the social and political conditioning of my father as well as myself. Uncle Billy reinforces and supports Frank's attitude to and treatment of women, demonstrating a shared cultural perspective – one that was common amongst my relatives. Furthermore, the introduction of Uncle Billy highlights that Frank is trying to better himself, bring about change and has moved away from his roots in a work context, but the moment when Frank chooses to be on Uncle Billy's side in the drunken meeting with Sadie and Uncle Billy in his offices, demonstrates that Frank doesn't want to change his emotional make up and chooses to continue to have the same relationship with Sadie as before.

Petticoat Lane is not a goal-orientated story. It is about problems or issues that characters look to resolve. Therefore with the other characters in the play in order to provide emotional distance when constructing them I focused on asking certain questions of my characters similar in intent to those posed by Linda Seger in *The Art of Adaptation*: "What is the problem that needs to be resolved?" and "What do the characters do to resolve the problem?" (80). I also wanted to question whether the other characters offer Sadie models for change and if so how?

The character of Trish is an adaptation of my mother. The thematic purpose of the character is to shed further light on the background of Sadie's struggle to bring about change for herself. In the earlier scenes with Sadie and Trish we see that Trish loves and defends her daughter, but the guidance she offers in relation to achieving change is limited to the desire for an education. She does not offer a practical example. There is more than a hint that Trish didn't have a supportive childhood. Both Frank and Sadie refer to Trish's mother in negative terms and this appears to have impacted on her levels of confidence. Trish does not have the confidence to bring about change herself. For her, change is something other people do to you, often with negative consequences. The character is drawn to things that seem unchanging, such as the pomp and ceremony surrounding the royal family. In the final scene with Sadie and Trish it is clear that Trish is ultimately shackled by her social context because of her adherence to the belief that the nuclear family model is something for Sadie to aim for even though evidence in her life and those around her has proved otherwise.

Having provided a perspective on the possibilities of change offered to Sadie by her parents' generation, I turned my attention to constructing characters from Sadie's own generation. Here I asked further questions posed by Seger: "Who influences the character?"

What developments occur to change the character from ‘the character with a problem’ to ‘the character who has resolved the problem’?” (80).

Marcus and Janice are adaptations of people I knew and know. Both characters are there to be a contrast to Sadie but also offer examples of attempts at change. They are also used to emphasise a particular personal, social and political stance through the choices that they make when under pressure. This compares with the choices Sadie makes when she is under pressure. It also means that Sadie has examples of choices made from her own generation to consider as well as from her parents’ generation. It was important for me to create characters that, to paraphrase Lajos Egri, embodied not only their environments, but also their heredity, likes and dislikes, and even the climates of the places they were born in (94). I also wanted to make explicit my characters’ political stances. Marcus represents the political views of many boys I grew up with in the village we moved to when I was young. There was sense that voting for the Conservative Party was as much in their DNA as was farming. Therefore Marcus’s career in politics is depicted as being connected to a family history which has prepared generations to follow a path to Oxford/Cambridge and go on to be gentleman farmers and politicians. The young Marcus’s reference to his brothers breaking with tradition to become bankers hints at a changing financial powerbase but not one of privilege. He has a present but emotionally distant father, reinforcing the hereditary nature of his decision-making.

The character of Janice is imbued with a sense of privilege that is fostered by her closeness to the senior American military. She has an absent father and a confident mother. Her lack of awareness of British social structures and her global travel allow her to have a more independent cultural viewpoint and an acceptance of difference that runs alongside a humanist perspective. Her fluid sexuality demonstrates a confidence in her physicality that underpins the confident way she identifies goals and makes decisions. Janice and Marcus not only provide a political, social and personal contrast with Sadie but also with each other. When Janice, Marcus and Sadie are young, the innate confidence displayed by both Janice and Marcus highlights Sadie’s lack of confidence, a result of her social conditioning. Sadie tries to assert herself, to bring about change by being confrontational and violent, something neither Janice nor Marcus feels the need to do. When all three are older and leaving university, Marcus is embracing the political beliefs passed down to him while Janice airs a political stance in contrast to her parents and which she plans to back up with direct action. In contrast Sadie is the most ardent when talking about her political concerns

but she lacks a clear sense of how to commit to and support her political beliefs. It is Sadie's lack of confidence, her conditioning, which makes her half listen to her mother and which draws her to Marcus and what seems unchanging. Ironically, despite professing his love for her, Marcus is ultimately not willing to change his life plans for her.

The characters of Frank, Marcus, Janice, Sadie and Olivia are used overtly to reflect the political landscape. Naturally, I'm aware of the political bias in the play. In his book, *Things Can Only Get Bitter: the Lost Generation of 1992*, Alwyn Turner explores how a generation born a few years either side of 1960, whose adult political experience was mainly of a Conservative government, turned away from politics after the unexpected defeat of Labour in the 1992 election, allowing the government to be populated by homogenised professional politicians. Turner's thinking directly underpins the political perspective of the character of Sadie. But whereas Turner identifies a generation turning its focus to the creation of cultural products, I thought it was more pertinent for Sadie to become a party planner, demonstrating a double negative-value-charged ending to the scene involving the 1992 election. There is a deliberately structured sense that Sadie's attempt to "beat them at their own game" (237) by becoming a party planner will not bring about the effective change she hopes for as she is still drawn to the unchanging.

Neither Frank, Sadie, Janice, nor Marcus can bring about effective change in the political climate depicted in *Petticoat Lane*, regardless of their efforts. Frank is the most damaged by the political regime in Britain. He turns away from Labour, the politics of his father, and embraces Thatcherism but ends up lost and disoriented, suffering the early stages of dementia. Janice reflects on the global influence of America during the period and demonstrates that charity organisations struggled to bring about positive change in a global context. Marcus is not rewarded even though he appears to be supporting the dominant political culture, and Sadie is involved in a failing business, reduced to ranting from the sofa at political programmes on the television.

It is with Olivia, Sadie's daughter and the only completely fabricated character in the play, that Sadie is provided with examples of possible change in relation to the overarching political culture and in particular her relationship with her father. Olivia is less burdened by her social position than Sadie. She is not as hampered by familial relationships as she has no knowledge of who her father is and she has had little contact with her grandfather. Her fondness for her grandmother is warm but remote. Olivia represents a possible future political perspective. She steps out of the depicted current political

structures to take non-violent action in order to bring about change. The point when she encourages Sadie to draw on Frank's dead body is the most obvious manifestation of structured beginnings of possible personal, social and political change for Sadie.

The intertwining of the political background and the characters in *Petticoat Lane* was important because I agree with Goldman that "drama lives beyond the moment and it is the mature political visions that we revisit most" (194). Without a specific social and political context in *Petticoat Lane* it would be difficult to reflect fully on the choices made by Sadie and the other characters.

As with *That Berlin Moment*, the characters' use of language was deliberately manipulated in *Petticoat Lane*, but this manipulation was utilised differently from the previous play. While both plays focused on a change of scriptwriting practice in relation to the creation of the main character, in *Petticoat Lane* I made the language as faithful to my memory of how people spoke as possible for all characters rather than just the main character. The adaptation of language-use for the characters was where I demonstrated most fidelity to the original source. All the transposed characters have language patterns which are attributable to people I know or knew, with the exception of Olivia, the agent of change. Using the same language patterns and dialogue from actual remembered incidents provides authenticity in terms of time, place and attitude. This is particularly notable in the language of Frank, who is unashamedly racist and sexist, particularly in the scene with Uncle Billy and Sadie (212-16). This was because I particularly wanted to test the actuality as best as I could remember of the social constraints my family were under at different times, in order to investigate whether or not the perceived impact of them was justified. The choice of language use by characters may not always have supported effective play construction. For example Frank uses cockney rhyming slang more when he is young than he does when he is older. This my father did but it could be perceived as a weakness in the script as there is not the continuity in the character's language use throughout the play and it is not explained.

On reflection, when I was drawing on my memories in order to write dialogue for Frank and Uncle Billy I realised that the characters they were based on had poor listening skills in relation to the women and children in their family. Therefore, in the scenes that include Trish, Frank and Sadie, Frank often does not answer Trish's questions and never waits to hear an answer from Sadie except once when he asks her to go and live with him (178). He hadn't heard and was ignoring what they said; he hadn't been listening.

There were salient parts of my autobiography that on this occasion I wished to draw on in *Petticoat Lane*. Using adaptations and appropriations of my memories in both the plays meant I had to be sure that I was the sceptical eye on my vision, pulling the rug from under myself, challenging my original perspective (Goldman 193). In *That Berlin Moment* I created a memory play in Favorini's terms where the play was more about the use of memory rather than the content of memories. In *Petticoat Lane* I became bolder in handling my memories and the narratives from my memories, adapting rather than just appropriating my memories or remembered feeling states and placing my adaptations of the self in a recognisable historical and political time frame.

One of the things I keep coming back to in my writing is what Rossington and Whitehead describe in their discussion of the work of Ricoeur and Margalit as the question of "amnesty or amnesia" (12) in relation to forgiveness. I explore this topic more explicitly in *That Berlin Moment* whereas in *Petticoat Lane* the exploration is implicit. Both Graham and Bean when talking to me considered that if they place an autobiographical concern in a play they felt they had dealt with the issue. This is an interesting assertion but in my case as a writer I still find this an important question, particularly in relation to change, which I haven't finished exploring in autobiographical terms and will pursue further in a future play.

In both plays I created main characters differently from in my previous scriptwriting practice. In both plays my intent was to explore the premise of how the quiet voice may be listened to in order to bring about change. Drawing on the experience of working in the creative frame of applied drama I depict characters being offered alternative courses of action and structures to bring about change and we experience them attempting change. For the first time in both plays I created verisimilitude in my main characters and I explored concepts of memory and autobiography through their narratives. This is the new frame that I am writing in.

After writing the two plays I would argue that for the playwright the process of adaptation of personal memories aids the development of the thematic exploration of change. I agree wholeheartedly with Ruth Helyer's point, made about the works of Bret Easton Ellis, that the process of self-adaptation "reiterates the idea that the boundaries between authorship, ownership and identity are permeable and evolving, and therefore changing" (205).

Conclusion

This thesis is an extended exploration of authorial intent, approached through a number of exercises in researching, writing and evaluating. These activities are the cornerstones of playwriting for me, and the interplay between them cannot be made into a formula or a methodology. For example, working through instinct and memory, writing dialogue “by ear” and creating works for theatre through imagination are processes that have to be reinvented for every piece of work, not just for every playwright. So what is the contribution to knowledge that I make in this thesis? This thesis is a piece of practice that opens up my methods of working to critical scrutiny, and which tracks the interplay of a wide range of influences and ideas in relation to my creative writing. It is not a study in drama or performance studies – this thesis stops decisively short of considerations of staging or audiences – but a study of the private and underexamined world of an individual’s imaginative process and its contact with lived realities and social contexts.

The study of creative writing enables the writer to develop a plan, and to articulate the process of developing their work and their ideas. This thesis is concerned with the process of authorship from the perspective of one who is trying to develop writerly skills. I wanted to produce a piece of writing about being a playwright, and a reflection on and a critical sharing of a developmental and critical process of trying to write better plays. The thesis maps the influence of my research into memory and also tracks the influence of serendipitous encounters in such a way that the main body of the work – the plays themselves – can be opened up to scrutiny from the perspective of the developing writer.

This process folds together research, reflection and writing. It is a piece of research into a creative process that involves the struggle with narrative and the conception of a self that draws on autobiographical material. The centrality of my concerns with authorship and autobiography is partly a response to (and a move away from) the attempts to represent others and to find solutions for others’ problems in my earlier applied theatre plays. I haven’t moved away from this work forever, and am writing a short play about and for NEET young people in Hull at the moment, but I have used this thesis to think about my own creativity, my own stories and the ways I can develop and enhance my own work. Putting my own creative processes at the centre of the study seems to be important, and too easily forgotten or neglected. The plays of this thesis are not, of course, merely plays about

me. They are (and are intended to be) integrally connected to the social, political and familial worlds that form us and give shape to our worlds. I am interested in what makes a person quite as much as what makes a character, and both these plays focus on how the individual functions and may connect to society. I remain concerned with individuals and their wish to make changes and choices in their lives, and in the plays I consider how both as individuals and part of a social context, characters (and by extension, people) may bring about positive change. I do this by creating a dramatic fictional context populated by fictional characters. This concern with issues of choice and individual empowerment connects my private creative world of playwriting with my former or alternative context of applied theatre maker. The connection between works in these different contexts is an important part of the creative context I lay out in this thesis.

Prior to undertaking this thesis, as a playwright I was used to working in the frame of applied drama with its concerns about the educative structuring of the audience's or participants' experience. The aim in my applied theatre plays was to create characters and place them in contexts that would enable the participants and audience to gain knowledge about themselves and others, and to gain a confidence which would permit them to be at ease in personal, social and political contexts and enable them to identify and bring about change. The reason for undertaking this thesis and to work in the discipline of creative writing was a desire to change my frame of practice. I aimed to hone aspects of my writing craft, but recognise and draw on aspects of the creative frame of playwriting for applied drama practice. The theoretical crux of the thesis was the connection between the two – rather than setting up an opposition between self, creativity and original imaginary worlds on the one hand, and social utility and empowerment and political concern on the other, I found that the process of exploring my own creative process led to some interesting and powerful connections and bridges between these two aspects of my practice.

I wished to explore and use in my creative practice a more profound understanding of autobiography and memory, so I may craft plays that deal with the context of living in the now and the future more effectively than I had previously. In order to do this I had to understand how memory works and relates to the imagination and the autobiographical past, present and future. Drawing on the work of Giuliana Mazzoni and others I discovered that “truth” in terms of memory was a myth, and that memories were often adapted to suit the present, therefore moving away from the triggering memory. I discovered that memory was fragile in terms of susceptibility and that the imagination was all-powerful. The

complexity of false narratives produced by the imagination was interesting, as was the understanding that there is sometimes a difference in the emotional response of believed and nonbelieved memories. However, the feeling state produced by false memories was often remembered just as intensely, even when the narrative was revealed as false. Ultimately I discovered that memories were often adapted to provide a sense of completeness; coherent narratives rather than happiness were what was desired, regardless of the “truth.” By interviewing Giuliana Mazzoni and exploring her work as well as that of others, I was able to place my experiences of memory in a new context, which enabled me to release my concerns regarding “truthfulness.” I found myself agreeing with Cavarero that:

Every human being is unique, an unrepeatable existence, which – however much they run disoriented in the dark, mixing accidents with intentions – neither follows in the footsteps of another life, nor repeats the very same course, nor leaves behind the same story. This is also why life-stories are told and listened to with interest; because they are similar and yet new, insubstitutable and unexpected, from beginning to end (2).

In the first play, *That Berlin Moment*, I explored various uses and manipulation of memory. But I realised I needed to be prepared to take greater creative risks. I am of the same opinion as Goldman when she says: “You can only express your voice truthfully by freeing it from perfectionist expectation, your own or others. Confidence lies at the heart of creativity and self-belief gives licence” (153). I decided I would go further and attempt to release any writerly constraints I had been imposing on myself in terms of memory and to focus fully on adapting moments of my autobiography. In my second play, *Petticoat Lane*, I tried to let my imagination roam more liberally without censoring it. Whereas previously I might have felt uncertain or embarrassed about placing my own concerns and experiences at the centre of the play, it became clear during this process that it was necessary to do so. Howard Barker refers to this process in *Arguments for a Theatre* when he states that the playwright’s function is “to lead into moral conflict by his superior imagination. He does not tailor his thought to an ideology, but allows it to range freely over a landscape in which he himself should experience insecurity, exposing his own morality, his own politics, to damage on the way.” (48-49)

The final outcome, *Petticoat Lane*, was a long play and ironically I'm aware that if I want to have the voices in the play heard, I will have to turn it into a text for performance, making it playable in current new writing theatre spaces, paying particular attention to reducing the running length of the piece. However, writing the play enabled me to identify concerns with political context and women's life stories through reflecting on incidents that happened to me in my past, and also past social and familial relationships. Heddon writes about the performance of autobiography but her thinking applies to my experience of using autobiography when writing the dramatic script of *Petticoat Lane* when she says:

Performing stories about ourselves might enable us to imagine different selves, to determine different scripts than the ones that seem to trap us. Devising a performance out of the material of personal experience might enable new insights into the relationship between experience and structures of power, between identity and its formation (and reformation) (157).

With the emotional distance adaptation offers when writing a play I could explore the possibility of change, not only for my characters but also for myself.

Cavarero believes that autobiography "responds to a rather precise question: who am I?" (44). After the creative journey I have been on for this thesis I would go further and say putting memories into a play definitely enables the writer to consider not only who they are but also how they may adapt and change. The scale and the implications of the political landscape, the emotional toll of Thatcherism and the imagination of political futures are important subjects. To approach these subjects by ranging through (uncertain) personal memory is what enables me to develop the detail of context and character.

I'm aware my journey as a playwright is not over. However much I draw on and am influenced by other studies I still as a dramatist feel I am "[exploring] the terrain, half-knowing, half-ignorant" (Barker 44). And I admit to hearing the same irksome voice in my head that Alan Plater described in interview, saying: "What makes you think your petty little emotions are worth listening to?" When drawing on autobiographical material Heddon talks about the risk of failure or of failed potential if the material is not handled effectively in the new medium it is transposed into. But in her opinion the risk is reduced "by an informed and thoughtfully critical – self-conscious – practice" (158). The process of connecting plays and influences is necessarily imprecise: memory science undermines the

memories upon which the plays are based; the work of other playwrights reveal different interests and priorities that can never be simply transposed to another's process. The reflective process of living, thinking and writing, taken together vastly exceed the boundaries of a thesis, but somehow the selective process that represents these two projects offer a navigable account of my attempts to develop the work. Both plays, *That Berlin Moment* and *Petticoat Lane*, were written with a sense that writing them was an act that connected the social world as it is with the ways I think, remember and imagine. On this level, with the plays as a bridge between intent and actuality, I am pleased to have written them.

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