

REASONS TO HIDE

BY NINA RAPI ©

Characters:

SOPHIE PAVLOU: Forties, professor

JOS (Jocelyn) CURTIS: Thirties, dancer/choreographer,
Sophie's lover

DETECTIVE AUSTIN (D.A.): Late thirties, male, Jos' ex

ALI KHAN: Late thirties, doctor, Sophie's half brother

MAX CHANNING: Forties, Reader (one rank below professor), Sophie's friend, female

JOURNALIST: Could be doubled by DA

Time: The very near future

Settings: A non-naturalistic setting that can indicate both
intimacy *and* nightmare – flexible enough for multiple locations e.g.
doctor's surgery, living room, TV. studio, a university office, a
dance studio, a mindscape.

Time-span: Six months, from September to April

/ Indicates interruption

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PART ONE

SCENE ONE

All characters are under house arrest, which is where they end up by the end of the play, except of course the D.A. They all speak from within that situation, though the setting is really a mindscape. All characters, apart from the DA, on stage together, each in their head space, mentally aware of each other but obviously physically apart. This is a mirroring extract of the last scene. Minutiae of the characters' facial and hand expressions, are projected on a huge screen at the back. DA is seated apart and higher than the rest, controlling and watching the screen, except for when he speaks when he is addressing the audience.

MAX: Guilty! Who is guilty of what, why, to whom,
that is the question.

ALI: Sophie would never do anything to harm anybody.
She'd never, she couldn't possibly...

JOS: Sophie couldn't, just couldn't risk putting me in danger.

SOPHIE: They must all be going through hell,
I can't stand it.

JOS: If only you were here, Sophie,
everything would seem possible.
If only you were here...
if only you could just hold me, kiss me...

SOPHIE: I love you Jos.

JOS: I love you so much.

D.A. Reasons to hide, things to hide, hiding from things,
hiding from the truth, think think think,
why hide, what is it you're hiding from when you
love somebody against reason?

ALI: Could she?
Could she just possibly not be who I think she is?

MAX: I know of truths, I don't know of any one single truth, no.

ALI: I mean, could I be wrong?
Is this out of the question?

JOS: Every problem has a solution, every problem has a solution.

Why does this one seem unsolvable?

MAX: Doubt is my tool of trade. Doubt is good. Doubt is healthy.

ALI: I never prayed before in my life.
And now? It's such a strong urge!
How do you pray?!
Oh God,
strength,
give me
strength!

SOPHIE: I've got nothing to recant, nothing to hide!

D.A.: We all have something to hide.
There are no innocents anywhere.
We hide in order to protect ourselves,
yes yes yes.
We also hide to disguise our intentions,
delude ourselves,
harm others,
and then and then.

Rock solid methods, yes yes.
New methods, I need new methods,
reasons to hide, think think think

Blackout

SCENE TWO

It's late afternoon, autumn.

Detective Austin (D.A.) and Ali Khan at Ali's surgery.

D. A. has been grilling Ali for at least half an hour.

Ali is holding on tightly to some files.

D.A. How well do you know your sister, doctor Khan?

ALI: How well do I know my sister?!

D.A. How well do you know her. Yes.

ALI: Very well, we are very close.

D.A. How close is 'very close'?

ALI: Detective Austin, are you deliberately trying to be offensive?

D.A.: I do apologise. No offence intended.

ALI: I've been extremely polite for half an hour now.
You've asked me lots of obvious questions and
some outright provocative ones.
I've been seeing patients all day. I'm tired.

D.A. So sorry, won't be much longer.

ALI: Go on.

D.A. You and your sister had different fathers.

ALI: That is so.

D.A. Has that caused any conflict between you?

ALI: Our parents have been dead for a while. Us two are *the* family.

D.A. That's not what I meant.

ALI: What did you mean?

D.A. Your father was Pakistani, her father was Greek.

ALI: So?

D.A. Muslim and Christian Orthodox...am I making myself clear?

ALI: My sister is an atheist and I've only ever been nominally Muslim. I'm not a religious man, never have been.

D.A. Never an issue then...this difference in religious beliefs?

ALI: No, never. If you have any more questions to ask, questions of substance may I add, please do so. Otherwise, I need to go home.

D.A. To your pregnant wife?

ALI: Yes. Is this relevant?

D.A. Doctor Khan everything is relevant in this investigation.
(*Beat*) Your wife.

ALI: What about her?

D.A. Is she a Muslim by any chance?

ALI: And what is the point of this question exactly?

D.A. I take it then she is a Muslim (*He knew that already*).

ALI: *Stares*

D.A. Now why would a nominally Muslim man marry a devout Muslim?

ALI: Because he loved her?

D.A. A-ha 'love' Dr Khan, now that's a subject under serious investigation by many disciplines. Love can be a lethal weapon indeed, wouldn't you agree?

ALI: Are you investigating the meaning of love, Detective Austin?

D.A. Amongst other things...

ALI: Please, let's stay serious.

D.A. Let's. (*Beat*) Do you know what your sister does on a daily basis?

ALI: Last time I stalked her she just went about her daily, very normal business of going to work and coming back home.

D.A. No need to get sarcastic, doctor. We need to explore every angle, as I said. Do you for instance know what she does when she is at work?

ALI: She gives lectures, she sees her students, goes to meetings, does admin at her office, comes back home.

D.A. But do you, for instance, know who she meets at work or after work?
Do you know how long exactly she stays at her office?
Or how long she is out on campus? Who she walks with while on campus?
Who she talks to on the phone while she is walking out on campus?

ALI: I'm her brother, not a spy! Of course I don't know her every move.

D.A. Do you understand my persistence now?

Silence

ALI: Listen, my sister is a very respectable citizen.

D.A. I'm sure she is (*Beat*). Have you heard of the group 17th of November?

ALI remembers something, instantly suppresses the memory.

DA doesn't miss a beat.

ALI: No, I have no idea.

D.A. Are you sure?

ALI: Absolutely. Who are they?

D.A. The longest running terrorist organization in Europe,
longer than the German Red Army Faction and the Italian Red Brigades.

ALI: I've never heard of either.

D.A. That is disingenuous, doctor. You've read your sister's book, haven't you?

ALI: I flicked through it, I'm not a political man.

D.A. You are a family man, yes?

ALI: Precisely.

D.A. Then let me contextualize things for you.
17th November are...were a self-proclaimed revolutionary group,
terrorist by any other name, operating and based in Greece but with cells in
France, Italy, Germany...and we now suspect Britain...
They also had strong links with the PLO, IRA and we now suspect, the AL-
QAEDA...They were involved in armed robberies, assassinations of political

figures, including a British diplomat, and countless bomb explosions.

ALI: They sound extremely dangerous.

D.A. Absolutely... Their arrests were front page news, a few years ago.

ALI: All caught, that's good.

D.A. Yes, 17th November were finally caught in 2002 through an international effort between the Greek police, Scotland Yard and the Interpol. They were put on trial.

ALI: Safely behind bars then.

D.A. Are they?

ALI: Aren't they?

DA stares at ALI

ALI: What could my sister possibly have to do with these people beyond... a research interest?

D.A. That's what I'm here to find out.

Blackout

SCENE THREE

Next day. D.A. and MAX, SOPHIE's closest friend, Max's office at the University. They measure each other up.

MAX: What do you want to know?

D.A. You and Sophie Pavlou go back a long way.

MAX: Twenty years.

D.A. Impressive.

MAX: It's a strong friendship.

D.A. Touching.

MAX: Do I detect a dose of irony there?

D.A. I'm sorry, none intended.

MAX: Well? Cut to the chase.

D.A. You work together too.

MAX: Same University, different department.

D.A. She is in Sociology. You are in Philosophy.

MAX: Correct.

D.A. You see each other practically every day then.

MAX: Practically.

D.A. She is a professor.

MAX: Yes she is. But you know all this already. Why do you ask me?

D.A. Sorry, standard procedure.

MAX: Go on. But I do have a tutorial soon.

D.A. You know her beliefs and political convictions.

MAX: Yes I do.

D.A. Moderate, extremist?

MAX: Pure logic.

D.A. Moderate then?

MAX: Sophie's mind is one of the sharpest I've ever known. Cutting straight to the bone.

D.A. Extremist then?

MAX: Your categories are too simplistic.

D.A. How would *you* describe her political convictions?

MAX: I just did. Anything else?

D.A. Would you trust her with a secret?

MAX: I fail to see the connection.

D.A. Are there areas in your life that you'd consider too private or...too sensitive politically or professionally...to share with your friend or her with you? Areas that would amount to secrets? We all have them after all.

MAX: In that case, we'd have to ask: what kind of secret are we talking about, why is it a secret, should it be a secret etc etc

D.A. Does that mean you don't trust your friend?

MAX: It means you're either deliberately misinterpreting what I'm saying or your mind can't grasp relative concepts.

D.A. Ms Channing I appreciate the temptation to be dismissive and patronizing to an officer of the Law but would it surprise you if I said I've got an inter-disciplinary Phd on power dynamics between groups of friends who share similar political beliefs?

MAX: You work for the Intelligence Service so nothing surprises me.
(*Beat*) Inter-disciplinary? What kind of disciplines?

D.A. Philosophy, psychology...sociology.

MAX: I see. Is this why they put you on this case?

D.A. I chose this case. I'm here to help.

MAX: Really? (*Beat*) Touching.

D.A. (*Ignoring the irony*) Yes, absolutely. (*Beat*) Talking of which I can't relate to relative concepts, you're right. I find them intellectually weak. I prefer absolutes.

MAX: Beliefs in absolutes is what got us in the mess we are in.

D.A. I see no mess. I see people trying to sort things out.

MAX: What exactly is it you are trying to sort out here?

D.A. (*suddenly heated, meaning every word*)
We are under threat from many unsuspecting quarters,

quarters that should be working with us are working against us, destabilizing an already fragile social structure. People who should be making that structure solid, functioning, productive, people who should be working to erase conflict and discord, are doing their best instead to create discord and disharmony, under the guise of academic research. That's what I'm here to sort out.

Our way of life is in danger of becoming extinct due to the rise of dangerous, lethal may I add, ideologies, doctrines should I say, dogmas really, whipping of brains into frenzies of irrational anger actually, anger that has nowhere to go but turn against imaginary enemies and ultimately itself. Hence the 'martyrs'. That's what I'm here to sort out.

Silence. He feels slightly embarrassed for losing his cool, revealing so much of himself. MAX watches him intrigued. He regains composure.

MAX: A man of conviction.

D.A. Absolutely.

MAX: Interesting.

D.A. I'm pleased you approve.

MAX: But fundamentally disagree. Your draconian methods are based on dangerous misconceptions about the most basic human needs not to mention political positions and what makes people lean towards the left or towards the right, towards blind obedience to the state or questioning it to the point of rebellion or indeed self-sacrifice. Your methods will act as boomerang and ultimately have the opposite of the intended effect, you can be sure of that.

Silence. They measure each other up again.

D.A. I'm not here to discuss political philosophy. Let's return to the matter in hand, shall we?

MAX: Let's.

D.A. How well do you know your friend, Ms Channing?

MAX: A lot better than you think you know her.

D.A. We have a lot more information on her than you would ever be capable of having.

MAX: Information possibly, the truth, never.

D.A. We're in the business of gathering facts, not philosophical notions of the 'truth'.

MAX: Facts without a notion of the 'truth' are meaningless. *(Pause)*
You should know that...

D.A. The indisputable fact here is your friend is under house arrest.

MAX: Wrongly and unjustly so.

D.A. Another indisputable fact is she is less willing to protect you or your research interests than you are of her and hers.

MAX: Now, that *is* a cheap trick.

D.A. You're aware of the new Government rules that academic research should protect the interests of the state/

MAX: Of course. We're fighting these very rules right now.

D.A. But you're in the middle of a huge grant application for your new research, the last step to you becoming a professor...
You've been a Reader for a long time. You feel you've been blocked in your promotion. You want to move on. Your research is breaking new ground on the notion of 'freedom' – dangerous ground, I may add, hence the funding problems...

MAX: I'm not surprised you know all this and it's not coming from Sophie, that's for sure.

DA. A further indisputable fact here is that you should be giving me the information I'm asking you or you're placing yourself under suspicion too.

MAX: Are you threatening me?

D.A. What if I am?

MAX: I'd interrupt this interview immediately.

D.A. You can't.

MAX: I can.

She stands legs akimbo, lips firmly closed.

D.A. stares at her for a while, realizes she won't say another word,

slowly moves towards the exit.

D.A. Till the next time, Ms Channing, till the next time.

Lights

SCENE FOUR

Next day. JOS' dance studio.

D.A. and JOS

JOS: You said you'd help, remember that.

D.A. I do indeed. For old time's sake...

JOS: I hope you mean it.

D.A. Of course I do. (*Beat*) Are you happy Jos?

JOS: She is...I...we...I love her!

D.A. But?

JOS: There is no but.

D.A. There was a 'but' hanging there.

JOS: I'm sorry, this is all extremely stressful, you understand.

D.A. Of course.

Silence

D.A. I know you well, come on (*Beat*) or at least I thought I did...

JOS: Don't go there. Please? Promise?

D.A. (*Beat*) I promise...so... the 'but'

JOS: She is so headstrong...so independent...so self-contained.

D.A. Makes you feel lonely? Abandoned?

JOS: I wouldn't go as far as that...even though
when she is working on a project,
she is totally, utterly consumed by it.

There is little space for anything else.
This new book, this latest 'baby' of hers
is eating her alive! Sometimes I feel second to that,
but I know for a fact that I am not,
so it's an unreasonable 'but', a selfish 'but' really... (*Small laugh*)
You can't compete with a book, can you?

D.A. Why do you think she has invested so much in it?
I mean is it purely research?

JOS: Nothing is ever 'purely research' for her.
She really believes in what she writes.
It's not just intellectual curiosity that drives her, it's passion!
She is a political animal.

D.A. Would she put her politics before you?

JOS: Never!

D.A. How well do you know your lover, Jos?

JOS: Now that is a silly question.

D.A. I mean it.

JOS: We've been together for three years, what do you think?

D.A. You may think you know your lover after being together for *seven*
years, at least I thought I did but then... unexpected things can happen.

JOS: You promised.

D.A. Seven years together and just as you're about to marry, she leaves you/

JOS: /Sophie and I are 'it'. I know Sophie's most intimate thoughts,
I know her deepest feelings, I know everything that scares her,
delights her, threatens her, pleases her...
I know her body, her mind, her/

D.A. /Ok, ok, ok!

Silence. They both recover.

D.A. Do you always travel with her?

JOS: No, not always.

D.A. Do you know what she does when she is not in the country?
When she visits her Greek relatives for example?

JOS: I don't keep her on a leash, no.

D.A. Do you know who she meets when she is not with you?

JOS: Most times yes. We know each other's movements.

D.A. Even casual meetings?

JOS: Of course not. But we do talk about what happens to us.

D.A. Don't you, aren't you, don't you keep the mundane events out
of your conversation 'to keep the relationship alive'?

JOS: *(Laughs)* You know we do.

D.A. What if those 'mundane' encounters that Sophie is having aren't
at all mundane?

JOS: What do you mean?

D.A. What if they were actually extremely important to Sophie?

JOS: Then she would tell me about them.

D.A. Are you sure?

JOS: Absolutely.

D.A. Has she ever mentioned Marie Veschi?

JOS: Marie Veschi? No, never.

D.A. Obviously then you wouldn't know that they've met at least two
times in the last month.

JOS: *(is getting uncomfortable)* Is she a colleague maybe?

D.A. No, not at all. She comes to London especially to meet Sophie.

JOS: *(is battling with this)* There must be an explanation for this.

D.A. She comes to London especially to meet Sophie, twice a month,
every month for the last six months. Always standing,

always at a remote place, a deserted street for instance where no one can hear what they say.

JOS: How do you know this?

D.A. Jos, this is my job. I watch people.
We've been suspecting Sophie for a while now.

JOS: Suspecting her of what?

D.A. You know.

JOS: Don't be absurd. This is all a terrible mistake on your part, an over-reaction. She wouldn't hurt a fly. *I know.*

D.A. Do you? The way you knew about Marie Veschi?

JOS: (*Stares at him angrily*). I don't like what you're doing, Andrew. I know exactly what you're doing and I don't like it.

D.A. I'm not doing anything of whatever you think I'm doing Jos.

JOS: Don't play with my head. Don't.
That's exactly why I left you in the first place.

D.A. That was a long time ago, as you keep reminding me.

JOS: You won't succeed in this, I simply won't let you.

D.A. This is work, pure work. You must trust me on this one, Jos, you really must.

JOS: I thought I could.
I'm just not sure anymore...
Not sure...

Slow fade

PART TWO

SCENE ONE

*A week before the opening of the play. MAX's office.
SOPHIE enters holding an A4 piece of paper.*

SOPHIE: Have you seen this?

MAX: Have I seen what?

SOPHIE: I don't know whether to just tear it up or take it seriously.

MAX: Who is it from?

SOPHIE: The Vice-Chancellor's office.

MAX: Show me.

SOPHIE is holding on to it, as if to let go of it would lose its effect.

MAX: Go on, read it!

SOPHIE: Dear Professor Pavlou,
Congratulations on your success, it's an honour for the University.
We trust you will help us in our latest endeavour to protect our community from the rising danger of possible terrorist cells amongst our students. We are asking you to carefully monitor your students' movements, record any strong beliefs or indeed extreme views, any unusual meetings, any faith-specific attire that seems ostentatious or obsessive. We thank you for your co-operation blah blah
What do you make of this!

MAX: What do I make of this? Simple.
They are trying to turn us all into both voyeurs
and objects of surveillance, at the same time.
To keep watching and being watched.
Monitored, tracked down, measured.

SOPHIE: Did you get one of these yourself? I mean are they
targeting everybody or just me?

MAX: I had one better, a personal visit just now.

SOPHIE: From whom?

MAX: My head of department.

SOPHIE: Saying?

MAX: Something on those lines.

SOPHIE: And what did you say?

MAX: I said no way. This is a university, not the KGB.
I refuse to spy on my students!

SOPHIE: What did he say?

MAX: 'Spy' is a strong word Miss Channing.
All we are asking you to do is observe your students carefully.

SOPHIE: As if.

MAX: So, I said: Apologies Mr. Brown but I teach on freedom.

SOPHIE: And he said that's what I'm asking you to do/

MAX: / exactly. (*imitates*)
Miss Channing this is precisely what I'm asking you to do.
Protect the freedom of your law-abiding students
by rooting out the loony minority. It's your duty.
Your idea of freedom is so... 19th century.
It really is about time people like you, faced reality and
made the transition to the 21st century!

They burst out laughing

MAX: We won't let them get to us, Sophie, we won't!

SOPHIE: I'm so glad I've got you to give me perspective!

MAX: The point is to keep a distance from all this, to watch it!
See how it affects you and how you end up doing it yourself
without even noticing!

They laugh again

SOPHIE: (*savouring the compulsion and absurdity of it*)
You're right, I remember when they first installed
CCTV cameras in my old block ten years ago.
I was totally against them, it felt an intrusion, a violation of my privacy. I then
found myself playing around with my entry phone camera to watch what was
happening in the yard at night! All I had to do if I wanted to see that, was get out
on my balcony and look, yet I was fascinated by watching it on camera!

MAX: See? There, tear this letter up right now.

SOPHIE tears it up with flair.

SOPHIE: It's all so insidious...so polite...so personal...

MAX: Velvet totalitarianism is the name of the game.

SOPHIE: 'Velvet totalitarianism'?

MAX: Sure – from the dictatorship of the mediocre, knocking all the spirit out of you, to the iron rule through civil means, knocking the life out of you.

SOPHIE: Sure...talking of 'velvet totalitarianism' how are things with Lyn now?

MAX: A-ha. Interesting connection there, Sophie.

SOPHIE: Well?

MAX: Tricky. Push and pull. Ice and Fire. Heaven and Hell. As ever.

SOPHIE: She is problematic that girl.

MAX: She is vulnerable and ok a little 'touchy', maybe manipulative too but oh, so tender...and sexy. *(Beat)* It's only when she turns on me, I find it hard to deal with.

SOPHIE: And she turns on you more and more for less and less?

MAX: It's the drink...but then again we've all got our addictions.

SOPHIE: She is fucking with your head.

MAX: That can be fun.

SOPHIE: Max, she is utterly self-obsessed.

MAX: She is that but then again I'm not altruism personified.

SOPHIE: You care about people! I worry about you. You're losing weight.

MAX: She likes me thin.

SOPHIE: Listen, you've given it two years, it's time to/

MAX: *(interrupting)* Stop right there.

SOPHIE: You have a brilliant mind yet you let some/

MAX: *(making light of it)* You're not so bad yourself.

They laugh.

MAX: Ok, change of subject. Your book.

SOPHIE: What about it?

MAX: You're on to something there.

SOPHIE: Like what?

MAX: You've managed to find a language that speaks to the majority without compromising your integrity. That's what.

SOPHIE: And?

MAX: You're fearless. You're trying to get to the heart of something/

SOPHIE: 'trying to'?!

MAX: Ok, rephrase: You *are* getting to the heart of...but be careful eh?

SOPHIE: I will.

They smile. Slow Fade

SCENE TWO

Still a week before the opening of the play.

Jos's dance studio. JOS is practicing her new choreography piece

'Fierce Love'. She is trying to capture the title with movements listening to 'Atta Boy' from Danny the Dog by Massive Attack (pending permission) or such like sound. Her dance is in fact a fusion of fierceness and intimacy, quite powerful.

Enter SOPHIE who watches her silently and unobserved for a while. She looks at her with love, lust and wonder for a few seconds. She then slides behind her playfully *and intervenes in the dance at a key moment in a very assertive, very sexual way.*

JOS is startled but soon catches on and responds eagerly. They kiss.

Then SOPHIE pulls away.

SOPHIE: Sorry I interrupted your practice.

JOS: Sorry?! You should do this more often!
Why this formality all of a sudden?

SOPHIE: I feel disorientated...anxious.

JOS: About the interview?

SOPHIE: The whole thing.

JOS: What about it?

SOPHIE: My sense of reality is getting a bit shaky
with all the things they write about me.

JOS: That's so unlike you.

SOPHIE: You're right and that's precisely what worries me.

JOS: Come on, you can take the whole lot of them on and not bat an eyelid.

SOPHIE: Thanks. *(Beat)* You believe in me, don't you?

JOS: That's why I'm with you. Because.

PAUSE

SOPHIE: You liked my book.

JOS: I admired your courage and way with words, yes.

SOPHIE: That's a rather diplomatic answer...What about the ideas?

JOS: You know me, I'm not really political...I work through the body, I'm not cerebral like you...that's why we are attracted to each other, no? (*playfully*) Mind and Body, Ying and Yang, you and me, one...

SOPHIE: I'm sorry to go all insecure on you...

JOS: I love it when you go all insecure on me...it's a very rare treat!

JOS reaches her hands out. SOPHIE takes them. JOS pulls her towards her. They embrace, tenderly softly. JOS breaks it this time.

JOS: I've asked you before but now I'll ask you again:
Do you want me to come with you?

SOPHIE: No thank you, I'll be all right.

JOS: Are you sure?

SOPHIE: Positive. Thank you.

JOS: Don't let anyone touch you. There.

Another tender moment.

SOPHIE: No, I won't. (*Beat*) I should go.

They linger

JOS: Go on, then. Let's both get back to business.
(*playfully*) I've got a big show coming.
South Bank, no less!

SOPHIE smiles, prepares to exit.

SOPHIE: I can't wait to see your show, sorry to interrupt.

JOS: This is the third sorry in less than five minutes
and more sorries than you've said in the three years I've known you.

SOPHIE: Sorry.....sure. I love you...

JOS: Me too.

SOPHIE: See you later (*exits*).

JOS: Ciao (*after her*).

JOS turns the music back on, makes to start, can't quite, seems lost in thoughts.

Fade out.

SCENE THREE

Still a week before the opening of the play.

Outside a TV studio. SOPHIE and ALI.

SOPHIE is smoking a cigarette outside, *looking agitated*. Enter ALI. He watches her for a few seconds with fondness, then approaches her. She sees him, looks surprised.

SOPHIE: Hey, I didn't expect you here.

ALI: That's why I came.

They hug.

SOPHIE: Shouldn't you be working?

ALI: I wanted to surprise you...and support you?

SOPHIE: You're a darling. Thanks. Jos did offer to come and I said no.

ALI: I knew you would. I knew you'd be alone here.
You wouldn't admit need, would you?

SOPHIE: *(smiling)* Well...Weird, I don't know why I'm nervous like this.

ALI: Psycho-agoraphobia!

SOPHIE: Never heard this term before. Did you just make it up?

ALI: Yes, I did. You're now in a huge space! Bound to cause anxiety.

SOPHIE: This is one way to look at it for sure.

ALI: Look ! *(takes something out of his pocket, hands it to Sophie)*

SOPHIE: *(It's a talisman. She takes it, looks at it, seems touched.)*

ALI: No need to feel nervous anymore eh? Protection.

SOPHIE: I thought I'd lost it. My blue scarab! Where was it?

ALI: I found it in my office, buried underneath piles of paper.
You must have dropped it the last time you came.
I had to bring it to you.

SOPHIE: Thank you so much, I was going crazy looking for it.
(Smiles) I'm no longer afraid. *(Sophie puts out her cigarette).*

ALI: You want me to come in with you?

SOPHIE: No, no that would just make me feel weak. Thanks anyway.

ALI: *(Teasing)* My big, strong sister...

They wink at each other, making a clicking sound, then smile – habitual series of gestures for sharing certain light moments.

ALI: You look after yourself yeah?

SOPHIE: I will.

ALI: I'll be waiting for you though, over at Amato's, ok?

SOPHIE: Ok.

ALI: Kali Tihi.

SOPHIE: Efharisto.

They part.

Slow fade.

SCENE FOUR

Still, a week before the beginning of the play, a little later from Scene Three.

A T.V. studio. SOPHIE is giving an interview. We see the interview live on stage but at the same time we see it projected onto a huge screen, recorded while taking place.

SOPHIE: What has made me shed tears in the last few days? That's a strange question.

JOURNALIST: It's a relevant question and one I'd love you to answer.

SOPHIE: Well, I do believe there is too much emphasis on pulling the heartstrings and that is dangerous and to be questioned. Having said that *(laughs)* there was something recently that hit me emotionally...almost to tears.

JOURNALIST: What was that?

SOPHIE: A photograph of a female lawyer, dressed in traditional clothes throwing a stone at the police force in Lahore, firing tear-gas at peaceful demonstrators. That.

JOURNALIST: This is a rather anti-police statement, no?

SOPHIE: No, that's missing the point entirely. You asked me what moved me.

What moved me was seeing resistance from an unexpected source. People fighting back against rotten conditions, people showing courage against hostile forces, especially people you wouldn't expect to. Yes, that does move me.

JOURNALIST: Even when that resistance is violent?

SOPHIE: What that woman did was an act of self-defence.

JOURNALIST: Even so, it was an anti-police action.
And your defence of that action is an anti-police statement.

SOPHIE: Again, this is missing the point.

JOURNALIST: What is the point here?

SOPHIE: Why would a woman who has so much invested in the status quo be pushed to such an act?

JOURNALIST: I suppose this is at the heart of your new book '*THE NEW TERRORISTS*', the book we're here to discuss.

SOPHIE: Absolutely.

JOURNALIST: Your book has caused quite a controversy.

SOPHIE: I believe that's a sign that our culture is still alive.

JOURNALIST: The statement that has caused the most controversy is this:
(reads from book) 'We are all potential terrorists'.
Can you explain this?

SOPHIE: Sure. But let's put things in context here.
My whole point is that it's absolutely essential
to address the question: *why* do people become terrorists?
This is what I try to find the answer to, let's be clear about this.

JOURNALIST: Surely though saying 'we are all potential terrorists'
is taking it too far? Would you say you are one?

SOPHIE: I would.

JOURNALIST: Isn't this attitude neutralising the issue?
If we are all potential terrorists, then no-one is!

SOPHIE: You could see it that way, yes.
But my point is that unless we find out *why*
people are pushed to such extreme acts,
without demonizing them and thus stripping them of their humanity, unless we find
this out, we simply won't get very far
in the fight against terrorism.

JOURNALISM: But why should we understand those who haven't got the slightest
desire to understand us and are bent on harming us?

SOPHIE: You've got to know your enemy, to better defeat him, surely.

JOURNALIST: So why do you think people are pushed to extreme acts?

SOPHIE: Ok, let's start by asking a series of questions: for example:
why would somebody be prepared to die for what they
believe in, in the twenty first century,
in a Western country like the UK?
Who could this person be? A psychopath? An isolated loner?
An angry adolescent, uneducated, driven by hormones and susceptible to
brainwashing? Actually no.

JOURNALIST: What is the profile?

SOPHIE: Ironically and on the contrary, evidence suggests that
most home-grown terrorists are middle class men
in their twenties and thirties, highly educated on the whole and
having strong links with their families.
In other words, they are 'normal' people.

Interference and discordant noise. Sophie stops for a second or two, decides to continue.

We could perhaps say then that this is a 'male thing'.
But what about the Chechnyan women?
And what about the lawyer I mentioned earlier?
Why did she go against all she had stood for, up to that point?
Because she was forced by the state of emergency/

JOURNALIST: (*interrupting*) But this is Britain, not Pakistan.
There is no state of emergency here.

SOPHIE: Isn't there?

JOURNALIST: Come, come now.

Interference and discordant noise. Journalist is looking anxious.

SOPHIE: This government won't declare a state of emergency as such but WILL enforce it without declaring it by systematically eroding our democratic rights one by one.

JOURNALIST: For example?

SOPHIE: The list is endless, starting with Control-Order Regimes/

Interference and discordant noise gets bigger. Journalist is looking anxiously at someone gesticulating off-stage.

JOURNALIST: My sincerest apologies for this.
There appears to be an electricity circuit problem.
We will have to interrupt our interview. Apologies again.

Lights

SCENE FIVE

That evening. Still a week before the beginning of the play. We open to Loveless from Mantaray by Siouxsie. ALI, MAX, SOPHIE and JOS are finishing candle-lit dinner at Sophie's house. Celebration. White musk oil (Sophie's favourite) is burning on the side.

MAX: She's hit fifty and makes music like this. Must give it to her.

SOPHIE: Inspiring isn't she?

JOS: She sure is but not as much as you!
(Switches music off) Let's have a toast. To Sophie.

The three raise their glasses.

ALL THREE: To Sophie!

SOPHIE: I adore you all! (Bursts out laughing)

ALI: I was really proud of you watching you on that screen,
so cool, so confident...

SOPHIE: It was the lucky charm you brought me.

They both wink with a clicking tongue noise, a joint habit for sharing light moments.

JOS: You looked hot. Made me want to...

JOS strokes Sophie's face. SOPHIE kisses her.

MAX: You looked fierce.

SOPHIE: Thank you.

Good spirits all around.

SOPHIE: Shame the interview wasn't completed though.
There was so much more I wanted to say

MAX: I don't buy that electricity circuit maloney.

JOS: Technical hitches do happen.

ALI: They do. My stethoscope went dead yesterday for example.
It just wouldn't pick any sounds, nothing, I thought for a second that my patient
had passed out, gone. *(small laugh)*

SOPHIE: *(to Max)* I don't think they'd go that far *(beat)* not yet...

MAX: I believe we are heading for velvet totalitarianism.

SOPHIE: Max has coined a new term.

ALI: 'Velvet totalitarianism'?

MAX: The most extreme measures justified in terms of the protection
of the citizen - in the nicest possible way!

ALI: I think you can take liberalism too far.
Some of these measures are not justifications for controlling us,
they are actually useful. It was through the CCTV cameras for instance that they
caught the Brixton bomber.

MAX: My point exactly.

JOS: Surely you don't object to that bomber or indeed the July bombers
being caught through the CCTV cameras?

MAX: Hard to object to it, isn't? You end up agreeing yourself to blanket
surveillance in off-guard moments! *(laughs)*

SOPHIE: *(laughs with her, sharing a moment)* I know

ALI: That may actually be necessary these days for our protection –

to a degree of course.

MAX: To a degree, perhaps. But protection becomes tyranny when your every movement gets recorded, reproduced, analysed. I wouldn't be surprised if we are being watched this very moment.

ALI: You really are an extremist, Max.

JOS: Come on Max, this is verging on paranoia.

MAX: Is it?

Uncomfortable silence

SOPHIE: More wine everybody?

MAX,ALI, JOS: Yes!

SOPHIE pours wine. They all share a moment.

MAX (*to Ali*): How is your wife's pregnancy? Smooth, rough, both?

ALI: She's doing fine, just can't go out much these days. Can't wait for the baby to arrive!

MAX: I bet. Boy? Girl? Do you know, do you want to know?

ALI: We don't want to know, actually. We want to be surprised. Leave ourselves open to both possibilities.

MAX: Good idea. Leaving things open is always a good idea. Too much certainty is a dangerous thing. It shuts the door to the unexpected, the surprising, the new. Standing on the edges of things, now that's a good place to be.

SOPHIE: My friend Max – the permanent outsider.

MAX: A-ha, that's me alright.

JOS: Well, I like certainty – the certainty of love for example. The certainty of a good performance. The certainty of a fantastic gig! (*She laughs*)

SOPHIE: Go girl!

Knocks on the door. Surprised exchange of looks.

JOS: Are you expecting anybody?

SOPHIE: No...I'll go and check.

She exits. The others are watching her as she goes, in anticipation. SOPHIE returns reading a warrant, shaking her head in disbelief.

JOS: What is it?

ALI: A delivery?

MAX: Sophie, what's going on?

SOPHIE: A warrant for house arrest. I'm under house arrest as of now.
Two officers have been stationed outside the house.
I'm not to leave this house until further notice.
Madness!

JOS: This is absurd.

ALI: Totally out of order!

MAX: Out of order for sure but not utterly surprising, I must say.

JOS(to Max): Did you know about this?

MAX: What do you mean?

A moment of tension.

JOS: Well you did say...

MAX: Of course I had no idea, what's the matter with you?

JOS: I'm sorry. It's all so...unreal!

ALI: *(Saving the situation between the two)* Prophetic?

MAX: *(Almost to herself)* Instinct?

JOS: Could it be some sick practical joke? Let me see.

SOPHIE shows her the warrant.

JOS: How do we know it's not forged?

SOPHIE: No, my love it's real, as real as the two officers outside...
I suppose, as Max said, it's not totally surprising...

SOPHIE sits down, dazed.

They look at each other, puzzled, confused.

Slow fade

PART THREE

SCENE ONE

*A neutral office space. Max is finishing checking the room for bugging devices.
Enter ALI and JOS.*

ALI: Is everything clear? You checked everything?

MAX: Every single corner of this room. Nothing.

JOS: Are you sure, Max are you sure?

MAX: *(a little irritated)* Jos, will you stop doubting me?

JOS: I'm not.

MAX: Yes you are.

JOS: I'm sorry. I'm a little tense, ok?

MAX: I care for Sophie as much as you do, ok?

ALI: *(Saving the situation between the two again)* We all do.
Come on. Let's not squabble.

The other two look at each other and nod. They stand in the middle of the room.

MAX: Ok, what shall we do about all these 'We are all Potential Terrorists' groups? That's the most important thing right now.
Do we distance ourselves from them or do we defend them?

JOS: We don't want to complicate matters more. We should keep our campaign clear and keep away from them.

ALI: But wouldn't ignoring them complicate matters more?

Silence

MAX: It's a hard one. Shall we ask Sophie what she thinks?

JOS: I think we should keep her out of this. She's got enough on her plate.
(Beat) She'll probably say: defend them!

MAX: She should at least be informed.

ALI: Maybe, just maybe this once we protect her from this.

MAX: But surely the DA will find a way to poke her with it?

ALI: He'll wait. He'll bide his time until he gathers more information.

JOS: I think we should leave Sophie alone on this! I'll speak to Andrew.

MAX: You still trust him?!

JOS: He's all we got...on that side...

The other two shift uncomfortably.
Slow fade

SCENE TWO

SOPHIE under house arrest. SOPHIE is working on her computer, printing pages out, tearing them up, starting again by hand, scrunching the paper up, getting up, pacing up and down. D.A. is recording her every move, projected on to the back screen.

SOPHIE: Stop recording me for God's sake. It's driving me insane.

DA: Normal procedure, I'm afraid.

SOPHIE: You've held me here for two months now. You've got nothing on me. Your so called evidence of an out-of-context statement won't stand in Court, the jury will throw out in seconds.

D.A. There will be no trial and no jury.

SOPHIE: Excuse me?

D.A. Haven't you heard? Hasn't anyone told you? New emergency regulations have come into operation whereby Terrorist Suspects won't stand trials.

SOPHIE: *(shocked)* As of when?

D.A. As of three days ago. We can hold you here without a trial for up to a year.

SOPHIE is shocked into silence

D.A. Unless of course you publicly retract your statements.

SOPHIE: What, the fabricated ones!

D.A. I wouldn't accuse the state of lying if I were you.

Pause

SOPHIE: So, what's next? Torture?

D.A.: We're a civilized nation Ms Pavlou, we don't torture people.

SOPHIE: You could have fooled me.

D.A. I know what you're referring to but this is all behind us now.

SOPHIE: Punishment blocks, constant surveillance, isolation, intimidation, distortion of the truth, emotional blackmail, turning your loved ones against you? You. Don't. Torture. People.

D.A. Has any of your loved ones turned against you Ms Pavlou?

Silence

D.A. Who? Your lover, your friend, your brother?

SOPHIE: *(stubbornly but somewhat unconvincingly)* No-one!

D.A. *(can't hide a sense of triumph)* I'm sorry to hear that.

SOPHIE: I said no-one!

D.A. Can I help in any way?

SOPHIE: And cut the fake sympathy.

D.A. Of course.

SOPHIE: I was simply referring to your methods...your pathetic attempts to turn my loved ones against me...without success!

D.A. Success is a matter of interpretation surely.

Silence

SOPHIE: Why wasn't I informed straight away of these new regulations?

D.A. You should ask your 'loved ones'.

SOPHIE: There is a campaign going on out there for my release. They won't stand for this! You'd better take notice.

D.A. We *are*...taking notice. (*Menacing tone*) You can be sure of that.

SOPHIE: (*Defiantly*) My lover, my friend, my brother. They are all behind me on this.

D.A. (*Deliberately wanting to implant doubt*) Are they? How sure are you?

SOPHIE: (*Ignores the bait*) Look. I'm a scholar. Everything I've done, everyone I've come in contact with – it's all been for my research.

D.A. Including Ms Veschi?

SOPHIE: Including her.

D.A. And the fact that she was the life long partner of the mastermind behind the 17th November terrorist organization was neither here nor there?

SOPHIE: I interviewed 'the mastermind' himself for God's sake, him and all the other members of the 17th November group. I wanted to know what drove them to do what they did. I wanted to explore their politics and their motives. That was my research and the sources are clearly referenced in the book, no mystery there!

D.A. Yes, of course. But might Ms Veschi be the 'innocent' link that keeps that organisation alive?

SOPHIE: This is preposterous. The 17th November group are old leftists, dinosaurs really. Without any cultural currency or credibility now. Why on earth do you spend time and energy on a dead organization?

D.A. Maybe it's not so dead after all? Maybe Ms Veschi is keeping it alive? Through contacting you?

SOPHIE: This is absolutely insane. It's approaching the theatre of the absurd! Ms Veschi has been accused of nothing, she's done nothing illegal, she's a free agent, a French citizen, the French state allows her to move freely, why shouldn't I have contact with her?

D.A. Why indeed? But then again, might the French state deliberately not restrict her movements precisely in order to track them?

SOPHIE stares in disbelief

DA. (*Unperturbed*) And you! Why take so many precautions, why keep your meetings secret...even from your 'loved ones'.

SOPHIE: Should I report all my movements to my 'loved ones'?
Is this a new law I'm not aware of?

D.A. You know exactly what I mean.

SOPHIE: You've heard of confidentiality, haven't you?
She is part of my new research project.
I want to look at people close to terrorists,
I want to explore the effects, the scars, the fallout.

D.A. Another 'innocent' research project then?

SOPHIE: Exactly.

D.A. Our sources inform us that there is still a live cell in operation...
based in the UK. That cell...involves various intellectuals.
As you say in your book 'we are all potential terrorists'.
As you say in your book, home-grown terrorists are mostly
well educated and middle class. As you say in your book,
'women can become terrorists too.'

Pause

SOPHIE: Let me ask you a simple question.

D.A. Please.

SOPHIE: Would I be so stupid as to frame myself through my book?

D.A. It's a well-known fact that long-term underground terrorists develop
an urge after a while to get caught and brought to justice. A core ex
member of The Red Brigade has said as much in her
autobiography. Might you not, *subconsciously*,
have written this book for that reason?

SOPHIE: This is so warped.

D.A. You must admit there is a logic behind it. Besides (*Beat*) your book
seems rather innocent now, considering all the other charges building
up against you.

SOPHIE: What other charges?

D.A. We're now investigating the *effects* of your actions.

SOPHIE: The *effects* of my actions?!

D.A. The charges against you are getting more and more complicated...

SOPHIE: And by 'effects' you mean the campaign?!

D.A. I mean something much more sinister than that.
I mean the students and youth throughout the country forming groups with the slogan 'We are all potential terrorists'.
What do you make of that, professor?

Silence.

SOPHIE: I didn't know about this.

D.A. Your 'loved ones' didn't inform you of that either?

SOPHIE: Maybe it's not relevant.

D.A. Oh, it is. Very.

SOPHIE: Maybe these groups interpret my statement freely, maybe they mean cultural terrorism as in shaking people up from apathy...or domestic terrorism as in women standing up for themselves...

DA. I don't think so...these groups are distinctly political.
They hate the government.

SOPHIE: And am I responsible for that?

D.A. Inciting violence with your ideas.

SOPHIE: Are these groups violent?

D.A. Not at present but they might become so...in the future.

SOPHIE: (*Anger rising*)
They *might!* From imaginary terrorist links to being charged for a framed admission of terrorism, to inciting the formation of spontaneous groups unwittingly, to what *might* these groups come up to?! Shifting sands indeed. (*Pause*) Why the hell are you doing this?

D.A. To protect the interests of the state. Surely
that should be obvious to you, professor.

SOPHIE: (*Explodes*) You're insane! Let me go, just let me go!

SOPHIE runs towards the exit, D.A. restrains her.

She resists at first but gradually gives in, trying to hide a rising sense of despair.

DA is rather pleased with himself.

Slow fade.

SCENE THREE

D.A. and ALI. A few days later.

D.A. It's a simple thing you have to do, doctor: simply reconsider.

ALI: Sophie is a confirmed pacifist.

D.A. Maybe she is, maybe she is not.

ALI: She is innocent.

DA: Maybe she is... maybe she is not. Her ideas though are inciting disobedience to the state at a time when obedience is the only solution and *that* is anything but innocent.

ALI: Her ideas bring clarity and understanding to the chaos and climate of fear you've created. You are the real terrorists!

D.A. You're approaching fanaticism, doctor, beware.

ALI: Why don't you question your own methods once in a while instead of constantly finding fault in others and projecting your frustrations on your targets?

D.A. Chapter 3: the Mechanics of Projection and Demonization of the Other. I find you well versed in your sister's book after all, Dr. Khan.

ALI: I have more than flicked through it, I admit.
Are you going to ban reading too?

D.A. When her ideas become actions for youth declaring 'We are all potential terrorists' and for people like yourself, family and peace-loving people, that's when we consider them dangerous.
So you see you prove my point.

ALI: It's you and your irrational actions that have pushed me to this position, not my sister's ideas.

D.A. I'm willing to concede that we played a small part in your radicalization but pushing you to it?
Now that's what I call an extremist view.

ALI: Have you no idea what it means to protect someone you love?

D.A. All we're asking you to do is re-consider your campaign and public statements.

ALI: And ask maybe for longer periods of detention without a trial?

D.A. Would that be such a terrible thing?

ALI: I'm a professional man. I'm a moderate man. I agree with many of the measures the government has taken against terrorists. I've never taken part in a demonstration or political campaign before in my life and here I am now, out on the streets!

D.A. Only you can change that.

ALI: Release my sister and I will.

D.A. Consider your baby.

ALI: I beg your pardon.

D.A. Your wife.

ALI: What about her?

D.A. How distressed she would be if we arrested you. And her with you... her devout faith...strong grounds for suspicion...protecting who knows what relatives of similar faith and of who knows what political persuasion...You're putting her at grave risk, doctor.

ALI: You have absolutely no reason to arrest me, leave alone her.

D.A. Even if there were no reason, we'd invent one, you can rest assured.

ALI: I know my rights. And hard though you may find this to accept, I do believe in this democracy of ours.

D.A. What we are doing is precisely defending democracy.

ALI: How can you be so deluded?

D.A. And you are pushing us to act in ways that are indeed against our democratic principles – serious reason for arrest!

ALI: You're really Machiavellian and yes, I'd go as far as to say evil.

D.A. (*Sarcastic*) I'm so sorry you feel the need to lapse into religious terminology, you a non-religious man.

Pause

D.A. Well, will you or won't you?

ALI: I want to see my lawyer.

D.A. A lawyer would only advise you to follow my advice.
The matter is very simple, doctor. A very clear dilemma in fact.
You either denounce and withdraw publicly from the campaign or
you're put under house arrest, along with your pregnant wife...
for an indefinite period...

ALI: This is utter blackmail.

D.A. Look at what you're making us do.

Slow fade

SCENE FOUR

MAX's office. D.A. and MAX, a few days later

MAX: Well, well the man himself. *Reasons to Hide*, well, well.
And what a pseudonym! Raoul Lepage.

D.A. I'm flattered you've gone to the trouble of investigating me.

MAX: We believe in understanding our enemies...
I'm intrigued you wrote such a book.

D.A. Does that mean you now take me more seriously?

MAX: It means I now think you're more dangerous than I had
originally thought.

D.A. Would you rather I was a simpleton?

MAX: You wouldn't be in this job if you were.

D.A. May I then persuade you of the futility of your actions?

MAX: Don't run ahead of yourself detective Austin.

D.A. Wouldn't you rather debate philosophical arguments than
running a political campaign?

MAX: Your concern is so...moving.

D.A. (*Ignores sarcasm*) Surely your campaigning detracts you

from your work, your goal, your ambition.

MAX: How considerate of you...so caring.

D.A. *(Ignores sarcasm)* We do...care. We respect you and your work and are willing to fund your research ourselves.

MAX: *(Laughs)* You're trying to bribe me?!

D.A. We're trying to help you. Well?

MAX: Well what?

D.A. It's a substantial offer.

MAX: And my ideas will magically be no longer dangerous?

DA: Surely not when funded by us. *(Pause)* Well?

MAX: You can't possibly think I would.

D.A. That is a shame but we are willing to wait, give you time.*(Beat)*
Besides, your impact without communication/

MAX: Without communication?

D.A. The new rules are no internet and telephone access allowed to house arrests. Whatever limited access they had, as in the case of Ms Pavlou, is now completely cut.

MAX: You cut her phone connections? As of when?

D.A. As of this morning. We had to. Oxygen supply you see.

MAX: But...

D.A. You spoke to Sophie...ah Ms Pavlou an hour ago.

MAX: Yes!

D.A. Staged.

MAX: Staged?!

D.A. Yes!

MAX: Did Sophie know?

D.A. I let you decide that.

Silence

MAX: You're bound to fail. You can arrest bodies but you can't arrest ideas, you can ban, censor, intimidate but you can't defeat the energy that comes from a sense of injustice, you can't defeat the desire for freedom. You can't.

D.A. We know exactly what we are doing.
Besides, our means of persuasion are stronger than yours.

MAX: Meaning?

D.A. If you turn our offer down, you're not just risking your career/

MAX: My career is fine without your help, thanks.

D.A. You misunderstand me.

MAX: How exactly?

D.A. ...your lover...

MAX: I beg your pardon?

D.A. She is so much more co-operative than you...

MAX looks like she is about to attack him

D.A. So much more vulnerable than you...

MAX: Vulnerable indeed...you had no right!

D.A. ...and so eager to please the authorities,
so easily scared into submission...

MAX: You repulse me.

D.A. Oh, that sounds almost intimate.

MAX: You're despicable!

D.A. This is not the information I wanted from you.

MAX: Get out of here!

D.A. Ms Channing. You. Can't. Order. Me. About.
Besides you're making your position difficult.

MAX: My position remains the same as before you walked into
this room. Now leave.

D.A. Your position is drastically altered since I walked into this
room.

MAX: How exactly?

D.A. Ms Channing, unless you denounce your friend in public,
you will lose everything!

MAX: I'll never give you that pleasure.

D.A. If you don't collaborate with us, you'll be arrested.

MAX: On what grounds exactly would you arrest me?

D.A. Now, let me see. Threatening an officer of the law,
 making unfounded accusations in the media against the state, disturbing the
 peace, withholding valuable information from the authorities and therefore
 endangering the public. I'd say these are reasons enough, don't you?

MAX: I know the law better than you.

D.A. We *are* the Law.

Slow fade

SCENE FIVE

A neutral office space. Max ALI and JOS enter. There is urgency in their movements.

MAX: They're losing it, they'll stop at nothing.

JOS: What shall we do?

ALI: We're doing all we can.

Silence

MAX (*to Jos*): You've got to stop 'feeding' him.

JOS: Oh, so it's me, is it?

ALI: Please, please no squabbling.

Silence

MAX: We've got to act, act fast.

ALI: What can we do more than what we're already doing?

MAX: It doesn't seem enough.

JOS: I'll talk to... (*stops when she realizes her weak position of still having faith in the DA*)

MAX: Yeah, right. He'll sort us out.

JOS: Don't turn on me. Please?

Pause

ALI: They're doing this to us. Divide and rule.
We mustn't let them.

Pause

MAX: I'm so sorry. Sorry Jos. Friends ok?

JOS: Ok...

ALI: Let's stay consistent. Let's keep at it. As is.

MAX: As is?

JOS: We're doing well. (*As if repeating a mantra*)
We must believe in ourselves. We must believe in ourselves.

MAX: (*thinking it through*)
Ok, right, we'll stick to a united front. A united public front.
We stick to that, ok? And not another word to the DA. Ok?

JOS and ALI: Ok.

No one is certain about anything anymore.

Slow fade.

SCENE SIX

A few days later. JOS' house. JOS is sitting down, refusing to engage with D.A.

D.A. is standing, staring at her.

D.A. Talk to me Jos.

JOS: Nothing to say.

D.A. Is this worth it?

JOS remains silent

D.A. Is this...stubbornness worth a brilliant career?

JOS remains silent

D.A. You could lose a gig you've waited years for.
The South Bank for god's sake!

JOS remains silent

D.A. You could lose contracts other choreographers would give their right
arm for. No public-funded organization in the country will ever
employ you again, unless you change your position.
We could make sure of that.

JOS remains silent

D.A.: Think of your options, limited though they are.

JOS: You always liked to remind me of my limitations.

D.A. Remember I'm here to help.
I could arrest you for complicity.

JOS: Why don't you?

D.A.: Distancing yourself would be more useful to us.

JOS: Nice touch.

D.A.: One thing you can never accuse me of is lies. Yes?

JOS: Yes, detective superintendent Austin.
Your brutal honesty is one of your major assets.

D.A.: I could withdraw the offer at any time.

JOS: Enjoying your power, are you?

D.A.: Come on Jos, let's get real, shall we?
All you have to do is distance yourself from her,
make a clean, public break... a sort of disclaimer.
Show the world you've got an independent mind.
It's simple.

JOS So simple indeed. Why didn't I think of this before!

D.A.: Look, I appreciate you battling with your conscience and all that but it's all a
question of *reframing* things.
Shift your angle of vision. (*Illustrates using subtly threatening body
language*) Instead of this angle, you take that angle. See how
different things look from here?

JOS: And do keep away from me.

D.A.: You must make a decision Jos.

JOS: I love her. This is *another* simple fact you seem unable
to accept... and the sooner you do, the better.

D.A.: You'd be a fool to let feelings take the better of you on this occasion. Positively
self-destructive in fact.

JOS: Let me decide what's good and what's bad for me.

Pause

D.A. You can't be doing this for her. There must be another reason you're
doing this. You're doing it to get to me, aren't you?

JOS: (*calmly*) You've been history to me for a while and you know it.

D.A. No. You're doing this to punish me.
You never did approve of me joining the Intelligence Service, did you?

JOS: That was a long time ago.

D.A. I had to jump camp after you did, Jos.

JOS: I jumped camp?!

D.A. You left me for Sophie.

JOS: That's what you mean by jumping camp?!

D.A. You left *our* world and I left *our* world. Same thing.
Different means. We both destroyed what we had built for seven years.
And now here I am back in your life/

JOS: You're not back in my life.

D.A. What do you call this?

JOS: Exactly what it is: interrogation!

She stares angrily at him. He likes anger, means communication to him.

D.A. Of course you're angry, I understand that.
That's why you're doing this, you're still angry with me.

JOS exercises self-control and looks impassive again

JOS: You're so off track, it's unreal.

D.A. Now don't you start talking to me about reality (*Beat*)
Or maybe it's your self-destructive streak that drives you.
Do you still...cut yourself?

JOS: *Shakes her head vehemently 'no'.*

D.A. Are you sure?

JOS: Of course I'm sure. I haven't done any cutting for more than two years.
That's how good Sophie has been for me.

D.A. Then what is it?

JOS: The truth is staring you in the face!

D.A. You can't possibly love her *that* much!

JOS: (*outburst*) I love her *that* much, yes! Now leave me alone.

D.A. I can't Jos.

JOS: Why not?

D.A. I'm on duty here...looking after you...for a while...

Slow fade

SCENE SEVEN

All characters are under house arrest, which is where they end up by the end of the play, except of course the D.A. They all speak from within that situation, though the setting is really a mindscape. All characters, apart from the DA, on stage together, each in their head space, mentally aware of each other but obviously physically apart. This is a mirroring extract of the last scene. Minutiae of the characters' facial and hand expressions, are projected on a huge screen at the back. DA is seated apart and higher than the rest, controlling and watching the screen, except for when he speaks when he is addressing the audience.

MAX: Guilty! Who is guilty of what, why, to whom,
that is the question.

ALI: Sophie would never do anything to harm anybody.
She'd never, she couldn't possibly.

JOS: Sophie couldn't, just couldn't risk putting me in danger.

SOPHIE: They must all be going through hell,
I can't stand it.

Pause

SOPHIE: Was I wrong, was I wrong, was I wrong?

D.A. Rock solid methods, yes yes.
We clearly need to reconsider the approach to Jos, she holds the key,
She's the core, she is the core of Sophie Pavlou,
I get to Jos, I get to Sophie,
I get to her brother,
I get to her friend.
New methods, I need new methods,
reasons to hide, think think think

SOPHIE: Jos is strong I know she'll hold out...
She's vulnerable too, she can't take stress...
I don't want her to, she mustn't start cutting again...
if only I could talk to her,
see her, hold her, kiss her.

JOS: If only you were here, Sophie,
everything would seem possible.
If only you were here...
if only you could just hold me, kiss me...

SOPHIE: I love you Jos.

JOS: I love you so much.

MAX: Doubt is my tool of trade. Doubt is good. Doubt is healthy.

D.A. Reasons to hide, things to hide, hiding from things,
hiding from the truth, think think think,
why hide, what is it you're hiding from when you
love somebody against reason?

ALI: Could Sophie just possibly not be who I think she is?
I mean, could I be wrong?
Is this totally out of the question?

SOPHIE: All locked up because of me – a heavy burden to carry...
But they have a choice, they have a choice!

JOS: Could I perhaps...should I maybe...
Would that be unforgivable?

SOPHIE: Ali, gentle Ali, how are you coping?

ALI: What's the matter with me?
How can I doubt my own sister?
Someone I've known all my life?

SOPHIE: Should I recant, recant what?
I've done nothing wrong! (*Beat*)

Max, my friend, how are you doing?
I need your advice! Where are you?

MAX: Truth, the truth, what the hell is the truth here?

ALI: I get more furious by the second and I can't control it.

JOS: The options, there are options, a number of options.
I hate myself for even thinking of options...
It's only her, us, love, trust, support.

I hate myself thinking of options (*scratches herself, pulls at her hair*)
I hate myself for it...(*Beat. Composes herself. Says as if a mantra*)
Every problem has a solution. Every problem has a solution.

SOPHIE: I've got nothing to recant,

nothing to hide!

D.A.: We all have something to hide.
There are no innocents anywhere.
We hide in order to protect ourselves, yes yes yes.
We also hide to disguise our intentions,
delude ourselves,
harm others,
and then and then

SOPHIE: You know I'm innocent,
don't you, don't you,
all of you!

Silence

MAX: I know of truths, I don't know of one single truth.
Do I know Sophie's inner thoughts? How could I?

JOS: Every problem has a solution, every problem has a solution.
Why does this one seem unsolvable?

MAX: How could you ever be hundred per cent sure about anything?
How? Because of failed logic, of instinct, of faith...of love?

ALI: Never prayed before in my life.
And now? It's such a strong urge!
How do you pray?!
Oh God,
strength,
give me
strength!

MAX: Lyn, sweet Lyn, what did you do...oh fuck...why why why?

JOS: I would only be acting in my own best interests.
Would that be so wrong? (*Beat*)
It would be sheer treachery!

Silence

JOS: *Is taking cutting implements out, lays them out ritualistically.*

D.A. Obsession is more dangerous than ideas.
Think think think.

You obsess, why,
to avoid something else,
why would you do that,
fear, must be fear, fear of what,
fear of the truth, the truth of what,
the truth of whatever it is you're obsessing about.
Eureka!

JOS: *She is cutting herself, looks at the blood, then at the audience ecstatic.*

MAX: A simple, simple truth? A lover or a friend?
Is this what this comes down to?

ALI: I want it to stop,
this all consuming anger,
I want it to stop.

Pause

ALI: Can I condemn an innocent person to save myself?
Can I? How can I be a father if I do?

SOPHIE: You know I'm innocent,
don't you, don't you,
all of you!

Silence

MAX: *(Resolutely)* I'm here for you Sophie, always will be.

JOS: *(Calmly, with certainty)* There is no way, just no way.
I'd rather cut my self to pieces than betray her.

D.A. This is it!
Love is an obsession,
a delusion,
masking fear,
preventing you
from seeing things clearly,
exactly what you're afraid of in the first place.

Jos is scared,
scared of realizing that
what she has to do
is distance herself

in public
from her lover.
Simple, logical, clear
and in her own best interests.

Yet she acts against her own best interests,
against reason, against logic,
why?

She is frightened of realizing
that that's exactly what she needs to do,
so she masks that by obsessing,
obsessing about Sophie,
deluding herself it's love,
loyalty whatever.

She has to do this obviously,
otherwise she'd need to act,
act fast and save herself but no,
she holds on to a falsity.

How can we stop this,
reverse this,
get it under control?
What stops us
from silencing Sophie Pavlou
once and for all?
Love!
Jos's love for her more to the point.
Jos's love-as-delusion to be precise.

Prove love as a delusion,
that's what we have to do,
prove love as a false belief
and a dangerous one too.

All the evidence shows that
love is an obstacle to reason,
to your own best interests,
a threat to democracy in fact,

unpatriotic,
an act of treachery,
a danger to the state,
absolutely,
yes yes yes,
this is it,
absolutely!
This is the answer,
the ultimate,
the final solution
against terrorism,
ban love, ban love for good,
make it a crime against the state,
yes yes yes,
that's what
we have to do!

He realizes he is utterly defeated.

Slow Fade

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