

The End of the World As We Know It

ten short plays

by

Alex Broun

email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

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**“It’s the end of the world as we know it ...
and I feel fine”**

1993REM,
“The End of the World as We Know It”

The End of The World As We Know It

Time: New Year's Eve, the present.

Place: Various

Scene Order:

Act 1 : The Death of Language

1. A Difficult Birth

Reykjavik, Iceland. Midnight.

Petyr/Caroline/Simon

2. Drew Barrymore and Sigmund Freud meet the Cookie Monster

Vancouver, Canada. 10pm.

Lee/Kat/Wolf

3. The Celine Dion Songbook.

Kansas City, USA. 11pm.

Paul/Tracey

4. Saturday Night Birmingham, Sunday Morning Walsall.

Walsall, England. 11am.

Matthew/Claire

5. The Gift of the Gun.

Cape Town, South Africa. 11.30pm.

William/Ben

Interval

Act 2: Erase and Rewind

6. Beijing Big Mac

Beijing, China. 6pm.

Len/Susannah

7. Tel Aviv Disco Bombing.

Tel Aviv, Israel. 8pm.

Julia/Ariel

8. The Choice

Bali. 9pm.

Vince/Rod/The Boy

9. The Dead Son

Chichibu, Tokyo. 10pm.

Ke-Lo/Tung/Twan

10. The First Fireworks.

Sydney, Australia. Midnight.

Dawn/Helen

Part One : The Death of Language**1. A Difficult Birth****Hospital Waiting Room. Reykjavik, Iceland. Midnight.****PETYR** sits alone on the row of seats. Pause.**CAROLINE** enters.

CAROLINE: Here you are. I've been up and down, all over – no one could tell me where I was supposed to ...

PETYR: You're here now.

CAROLINE: Eventually.

PAUSE.

PETYR: Would you like to sit down ?

CAROLINE: Yes. Thank you.

CAROLINE SITS.

CAROLINE: Thanks for the call.

PETYR: It's okay.

CAROLINE: No. I mean it. You didn't have to and you did – immediately. I appreciate that.

PETYR: I'm glad you could come.

CAROLINE: Of course I could come. It doesn't matter what ... she's still my ...
When did you hear ?

PETYR: About an hour ago.

CAROLINE: Who ...

PETYR: The hospital.

CAROLINE: How did they ...

PETYR: She gave them my name.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: Oh. Good. That's good. But how did they ...

PETYR: I was a patient here once.

CAROLINE: Really ?

PETYR: Gall bladder. Perhaps they looked me up on there ... system.

CAROLINE: Very ... resourceful. (PAUSE) So ... how bad ...

PETYR: I just got here.

CAROLINE: You haven't seen –

PETYR: Not yet.

CAROLINE: But how will we know what to ...

PETYR: They'll tell us.

CAROLINE: But when ?

PETYR: Soon.

CAROLINE: But how much time have we ...

PETYR: Soon.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: All this waiting. I can't stand it. Coffee ?

PETYR: No. But you go.

CAROLINE: Is that alright ? I just can't bear –

PETYR: I'm okay.

CAROLINE: Okay. Won't be long.

CAROLINE EXITS. SIMON ENTERS.

SIMON: Mr Russik ?

PETYR: Yes. (CALLING) Caroline.

SIMON: You're Mr Russik ?

CAROLINE RETURNS.

PETYR: Petyr.

SIMON: Petyr ?

PETYR: My name is Petyr.

SIMON: Simon Delaunay. I'm the Resident -

CAROLINE: How is ...

SIMON LOOKS AT CAROLINE, THEN AT PETYR.

CAROLINE: It's okay.

SIMON LOOKS AT PETYR AGAIN.

CAROLINE: I'm the mother. Caroline Helmers.

SHE PUTS OUT HER HAND. SLIGHT PAUSE. SIMON SHAKES IT.

SIMON: Of course. Please. Sit down.

THEY ALL SIT.

PETYR: How is she ?

SIMON: Usually it's a quite routine condition. If she'd come to us even a few months ago –

PETYR: I haven't seen her for six months.

SIMON LOOKS AT CAROLINE.

CAROLINE: Don't look at me. She hasn't deemed me worthy of a phone call for three years.

PETYR: So how bad is it ?

SIMON: If we'd seen her a few months ago –

CAROLINE: I think we've established that.

PETYR LOOKS AT CAROLINE.

PETYR: Go on Simon.

SIMON: If we had seen her it may have been possible to stop the infection before it spread.

CAROLINE: But you didn't.

SIMON: No. And the infection has spread.

CAROLINE: Meaning ?

SIMON: It will now be very difficult to save both of them.

PAUSE.

PETYR: (REALISING) Jesus.

CAROLINE: Personally I'm not surprised.

SIMON: We can continue to try and treat the infection but then there is a possibility that both mother and child will die. Or we can remove the child -

PETYR: How long is she -

SIMON: About seven and a half months we think. It's difficult to be exact.

CAROLINE: Can the baby survive ?

SIMON: In these situations we don't like -

CAROLINE: Will my Grand child live Doctor ?

SIMON: Infants younger than this child have survived in similar circumstances.

CAROLINE: Well then - what are you waiting for ?

SIMON: The mother -

PETYR: Her name is Janet, Doctor.

SIMON: Janet is very weak. The trauma of the baby's removal could kill her.

CAROLINE: So ?

PETYR: Caroline – Jesus.

CAROLINE: What ? She's brought this on herself. Pumped her self so full of that garbage she didn't know if she's Arthur or Martha. You tried to stop her. We all tried to stop her. She knew it might kill the child – your child – but she continued to do it. You gave her everything Petyr. She was lucky to have you. And how – how did she repay you ?

PETYR: It doesn't matter what's she done. She's still a –

CAROLINE: A what ? A human being ? A daughter ? A mother ? She's nothing. A waste of space. A bad seed. Good riddance.

PETYR: You are talking about your child.

CAROLINE: And you are talking about your child. We did everything we could. Everything. She chose this. She put that ... stuff in front of you, me, Donald – everybody. Now she's trying to put it in front of your child. My grand child. She made her bed – now let her bloody well lie in it.

SIMON: Perhaps I should come back.

CAROLINE: You're not going anywhere.

SIMON: Mr Russik needs time to think.

CAROLINE: What is there to think about ?

SIMON: With respect Mrs Helmers – it's not your decision.

CAROLINE: What do you mean it's not my ... Of course it's my ...

SIMON: The next of kin is the only person who has the right to decide on behalf of the patient.

CAROLINE: Next of kin ? I'm her mother. I am the next of kin.

SIMON: Not according to the mother.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: Oh. I see.

SIMON: She nominated Mr Russik. And only Mr Russik. He must decide on behalf of the patient. And as in our law the rights of an unborn child revert to the mother – he must decide for the child as well.

CAROLINE: Well fine. Then you tell him Petyr. Go ahead.

PAUSE. **PETYR** TURNS AWAY.

CAROLINE: Don't you dare. Don't you dare think twice about this. We are talking about an innocent child.

PETYR: She was my wife.

CAROLINE: Was ! And then she chose to run off with that ...

PETYR: You don't have to remind me.

CAROLINE: Well you clearly need reminding. How can you even hesitate ? You heard what he said. There is a chance and only a chance that she could survive if we don't do something now. But if we don't that baby – your child – my Grand child will die. What do you need to think about ?

PETYR: Even if I do agree to this the baby still may not ...

CAROLINE: But at least it will have a chance. She had hers – now give your child that same chance.

PETYR: I loved her.

CAROLINE: So did I. She was my only daughter. But you have to be strong now. Like I had to be when Donald died. You have to grow up now. You can save your child's life if you act now.

PETYR: (TO **SIMON**) Is that true ? Will I save the babies' life if I do this ?

SIMON: It's not up to me. There are legal questions here which -

PETYR: I'm asking your opinion.

SIMON: And I am not allowed to give it. It is your decision Petyr. Not mine and not Caroline's. Yours. Once you have made that choice we will do all we can but you must tell us what to do. You must act in the best interests of the patients. Both patients.

CAROLINE: Think Petyr, think. Remember what she was like. When you first met her. That Janet. Not what she became. Our Janet. Think what she would want. She'd want us to save her child. To keep her alive through that new life. That's what she'd want. You know that. Petyr. Please.

PAUSE.

SIMON: Mr Russik ?

PAUSE.

PETYR: Okay.

SIMON: I'll bring you the papers to sign.

SIMON EXITS.

PETYR: Doctor ?

SIMON: (STOPPING) Yes Mr Russik ?

PETYR: Is it a boy or a girl ?

SIMON: I believe it's a boy.

SIMON NODS. HE EXITS. PAUSE. CAROLINE STANDS.

CAROLINE: You've done the right thing.

PETYR: It's not mine.

CAROLINE: What ?

PETYR: The baby. It's not mine. Couldn't be mine. It's been – years since Janet and I wee together like that.

CAROLINE: Oh. I see. (BEAT) Not yours. Well ... you've done the right thing. Either way.

PETYR: (WATCHING **CAROLINE**) You don't have to gloat.

CAROLINE: (SCOFFS) I am not gloating.

PETYR: She's your daughter and you can't wipe the smile off your face.

CAROLINE: Nonsense.

PETYR: You finally got your revenge for her magnificent failure.

CAROLINE: Please Petyr. That's not fair. That's not ...

CAROLINE TURNS AWAY. PAUSE. PETYR GOES TO CAROLINE.

PETYR: I'm sorry.

CAROLINE: You've always been like a son to me. Strange. I always felt you were more like my child than Janet.

PAUSE.

PETYR: Would you mind ...

CAROLINE: I'll leave you alone, with your ...

PETYR: Thanks.

CAROLINE STARTS TO LEAVE. SHE STOPS.

CAROLINE: Petyr. None of this ...

PETYR LOOKS UP.

CAROLINE: It's not your fault.

PETYR TRIES TO SMILE. HE NODS.

CAROLINE RETURNS THE SMILE. SHE LOOKS AT HER WATCH.

CAROLINE: Five to twelve. Great way to spend the New Year.

SHE EXITS.

PETYR ALONE. FADE.

2. Drew Barrymore and Sigmund Freud meet the Cookie Monster

Vancouver, Canada. Board Room. 10pm.

LEE is dancing, if you can call it dancing, to what sounds like an advertising jingle.

WOLF sits at the end of the table, watching. KAT stands nearby.

LEE: And then – big finish. Big finish.

WOLF: I'm seeing it.

LEE: The little boy looks up. He looks up –

WOLF: Tell me.

LEE: Looks up and says –

WOLF: I'm with you.

THE JINGLE BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO

LEE: The sting.

WOLF: Give it to me –

THE MUSIC IS SUDDENLY CUT OFF. SILENCE.

LEE: “Dad, can I come too ?”

WOLF: Oh yeah. Oh yeah !

LEE: (STILL DANCING) We've re-inforced the stereotype.

WOLF: I'm coming.

LEE: Reflected the demographic.

WOLF: You made me come.

LEE: It's a no brainer.

WOLF: My wad is on the floor.

LEE: It's kind of like J Lo –

WOLF: Yeah.

LEE: J Lo and Sigmund Freud –

WOLF: Oh yeah.

LEE: J Lo and Sigmund Freud Meet the cookie monster.

WOLF: Beautiful.

LEE: No.

WOLF: What ?

LEE: No. Not J Lo.

WOLF: Yeah ?

LEE: Drew.

WOLF: Okay.

LEE: Drew Barrymore and Sigmund Freud meet the Cookie Monster.

WOLF: I'm coming again.

LEE: Drew, not Lo.

WOLF: You made me come again.

LEE: Shall we go for third time lucky ?

WOLF: What ?

LEE: Play it again – shall I ?

WOLF: I haven't even had time to re-load.

LEE: Wolf man, your batteries are always fully charged.

WOLF: You know me.

LEE: I do.

WOLF: You – know - me !

LEE: And I know my target market.

WOLF: As if they were your asshole.

LEE: They are my asshole.

THEY LAUGH.

LEE: Are you ready ?

WOLF: I'm ready.

LEE: I'm putting it on again.

WOLF: Put it on.

LEE: I'm putting it on.

WOLF: Put it on – and stand back because I'm ready to explode.

LEE HITS A BUTTON. THE JINGLE STARTS AGAIN. SUDDENLY KAT GRABS THE CONTROL. SHE TURNS IT OFF.

KAT: I can't believe it.

WOLF: Hey –

KAT: I can not believe it.

LEE: Would you –

KAT: I can not believe I'm standing in a room on New Year's Eve with people who say things like that.

LEE: Hey.

KAT: People who talk like you. I didn't even know people like you existed.

LEE: I do exist.

KAT: Do you ? Are you real ?

WOLF: Interesting.

KAT: Would you listen to what comes out of your mouth ?

LEE: Wolf wants to –

KAT: Can you hear the words that come from your lips ?

WOLF: Play nice Kat.

KAT: “Reinforce the stereotypes.”

LEE: What ?

KAT: “Reflect the demographic.”

LEE: What ?

WOLF: Play nice.

KAT: I mean is this for real ? Is he for real ?

LEE: Is she – ... Are you – ... Is she ?

WOLF: He’s just speaking the language. The language of the industry.
The “go” code. Green light me. Woah !

KAT: That is not language. That is the death of language.

LEE: Is she- ...

KAT: That is when words cease to have meaning. They have been stripped of all
sense. They’re just little marks on a page.

LEE: Are you – Is she – What ?

WOLF: Remain calm Lee. Kat loved it.

LEE: She did ?

WOLF: She loved it.

KAT: Uh – uh.

WOLF: We all loved it.

KAT: No.

WOLF: We loved it because it’s a beautiful thing.

KAT: Wolf ...

WOLF: A thing of beauty.

LEE: I made you come.

WOLF: Three times.

LEE: Almost.

WOLF: You made me come because it was a beautiful thing. Just as I know Kat's will also be a beautiful thing. (HE STANDS) You see in the end it's all about commitment. We're committed. The agency is committed. That's why we're all here on New Year's Eve instead of at the best party in town getting completely shit-faced. Because we are committed. To this agency. To this potential new client. To this pitch.

PAUSE.

LEE: That was beautiful Wolf man.

WOLF: Thank you Lee.

LEE: Truly beautiful.

WOLF: Thank you again. And now you will be truly beautiful by giving Kat her chance. Okay ?

LEE NODS.

WOLF: Okay. Kat.

KAT: Finally. May I ?

WOLF: Please.

KAT: May I ?

WOLF: Make me come.

KAT GOES TO THE MACHINE. SHE INSERTS A DISC. SHE HITS THE BUTTON. WE HEAR CLASSICAL MUSIC.

WOLF: Oh yeah.

KAT: You like it ?

WOLF: This is great.

KAT: Am I making you come ?

WOLF: Oh I'm sure you will. What do I see ?

KAT: You see a man.

WOLF: I'm coming.

KAT: Walking along a deserted beach.

WOLF: I'm definitely coming.

KAT: Bare feet, cut off trousers – not jeans. Trousers.

WOLF: Trousers. You're making me come.

KAT: Faded blue sweatshirt.

WOLF: I am coming.

KAT: Bare feet.

LEE: You already said that.

KAT: Shut it Lee.

WOLF: (TO LEE) Lee. Commitment. (TO KAT) Where were we ?

KAT: You were about to come.

WOLF: Okay.

KAT: A man, walking along a beach. Cut off trousers, faded blue sweatshirt, bare feet.

WOLF: Oh yeah. I'm seeing the feet.

KAT: Sunset.

WOLF: Beautiful.

KAT: Sun setting.

WOLF: I'm gonna come.

KAT: Red sun sinking into the blue sea. Blue sweatshirt, tassled hair, stubble on his chin. He's young -

WOLF: But not too young.

KAT: Mid thirties –

WOLF: Early forties –

KAT: But lean, muscular –

WOLF: Chiselled.

KAT: Just the hint of a taut, tan stomach underneath his shirt. He's handsome.

WOLF: Handsome ? He's fuckin' gorgeous.

KAT: He's walking along the sand. His feet – bare feet – dipping in and out of the waves.

WOLF: His feet are gorgeous.

KAT: Leaving impressions in the wet sand.

WOLF: Even his footprints are gorgeous.

KAT: Sun dying, waves lapping. A gentle breeze.

WOLF: Hurry up. I'm gonna come.

KAT: We go in close and we see –

WOLF: What ?

KAT: Holding in his hand, in the soft orange glow –

WOLF: What ?

KAT: The fine mist of sea spray.

WOLF: What the fuck is he holding ?

KAT: A boot. A baby's boot.

WOLF: Oh my god.

KAT: A boys' tiny knitted boot.

WOLF: I thought I was gonna come –

KAT: The colour matches his shirt.

WOLF: But now you're making me cry.

KAT: He looks down at the boot. A tear in his crystal blue eye –

WOLF: Coming.

KAT: He twists the boot in his fingers.

WOLF: Crying.

KAT: He looks out to sea, the wind flicking his soft brown curls.

WOLF: Coming.

KAT: And down at the boot.

WOLF: Crying.

KAT: He kneels and holds the boot out over the waves.

WOLF: Coming then crying.

KAT: A thought passes across his knotted brow as the waves lick at his feet, calling out to the boot.

WOLF: Crying then coming.

KAT: He holds out the boot further

WOLF: Crying.

KAT: He lets it slip through his fingers –

WOLF: Still crying.

KAT: The boot begins to tumble towards the waves.

WOLF: I'm blubbering.

KAT: Spinning end on end, blue falling into blue.

WOLF: I'm hollering my guts out.

KAT: But then –

WOLF: I'm stopping.

KAT: His other hand –

WOLF: My tears are gone.

KAT: Surges out –

WOLF: My eyes open wide –

KAT: And grabs the boot. Sun glints off his hair.

WOLF: I'm coming again.

KAT: The man gets up –

WOLF: I'm gonna come.

KAT: His tight arse sliding in his pants.

WOLF: I'm coming.

KAT: And he walks off down the beach –

WOLF: I'm gonna come –

KAT: Boot still in his hand.

WOLF: No boot now – I want to come.

KAT: We don't see the boot.

WOLF: Boot's stopping me from coming.

KAT: The boot is gone.

WOLF: Boot bad.

KAT: The boot is history.

WOLF: And I'm coming.

KAT: We go down low as his Davidesque physique –

WOLF: I'm really coming.

KAT: Silhouetted against the sky.

WOLF: I'm gonna come.

KAT: Disappears into the fiery sun.

WOLF: I'm really going to come.

KAT: The music swells.

IT DOES.

WOLF: I'm gonna come so hard.

KAT: Title. Lower case.

WOLF: You're making me come.

KAT: Bottom of the screen. Left.

WOLF: Stand back.

KAT: "Henshaw. For you and your future."

WOLF: I'm coming !

KAT: And with music,

WOLF: Oh my dog !!!

KAT: Fade to black.

MUSIC FADES.

WOLF FLOPS FORWARD ON TO THE TABLE. PANTING LOUDLY.

KAT BOWS TO LEE. LEE GIVES HER THE FINGER. WOLF STILL PANTING. LONG PAUSE. EVENTUALLY:

WOLF: You made me come.

KAT: Cry and come.

WOLF: Cry and come.

KAT: Big time ?

WOLF: The biggest.

KAT: Back wall ?

WOLF: I splashed all over the back wall. I think I even got some on Lee. Sorry.

LEE: Forget it. I'm used to it.

WOLF: You made me come all over the back wall.

LEE: Perfect. (BEAT) So we go with mine then ?

WOLF: (CHANGE) Nah – I still prefer Lee's.

LEE IS JUBILANT.

KAT: But you hit the back wall.

WOLF: I know.

KAT: I made you hit the back wall.

WOLF: Strange isn't ? But I still want Lee's. Maybe it was the tears.

KAT: But you liked that.

WOLF: I loved it.

KAT: Then what ?

WOLF: I don't know. Maybe they made me feel guilty.

KAT: The tears ?

WOLF: Guilty about coming.

KAT: But –

WOLF: Guilt is bad.

LEE: Very bad.

WOLF: Guilt is a turn off.

LEE: And we can't have that.

WOLF: Something about those boots ...

LEE: I'll can the boots.

WOLF: (GOING TO HER) But the boots are what made it so great. We go with J Lo.

LEE: Drew.

WOLF: We go with Drew -

KAT: And Sigmund Freud ?

WOLF: Meeting the -

LEE: Cookie Monster !

WOLF: No Cookie Monster ever made me feel guilty. We'll pitch it tomorrow. I think they said noon. Noon on New Year's Day. Can you believe it ? Commitment. Wooo-ah !

WOLF STARTS TO LEAVE. LEE BOWS TO KAT. KAT GIVES HIM THE FINGER.

WOLF REACHES THE DOOR. HE STOPS.

WOLF: Hey, what is this ad for anyway ?

LEE: Brake fluid.

WOLF: Brake fluid. I love it.

AND WOLF EXITS. PAUSE.

LEE: You want me to get you a rag ?

KAT: Oh piss off.

BLACKOUT.

3. The Celine Dion Songbook.

Kansas City, USA. Kitchen. 11pm.

PAUL sits at the kitchen table, a cup of coffee and notepad and pen on the table in front of him. He is still. Long pause. **TRACEY** enters, holding a syringe.

TRACEY: He seems to be quiet now.

TRACEY PLACES THE SYRINGE IN A DISPOSAL UNIT. SHE REMOVES HER GLOVES. SHE GOES TO THE SINK AND WASHES HER HANDS, THEN SHE BEGINS CLEANING SOME SMALL BOTTLES. NEXT SHE OPENS A SMALL BOX FULL OF VIALS. SHE BEGINS CHECKING THEM, HOLDING THEM UP AGAINST THE LIGHT.

TRACEY: Darling, I said he seems to be alright. We must go to Doctor Bourke again tomorrow. I'm running out of Dexihedrine. Have we still got that spare script we got last month from Doctor Ryan. We should get some Tamochotil at the same time. We must remember to claim for that. I don't think we got the full amount. We can get sixty percent, I think. What did we get last time ? Do you remember that nice lady we spoke to who said we could get sixty percent ? I think it was Barbara. Or Betty. Something beginning with B. Do you remember ? Darling ?

PAUSE. TRACEY CLOSSES THE BOX. SHE GOES TO THE TABLE AND CHECKS PAUL'S COFFEE. SHE TAKES THE CUP AND GOES BACK TO THE SINK.

TRACEY: Finished ? Another one ? What's the time ? Maybe we should go to bed. You have to drop me off on the clinic before work. I have to pick up those Test results. I'll just give him the Lachmose. (PAUSE. SHE STOPS AND LOOKS AT PAUL.) Paul ?

PAUL: Peter will be six in September.

TRACEY: That's right.

PAUL: September the twenty first.

TRACEY: Yes.

PAUL: How many Doctors do you think he's seen in that six years ?

TRACEY: (LAUGHS) What ?

PAUL: How many Doctors do you think he's seen in that six years ?

TRACEY: I heard you - it's just such an odd question.

PAUL: One hundred and thirty seven.

TRACEY: What ?

PAUL: (INDICATING PAD) I've worked it out. One hundred and thirty seven.

TRACEY: Well, it's a lot. I guess it could be right.

PAUL: Trust me. That's an average of twenty two point eight per year.
Give or take.

TRACEY: Give or take what ?

PAUL: You can check it if you like.

TRACEY: I haven't got a calculator.

PAUL: It's right.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: What's your point ?

PAUL: Nothing. Just an interesting statistic.

TRACEY: (SMILING) Maybe we should put up a chart. Keep score.
Another coffee or bed ?

PAUL: How much money do you think we've spent on those one
hundred and thirty seven doctors ? Roughly.

TRACEY: I have no idea.

PAUL: One hundred and forty thousand dollars. Give or take.

TRACEY: It could be. The insurance did cover some of it. Before it

PAUL: Not too mention - needles, syringes, medications, pills, ampules,
gloves, cotton wool, disinfectant, rubber sheets, thermometers,
blood pumps, stethoscopes -

TRACEY: Again, I don't see your point.

PAUL: But this is the big one. Money, Doctors - they don't come near this one. Time. How much time do you think has been spent in seeing those Doctors, in administering those medications, in monitoring that faint little heartbeat ?

TRACEY: He's your son. It shouldn't be about time.

PAUL: Fourteen hours a day. Fourteen hours a day for three hundred and sixty five days a year for six years. Let me do the sums for you. (READING FROM THE PAD) Fourteen hours times three hundred and sixty five days equals five thousand, one hundred and ten hours per year. Five thousand one hundred and ten hours times six years, give us a grand total of thirty thousand, six hundred and sixty hours. That's one million, eight hundred and thirty nine thousand and six hundred minutes.

TRACEY: So you can count.

PAUL: Or one hundred and ten million, three hundred and seventy six thousand seconds.

TRACEY: And I would not take back one single second. (PAUSE) Paul - please. It's late. Peter needs his Lachmose. I'll just give him his shot and we'll go to bed. You just need some rest for those tired eyes. And tired brain - after all those sums.

PAUL: How many children in the world suffer from Peter's condition ?

TRACEY: I don't think they know.

PAUL: Give or take.

TRACEY LOOKS AT PAUL. PAUSE.

PAUL: Humour me.

TRACEY: Well Peter is the only one in the States. That we know. There's that little girl in Scotland. We spoke to her mother. The boy in India we heard about. There were two in Germany. And that girl in Japan. Wasn't there a couple in China ?

PAUL: Three. That's one in England, one in Scotland, one in India, one in Japan, two in Germany and three in China. That's of course that we know. There could be many more - in Africa, Thailand, perhaps Australia.

TRACEY: Perhaps.

PAUL: But of those we know, what was the maximum age any of them reached ? The maximum.

TRACEY: I couldn't tell you - off hand.

PAUL: I think you can.

TRACEY: It's not something I like to think about.

PAUL: I'm asking you to think about it.

TRACEY: Honestly I couldn't -

PAUL: Give or take.

TRACEY: I wish you would stop saying that.

PAUL: Give or take.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: Well, the Indian girl was five when she passed away, I think. And the three in China were a bit younger.

PAUL: Four. All three died when they were four.

TRACEY: The girl in Scotland was at least seven. And I'm sure the boy in Germany was older than that.

PAUL: Seven years, five months and fourteen days.

TRACEY: The girl in Germany is still alive and so is that girl in Japan.

PAUL: They are both two years old.

TRACEY: You must remember of course that they're making advances all the time. Doctor Robinson said that they're making real breakthroughs. And the girl's mother in Scotland. She said if they'd used more Lachmose, she's sure she would've made a least another year.

PAUL: But she didn't. Seven years, five months and fourteen days. (PAUSE) How old is Peter ?

TRACEY: I still don't see your point.

PAUL: How old is Peter ?

TRACEY: I'm giving Peter his Lachmose. You should go to bed.

PAUL: Five years, ten months and eighteen days. *If*, and it's only if, he were to match that boy in Germany that would give him seventeen months and twenty six days. That's not even a year and a half. And that's if he makes it that far.

TRACEY: I still don't get your point. (SILENCE.) (GOING TO THE BOX)
I'm giving Peter his shot.

PAUL: My point is this : that even if you took his blood pressure every five minutes, consulted every specialist in the whole country every day, pumped him full of Lachmose till he couldn't take anymore, took one thousand tests and fed him a million pills - the most, the absolute most that you could hope for is that he might - just might - live for another year and a half.

TRACEY: Where is this going, Paul ? Where are you taking me ?

PAUL: Eighteen months. Five hundred and forty days. Two thousand, one hundred and sixty hours. If you're lucky.

TRACEY: Some children don't live even that long. Every hour is precious.

PAUL: If - you're lucky.

TRACEY: If *we're* lucky. There's always the first time.

PAUSE. **TRACEY** PREPARES THE NEEDLE. **PAUL** GOES TO HER AND TAKES THE NEEDLE.

PAUL: Give it up.

TRACEY: Paul - give me the needle.

PAUL: Give it up.

TRACEY: Give it to me.

PAUL: (MOVING AWAY) Give it up.

TRACEY: I don't understand what you're doing. Give me the needle.

PAUL: Give - it - up.

TRACEY: What are you doing ?

PAUL: Your obsession to keep this child alive. It's sucking you dry – from the inside out. Ever since the second he was born you've had this obsession. No matter what it took, no matter how many Doctors, no matter what the cost, no matter how much time - just so he could have a few more precious seconds of his miserable existence.

TRACEY: You're tired. You don't know what you're saying.

PAUL: A few more wheezy breaths to help stretch out your futile quest.

TRACEY: Your son's name is Peter. Call him by his name. But you can't. It's too painful. It hurts too much.

PAUL: Do you really think he's happy ? Do you think Pete likes being jabbed every five seconds, poked and prodded all day and all night - never a second's peace. Watched every moment in a glass cage - like a bloody lab rat. The poor little kid. If it was up to him he'd have left us years ago. Left his never-ending pain filled excuse for a life. Christ, he's only holding on because he sees you're so obsessed with prolonging his agony.

TRACEY: I'm going to bed.

PAUL TAKES OFF HIS WEDDING RING. HE HOLDS IT UP.

PAUL: I have this ring.

TRACEY: I have one too.

PAUL: I was married eight years ago. My wife was a beautiful young woman. Intelligent, funny, full of life. Then I had a child. We knew from the start, something was wrong. He wasn't going to make it.

TRACEY: There's always the first time. There's always one.

PAUL: And somewhere, I don't know quite where and when , but somewhere - I lost my wife. That beautiful young woman became a desperate, tired hollow shell - who just couldn't forgive herself for giving birth to an imperfect son.

TRACEY: Peter is my child. I am his mother. It's my duty to give him the best possible care I can. You're his father - it's your duty to protect him as best you can.

PAUL: I have done my duty. I have done more than my duty. I have given Pete all the time, money and love that I could possibly give. I have no more left. I have done enough. Now I want my wife back. I want my marriage back. I want our life to start again.

TRACEY: There's always one.

PAUL: It's time to give my son what he wants.

TRACEY: And what he wants is to be left to die !

PAUSE. **PAUL GOES TO TRACEY, HE TAKES HER HAND.**

PAUL: Give it up my wife. Let him go. We've done enough. Stop blaming yourself. It wasn't your fault. Or mine. It was a fluke. A lucky chance. One in ten million. We are not too blame here.

TRACEY: Then who is ? Why was my son born imperfect ? Why was he chosen for this condition ? This affliction ? Why did he have to suffer this horrendous pain ? If we're not too blame - then who is ? Who will pay for this ? Who will bear this burden ? Who will cherish his little life ?

PAUL: He has no life.

TRACEY: Who else will make him live ?

PAUL: No one can make him live.

TRACEY: I love my son.

PAUL: And I love him too. That's why I know it's time to let him go. (PAUSE) I'm not going to take the blame anymore. I've blamed myself for long enough. I'm too tired to do it anymore. We have given Pete six years. We have done all that was asked. Now it's time to let him go.

TRACEY: We can do more.

PAUL: Just for tonight, just for one moment, just for Pete - don't give him the Lachmose. Let it go. Give it up.

TRACEY: We all have to die sometime.

PAUL: Pete's time has come.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: It's nearly two am. It's late. We're tired. I'm going to forget this conversation ever happened. Put it aside as an awful dream. I'm going to take my son his medication.

WE HEAR A COUGH OFF, THEN A FAINT CRY. **TRACEY GOES TO PAUL.**

TRACEY: I'm going to give my son what he needs.

THE CRYING GROWS LOUDER. **TRACEY** REACHES FOR THE SYRINGE. **PAUL** GRABS HER HAND.

PAUL: What happened to our plans ? Our hopes ? Our dreams ? You were going to start your own business. You were going to make dresses, just like you did on our wedding day.

TRACEY: Things got in the way.

PAUL: He got in the way. We were going to have another child. And another. We were going to have a family.

TRACEY: We do have a family.

PAUL: We have one sick kid, wheezing and coughing his way to an early grave.

THE CRYING GROWS LOUDER AND THEN SUDDENLY STOPS. SILENCE. **TRACEY** BEGINS TO STRUGGLE.

TRACEY: I must go to my son.

PAUL: You've done enough.

TRACEY: Don't make me choose.

PAUL: He's not going to live.

TRACEY: Don't make me choose.

PAUL: We've done all that we can.

TRACEY: (SCREAMS) Don't - make - me - choose !!!

TRACEY STRUGGLES AND BREAKS FREE OF **PAUL** BUT SHE SLIPS AND BUMPS INTO THE TABLE. THE BOX OF PILLS FALLS TO THE FLOOR, SPILLING PILLS AND SMALL BOTTLES EVERYWHERE.

TRACEY SCRAMBLES TO PICK UP THE PILLS AND PUT THEM BACK IN THE BOTTLES.

PAUL: No Tracey. You chose. Pete or me. Right now. You make a decision because in front of god, I swear. I have no more to give, I want my life back. I want my marriage back. When I stood at that altar, beneath those trees, on that day - this is not what I wanted. This is not what I dreamt of.

PAUL: (CONT) This is not why I took those vows. I don't want this to be my life. I'm not going to let it be my life anymore.

PAUL TAKES OFF HIS RING. HE LAYS IT ON THE TABLE.

PAUL: Time to chose. Life or death. Us or him. Duty or love.

TRACEY: I love my son. I want my son to live.

PAUL: So do I. But whatever we do. No matter how hard we try. He won't. He can't. He's going to die. Don't fight it any longer. Don't make it any harder for him. Let him go.

TRACEY: I can't make that choice.

PAUL: Then let me.

PAUL PICKS UP THE SYRINGE. HE GOES TO THE SINK AND SQUIRTS THE LACHMOSE DOWN THE DRAIN.

TRACEY: (RUNNING TO HIM) No. No !!! You murderer. You've killed my son.

SHE COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR - CRYING.

TRACEY: They'll be a trial. They won't let you get away with this. You will die.

TRACEY LIES SOBBING ON THE FLOOR. LONG PAUSE. PAUL GOES SLOWLY TO THE SINK. HE PICKS UP THE COFFEE CUP AND WASHES IT. HE PUSHES THE CHAIR UNDERNEATH THE TABLE AND CLOSES THE NOTE PAD.

PAUL: I'm going to bed. I'm going to sleep. Tomorrow - our new life will begin. (HE STARTS TO LEAVE.) I'll leave the light on.

PAUL STARTS TO LEAVE. TRACEY REMAINS ON THE FLOOR

PAUL: Turn it off when you come.

PAUL EXITS.

LIGHTS FADE.

4. Saturday Night Birmingham, Sunday Morning Walsall.

Walsall, England. 11am. Bedroom

MATTHEW's cluttered and grubby room. Sunday morning.

MATTHEW and **CLAIRE** lie sprawled in the bed. Slowly **CLAIRE** wakes. She sits up and looks around, trying to work out where she is.

She looks at **MATTHEW** lying in the bed alongside her. She lifts the sheet and looks at herself. She lifts the sheet and looks at **MATTHEW**.

She suppresses a groan. Carefully she gets out of bed, trying not to wake **MATTHEW**.

She delicately picks her way around the room, recovering her clothing. She puts a few pieces on and, with the rest in her arms, makes her way for the door.

She tries the door but it appears to be locked. She re-positions the clothes under her arm and using both hands manages to open the door. But as she does she drops a shoe. It falls to the ground with a thump.

CLAIRE spins around to look at **MATTHEW**. He doesn't move. **CLAIRE** eases her way through the door.

MATTHEW: Making a quick getaway.

CLAIRE STOPS.

CLAIRE: You're awake.

MATTHEW: (SITTING UP) Didn't mean to interrupt you.

CLAIRE: I didn't want to wake you.

MATTHEW: Very considerate.

CLAIRE TURNS TO LOOK AT MATTHEW. MATTHEW FINDS A T-SHIRT AND PUTS IT ON.

MATTHEW: It's okay. You can still go.

CLAIRE: You're awake now. I'll stay.

MATTHEW: Then why are you holding the door open ?

CLAIRE CLOSES THE DOOR. SHE MAKES HER WAY BACK INTO THE ROOM.

MATTHEW: At least you didn't have to do a coyote ?

CLAIRE: Coyote ?

MATTHEW: Chew your arm off rather than waking me. You weren't faced with that dilemma.

CLAIRE: Don't be so stupid. Now if I can just find a spot.

MATTHEW: Sorry. Bit messy.

CLAIRE: No, it's fine.

CLAIRE PERCHES ON A CHAIR AND FINISHES DRESSING.

CLAIRE: Where are we ?

MATTHEW: Walsall.

CLAIRE: Walsall ? But last night we were in Birmingham, weren't we ?

MATTHEW: Now we're in Walsall.

CLAIRE: How did we get here ?

MATTHEW: Walked. Or should I say I walked. You staggered.

CLAIRE: I really don't remember. What were we drinking ?

MATTHEW: I was on lite beer. You were drinking - well pretty well anything you could get your hands on.

CLAIRE: Drowning my sorrows.

MATTHEW: Tough week ?

CLAIRE: That I do remember.

MATTHEW: Thought you'd be saving yourself for a big one tonight.

CLAIRE SMILES.

CLAIRE: Are the buses running by now ?

MATTHEW: Should be.

CLAIRE: I better get going.

MATTHEW: Church ?

CLAIRE: Very funny. Got to help my mum. She's having a big party tonight. Family New Year.

MATTHEW: Where does she live ?

CLAIRE: (AFTER A PAUSE) Tasmania.

MATTHEW: You've got a long trip in front of you then.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: Look, I'm sorry.

MATTHEW: It's okay.

CLAIRE: I just usually don't do this.

MATTHEW: Who said I do ?

CLAIRE: I mean I'm not accustomed to being in this situation.

MATTHEW: Absolutely.

CLAIRE: Last night ... I guess I sort of lost control. Went a little crazy.

MATTHEW: Let yourself go.

CLAIRE: Did things I wouldn't do under normal conditions.

MATTHEW: You mean normally you wouldn't go home with me ?

CLAIRE: I'm sorry. That must sound awful.

MATTHEW: It's okay. I gather I'm not exactly your type.

CLAIRE: No, it's not that.

MATTHEW: You mean I am your type ?

CLAIRE: I've just had a terrible week. I mean a really terrible week.

MATTHEW: Gary.

CLAIRE: How do you know about Gary ?

MATTHEW: You mentioned him last night. Several times.

CLAIRE: I did ? He ...

MATTHEW: Dumped you on Thursday -

CLAIRE: For no reason.

MATTHEW: And then last night he was there with -

CLAIRE: That bitch. He was all over her, and ...

MATTHEW: You discovered there may have been a reason after all.

CLAIRE: So as you can understand I was a little ...

MATTHEW: Emotional. And so you end up -

CLAIRE: In Walsall.

MATTHEW: With me.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: (HEADING FOR THE DOOR) Look, I'm just going to go.

MATTHEW: You know it doesn't have to be like this.

CLAIRE: Believe me - it does.

MATTHEW: What are you actually taking away from here ?

CLAIRE: (SHE TURNS) What ?

MATTHEW: What are you actually leaving here with ?

CLAIRE: Only what I arrived with. I hope.

MATTHEW: So there is no tangible evidence that you were ever here.

CLAIRE: Do you want my panties as a souvenir ?

MATTHEW: Do you want mine ? (SMILES) Think about it. When you walk out that door you will take away absolutely nothing from last night.

CLAIRE: Except for a whopping headache and some -

MATTHEW: Some what ?

CLAIRE: Look - I really have to go.

MATTHEW: Say it.

CLAIRE: Some less than perfect memories.

MATTHEW: Exactly. The only thing you take with you is your memories - which I would imagine won't be tremendous. But it doesn't have to be like that.

CLAIRE: Listen - I like you. Your sweet. A bit odd, but sweet. But like I said - you're really not my type. And now I've got to go.

MATTHEW: What if you remembered last night differently ? After tonight this year is dead. Who can remember what really happened ?

CLAIRE: What are you talking about ?

MATTHEW: You heard me.

CLAIRE: I can't change my memories.

MATTHEW: Can't you ? Have you ever tried ? Your memories of last night are pretty hazy at best.

CLAIRE: You can say that again.

MATTHEW: You can't even remember how we got here.

CLAIRE: True.

MATTHEW: So what if you decide what to remember ? Make up your own version of events.

CLAIRE: If only it was that easy.

MATTHEW: It is that easy. Who would you have like to have spent last night with ?

CLAIRE: I don't know.

MATTHEW: Gary ?

CLAIRE: After what that bastard did to me ? No way.

MATTHEW: Then who ? If you could chose anybody you want. Play along.

CLAIRE: Alright. (PAUSE) I don't know. Brad Pitt maybe.

MATTHEW: Tricky. How about someone who looked just like Brad Pitt ?

CLAIRE: But with black hair.

MATTHEW: Perfect. Now what's your favourite man's name ? Play along.

CLAIRE: I've always like Nathan.

MATTHEW: Okay. So you spent last night with a man named Nathan who looked just like Brad Pitt. Except with black hair.

CLAIRE: There's only one problem - I didn't.

MATTHEW: I'm the only person who knows that and I've forgotten already.

PAUSE. **CLAIRE** CONSIDERS.

CLAIRE: Okay. If I spent last night with Nathan - where did he come from?

MATTHEW: You tell me. Where do you like to go on holiday ? Greece, Spain -

CLAIRE: Nathan sounds French.

MATTHEW: Perfect. So he was a charming and sexy -

CLAIRE: If he looked like Brad Pitt - very sexy.

MATTHEW: Very sexy Frenchman who had to fly back to Paris this morning but not before you had the most incredibly intense night of lovemaking you have ever experienced.

CLAIRE: I did ?

MATTHEW: You two just clicked. It went on for hours. Much better than you ever had with Gary.

CLAIRE: You can say that again.

MATTHEW: He made you feel like no man has ever made you feel before. Made you experience more pleasure than you ever felt possible.

CLAIRE: (LOOKING AT BED) What little I can remember, I wouldn't say it -

MATTHEW: *Nathan* was incredible. *You* were incredible. Together you set the night on fire.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: But where did this happen ?

MATTHEW: What's your favourite hotel ?

CLAIRE: I went to The Savoy once.

MATTHEW: Room four three two of The Savoy. Your room looked out straight on to Hyde Park. Nathan was staying there on business for the week.

CLAIRE: Before he flew back to Paris ?

MATTHEW: There was this huge four pillar bed in the room which you almost broke. Not to mention what happened in the bathroom.

CLAIRE: In the shower ?

MATTHEW: It went on and on.

CLAIRE: (SHE SMILES) It was unbelievable.

MATTHEW: You were unbelievable. It was a one in million. The best night of your life. And the next morning you woke up in each other's arms on New Year's Eve. How incredibly ...

CLAIRE: Romantic. (PAUSE) One problem. The Savoy is in London ?

MATTHEW: No problem. He drove you there.

CLAIRE: But everybody saw me leave with you ?

MATTHEW: You dumped me at the bus stop. Then he drove by in his -

CLAIRE: Convertible Black BMW.

MATTHEW: He stopped and asked you for directions.

CLAIRE: We got talking.

MATTHEW: Next thing you knew you were back at The Savoy.

CLAIRE: Sipping French champagne.

MATTHEW: The whole thing seemed like -

CLAIRE: Magic.

MATTHEW: Destiny.

CLAIRE: But hold on. I'm not going to be a one night stand for some travelling French ponce.

MATTHEW: This is just the beginning. He's filthy rich. He's flying you to Paris. In fact he wouldn't go until you promised -

CLAIRE: To fly over to see him.

MATTHEW: Your meeting him in two weeks time - -

CLAIRE: At midnight.

MATTHEW: On top of the Eiffel Tower. A new year.

CLAIRE: A new man.

MATTHEW: He's a dream come true. The next morning after breakfast he kissed you goodbye.

MATTHEW KISSES CLAIRE.

MATTHEW: And whispered something in French in your ear.

CLAIRE: It sounded like poetry.

MATTHEW: Ordered his driver to take you home.

CLAIRE: A chauffeur.

MATTHEW: And you walked out the door.

CLAIRE: More like floated.

MATTHEW: Dreaming of when you would meet again in Paris -

CLAIRE: Under the stars.

MATTHEW: On top of the Eiffel Tower.

CLAIRE: One final kiss.

CLAIRE KISSES MATTHEW.

MATTHEW: And you were gone.

CLAIRE: Dreaming of the moment -

MATTHEW: When we would meet -

CLAIRE: Again.

CLAIRE EXITS. MATTHEW ALONE, WATCHING WHERE SHE HAS GONE. HE SMILES.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

5. The Gift of the Gun.

A bare room. Cape Town, South Africa. 11.30pm.

In darkness music begins. A Chopin Etude.

A spotlight comes up on a child's mobile of bright coloured shapes. Red triangles and yellow rectangles, floating in space.

Lights come up on **WILLIAM**. He sits on a chair down left. He is well dressed in an expensive suit and shiny shoes.

To his right is a bare table. On it two objects : a yellow box and a red triangle. Beside it a plain black sound system. There is a door upstage.

The spotlight fades on the mobile. The music remains.

There is a knock at the door. The music is suddenly cut off.

WILLIAM: It's open.

THE DOOR OPENS SLOWLY AND BEN ENTERS. HIS FAIR HAIR IS SLICKED BACK AND HE WEARS A BRIGHTLY COLOURED RED SINGLET AND YELLOW PANTS. HE CARRIES A SMALL BACK PACK.

WILLIAM: Close the door.

BEN CLOSSES THE DOOR.

WILLIAM: No problem finding the address ?

BEN: Place seems deserted. You must be the only one here.

WILLIAM: It's scheduled for demolition.

BEN: Whatever blows your mind. I'm Ben.

WILLIAM: My name is William. Come over here so I can look at you.

BEN PUTS DOWN THE BAG. HE WALKS SLOWLY TOWARDS WILLIAM. WILLIAM INDICATES FOR HIM TO WALK UP AND DOWN.

BEN WALKS IN FRONT OF WILLIAM. WILLIAM WATCHES HIM.

WILLIAM: Excellent.

BEN: Blonde enough for you ?

WILLIAM: Perfect.

BEN: Clothes alright ?

WILLIAM: You've done very well.

BEN: Not leaving anything to chance are you ?

WILLIAM: Best not to.

BEN: Any more special requests ?

WILLIAM: Not just yet.

PAUSE. BEN LOOKS AT WILLIAM.

BEN: So, having a good day ?

WILLIAM: So far.

BEN: (WANDERING AROUND ROOM) Do you live here ?

WILLIAM: Of course not.

BEN: It doesn't look too cosy. Is there a bathroom ? I might need to clean up afterwards.

WILLIAM: Unfortunately not.

BEN: How about some towels ?

WILLIAM: I do apologise.

BEN: It's alright. I've got some of my own. Keep them for little emergencies.

**BEN OPENS UP HIS BAG. HE TAKES OUT SOME TOWELETTES.
HE HOLDS UP A SMALL CASSETTE PLAYER.**

BEN: How about some music ?

WILLIAM: Not at the moment.

BEN PUTS THE CASSETTE PLAYER AWAY. HE STANDS.

BEN: So what will it be ? Giving. Receiving. Or are you just interested in some oral ? You look like you really like to suck dick.

WILLIAM: Absolutely not.

BEN: Oops. Didn't mean to offend you. I don't often have new clients. Too popular with my regulars. They get great service so they ask for me again and again. Hopefully you will too.

WILLIAM: A once off will be sufficient.

BEN: Don't be so hasty. Wait to see if you like me. (PAUSE) I don't usually go to someone's place. You never know what could happen. But Terio said you come highly recommended and you'd make it worth my while.

WILLIAM: You'll be well compensated.

PAUSE. **BEN BEGINS TO UNBUTTON HIS PANTS.**

WILLIAM: What are you doing ?

BEN: Don't you want to watch me.

WILLIAM: God no. No offence.

BEN: Most people say I've got a great body.

WILLIAM: You look very firm.

BEN: Would you like to touch me ?

WILLIAM: No, but thanks for offering.

BEN: I could lie on the table.

WILLIAM: That won't be necessary.

PAUSE.

BEN: Look, I don't mean to sound ungrateful. But could we get started. I've got to be back for one of my regulars at eleven.

WILLIAM: Certainly.

BEN: Well ? What would you like me to do ?

WILLIAM: Go to the table and lift up the red triangle.

BEN: Oh, so that's it. Toys.

WILLIAMS: Objects from my childhood.

BEN: Kinky.

BEN GOES TO THE TABLE. HE LIFTS UP THE TRIANGLE TO REVEAL A REVOLVER. BEN RECOILS IN HORROR.

BEN: Oh fuck. Fuck !

BEN RUNS FOR THE DOOR. HE TRIES THE HANDLE. IT IS LOCKED.

BEN: Jesus. Help me. Help me.

HE BANGS ON THE DOOR.

BEN: Help me - please !

WILLIAM: As you said the warehouse is deserted.

BEN SCRAMBLES FOR HIS BAG. WILLIAM STANDS.

BEN: Stay away from me. I've got a panic button. In two minutes they'll be security from the service all over the place.

WILLIAM: Please Ben - I'm not going to hurt you.

BEN: (SEARCHING THROUGH HIS BAG) You stay away from me.
(PULLING OUT BUZZER) Got it.

WILLIAM: There is no need to panic.

BEN: That's not how I see it.

WILLIAM: I'm standing still and I'm putting my hands above my head.
(**WILLIAM RAISES HIS ARMS.**) There is only one revolver in the room and I am not intending to touch it. I am completely powerless.

BEN: Why should I believe you ?

WILLIAM: You are welcome to search me.

BEN DOES NOT MOVE.

WILLIAM: I am not going to hurt you. And as your manager said you will be extremely well paid for your services.

BEN, HOLDING THE BUZZER IN ONE HAND, MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS WILLIAM.

HE PATS HIS POCKETS AND FEELS HIS PANTS.

WILLIAM: Nothing except the clothes on my back.

BEN STANDS BACK.

BEN: What the fuck is going on ?

WILLIAM: May I put my hands down ?

BEN: Okay, but keep them where I can see them.

WILLIAM: Thank you.

WILLIAM LOWERS HIS HANDS.

BEN: Is this like some weird S and M thing ?

WILLIAM: (HE SMILES) After a fashion. Try to look at me as just another client.

BEN: Pretty weird fucking client.

WILLIAM: Who is paying you very well for your services. Lift up the yellow box.

BEN: I'm not touching anything else.

WILLIAM: May I remove it then ?

BEN: How do I know it's not a bomb or something ?

WILLIAM: It's not. (PAUSE) Would you like to leave ?

BEN: Absolutely right.

WILLIAM: The key for the door is hidden somewhere in this room.

BEN: Where ?

BEN BEGINS TO SEARCH AROUND THE ROOM.

WILLIAM: Let me remove the box and then I'll tell you.

BEN: Tell me now.

WILLIAM: Not until I remove the box. (INDICATING BOX) May I ?

PAUSE. **BEN NODS. WILLIAM MOVES TOWARDS THE BOX. BEN'S EYES FIX ON THE GUN.**

BEN: Stop !

PAUSE.

WILLIAM: Why don't you pick the gun up ? It might make you feel safer.

BEN: I've never held a gun in my life.

WILLIAM: Then now would seem a good time to start.

PAUSE. **BEN GINGERLY PICKS UP THE GUN.**

WILLIAM: How does it feel ?

BEN: Cold.

WILLIAM: It'll warm up.

BEN: Is the thing-a-me on ?

WILLIAM: Yes, the safety catch is on. Would you like me to show you how to take it off ?

BEN: Stay where you are. It's fine the way it is.

WILLIAM: As you wish. May I remove the box now ?

BEN NODS. WILLIAM LIFTS THE BOX TO REVEAL THREE NEAT PILES OF CASH. BEN IS DRAWN TO IT. WILLIAM STEPS AWAY.

BEN: Shit.

WILLIAM: Touch it. It's yours.

BEN PUTS DOWN THE BUZZER. HE PICKS UP SOME OF THE MONEY.

BEN: This is for me ?

WILLIAM: All of it. Not bad for a morning's work.

BEN: You must be into some pretty weird shit. What do I have to do ? Let you stick a rat up my arse.

WILLIAM: Nothing as vulgar as that.

BEN: Then what the fuck do you want me to do ?

WILLIAM: I want you to give me a gift.

BEN: Listen mister, I don't think I'm selling what your buying.

WILLIAM: You're more than capable.

BEN: So what is this gift ?

WILLIAM: It's in your hand.

BEN: You want me to give you a hand job with the cash ?

WILLIAM: The other hand.

BEN LOOKS AT THE GUN. PAUSE.

BEN: (REALISING) You're fucking mad.

WILLIAM: I can assure you I am perfectly sane.

BEN: Not from where I'm standing.

WILLIAM: All my life there has been an absence of control. I have been perpetually at the mercy of others. The whim of chance, fate, circumstance. But through it all one piece of information has been a considerable source of comfort for me. The knowledge that there was one pivotal moment in my life that if I acted quickly enough, I could control. Completely. The time, the place and the mechanism of my death.

BEN: And you chose this room - and me ?

WILLIAM NODS.

BEN: But why do you want to die ?

WILLIAM: The reasons are not important. Suffice to say I have them. You don't need to know why. Indeed it's perhaps better if you don't.

- BEN: I'm kind of involved here. What you're asking me to do is likely to cause a few bad dreams down the track.
- WILLIAM: As I said this is one event that I can control. And I choose to keep my reasons private. That's what I want and on this day I am getting what I want. I'm not asking you to do something that far from your usual gamut.
- BEN: Killing people is a little out of my ordinary work day.
- WILLIAM: You carry out a service. Give people a bit of a thrill. I'm not asking for anything quite so ... grubby.
- BEN: I think will be just a bit messy.
- WILLIAM: I'm asking you to carry out a service.
- BEN: You got the wrong boy. I give blow jobs.
- WILLIAM: But that's not what I want.
- BEN: Yes it is. You're asking me to give you the ultimate blowjob.
- WILLIAM: Don't be vulgar. That's not how I want it.
- BEN: Some clients like it if I talk dirty.
- WILLIAM: I would be grateful if you could restrain from it.
- BEN: Always want to give client satisfaction.
- WILLIAM: And you can do that. Completely.
- PAUSE.
- BEN: You do understand you only get to do this once. I can't come back tomorrow.
- WILLIAM: I'm well aware of the consequences.
- BEN: This isn't like some test is it ? I'm not being filmed for some stupid reality TV show.
- WILLIAM: I do understand that this must come as quite a surprise to you. Look at it rationally.
- BEN: You're a fucking psycho.

WILLIAM: At this moment I would imagine you desire two things. The first would be to leave this room as soon as possible.

BEN: You're right there.

WILLIAM: The second would be to take that money with you.

BEN: The thought had crossed my mind.

WILLIAM: Now I'm going to tell you where the key is hidden and you will be able to leave. But first I need you to do one more thing for me ?

BEN: You want me to sing you a song Willy ?

WILLIAM: Please Ben.

BEN: You have someone else you'd like me to bump off ?

WILLIAM: This is for your protection.

BEN: What ?

WILLIAM: In the draw of the table you will find a pair of gloves and a cloth. I want you to put the gloves on.

BEN: Why ?

WILLIAM: Just do it ! (CHANGE) It's for your benefit.

BEN REACHES UNDER THE TABLE AND PULLS OUT THE GLOVES AND THE CLOTH.

WILLIAM: Thank you. After it's done you will wipe the handle of the gun with the cloth. You will then put the gun in my hand and wipe the door handle on the way out. No one will ever know you were here.

BEN: Suicide ?

WILLIAM: Precisely.

BEN: Then why don't you just do it yourself ? Why do you need me ?

WILLIAM: Because that's not how I want it.

BEN PUTS ON THE GLOVES.

BEN: Okay. I've put on the gloves. Now, where's the key ?

WILLIAM: Reach under the table.

BEN FEELS UNDERNEATH THE TOP OF THE TABLE. HE PULLS OUT A KEY.

BEN: Thank Christ for that. See you later you sick fuck.

BEN HEADS FOR THE DOOR.

WILLIAM: Do you love your life Ben ?

BEN STOPS.

BEN: What do you think ?

WILLIAM: Look at what's sitting on that table. I'm offering you a new life.

BEN TURNS. HE LOOKS AT THE MONEY.

BEN: Maybe I'll just take the money anyway.

WILLIAM: I'll have you tracked down and killed within the hour.

BEN: You've really thought of everything.

WILLIAM: What is so abhorrent –

BEN: Ab – what ?

WILLIAM: Abhorrent. Awful. What is so awful about what I'm asking you to do ? How am I different from a thousand other Johnnies you've serviced ?

BEN: I've never called anybody a Johnny. Unless they wanted me to.

WILLIAM: And what about what I want ?

BEN: Look, I just never thought about killing anybody.

WILLIAM: You're a service man. I'm asking you to provide a service.

BEN: It's more than that.

PAUSE.

WILLIAM: Tell me, is there anything you like about your job ?

BEN SHRUGS.

WILLIAM: Anything. Anything at all

PAUSE.

BEN: Once I was with this guy, from Telly. He was like - famous. And afterwards he had this big smile on his face. I liked that. I made him happy.

WILLIAM: And if you did this it would make me very, very happy. Would it make any difference if I was lying here stuck full of needles, tubes coming out of every orifice ?

BEN: Yeah. That would be different.

WILLIAM: How would it be different ? I want to die Ben. Why can't I die when and how I chose ? Surely I deserve that dignity.

BEN: I just wish you hadn't involved me.

WILLIAM: And then you would miss out on the chance for a new life. We are the same - you and I.

BEN: No we're not.

WILLIAM: We both have a life we don't want. You're giving me a way out and I'm giving you a way out. No one loses.

BEN: Except maybe the wallpaper.

WILLIAM: Don't think about it anymore. Just do what I ask then pick up the money and leave. Begin your new life.

PAUSE. **BEN PUTS DOWN THE GUN.**

BEN: I think you should get somebody else.

HE STARTS TO LEAVE.

WILLIAM: But I chose you.

BEN STOPS.

WILLIAM: You're not here by accident Ben. I could've got hundreds of people to do this. Some would've gladly done it for kicks. You were handpicked for this occasion.

BEN: I was ?

WILLIAM: Terio didn't know exactly what I wanted you for but he knew I needed someone very special. I came to his office and I went through the catalogue. I chose you from all the other boys. Remember the parade.

BEN: When we all had to walk up that stupid catwalk ?

WILLIAM: I was there. Behind the glass. So I could see you in the flesh. So I knew I was making the right choice. And your clothes. They were handmade specifically to your measurements.

BEN: They do fit well.

WILLIAM: Everything had to be perfect for this one moment. I want it to be exactly how I imagined. That's why it has to be you. You're the one I chose. The one I want. The angel of my demise.

BEN: Angel ?

WILLIAM: I want to sit here nice and straight with my hands on my knees and close my eyes. I want you to stand here and put the gun to my head. I want to feel the steel point pressed against my temple and smell the sweet blend of your sweat mixing with your perfume. I want to taste the saliva building in my mouth. I want to hear the soft click of the gun cocking and then feel the explosion against my skin as the bullet enters my skull - a millisecond before my blood and brains are splattered against this wall. Then my nerve endings will be numb and the screaming inside my skull will finally stop. My angel will have given me my blessed release. (PAUSE) Please Ben. Give me my parting wish. This final gift. I want there to be an end to it.

BEN: You really want to die that much ?

WILLIAM: Yes.

PAUSE.

BEN: Let's get it over with.

WILLIAM: Thank you.

BEN: Don't say anything else. I want to start forgetting this ever happened.

WILLIAM TAKES OUT A REMOTE. HE POINTS IT AT THE SOUND SYSTEM AND PRESSES A BUTTON. MUSIC: CHOPIN ETUDE.

WILLIAM SITS IN THE CHAIR. BEN MOVES OVER TO HIM. WILLIAM HOLDS OUT HIS HAND.

BEN: What ?

WILLIAM INDICATES THE GUN. BEN HANDS HIM THE GUN. WILLIAM TAKES OFF THE SAFETY CATCH. HE HANDS THE GUN BACK TO BEN.

BEN: Ready ?

WILLIAM SITS UP STRAIGHT AND PUTS HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES. HE TAKES TWO DEEP BREATHS THEN CLOSES HIS EYES.

WILLIAM: Now.

BEN PUTS THE GUN TO WILLIAM'S HEAD. HE CLOSES HIS EYES AND PULLS THE TRIGGER. THE GUN CLICKS.

BEN OPENS HIS EYES. HE PULLS THE TRIGGER AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE GUN CONTINUES TO CLICK. BEN BEGINS TO LAUGH.

BEN: You are without doubt the sickest fuck I have ever met in my entire life. And believe me - I've met some sick fucks.

WILLIAM: I'm sorry I had to be sure

BEN: Okay, so what do we do now ?

WILLIAM PULLS A SINGLE BULLET FROM HIS POCKET.

WILLIAM: Now, we load the gun.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

END ACT 1.

Act Two : Erase and Rewind.

6. Beijing Big Mac

McDonald's. Beijing, China. 6pm.

**SUSANNAH IS SIPPING TEA FROM A STYROFOAM CUP, READING A BOOK.
LEN APPROACHES WITH A BURGER AND COKE ON A TRAY.**

LEN: Can I sit here ?

SUSANNAH LOOKS AT HIM.

LEN: I said can I sit here ?

SUSANNAH LOOKS AWAY. LEN SITS.

LEN: Cold isn't it ?

SUSANNAH DOES NOT RESPOND.

LEN: Bloody cold. Freezin' my tits off. I don't think it's got above zero since I arrived. It's the wind they reckon, comin' down from Mongolia.

PAUSE.

SUSANNAH: Siberia.

LEN: Sorry ?

SUSANNAH: The wind comes down from Siberia. Not Mongolia.

LEN: Oops.

LEN UNWRAPS HIS BURGER. HE EXAMINES IT.

LEN: So what do you think of that ?

SUSANNAH DOES NOT RESPOND.

LEN: I said what do you think of that ?

SUSANNAH: I heard you.

LEN: Well what do you think ? Take a good look. A genuine Beijing Big Mac.

SUSANNAH: (NOT LOOKING) Great.

LEN: I didn't think they'd even have the Golden Arches in China. Now what do I find, right in the middle of downtown Beijing central – my very own Maccie Dees. And since it's New Year's Eve I thought: "Hey, a special occasion. Treat yourself." Treat yourself to a Big Mac – Beijing style. See in the new year with a big bite. Well, here goes.

LEN TAKES A BITE. HE CHEWS.

LEN: Hey, that's okay. No – it's better than okay. It's good. Really good. Almost as good as the real thing.

SUSANNAH: It is the real thing.

LEN: Sort of. But not really. Not really real. Like back home. (OFFERING IT TO SUSANNAH) You want some ?

SUSANNAH: I'm a vegetarian.

LEN: Then what are you doing in McDonald's ? (LAUGHS) Me name's Len.

HE HOLDS OUT HIS HAND. SUSANNAH LOOKS AT IT. LEN PULLS IT BACK.

LEN: Oops. (HE WIPES IT) So, when d'ya get in ?

SUSANNAH PUTS DOWN HER BOOK.

SUSANNAH: You see - now that pisses me off.

LEN: What ?

SUSANNAH: The way you immediately assume I just got in. Like the way you come over here and immediately assume I speak English.

LEN: Well you do don't you ?

SUSANNAH: But that doesn't mean you should assume it. You don't know anything about me. How did you know I wasn't a local ?

LEN: Sorry ?

SUSANNAH: You heard me. How did you know I wasn't a local ?

LEN: I don't see too many other people with blonde hair in here.

SUSANNAH: Just because I'm blonde doesn't mean I'm blonde okay ?

LEN: Okay. Okay. Don't get your knickers in a knot.

SUSANNAH: I'll do whatever I like. I could've been naturalised. I could've been living here for years - but you just immediately assume that I'm not from here. I'm alien.

LEN: So you're not an alien ? You're from here.

SUSANNAH: No. But that doesn't change my point. How would you've felt if I didn't speak English huh ? If you just came over here and started blurting –

LEN: I wasn't blurting.

SUSANNAH: And I couldn't understand a word you were saying. How would you've felt then ? Pretty stupid huh ? You would've felt pretty bloody stupid.

LEN: No.

SUSANNAH: What-ever.

SUSANNAH TURNS AWAY AND STARTS READING HER BOOK. LEN GOES TO TAKE ANOTHER BITE. HE STOPS.

LEN: See this is no good now. You've put me off my Big Mac. On New Year's eve too. (PAUSE) I said I'm not eating my Big Mac.

SUSANNAH: Do you know how much crap is in one of those ?

LEN: Hey baby, you're eating it too ?

SUSANNAH: I'm not eating. I'm drinking. Tea. Green tea. Without milk.

LEN: That's usually how Green Tea comes.

SUSANNAH: It's all I can afford. I only come in here because I've got a friend who works behind the counter. He slips me an extra tea bag for free.

LEN: A friend ?

SUSANNAH: He lives with the family I'm staying with.

LEN: You're staying with a family ?

SUSANNAH: I help with the chores and give ‘em five bucks a week. I sleep on the floor in the kitchen.

LEN: The kitchen ? Must be hard on the bum.

SUSANNAH: Yeah, well it’s cheaper than the Hostel.

LEN: That’s where I’m stayin’. (LOOKING AT BURGER) You sure you don’t want any ? I could pick out the meat and you could eat like the tomato and lettuce. Seems a shame to waste it.

SUSANNAH: What you paid for that would keep my family in rice for a week ?

LEN: Well shit – I didn’t know that. Only been here a week.

SUSANNAH: You don’t know much at all do you ?

LEN: Well if you don’t like it so much then why don’t you just go elsewhere. Leave this hell hole of corporate carnality and go and find a nice little genuine Beijing bistro.

SUSANNAH: I would – but it’s too friggin’ cold and I think I’m comin’ down with the flu.

PAUSE.

LEN: Hey, you want to know a secret. A big secret.

SUSANNAH: No.

LEN: Come on.

PAUSE. SUSANNAH TURNS TO HIM.

LEN: I don’t like it.

SUSANNAH: Like what ?

LEN: (WHISPERS) Rice. I don’t like rice. Guess I’m stuffed out here.

LEN LAUGHS. SUSANNAH TURNS AWAY. PAUSE. LEN REACHES INTO HIS POCKET AND TAKES OUT A WALLET. HE OPENS IT AND PULLS OUT A NOTE. HE OFFERS IT TO SUSANNAH.

LEN: Take it.

SUSANNAH: What ?

LEN: Go on. Take it.

SUSANNAH: I don't want your money.

LEN: Sounds like you need it.

SUSANNAH: I don't need anything from you.

LEN: It's a Christmas Present.

SUSANNAH: That was last week and they don't really celebrate Christmas in China, duh ?

LEN: Well you need a Christmas present then. A late one. (PAUSE. PUTTING NOTE ON TABLE) I'll just leave it here then. So you can think about it for awhile.

SUSANNAH: (STANDING) I said I don't want your money !

LEN: What exactly is your problem ?

SUSANNAH: You are my problem.

LEN: I come over – see a familiar face – just trying to be friendly – and how do you treat me ? Like a dog. Like a fuckin' dog.

SUSANNAH: You're probably use to it.

LEN: I mean we're countrymen. Country-women. Whatever. We come from the same home. Shit – we might've even gone to the same school. I'm all alone here – trying to get used to the place. And you just treat me like shit.

SUSANNAH: Maybe I don't want to run into someone from my country.

LEN: Why the fuck not ?

SUSANNAH: Maybe I came over here to get away from people like you.

LEN: People like ...

SUSANNAH: Travellers. Backpackers. Ozzies. They come to a city, take some happy snaps, tick off the sights in their Lonely Planet, shit in some exotic boghole then get back on the bus and on to the next spot on their pathetic little world tour so they can snap and tick and crap all over again.

LEN: And you're different ?

SUSANNAH: I live here. I've made a commitment to live here. For six months - at least. To really experience what another culture is like. To live like the rest of the world does. To stop being so ignorant and stuffin' my face full of Beijing Big Mac.

PAUSE.

LEN: I'm booked in for two years.

SUSANNAH: Two ...

LEN: I'm on a volunteer programme - teaching English. Took me five years to save enough money to come out here. My school is just down the road.

SUSANNAH: You said you were stayin' in the hostel.

LEN: Only till the woman I'm taking over from moves out of my house next week.

SUSANNAH: House ?

LEN: Yeah - house. I think it used to be a mission. Real cosy like. There's a spare room too. Maybe you could've used that. Still I guess that ain't gonna work out now, seeing how you think I'm such pathetic snapping, ticking, crapping Ozzie.

LEN STANDS. HE WRAPS UP THE BIG MAC AND PICKS UP THE COKE.

LEN: You reckon it's alright if I give this to that little kid out on the street ? The guy at the school said you shouldn't give them money but food's okay isn't it ?

SUSANNAH NODS.

LEN: See you round.

LEN STARTS TO EXIT. HE STOPS.

LEN: You know they're throwing a party for me tonight at the school. A sort of "Welcome Len - New Year's Eve" party all rolled into one. How's that ? They don't even know me and they're throwing me a New Year's party even though their New Year's like months off. Pretty cool huh ?

LEN EXITS. PAUSE.

SUSANNAH: My name's Susannah.

SUSANNAH LOOKS AT THE NOTE ON THE TABLE.

LIGHTS FADE.

7. Tel Aviv Disco Bombing.

Office. Tel Aviv, Israel. 8pm.

ARIEL at his desk, reading. There is a knock at the door.

ARIEL: Yes.

THE DOOR OPENS SLIGHTLY. JULIA IS THERE, CARRYING A FOLDER.

JULIA: It's only me.

ARIEL: (STANDING) Julia. Yes, come in. Come in. Sit down.

ARIEL GUIDES HER TO A CHAIR.

JULIA: Please tell me I didn't miss it. Please.

ARIEL: No – you made the deadline.

JULIA: Thank you. I was fretting.

ARIEL: There's plenty of time for the deadline.

ARIEL SITS DOWN. HE PICKS UP SOME PAPERS.

JULIA: Is that it ?

ARIEL: Yes.

JULIA: (STANDING) I'm sorry. I thought you'd had time to ... Impatient. I'll come back.

ARIEL: No, it's fine.

JULIA: You've read it ?

ARIEL: Yes.

JULIA: Already ?

ARIEL: Yes.

JULIA: And ?

PAUSE. SHE SITS.

JULIA: It's good, isn't it ?

ARIEL: No, it's not good. It's great.

JULIA: Thank you.

ARIEL: Perhaps the best story you've done since you came to us.

JULIA: I was happy.

ARIEL: First class.

JULIA: Thank you.

ARIEL: Does anybody else –

JULIA: No. I didn't tell anybody. Not even my husband.

ARIEL: Good.

JULIA: I was busting to but I didn't.

ARIEL: Well done.

JULIA: So ... where do you think it will run ?

ARIEL: This is a cover. No doubt.

JULIA: I thought so. I don't mean to – but I did... A cover. Yes !
(OPENING FOLDER) And I've been down to see Cassandra and found
some amazing photos. Look at this one of one of the ... This could be the
cover.

**JULIA MOVES TOWARDS ARIEL. ARIEL HOLDS UP HIS HAND. PAUSE.
JULIA SITS.**

ARIEL: Julia – I can't use this story.

JULIA: But ...you just said.

ARIEL: I know what I said.

JULIA: Cover. You said cover.

ARIEL: It's a great story.

JULIA: But ... then –

ARIEL: A truly excellent piece of journalism.

JULIA: Then ... why –

ARIEL: That doesn't change the fact -

JULIA: But, I don't –

ARIEL: That I can't use it. (PAUSE) You know what is happening tomorrow ?

JULIA: How could I not know ?

ARIEL: Well ...

JULIA: How does my story affect that ?

ARIEL: Don't be so naïve.

JULIA: Pardon me.

ARIEL: We may not be the biggest paper but we are certainly read.

JULIA: I'm not saying –

ARIEL: Then how can this story have no affect ? Your words have power. Do you doubt that ? If you do then why did you become a journalist ?

JULIA: My words do have power. Our words have power.

ARIEL: Then you can understand why I can't use it.

JULIA: But it happened.

ARIEL: So you proved.

JULIA: It's the truth.

ARIEL SCOFFS. THE SCOFF TURNS INTO A LAUGH.

JULIA: You're laughing ?

ARIEL: The truth ? You want to talk about the truth.

JULIA: Why are you laughing ?

ARIEL: Let me tell you – the truth. (STANDING) Tomorrow is New Year's Day and to begin the New Year major representatives of both parties will sit down together in this city to sign a comprehensive agreement discussed and argued over for almost three years. We are the closest we have ever been to something resembling peace – and you want to destroy that.

JULIA: I'm not destroying anything.

ARIEL: What will this information do to that process ?

JULIA: People will finally know what happened.

ARIEL: I'll tell you what happened. There was an attack. We retaliated. They retaliated. We retaliated again. They accepted responsibility. They apologised. We accepted their apology. It was a massive step in the process.

JULIA: But they didn't do it.

ARIEL: That doesn't matter.

JULIA: Doesn't ... matter. Aren't you Ariel Ramen ? The Editor of The Beacon. The guardian of the media's right –

ARIEL: It doesn't matter.

JULIA: To publish the whole story. No prejudice. No fear.

ARIEL: It doesn't matter who was responsible ! It's over. Those people died. Now we have the chance to stop the killing. How can you consider even for a moment robbing us of that chance ?

JULIA: Seventeen people died in that explosion. Including an eight year old boy. (TAKING PHOTO OUT OF FILE) Look at him. Look at his face. And you want to tell me it doesn't matter who was responsible.

ARIEL: We have all lost people.

JULIA: You want to tell his family -

ARIEL: The paper ... photographers ...

JULIA: Who swore they would have justice –

ARIEL: Hasn't there been enough killing ?

JULIA: That they're looking in the wrong place.

ARIEL: I just want it to stop –

JULIA: Because the people who committed this terrible act –

ARIEL: We all want it to stop !

JULIA: Who blew up a crowded family club on Saturday evening–

ARIEL: There is a –

JULIA: Were not the enemy –

ARIEL: There must be –

JULIA: They were their own people !

SILENCE. **JULIA SITS.**

ARIEL: No good will come of this.

JULIA: We have an obligation to report the truth.

ARIEL: But first you must ask yourself – what is more important ? Truth or peace ?
(PAUSE) Julia, I know how you must feel.

JULIA: You have no idea.

ARIEL: I know you spent a lot of time and effort on this story.

JULIA: Six months.

ARIEL: And placed yourself in considerable danger to get the information.

JULIA: I was shot at – twice !

ARIEL: I know it must be very ... disappointing -

JULIA: That's one word for it.

ARIEL: To see all that go to waste.

JULIA: Yes it is. So why didn't you stop me ? If you didn't want the story why didn't you pull me off it ? I could've written a belly dancing feature for our new Happy Times.

ARIEL: Even after all the tings I've seen I still didn't think ...

JULIA: Think what ?

ARIEL: That this was possible.

JULIA: Well now you know. You see how appalling this act was. To kill seventeen of our own people just to make them look bad. And remember - the men who ordered this are still in power. If you do this – you're letting them get away completely without blame.

PAUSE.

ARIEL: Eighteen months and eleven days ago, before you came here, there was a similar blast in another part of the city. This time no one claimed responsibility. It was a minor incident. Small numbers of casualties. Only three people died. One of them was my son. (PAUSE) I will never be able to forget the pain of losing my own child. I never want any other father to go through that. If this agreement tomorrow has the chance of saving even one father's child then I will do everything I can to make sure it goes ahead.

PAUSE.

JULIA: It's a good story.

ARIEL: It's a dangerous story. And while the treaty holds I give you my word it will not appear in this newspaper.

JULIA: They killed eighteen people.

ARIEL: And this story will kill more.

JULIA: I could take it to somebody else. Someone who wasn't as flexible with their principles.

ARIEL: Not while you work for me.

JULIA: Then maybe I won't work for you.

ARIEL: I'm asking you not to.

JULIA: I'm asking you to print it.

ARIEL: Maybe this isn't about the truth. Maybe the truth doesn't matter anymore. Maybe we've found something far more important. Life. Or maybe it's about something else. Something completely different. You.

JULIA: Me ?

ARIEL: Maybe what you're really concerned about is not the truth being revealed but that you'll miss out on the chance to become the journalist who uncovered the biggest scandal of the year.

JULIA: Maybe. Either way it doesn't change the fact that my story is one hundred percent truth.

ARIEL: Then you have a choice. Truth or life ?

JULIA: I have a choice.

ARIEL: If you really want to I can't stop you getting this story out. What am I going to do - kill you ? (PAUSE) It is your choice.

JULIA: Thank you.

ARIEL: But before you go I want to give you something. Another photograph for you to consider.

ARIEL TAKES A PHOTO FROM HIS WALLET. HE HANDS IT TO JULIA.

ARIEL: That is David. He was my son. When you look at the little boy – look at my son as well. They are both in your hands.

ARIEL SITS. HE BEGINS TO READ.

JULIA LOOKS AT THE PHOTO. PAUSE.

ARIEL: Sorry. I have a deadline. Then I must get home to my family. And so should you. After all - it is New Year's Eve.

JULIA NODS. SHE GOES TO THE DOOR. SHE STOPS AND LOOKS BACK AT ARIEL. SHE IS ABOUT TO SPEAK BUT STOPS HERSELF. SHE EXITS.

THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND HER. ARIEL LOOKS UP. HE DROPS HIS PAPERS ON TO THE DESK AND SLUMPS BACK IN HIS CHAIR.

LIGHTS FADE.

8. The Choice

Vince's Apartment. Bali. 9pm.

VINCE sits at a coffee table. On the table pills, plastic packets, a needle. **ROD** sits nearby. They both stare at the table.

Long Pause. Eventually:

VINCE: So, how can I help you ?

ROD: It's okay.

VINCE: (SUDDENLY ANGRY) Don't you – Don't you tell me it's okay ! I know it's okay. Don't – you – tell – me ... !

ROD HOLDS UP HIS HANDS.

VINCE: What now ?

ROD: Nothing.

VINCE: (HOLDING UP HAND) What is this ?

ROD: Nothing.

VINCE: Just don't tell me it's okay. I know it's okay. Now, I say again. How can I help you ?

ROD: Just thought I'd drop by.

VINCE: Long way to just "drop by".

ROD: Just thought I could -

VINCE: Don't say talk Rod. Just don't say *talk* !

ROD: Wish you a Happy New Year.

VINCE: Well "Happy New Year." Now piss off. I'm busy.

ROD: Christ Vince. (PAUSE) Look, it's New Year's Eve, You shouldn't be alone on New Year's Eve.

VINCE: I'm perfectly happy to be alone.

PAUSE.

ROD: Alright. I'll go. But first I just want to give you something.

VINCE: What you gonna give me Rod ? A blowjob ? Be my guest. But don't say advice. Please don't say advice.

ROD: It was something somebody once gave to me.

VINCE: Is this like a Kenny Rogers song Rod ? When you were a little boy, out on the prairie, your daddy gave you your first bum fuck ?

ROD: (LAUGHS) You're all fired up.

VINCE: Yeah – I'm fired up Rod. All fired up. That's how I'm feeling. That's what I feel. Is it okay to feel like that – Rod ?

ROD: What do you want me to say ?

VINCE: How about sure ? Let's try *sure*.

ROD: Sure.

VINCE: Perfect.

ROD: Sure. (PAUSE.) Looks like your all set then.

VINCE: My one way ticket to wonderland.

ROD: And then ?

VINCE: Don't give – Don't give me that crap, Rod. If you give me that crap you can fuck off right now ! This is it. This is all that matters. This moment – right now. (HOLDING UP PACKETS) This, this and this.

ROD HOLDS UP HIS HAND.

VINCE: What is that ? What are you doing ? What is this ?

VINCE HOLDS UP HIS HAND. ROD LOWERS HIS HANDS.

ROD: All fired up.

VINCE: All fired up.

PAUSE.

ROD: How long have I known you ?

VINCE: I don't know Rodney. How long have you *known* me ?

ROD: Six years.

VINCE: That long.

ROD: All I'm asking –

VINCE: Yes.

ROD: All I'm asking is that you listen to me. One minute for each year.

VINCE: He's got it all worked out, haven't you Rod ? All worked out. A catch phrase for every convo. Mr Dial-a-Cliché.

ROD: Six minutes. Then I'm out the door.

VINCE: What about one more for next year ? You want one for that as well.

ROD: It's not next year yet.

VINCE: Oh but it soon will be. And by then I'll be well and truly in la-la-land.

PAUSE.

ROD: Six minutes is all I need.

VINCE: Six minutes. Mr Dial-a-cliché.

ROD: It's your choice.

VINCE: I know it's my choice.

ROD: I'm just reminding you.

VINCE: But I already know it's my choice. You don't have to remind me of anything. (PAUSE) Six minutes. And then you'll piss off ?

ROD: If that's what you want.

VINCE: Leave me alone to get down to business. See in the New Year.

ROD HOLDS UP HIS HANDS.

VINCE: Can we please lose the hands ?!

ROD LOWERS HIS HANDS.

VINCE: So, do I drop a flag or something ?

ROD: Flag ?

VINCE: To indicate when you're six minutes is to begin. Your six minutes of cliché filled splendour.

ROD: As you wish.

VINCE: I do wish.

VINCE PICKS UP AN EMPTY PACKET. HE DROPS IT TOWARDS THE FLOOR. THEY WATCH AS IT FLOATS TO THE GROUND.

VINCE: The flag is dropped. Come on Rod, I'm listening. Let the magic roll.

PAUSE

ROD: What you're going through –

VINCE: Ah – hah.

ROD: What you're ... experiencing now.

VINCE: And am about to experience.

ROD: It will –

VINCE: Give it to me.

ROD: Pass. It will pass.

PAUSE.

VINCE: It will pass. (LAUGHS) Shit Rod, that's good stuff. How long did it take you to think that up ? Whole flight ?

ROD: About as long as it took you to decide to do this. Because if you stopped, if you thought about it for one second, you'd realise how wrong it was.

VINCE: Wrong ? Is that the best you can do ?

ROD: How this is not an answer.

VINCE: This is the only answer.

ROD: You know that isn't true.

VINCE: All I know is that nothing you say is true. Your words, your cliches. They don't mean anything.

ROD: Everything means something.

VINCE: A million words of love, a million words of hate. Nothing.

ROD: Listen to yourself.

VINCE: Words mean nothing. The only thing that means anything is sitting on this table. Ready and waiting.

ROD: Everything means something.

VINCE: No. Nothing. Nothing ! Nothing means anything. Except for this. This is definite. This is real. This means something. I know that if I take this pretty soon I will feel okay. I won't care anymore.

PAUSE.

ROD: Can I tell you something ?

VINCE: How much will it cost me ?

ROD: This is free of charge.

VINCE: No. I don't want anything for free.

ROD: (INDICATING THE TABLE) This doesn't mean anything. And in your heart you know that. This is only going to make what you're going through worse.

VINCE: No. No !

VINCE PUSHES ROD UP AGAINST THE WALL. HE HOLDS HIM THERE.
SILENCE.

VINCE: Don't you – Don't you tell me what to do ! Never ever tell me what to do.

ROD: Do you want me to go ?

VINCE: No, I don't want you to go. I just want you not to say anything. I want you to sit there and not say a single word. No more sounds. No more words. Words are our enemies. Only actions now. Actions that mean something. That change something.

VINCE LETS ROD GO. HE SITS.

VINCE: The deal is on the table. Something is sitting on the table. Something that means something.

PAUSE. VINCE BEGINS TO OPEN THE PACKET ON THE TABLE.

ROD: So that's -

VINCE: No words.

ROD: You're just going -

VINCE: No – words.

ROD: Am I meant to just sit here and watch this ?

VINCE: You can stay or you can go. That's your choice.

ROD: Six years and you're just –

VINCE: Your – choice.

ROD: Throwing it away.

VINCE: Howdy doody.

ROD: Is it really worth this ?

VINCE: Something has happened. Something that requires action. This action .

ROD: Is it really that important ?

PAUSE. VINCE LOOKS AT ROD.

VINCE: How can you say that ?

ROD: People leave.

VINCE: Not her. Not – her.

ROD: It happens.

VINCE: No. It doesn't happen. I did everything – right. Everything she wanted. Moved here, bought this place. Had a fuckin' kid.

ROD: Haven't you –

VINCE: No – you listen to me. I did everything right. And then one morning, because she feels like it. She walks out on me. On us. I don't deserve this.

ROD: Bad things happen to good –

VINCE: Shut the fuck up ! For six years. I've tried, to make it work – her way. Your way. Good little boy. Behaving myself. Nine to five, eat shit, wank on Sundays.

ROD: Haven't you heard a single word I've said in six fucking years ?

VINCE: I've listened to every syllable. And you know what ? In the end they don't add up to shit. (PAUSE) I've tried and I've failed, so now I'm going back to something that I know works.

ROD: Only for a very brief time.

VINCE: Any time at all – at least I know it works. I think your time is up.

PAUSE. **ROD STANDS. HE GOES TO SAY SOMETHING.**

VINCE: Don't.

ROD LOOKS AT VINCE.

VINCE: Don't talk. I don't want you to talk anymore.

ROD: You agreed.

VINCE: And so did you. Your six minutes is up. Now, if you'll excuse me.

**VINCE OPENS A PACKET. HE BEGINS TO PREPARE THE DRUGS.
ROD GRABS VINCE'S HAND.**

ROD: Just ...

VINCE: Let go of my hand.

ROD: For one second –

VINCE: Let go of my hand Rod –

ROD: Think of what you're throwing away.

VINCE: Let go of my hand

ROD: Think of your son –

VINCE: Let go of my hand or I'll slice you fuckin' open.

PAUSE. **ROD** RELEASES HIS HAND.

ROD: I want you to know.

VINCE: That's great.

ROD: I just want you to know.

VINCE: So – you – said !

ROD: This means something to me. What you are about to do means something to me.

VINCE: That's great Rod. Absolutely fantastico. Six minutes. Over. Now Happy New Year and fuck – off.

PAUSE. **ROD** STARTS TO LEAVE.

VINCE: So that's it ? Mr Dial-a-Cliché is all Cliched out.

ROD: I've made my choice.

VINCE: Why don't you stick around ? "Let's get this party started right."

ROD: I'm not going to sit by and watch you -

VINCE: Yeah baby !

ROD: Do this to yourself all over again.

VINCE: Ooooh baby !

ROD: That's my choice.

VINCE: Bravo.

VINCE STANDS AND APPLAUDS ROD.

VINCE: There you go Rod. You're very own standing fucking ovation.

ROD LOOKS AT VINCE.

VINCE: Thunderbirds are go.

ROD TURNS TO EXIT. VINCE GOES BACK TO PREPARING.

VINCE: Hey, you never gave me my New Year gift.

ROD: Yeah ?

VINCE: You said you came to give me something. (MOCKING) "A present that somebody once gave to you."

ROD: I already did.

VINCE: Could've fooled me.

ROD: I gave you a choice. And now – you've chosen.

VINCE: Right except for one thing. You never gave it to me. It was my choice. All along.

PAUSE.

ROD: Right again. It is your choice. Even now. (STARTING TO LEAVE)
There's a midnight meeting down at the beach if you want to come.
My time is up.

ROD LOOKS AT VINCE. HE EXITS. PAUSE. VINCE CONTINUES TO PREPARE.

VINCE: My choice. My choice. Wank on that. My choice.

HE STOPS.

VINCE: No. Fuck you Rod. You're not going to ... You're not going to stop me.
My choice. And I choose ...

VINCE GOES BACK TO PREPARING. THE BOY ENTERS, DRESSED IN PYJAMAS. HE WATCHES VINCE. ONLY THE SOUND OF PREPARATIONS.

BOY: Dad ?

VINCE LOOKS UP. HE FREEZES. SILENCE.

VINCE: Go back to bed Mickey.

THE **BOY** DOES NOT MOVE.

VINCE: I said – go – back – to – bed.

THE **BOY** TURNS AND RUNS OFF. VINCE WATCHES HIM GO.

HE LOOKS DOWN AT THE TABLE.

SILENCE. HIS HANDS SLOWLY DROP DOWN TO THE TABLE. HE IS STILL.

LIGHTS FADE.

9. The Dead Son

Chichibu, Tokyo. Kitchen, 10pm.

A kettle is boiling on a kitchen bench. KE-LO enters.

She turns the kettle off and takes a cup from the cupboard. She scoops some green tea leaves into a metal strainer and holds them in a cup. She pours some boiling water onto the strainer.

She leaves the strainer in the tea for a few moments then she removes it. She picks up her tea and blows on it, waiting for it to cool. She sips her tea.

TUNG enters, unseen by **KE-LO**. He stands watching **KE-LO**. **KE-LO** sips her tea.

KE-LO turns and sees **TUNG**. Surprised, she gasps and drops her tea. The cup smashes on the floor. Pause.

KE-LO sways and stumbles towards the table. She sits. Pause. **TUNG** moves towards the broken cup.

KE-LO: No. Leave it.

TUNG: I should ...

KE-LO: I will do it later.

TUNG: But your back ...

KE-LO: My back is fine. (PAUSE) Sit with me.

TUNG MOVES TO THE TABLE. HE SITS. KE-LO LOOKS AT HIM.

KE-LO: You scared me.

TUNG: Scared ? You should know my face by now.

KE-LO: Surprised. You surprised me. You appeared so ... suddenly.

TUNG: The gate was open.

PAUSE.

TUNG: No tears now. You have cried enough.

KE-LO: I think I shall never stop crying.

TUNG: You have cried enough.

KE-LO: You have been away so long ... this time. Where have you been ?

TUNG: No questions.

KE-LO: So long. Why ?

TUNG: No questions.

KE-LO: Who are you to say 'no questions' ?

TUNG: We have this time. Let us share it.

KE-LO: Share ? But what shall we do ?

TUNG: Talk. Say things that need to be said.

KE-LO: But Twan should be here.

TUNG: I came when I knew.

KE-LO: You always come when ...

TUNG: Knew that he won't ...

KE-LO: Be here. (BEAT) He has suffered too.

TUNG: You have suffered most. (BEAT) How is he ?

KE-LO: Better. He works.

TUNG: So do you.

KE-LO: He is busy.

TUNG: He was always busy. You made time for me.

KE-LO: I always made time for you.

TUNG: You loved me.

KE-LO: I loved you.

TUNG: More than anything.

KE-LO: Even more than ...

TUNG: I knew. I always knew.

KE-LO REMEMBERS SOMETHING. SHE STANDS, SUDDENLY.

KE-LO: Did you see your lilies ? I have looked after them.

TUNG: I saw them.

KE-LO: You came in through the garden. You must've have ...

TUNG: They are beautiful.

KE-LO: But the garden is so small.

TUNG: Big enough.

KE-LO: I know what they are called now. Stargazer lilies. I thought if I looked after them, kept them alive, then you would know that we were always here. Always ...

TUNG: And I do.

KE-LO: (SUDDENLY DARKER) But there is no sun now.

TUNG: It shines still.

KE-LO: Just clouds and rain. Your flowers stare up at a grey wall. The sun is dead where we live.

TUNG: But it is shining right now.

PAUSE.

KE-LO: How long will you stay ... this time ?

TUNG: More questions.

KE-LO: You have been away so long.

TUNG: I am here now.

KE-LO SUDDENLY GOES TO A DRAW. SHE TAKES OUT A SMALL BELL. SHE RINGS IT. A DELICATE TINKLE.

KE-LO: Here is your bell. Remember you must keep it by your bed. The Doctor said -

TUNG: Enough now.

KE-LO: In the night, if ever you need us, you can just ... (SHE RINGS THE BELL)
We are in the next room.

TUNG: Enough.

KE-LO: I will hear the bell and come to you. I will ...

TUNG: I remember.

KE-LO: He said that if you had the puffer - you would be alright.

TUNG: And I am.

TUNG STANDS.

KE-LO: You are leaving ? Already.

TUNG: I have little time.

KE-LO: But you ... Your father ...

TUNG: Quiet now. You must listen to me.

KE-LO: You can not leave so soon !

TUNG: Please. You must listen.

KE-LO: Why have you come ?

TUNG: Because it is time.

KE-LO: Time ? For me ?

TUNG: No.

KE-LO: For Twan. No - please. I can not ...

TUNG: I am your son. It is time to -

KE-LO: Forget. I will never forget.

TUNG: Forgive.

KE-LO: Who ? Who must I forgive ?

TUNG: You must forgive.

KE-LO: I am your mother.

TUNG: And I am your son. And you must forgive.

PAUSE. SUDDENLY:

KE-LO: Go. Leave here.

TUNG: I am your son.

KE-LO: My son would not try to take this away from me.

TUNG: Why must I not -

KE-LO: Because it is all I have left. All I ... have ...

SHE COLLAPSES TO HER KNEES. TUNG GOES TO HER. HE KNEELS BESIDE HER AND MAKES THE ACTION OF STROKING HER HAIR, EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT ACTUALLY TOUCHING HER.

KE-LO RESPONDS TO HIS HAND AS IF HE WAS TOUCHING HER.

TUNG: You have my stargazers. You have my photos. You have my love.

KE-LO: I - can - not - bear - this.

TUNG: You are the strongest person I know.

KE-LO: I should've done something.

TUNG: You did everything you could. But now you must do the hardest thing. You must forgive.

KE-LO: For - give. Why ?

TUNG: For me. For - me.

KE-LO: Tung.

TUNG: Ke-lo.

KE-LO: Mother.

TUNG: Son.

TUNG STANDS. HE LOOKS TOWARDS THE DOOR.

KE-LO: No ! Please.

TUNG: Twan will be home soon.

KE-LO: But you must wait. You must talk to him.

TUNG: I can not.

KE-LO: He must know..

TUNG: I - can - not.

TUNG GOES TO THE DOOR.

KE-LO: Why must you always leave ?

TUNG SMILES.

TUNG: Look after my lilies. Keep them gazing up - at the sun.

KE-LO: The stars.

TUNG: The sun.

TUNG EXITS. KE-LO WATCHES WHERE HE HAS GONE. PAUSE.

TWAN ENTERS FROM THE FRONT DOOR. HE SEES KE-LO ON THE FLOOR.

TWAN PLACES HIS BAG DOWN. HE GOES TO KE-LO AND PICKS HER UP. HE PLACES HER BACK IN THE CHAIR.

TWAN GOES TO THE BROKEN CUP ON THE FLOOR. HE PICKS UP THE PIECES AND PLACES THEM IN THE BIN. HE TAKES A CLOTH AND WIPES THE SPILT TEA FROM THE FLOOR. HE PLACES THE CLOTH NEATLY BACK OVER THE TAP.

HE SITS NEXT TO KE-LO. SILENCE.

KE-LO: Our son came home today. (PAUSE) He came through the garden, past his lilies. He thanked me for looking after them. I asked him to stay ... I asked him to wait for you ... but he would not. (SMILING) He told me to keep his lilies gazing up at the stars.

TWAN: The sun.

KE-LO: The stars.

PAUSE.

TWAN: (STANDING) I will make some tea.

TWAN GOES TO THE COUNTER.

KE-LO: (SUDDENLY ANGRY) How can you be like this ? So cold. Your son returns. Your only son. He returns to us and you say nothing. Nothing ! How can you be so cold.

TWAN: Sit down my love. We will have some tea.

KE-LO GOES TO HIM. SHE BEGINS STRIKING HIM.

KE-LO: No ! I want you to say something. Our son has come back to us. Our son. I want you to say something.

TWAN SLOWLY GRABS HER ARMS. HOLDING THEM. WE HEAR ONLY KE-LO'S BREATHING, THEN:

TWAN: You were asleep. You were dreaming. (PAUSE) You were asleep. You were dreaming.

KE-LO MOVES AWAY FROM TWAN.

TWAN: And in your dream ...

KE-LO: I heard a ringing.

TWAN: A tiny bell ...

KE-LO: Calling me from my dream.

TWAN: You knew.

KE-LO: A mother knows. A mother always knows -

TWAN: When their child is in danger. You heard the bell

KE-LO: Through the paper thin wall between us.

TWAN: You heard him gasping for breath.

KE-LO: I rose from my bed and I ran into his room.

TWAN: You saw him on the bed ...

KE-LO: Choking and blue.

TWAN: You gave him his puffer.

KE-LO: Choking and blue.

TWAN: You placed the puffer in his mouth.

KE-LO: Choking and ...

TWAN: Soon he was better. No more choking. His was breathing again. You saved him. You saved our son.

KE-LO: blue ...

PAUSE. **KE-LO** LOOKS UP AT **TWAN**. **TWAN** IS SURPRISED, CONCERNED.

KE-LO: I did not hear the bell.

LONG PAUSE.

TWAN: He did not ring the bell.

KE-LO: I did not run to his room.

TWAN: We did not run to his room.

KE-LO: We slept on.

NOW THE TEARS ARE **TWAN'S**.

TWAN: We slept ... on.

KE-LO: But in the morning we ...

TWAN WATCHES **KE-LO**.

KE-LO: In the morning ... I woke up.

TWAN EMBRACES HIS WIFE. HE IS SOBBING NOW.

TUNG EMERGES FROM THE SHADOWS AT THE REAR OF STAGE,
WHERE HE HAS BEEN WATCHING.

KE-LO LOOKS UP TO SEE HIM. **TUNG** SMILES AND TURNS TO EXIT.

KE-LO WATCHES HIM LEAVE.

THE LIGHTS FADE.

10. The First Fireworks.**Sydney, Australia. Midnight. A bench on a hillside.**

DAWN, a frail woman in her sixties enters, wearing a white hospital gown. Her feet are bare. She slowly makes her way to the bench. She sits on the bench, panting heavily.
Pause.

HELEN, a well-dressed woman in her late thirties enters.

HELEN: Mum ? Mum !

SHE GOES TO **DAWN**.

HELEN: What are you doing ? Dad's going out of his mind.

DAWN: He'll be alright.

HELEN: The whole hospital's turned upside down. Everybody's looking for you.

DAWN: But you're the only one who found me.

PAUSE.

HELEN: How did you get up here ?

DAWN: There's a hole in the fence.

HELEN: I know but how did you get up here ? The steps almost killed me.

DAWN: I'm not sure.

HELEN: It's a good spot. Wonder more people don't get up here.

DAWN: They don't know about the hole.

PAUSE.

DAWN: Shouldn't you be at your party ?

HELEN: I was until Dad called and told me you'd vanished.

DAWN: He will be annoyed.

HELEN: Dad ?

DAWN: No. What's his name ?

HELEN: You know his name.

DAWN: Do I ? What is it again ? Gordon, Gormond –

HELEN: Garan.

DAWN: That's right – Garan. Sounds like some kind of rash. "Oh no. I've got a nasty case of Garan on my arse."

HELEN: Mum, he's my husband.

DAWN: More fool you. I always liked that other one. Simon. He was –

HELEN: Wet.

DAWN: Considerate. He was always so nice to me.

HELEN: Probably fancied you.

DAWN: Me ? Really ?

HELEN: Really.

DAWN: But I'm twice his age.

HELEN: Trust me.

DAWN: Garan reminds me too much of someone else.

HELEN: Who ?

DAWN: My husband.

HELEN: Dad's alright.

DAWN: You try being married to him for forty years.

PAUSE.

HELEN: Come on, we better get you back.

DAWN: I'm not going back.

HELEN: Don't be silly Mum. Come on.

DAWN: Helen – I'm not going back. I hate that awful room full of all that stuff. People keep ringing me and saying "What can I bring you ?" I say, "Don't bring me anything !" I don't want any more things.

DAWN TAPS THE BENCH ALONG SIDE HER. HELEN SITS.

DAWN: Beautiful clothes. They look very expensive.

HELEN: They are. So I guess Gormond is good for one thing.

DAWN: (TAPPING HELEN'S STOMACH) Maybe two.

DAWN: How did you work it out where I was ?

HELEN: It wasn't hard. New Year's Eve. Where else would you be ?

DAWN: My chair. My view. Surprised you remembered where it was.

HELEN: Come on Mum, it hasn't been that long.

DAWN: Five years.

HELEN: Five ? Really.

DAWN NODS. PAUSE.

HELEN: I still remember when you first brought me here. I was eight years old.

DAWN: Long time ago.

HELEN: Twenty years. (PAUSE) I remember it like yesterday. We got here just as the sun was going down. My little legs got tired so you had to carry me up the last fifty steps. And I kept asking: "What is it Mum ? Why are we here ?" And you just smiled and said : "We're going to my chair. The best view in the city."

DAWN: I remember.

HELEN: And I kept asking: "But what are we going to see ?" And you wouldn't answer. You just put your finger over my lips and said:

DAWN: "You'll see my love."

HELEN: And then when it got dark you pointed to the sky and said "Look" and suddenly the sky was full of light. Huge explosions of colour. Orange, pink, blue, green. And noise. Terrible noise. I had to cover my ears the

HELEN: (CONT) explosions were so loud. I'll never forget it. Looking up at that clear night sky, the colour and the stars. The muffled explosions ringing in my ear. It was my first fireworks.

DAWN: You never forget your first fireworks.

HELEN: Did you ever bring Dad here ?

DAWN SHAKES HER HEAD.

DAWN: No matter how much I loved your father I needed to keep something to myself. And this was mine. My chair and my fireworks.

HELEN: But you brought me here.

DAWN: Back then when I thought of you - it wasn't like we were two people. We were the same person so it made sense to bring you. I knew it would mean the same for you as it did to me. Maybe I thought you needed to see it.

HELEN: Do you still think that ? We're one person.

DAWN: Sometimes. (PAUSE) I knew you'd come. I wanted it to be just the two of us. Me and you. Our twentieth anniversary fireworks.

HELEN: It's not fair to Dad. He should be here too.

DAWN: I've said my goodbyes to him. And besides forty year's of being a wife, thirty years of being a mother. About time to just be me.

HELEN: Mum –

DAWN: This is my last fireworks Helen. And I wanted to share them with you. If I can't play favourites now, then when can I. Can I tell you something ?

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: Big secret. Biggest secret ever. Never told before.

HELEN: Tell me.

DAWN: Not even your father knows.

HELEN: Cross my heart and hope to die.

DAWN: Before you were a born - I always wanted a boy.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My own little Tiger Tim. My Percy Piddler.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: But once you came out – once I saw the child you were, the woman you were growing into – I got down on my hand and knees and thanked God for sending me such a gift. I have been so lucky to have you as my daughter.

DAWN PRESSES HER EAR TO HELEN'S STOMACH.

DAWN: Promise me something ?

HELEN: What ?

DAWN: That you'll bring her one day to watch the fireworks. And tell her about me.

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: What was, what is and what is about to be. Three generations of Pringles.

HELEN: Our name is Heath.

DAWN: My husband's name is Heath.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My name is Pringle. And so is yours. Helen Pringle Heath.

HELEN: It's actually Rogers now.

DAWN: But you're still a Pringle. You are continuing in a long line of proud, strong Pringle women. (PAUSER) I remember when we almost lost you. About a month before you were due.

HELEN: Don't remind me. I still get goose bumps.

DAWN: I woke up in the middle of the night. Blood everywhere. Neil rushed me to the hospital. I was haemorrhaging. Seemed you were just too big for me to keep inside. They thought they were going to lose you. And me. Had to get you out – right away.

HELEN: Christ.

DAWN: And they did.

HELEN: Lucky for me.

DAWN: Your father sat beside my bed all night. Holding my hand. I think that's why I made it through the night. Hung in so long. Just looking up at his eyes. I knew he wouldn't be able to bear losing me. So I pulled through. I survived. Like my mother before me and her mother before. We're survivors. Just like you. That's why I never had any more children.

HELEN: I feel like I should say sorry.

DAWN: Why ? We already had the most wonderful child you could hope for. A beautiful baby girl. How could we begrudge God that.

HELEN WIPES AWAY A TEAR.

DAWN: Don't be sad my daughter. I've had a good life. People who loved me. A husband who worshipped me. A daughter. I had a home. I had a family.

HELEN: I'm going to miss you.

DAWN: And I'm going to miss you. Just don't be so successful in your work you forget to be a good Mum. And if Gormond ever starts rooting around – tell him to piss off.

HELEN: Thanks for the advice.

DAWN: Your welcome.

DAWN LOOKS AT HELEN. SHE TAKES HELEN'S FACE IN HER HANDS AND STROKES HER HAIR.

DAWN: Twenty years. It all goes by so ... fast.

HELEN SMILES. DAWN LIES DOWN ON THE BENCH. SHE PUTS HER HEAD ON HELEN'S LAP.

DAWN: I'm just going to lie down for a little while. Wake me up when they start.

HELEN: Mum ...

DAWN: Quiet now. No more words. (PAUSE) No ... more ... words.

DAWN CLOSSES HER EYES. PAUSE. WE HEAR A DISTANT EXPLOSION.

FIREWORKS EXPLODE OVER HEARD, SHOWERING THEM IN
BRIGHT BURSTS OF COLOUR.

HELEN: Mum ... It's starting. (**DAWN DOES NOT RESPOND.**) It's starting.

BUT **DAWN DOES NOT MOVE. HELEN WATCHES THE FIREWORKS.**

FADE.