

Scenes from an Affair

(Part 3 of The FAST LOVE Trilogy)

a play

by

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Cast

A. Director. Male. Early thirties.

B. Actor. Female. Mid to late twenties.

A city. Now.

Scenes From An Affair

was first performed by

The Arena Theatre Company

at

The Gauloises Warehouse
Cape Town, South Africa

On March the 31st, 2000

with the following cast:

A: Jan Ellis

B: Anthea Thompson

The production was directed by **Christopher Weare.**

1. Begin the Beguine

In darkness, we hear music : “Gymnopedes” by Erik Satie.

SLOWLY THE LIGHTS COME UP TO REVEAL **A** AND **B** STAND IN SPOTLIGHTS ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE.

B DRESSED IN PERIOD COSTUME, IS WATCHING SOMETHING, SMILING.
A ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

A: So what is the story of this play ? It’s a story about a man, a young man, let’s call him an artist. He meets a lady, a beautiful lady and falls in love with her. They get married and for a short time he lives in a state of total bliss. But then one day she gets sick and dies. He is heartbroken and each night he goes to lie on his lover’s tomb to weep for her loss. Then one dark night in the graveyard he is visited by a dream, a nightmare, a terrible vision – where all is revealed. And after that, what he thought was real, no longer seems real and what he thought was illusion is suddenly larger than life. And the subject of this dream, the trigger of this transformation ?
Read on.

FADE.

2. Aphrodite.

Bar. Upstage, a copy of the Venus de Milo.

A AND B ENTER, LAUGHING.

A: He didn't say that.

B: He did.

A: Lauren Bacall ?

B: The one and only.

A: Now that's a line.

B: A very unsuccessful one.

THEY REACH THE TABLE.

B: Now this is more like it.

A: Few less Romeos.

B: (SITTING) So far.

A: What are you having ?

B: Champagne.

A: Champagne. My pleasure.

A EXITS. B LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. SHE LOOKS AROUND THE BAR, SMILING. A RETURNS WITH DRINKS – A CHAMPAGNE FOR HER, A MINERAL WATER FOR HIMSELF.

B: That was quick.

A: One champagne with strawberry.

B: Very large strawberry.

A SITS.

B: I've never been here before.

A: No ?

B: I've walked past it lots of times but I've never actually been inside.

A: Well, not anymore.

B: It's quiet nice. Very ... Mediterranean.

A: Greek. Thus the name.

B: "Aphrodite" ?

A: The Goddess of Love.

B: I thought that was Lauren Bacall.

A: No. You're Lauren Bacall.

THEY LAUGH.

A: Cheers.

B: Cheers.

THEY CLINK GLASSES AND DRINK.

B: Very nice.

A: French ?

B: South Australian. Definitely. (REMOVING HER STRAWBERRY)
Why do they put strawberries in the champagne ?

A: I don't know. Why do they put strawberries in champagne ? Makes it taste better.

B: It might taste better if you liked strawberries.

A: But you don't like strawberries ?

B: Uh – huh.

B OFFERS THE STRAWBERRY TO A.

A: I think that might be a little too champagne soaked for me.

B: That's right. You don't, do you ?

A: No.

B: Never ?

A: I used to. Too much. That's why ...

B: I see. Very wise.

A: Eventually. Life is a lot less dramatic now.

B: Sounds interesting.

B OFFERS A A CIGARETTE.

A: No. I've got my own. (HE PULLS OUT A CIGAR AND STARTS TO SMELL IT)
So, what did you think ?

B: I'm not sure.

A: Come on. You can tell me. What did you think ?

B: It was okay.

A: Only okay ?

B: I didn't really like what she did.

A: Katie ? I thought she was alright.

B: It was all really general. White noise.

A: White noise ?

B: Unclear. Fuzzy. Like on a TV set.

A: I'm not up on all these technical terms.

B: Shut up. I just didn't think she - got it.

A: Maybe. (PAUSE) She did get better though.

B: True.

A: In the second act. She did have her moments.

B: The shopping bag ?

A: Now that was good.

B: (UNCONVINCED) Yes.

A: "Oh my God ! My potatoes are green !"

B LOOKS AT HIM.

A: Stick to directing ?

B: Probably best.

A: If you ask me, it was the script that was white noise. On stage, nothing can be superfluous. Everything means something. Every comma, every syllable, every movement. If I was to reach over and touch your hand now. In life that wouldn't mean much.

HE TOUCHES HER HAND.

A: But on stage, it means everything.

PAUSE. SHE MOVES HER HAND AWAY.

B: Where's ... ?

A: Karen ? Home. I guess. She's had a big week. And Ian ?

B: Same. Or he still might be at work. He's been flat out.

A: What's he working on ?

B: He's designing "Streetcar". He's built this fantastic set but there's one problem.

A: Yes ?

B: It keeps falling down.

A: Hazardous for the Thespians.

B: It's a very complicated design.

PAUSE.

A: How's things going between you two ?

B: Fine.

A: In the past, there was some ... wasn't there ?

B: It's settled down now.

A: Sorry. It's none of my business.

B: Not really. And Karen ?

A: Early days. She's a great girl, very good to me. We'll just have to wait and see.

B: (REFERRING TO CIGAR) Are you ever going to light that ? Or are you just going to sit there and smell it all night ?

A: Sorry.

A LIGHTS THE CIGAR AND TAKES A BIG DRAG.

B: Very impressive.

A: What ?

B: The cigar. Didn't Oscar Wilde smoke cigars ?

A: I think his were a little bigger than this.

B: Impressive nonetheless.

A: Would you like one ?

B: No, I couldn't.

A: Sure you could. You're a big girl.

B: I'll cough my lungs out.

A: It's not much worse than a cigarette. Trust me.

HE HOLDS OUT THE CIGARS. SHE TAKES ONE.

A: The trick is learning to smoke them properly.

B: And if you don't.

A: You cough your lungs out. Now this is the way I smoke it. You don't have to smoke it this way but you can. (DEMONSTRATING AS HE GOES) First of all I inhale, quite deeply. But I don't draw it right back, not into my lungs. I just breathe it in to the back of my throat , then I roll it around, getting the taste. That's what cigars are all about - the taste. Then I breathe it out. Now this is the tricky part. While I breathe it out, I re-inhale the smoke through my nose and it's some of that diluted smoke that goes down to my lungs and doesn't make me have a coughing fit.

B: Sounds complicated.

A: Not at all. In the end you get both. Taste and satisfaction. Now you try.

B: Let me watch one more time.

HE DEMONSTRATES AGAIN.

A: Now you.

SHE TAKES A DRAG. SHE STARTS COUGHING.

B: Think I made a mistake.

A: You inhaled when you should have exhaled.

B: Right.

A: Try again.

SHE DOES.

A: That's better. Did you taste it ?

B: I think so.

A: And how did it taste ?

B: Very ... cigary.

A: Wash it down with some champagne.

SHE FINISHES HER GLASS.

A: Another.

B: Why not ?

A: Sans strawberry ?

B: Yes please. I think I'd like to drink the next one. Not eat it.

A: Back in a sec.

B: Now don't you pick up any strange women at the bar.

A: I only have eyes for you Lauren.

SHE LAUGHS. HE EXITS. **B** SMOKES THE CIGAR. SHE COUGHS AGAIN.

3. Apartment.

A's apartment. **A** AND **B** ENTER.

B: Yes !

A: Yes what ?

B: Yes, I am definitely too drunk to drive home.

B FLOPS DOWN ON SOFA.

A: Coffee ?

B: Strong and black.

A: (INDICATING CD PLAYER) Pick a song. That is if you're not too "strawberried".

B: It's your fault. You made me eat them.

A: All five ?

B: It was a little excessive. But you me – Vivien Leigh.

A: What happened to Lauren ?

B: Got bored. Went home.

A: Same to you.

B: Go. Make coffee.

A: Choose song.

A EXITS. **B** GOES THROUGH CDs.

B: Duran Duran.

A: (OFF) Don't lie. You've got them too.

B: Do not.

A: Yeah, yeah.

B: (PICKING OUT CD) I wasn't even born when this came out ?

A: Hey, I'm not that ancient.

B: Aren't you ? ABBA. Now that's more like it.

A: No. No. This is an AFZ.

B: AFZ ?

A: Abba Free Zone.

B: Spoil sport. New Order ? Too eighties. U2 ? Too popular.
Madonna ? Too boring. Richard Clayderman !

A: It was a gift.

B: I don't think so. Time to come out of the closet. (PULLING OUT ANOTHER CD)
Billy Bragg. Now that's more like it.

B PUTS THE CD ON. MUSIC: "WISH YOU WERE HER" - BILLY BRAGG. SHE MOVES, DANCING SLOWLY, DRUNKENLY.

A ENTERS. HE WATCHES HER.

A: Why did you put this on ?

B: Because it's the only decent record you've got. Everything else is crap.

A: I'm touched. Karen brought me this. This is her favourite song.

B: Mine too. (PAUSE) Do you want me to take it off ?

A: No. Leave it. She says that if ever I'm with another woman I should
play this song and think of her.

B: And are you ?

HE LOOKS AT B.

A: No.

THEY KISS. PAUSE.

B: Why did you do that ?

A: I wanted to.

B: Do it again.

THEY KISS AGAIN. THEY BREAK APART.

B: Ian likes this song too.

A: Why does he like it ?

B: Because every girl he sees reminds him of me.

A: I think you're exaggerating slightly.

B: I'm not. Trust me.

PAUSE.

A: How is it going between you two?

B: Oh fine.

A: Really ?

B: Oh "really" ? You meant "really" ? You know, fine.

A: Just fine ?

B: Fine. And what about you ? Really ?

A: She's a nice girl. Intelligent, successful, sexy – takes me out to dinner.

B: Then why aren't you with her tonight ?

A: Because tonight I'm having fun.

B: Yay. Here's to fun.

THEY CLINK GLASSES.

A: Let's just say she doesn't set my heart aflame.

B: Sounds painful.

A: Karen deserves someone better.

A MOVES TOWARDS B. B MOVES AWAY.

B: I never thought I'd be doing this. Feels weird.

A: Mmm.

B: I guess I never thought about you in that way.

A: What changed your mind ?

B: I don't know. Little things. Being around you.

A: When did you first become attracted to me ?

B: Who said I was ? (THEY LAUGH) I think it was at the first meeting. When I saw you took your work so seriously.

A: I always did take my work seriously.

B: Maybe, but I didn't know that. Where's my coffee ?

A: I've always had a crush on you. A huge crush. You must've known ?

B: No.

A: I asked you out didn't I ?

B: That was years ago.

A: Didn't you at least suspect ?

B: I was so screwed up back then I didn't know what I was feeling. Drama school, you know.

A: I have an idea. (EXITS) You were going out with Ian back then too weren't you ?

B: Was I ? So I was. Four years later and I still can't ...

A RETURNS WITH COFFEE.

A: Here we are. Strong and black.

B: Very nice.

B SMELLS IT. SHE TAKES A SIP.

A: Perfect ?

B: Perfect.

THEY KISS AGAIN.

A: I didn't plan this.

B: You didn't.

A: I didn't.

B: I know. Anyway, I don't mind. I'm glad I kissed you.

A: Why ?

B: Because you're a yummy kisser.

A: What a wonderful thing to say.

THEY KISS AGAIN.

B: We shouldn't really be doing this.

A: Probably not.

HE KISSES HER AGAIN.

B: You are a yummy kisser.

A: And you are a big spunk.

B: "Thank you kind sir. You do flatter me with your attention."

LIGHTS CHANGE.

4. Reading.

A PICKS UP HIS COFFEE CUP AND A SCRIPT OFF THE TABLE AND MOVES FORWARD INTO A SPOTLIGHT. HE IS NOW IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM ADDRESSING THE ACTORS.

A: Sorry everyone, Keith has a headache and won't be joining us this morning. So it looks like I'll be reading in for him. (HE SITS ON A CHAIR AND PUTS ON HIS GLASSES) Let's start shall we ?

(READING, GRADUALLY IMMERSING HIMSELF IN THE ROLE) Jacque:
Why does one love ? Why does one love ? How queer it is to see only one being in the world, to have one thought in one's mind, only one desire in the heart, and only one name on the lips – a name which comes up continually, rising like water in a spring from the depths of the soul to the lips, a name which one repeats over and over again, which one whispers ceaselessly. Like a prayer.

A SPOTLIGHT GOES UP ON B SITTING NEARBY, LISTENING TO A READ.

A: I am going to tell you our story, for love only has one, which is always the same. I met her and I loved her, that is all. And for a whole year I have lived on her tenderness, on her caresses, in her arms, in her dresses, on her words, so completely wrapped up, bound and absorbed in everything which came from her that I no longer cared whether it was day or night, or whether I was dead or alive, on this old earth of ours.

PAUSE.

B: I liked the quality you brought to that reading.

A: Excuse me.

B: The empathy. The emotion. Now if Keith could just capture some of what you're –

A: Yes well Keith has his process. As we all do. Moving on. Katie.

LIGHTS FADE.

5. Afterwards

A's apartment.

B ENTERS, PUTTING ON HER COAT. **A** ENTERS, FOLLOWING HER.

A: You're going.

B: Yes I better. Ian said he'd call later on.

A: Right.

B: You understand ?

A: Of course.

B IS READY TO LEAVE. THEY FACE EACH OTHER. PAUSE.

B: Well, that was ... unexpected.

A: But nice.

B: Yes. (PAUSE) Look don't get me wrong, it was great. I mean I did enjoy it - but I think it's best if we just make it a one off.

A: Okay.

B: It's probably for the best.

A: We are both involved.

B: It's not just that. We're working together. You're my director. It could get messy.

A: Very true.

B SMILES. **A** ALSO. PAUSE.

B: Well, I better go.

A: You better.

B KISSES **A**.

B: See you tomorrow at rehearsals.

A: Nine O'clock.

B: Sharp.

SHE STARTS TO LEAVE. STOPS.

B: I hate to leave like this.

A: It's okay.

B: It is ?

A: We've got it out of our systems now.

B: We're still friends.

A: Of course. (HE GOES TO HER) Listen, it happens. You're attracted to someone. You go out for a few champagnes, or in my case mineral waters – you have some fun, you laugh a lot and you end up ... Nothing's going to change. I'm still you're director. You're still my leading lady. It never happened.

B: Thanks.

A: No one else will ever know.

B: Ian would kill me. And you.

A: He'll never know. It's dead and buried.

BLACKOUT.

6. Bed

a. Crazy

DARKNESS. **A** AND **B** ARE IN BED. THEY CLIMAX. LIGHTS UP. **A** AND **B** LIE BESIDE EACH OTHER, PANTING.

B: I feel like I've just given birth.

A: I wish I could say the same.

B KISSES **A**.

B: This is crazy.

A: Absolutely.

B: Absolutely crazy.

A: Totally.

B: Totally absolutely crazy.

A: Exactly.

B: Exactly totally absolutely crazy.

A: My words precisely.

B: My words precisely exactly totally –

A LAUGHS. HE GRABS **B** AND KISSES HER.

B: I thought we decided we weren't going to do this again.

A: Terrible aren't we ?

B: So what do we do now ?

A: Wait for half an hour and run the scene again.

BLACKOUT.

b. Lush

A AND B CHANGE POSITIONS. LIGHTS. B DRINKING A GLASS OF WATER.

B: Water.

A: Please.

B HANDS WATER TO A.

A: Thank you. (DRINKS)

B: (GETTING OUT OF BED) Where are your t-shirts ?

A: Top draw.

B OPENS THE DRAW AND PUTS ON A MICKEY MOUSE T-SHIRT.

A: Most becoming.

B: Where did you get it ?

A: An opening night present I think.

B LIES ON THE BED.

B: There's no doubt about it. You are lush.

A: I'm what ?

B: Lush. Your body. Your face. Your eyes. Lush.

A: I think that's the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me.

B: Enjoy it while it lasts – sucker.

BLACKOUT.

c. Babble

A AND B CHANGE POSITIONS. LIGHTS. A LIGHTS A CIGAR. HE TAKES A PUFF AND PASSES IT TO B. SHE TAKES A PUFF AND BLOWS THE SMOKE INTO THE AIR.

B: It is rather good isn't it ?

A: Good. It's much better than good. Let's just say we connect.

B: We connect.

A: And when that happens - it's not too bad at all.

B: At all.

A: That's the thing about good acting.

B: Acting ? Excuse me, did I miss something ? How did we get on to acting ?

A: There is some link between the actor and the character, something intangible -

B: (SHE DRAINS A WINE GLASS) Like an empty wine glass.

A: Because the actor and the character are the same. They both feel the same, they both want the same thing at the bottom of their soul. If you tried to explain it, to put it in to words you couldn't but it's there - this invisible string tying them together. This magical oneness. A melding of souls.

B: Do you always talk this much after sex ?

A: Only after good sex. Euphoric babble.

B: Should I take notes ?

A: Don't worry. Tapes will be available in the foyer after the lecture.

B: You're such a ... director.

A: Is that a complement ?

B: I think so.

A: Then thank you. Now where was I ?

B: Something about souls.

A: Connection. It's the same in a relationship. How when two people meet they instantly know they're going to be together. Because deep down they are the same people. They have this connection. This bonding of souls.

B: I thought it was melding. Or was that melting ?

BLACKOUT.

d. Liechtenstein

A AND B CHANGE POSITION. B SMOKES A CIGARETTE.

A: I mean what about love. What ever happened to love ?

B: Love ? Is this like a lecture series ? I'm still catching up to acting.

A: Stay with the tour guide.

B: Tour guide ? I'd say you were drunk but I know you don't drink.

A: One upon a time you meet a nice girl from down the street. And after about a year you'd eventually get up enough courage to ask her out on a date. Then you'd date for about a year and one night you got down on your knees in the snow and proposed.

B: In the snow ?

A: After that you got married, had two kids, moved to the suburbs and spent the rest of your life together in marital and domestic bliss.

B: This is from some play you're thinking of doing.

A: This is real life.

B: Where is this real life ?

A: Liechtenstein.

B: This happens in Liechtenstein ?

A: It used to happen. All the time. But today, you lose your virginity to the boy down the road when you're fifteen -

B: Sixteen.

A: Run off with the boy with the motorbike from next door when you're eighteen -

B: Seventeen, and he had a pushbike.

A: But you end up marrying his brother, the ex-con

B: He didn't have a brother.

A: Whom you divorce when you're twenty-five, then have numerous lovers, re-marry when you're about thirty to an Italian called Boris -

B: An Italian ?

A: Have more numerous lovers, separate fifteen years later -

B: This is from some play.

A: Move back to your old suburb and live out the rest of your life – alone- enjoying occasional visits from your children –

B: When did I have time for kids ?

A: The daughters who are gay accountants and the sons who are lonely curtain makers. Am I making sense ?

B: I'm still in Liechtenstein ?

A: I mean whatever happened to good old-fashioned love ?

B: It's still here. It's just mutated.

A: So that's what we have to look forward to ? Mutated love.

B: Beautiful isn't it. So when am I going to meet my Italian ? I guess Ian counts as my first marriage so when do I get the second ?

A: First you have to have numerous lovers.

B: Are you sure you're not Italian ?

A: Ciao Bella.

THEY LAUGH AND KISS.

B: Are we having fun ? I think we're having fun.

A: I apologise. I promise I'll never do it again.

THEY KISS AGAIN. FADE.

7. Rehearsals

Rehearsal room.

B WEARING REHEARSAL SKIRT AND CARRYING SCRIPT. SHE STEPS OVER A COAT LAIN ON THE FLOOR.

B: Thank you kind sir. You do me much service. The weather has turned against me and I have forgotten my parasol.
 No sir. I go only a short distance.
 Thank you I cannot sir. Accepting an offer from a gentlemen such as yourself would not be proper.
 Please good sir, I wear the brooch of my betrothed.
 He is a good man, excellent and wise. An artist.
 You mock me good sir. You are not an artist. Your garments are too fine.
 (LAUGHS) You lie sir. A great big lie.
 Please sir, I can not. A coach ride may mean much in polite society.
 You are too bold sir. Brazen and bold.
 (SMILES) You are mistaken sir. I do not like your manner. Now I must depart.
 You may not know that sir. Good day.
 Sir, good day.
 (SHE WATCHES HIM GO. SOUND OF COACH MOVING AWAY)
 (A SMILE, THEN SEEING COAT:) Sir ! Your coat. Sir !

LIGHTS COME UP ON A WATCHING NEARBY. **B** TURNS TO HIM. PAUSE.

B: How was that ?

A: Mmm. That's lovely, great. (STANDING) But I think we need to move the coat.

B: I tried to be sterner. Do you think maybe I lost some of her status ?

A: No it's lovely ... lovely. (SEEING SOMEBODY) Keith. Keith !
 Can we have a look at that "Love only has one story" speech ?

B: Can I please have some feedback ? Keith isn't the only member of the cast.

A: It's fine. (EXITING, TO KEITH) I really think there's more we can discover –

B: Some direction – please.

PAUSE. **B** ALONE. SHE TAKES OFF HER REHEARSAL SKIRT AND PICKS UP HER SCRIPT. SHE FLOPS DOWN ON TO THE BED. LIGHTS CHANGE.

8. Fluffy Toys

A's apartment.

B: (READING SCRIPT) "I must depart. I stay too long and the clock has already chimed twelve." (CLOSES EYES) "I must depart. I stay too long and the clock has already struck twelve. (READS) Chimed. Chimed. (CLOSES EYES) "I must depart. I stay too long –"

A ENTERS WITH A LARGE PURPLE FLUFFY TOY.

A: Look what I got.

HE HOLDS IT OUT.

B: What is it ?

A: A fluffy toy. I saw it and I knew you must have it.

B: Must.

A: I had to push buttons and pick it up with this big metal claw. Took me 15 attempts.

B: How much an attempt ?

A: Two bucks.

B: That's a very expensive ... whatever it is. What is it ?

A: Haven't you ever heard of the purple dinosaur ? Very rare, and very dangerous. They're extinct now.

B: Is that so ?

A: They use to stalk their prey at night. When they were fast asleep, they'd sneak up on them and then kiss them to death.

A KISSES B.

B: Aren't you meant to be at rehearsals ?

A: We finished early. Keith had a headache so I sent him home.

B: Keith always has a headache.

A: Keith is a very good actor but he is also a very big pain in the arse.

B: That'll get back. Talking about pains in the arse – Petra.

A: Petulant Petra – what about her ?

B: Well I know this isn't meant to be a problem for us Thespians but I don't get her.

A: What exactly don't you get ?

B: All of her.

A: That much.

B: I mean she just got married.

A: One year ago.

B: Alright, a year ago. And now she's drawn to Henri, the "mysterious but handsome" -

A: Don't forget handsome.

B: stranger.

A: Obviously something's missing in her relationship with Jacque.

B: Something's missing ?

A: Her needs aren't quite being met.

B: Are we talking sexual ?

A: Or emotional, or mental. Whatever. Something's not there so she seeks it out elsewhere.

B: Is that why I'm here ? We're here ? Something's lacking ? Needs aren't being fulfilled.

A: I don't know. Maybe deep down you, me, Petra – we all feel we're missing out on something in our love lives. Like there's something better.

B: And is there ?

A: I think we're in the process of finding that out. All will be revealed at the climax of Act Two.

B: I thought this show only had one act.

A: I'm speaking figuratively.

B: (ANNOYED) Oh figuratively. I love it when people speak figuratively.

B TURNS AWAY FROM HIM. PAUSE. A STROKES HER HAIR. SHE TURNS BACK TO HIM. THEY KISS. THEY KISS MORE PASSIONATELY. LIGHTS FADE.

9. Direction

Rehearsal room.

B, WEARING REHEARSAL SKIRT, IS KNEELING ON THE FLOOR. SHE IS BREATHING HEAVILY, VISIBLY UPSET. **A** KNEELS NEARBY.

SILENCE, EXCEPT FOR **B**'S BREATHING. THEN:

A: Okay. Okay. Just let it go. Try and relax and we'll work it through step by step.

PAUSE. **B**'S BREATHING SOFTENS.

A: Now, how do we find Petra ? She is quite illusive I know, but you have already grasped her confusion. The way she is torn between her own needs and her attraction to both Henri and Jacque. I can see that in your face, your manner in the "Coat" scene. You can trust that very uncertainty as a driving force. You've made the choice. Who knows where it might lead you ? Those first steps are nervous ones but you must take them. You have that connection. Trust it. Trust me.

B NODS. **A** HELPS **B** TO HER FEET.

A: Okay. Once more from "the clock has already chimed". Thank you.

B TAKES UP HER POSITION. BLACKOUT.

10. Short Scene

A's apartment. **A AND B KISSING.**

B: We can't do this anymore.

A: We can't. Why not ? I know. You're becoming a nun.

B: No.

A: You're having a sex change.

B: I'm trying to be serious.

A: Oh sorry.

A LOOKS AT HER MOCK SERIOUS, SHE HITS HIM.

B: This can't last.

A: Maybe not. But gee it's fun while it does.

B: Is that all we are - fun ?

A: Serious, serious, serious.

A KISSES B. SHE MOVES AWAY.

A: Who's know what will last ? The fact is you like me and I like you. We enjoy each other. We have great sex. What else matters ? Who knows how long we've got ? Let's just enjoy it while we can.

B IS SILENT.

A: Unless of course you're not enjoying it. Unless of course you'd rather be with someone else.

B: I don't want to be with anybody else.

A: Then what's wrong ?

B: I don't know. I'm confused.

A: Ah, the "c" words. Starts with the same letter as claustrophobia, commitment, cage, champagne -

B: I don't know what I want.

A: Maybe you should go and talk to Ian. Maybe he knows what's wrong.

B: The last thing in the world I want to do right now is go and talk to Ian. Don't you feel confused too ? About Karen.

A: No.

THEY HUG.

A: A relationship is like a journey. You've just got to be ready to go on it.

B: You're big on journeys today aren't you ? "Nervous footsteps."

A: It was a bit over the top wasn't it ?

B: A little, but the situation called for it. The actress was struggling. (SHE KISSES A ON THE CHEEK.) Keith likes it when you're over the top. I think he's getting a bit of a crush on you.

A: Just what I need.

B: And what I need is a glass of wine. Coffee ?

A: Thanks.

B EXITS. A ALONE.

11. Coat

Rehearsal room.

B DRESSED IN REHEARSAL SKIRT AND BONNET. NO SCRIPT. SHE HOLDS THE COAT FROM SCENE 7.

SHE STANDS WAITING. SHE PACES UP AND DOWN. PAUSE. SHE KNOCKS ON A DOOR. LONG PAUSE. SHE STARTS TO LEAVE BUT HEARS SOMETHING BEHIND HER. SHE STOPS. SHE TURNS AND SMILES.

B: Why kind sir. I have come to return your coat.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

12. Cracks in the Pavement

After rehearsal. A's apartment. A AND B ENTER.

B: (FLOPPING ON TO COUCH) At last.

A: (EXITING TO KITCHEN) Some wine ?

B: What are you doing with wine ?

A: (OFF) I bought some for you.

B: Very thoughtful.

A RETURNS. HE HANDS HER A GLASS OF WINE.

B: Ta. (SHE DRINKS)

A: You were very good today.

B: Was I ?

A: Especially in the coughing scene.

B: Can I get that on my resume ? Under "skills". "Good at coughing". (TAKING SCRIPT FORM HER BAG) Why do the women in these shows always have to die ?

A: So their broken hearted lovers can do wild and tragic things.

B: I see. The girl dies so that the guy can get all the good lines ?

A: Spot on.

B: (READING TITLE PAGE OF SCRIPT) Adapted from the story by Guy de Maupassant. (LOOKING UP) Is this the same Maupassant who ran away from the Eiffel Tower ?

A: "Which so oppressed him with its vulgarity." That's the one.

B: He gets around. Towers, graveyards, Chekov ...

A: All the best places.

B: "Was it a dream ?" What do you actually think of this play ?

A: This dramatisation.

B: Sorry. This dramatisation.

A: I think it works.

B: Is that all ?

A: That's more than enough.

B: I'm worried about Katie.

A: Don't. That's my job.

B: She's really unfocused.

A: There's still two weeks to go and she hasn't been well. Keith's migraine is catching.

B: It's really hard being on stage with her. She doesn't give you anything.

A: You're not on stage yet. She's just having a little trouble finding the role.

B: Katie couldn't find the role with a street map.

A: She'll get there.

B: I wish I could be so sure.

A: It's just the way she works.

B: Bloody funny way.

A: I've seen it before. It comes together.

B: You don't have to act with her.

A: It'll be fine.

B: I don't want it just to be fine. I want it to be good.

A: It will be good.

B: I want it to be great.

A: It will be great. You will be great. She will be great. Everybody will be great. Trust me. I'm the director. I know where we're going.

B: I hope so.

A: Now stop worrying and drink your wine.

B: Maybe I should talk to Ian. He understands my process.

A: Maybe you should.

A MOVES AWAY.

B: I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

A: No that's fine. If you don't trust your director, if you're director can't understand your process - ask your boyfriend. Maybe we can get him in to rehearsals. He can *understand* everybody. Even Keith.

B: It just might help. Surely an actress should do everything she can to improve her performance.

A: You're performance is fine. You are exactly where I want you to be at this moment in time. But if you want a second opinion - fine, ask Ian. The designer. I'm sure he knows a lot about acting.

B: Don't be like that.

A: Like what ?

B: The drama king. Who's over acting now ?

A: The leading lady says she going to ask her boyfriend for direction and I'm overacting.

B: I didn't say that. Anyway I don't know why you're getting so angry. If I remember correctly, yesterday you suggested I should talk to him.

A: That was about your relationship. Not my production.

B: Stop being so petty.

PAUSE.

A: Yes I guess I am being petty aren't I ?

B: Just a tad. This isn't about the play, is it ?

A: Guess not. (PAUSE) I just don't like the thought of you leaving here and going home to him.

B: I don't go home to him. He taps on my window. At 2am.

A: I just would be a lot happier if you didn't see him.

B: So would I.

PAUSE.

A: Do you still sleep with him ?

B: Don't ask me that.

A: Do you ?

B: When I have to. (PAUSE) I can't tell him about us now. We're in the middle of rehearsals and he's got an opening night in three days. Ian's not the most stable of people at the best of times. He'll go berserk. As soon as he opens I'll tell him.

A SMILES.

B: What are you smiling about ?

A: Nothing.

A GOES TO B. THEY KISS. B's CELLPHONE RINGS.

B: Forget it.

THEY KISS AGAIN. THE PHONE KEEPS RINGING.

B: Fuck it.

B PULLS THE PHONE OUT OF HER BAG. SHE ANSWERS IT.

B: (ON PHONE) Hi, it's me. / Sorry, we were listening to a song. Didn't hear it. / Just at Keith's. Having a few post-rehearsal drinks. / No, look I'm really tired. I've got to get some sleep tonight./ You must be bugged too. / Ian, tomorrow night. / Thursday then. / Yes I do want to see you. / Ian, don't say that./ Alright, but only half an hour. Okay. / Okay. (**B HANGS UP.**)

B: I gotta go.

A: I heard.

B: Nothing's going to happen.

A: None of my business.

B: If I don't agree to see him he'll come around anyway. Then it'll really be on.

B STARTS TO LEAVE.

A: Call me later if you like.

B: Will you still be up ?

A: No, forget it. I'll see you at rehearsals.

B: Sleep well.

B SMILES. A TRIES TO RETURN THE SMILE. B LEAVES. A ALONE.

13. Lecture

Hall. A STANDS BEHIND A LECTERN.

A: That's an interesting question. It's a central question of the play and one that I'm hoping to address in this production. (PAUSE) When the author calls the story "Was it a dream?" what *is* he referring to? Was Jacque's vision in the graveyard a dream? Or is he talking about Jacque's life? Jacque and Petra's marriage. Was that the dream? The loved they shared. His "torrent of emotion" for her. Or was it all dream? Husbands, wives, lovers entwined, lovers deceived, life, death, coats, parasols. And if it was, then isn't that what we all searching for? Longing for? The wonderful dream that for a short time lifts us out of the world. A passion that transforms us into Gods and transports us to the realms of the clouds where we reign supreme. Isn't that the "great magic" he is referring to? The best dream of all. One we are all desperate to prolong as long as possible.

A LOOKS OUT AT THE AUDIENCE. PAUSE.

A: Next question.

BLACKOUT.

14. He Knows.

Park. **A** AND **B** SIT ON A BENCH. **B** PUFFS ON A CIGARETTE.

B: He knows.

A: He doesn't.

B: He knows.

A: He doesn't know. How could he ?

B: He just does. Someone's told him.

A: Who ?

B: Someone's seen us together.

A: No one could have seen us together. Unless they've got a telescope.

B: Someone in the cast.

A: Who ?

B: Keith.

A: Keith.

B: I don't know. All of them. They all know.

A: They don't have the slightest idea. We've been trying to act normal so much most of them think we hate each other.

B: I wouldn't be so sure. He looked at me strangely.

A: Keith ?

B: Ian. The other night.

A: Which night ?

B: Thursday. He looked at me weird.

A: You were with me Thursday. Till about twelve. Then you said you had to go home. You did go home didn't you ?

B: It must've been Wednesday then. At the theatre. I saw a run through of his show. He looked at me strangely.

A: Right. (PAUSE) It's starting to rain. Shall we go in ?

- B: It's just drizzle. Why does it always do that ?
- A: What ?
- B: Rain. Just when you don't want it to it always does. And not big rain. Not big Large drops. Splat, splat, splat. Shitty little rain. Teensy, weensy little specks. It's annoying. Spit, spit, spit. On and on.
- A: What's wrong with you today ?
- B: I'm freaking out. He knows.
- A: Well, I wouldn't be surprised.
- B: Why ?
- A: If you keep running off in the middle of the night to see your lover, like Petra.
- B: You're my lover.
- A: So was he. The other night.
- B: I didn't run off to see him. Thursday, Wednesday. It was a slip of the tongue.
- A: Harold Pinter would not agree. "Subtext". That's what he would say. Read the subtext.
- B: It was not subtext. It was no text. It was "I-can't-find-my-fucking-character -I'm-freaking-out" text.
- A: I thought we were talking about something else.
- B: It's both. I'm freaking out about both.
- A: You've got Petra.
- B: No I don't.
- A: Yes you do. You just don't trust it yet. Trust me.
- B: I do trust you.
- A: She said rather unconvincingly. Why do we keep having this conversation ? Whether You believe me or not what you're doing is right. It's good work. As for our performances off stage ...
- B: What about them ?

A: Maybe this was a bad idea. I'm your director. You're my leading lady. I crossed the line. Don't-sleep-with-your-actors. First thing they teach you at Directing School.

PAUSE.

B: Is that what you want to do then ? Not see me anymore.

A: The truth ?

B: No. A lie.

A: The truth is I never want to not see you. The scariest thing is I never want to see you so much. I'm not sure if I give a fuck about anything else but seeing you. I don't care about the play or Jacque or Henri or Petra. Everyone. Even Keith.

B: Not Keith ?

A: No you're right I do care about Keith. And the cricket scores. In fact you and Keith both come a distant second to the cricket scores. (PAUSE) And you ? How do you feel ?

B: I just wish I could get her.

A: I was talking about us.

B: I know you were.

A: Well ?

B: Why do you always ask so many questions ?

A: I'm exploring the character.

B: That's my job.

PAUSE. THEY TOUCH.

A: Will you promise me something ?

B: To buy you an umbrella ?

A: Extra special super promise. Never to be broken.

B: Hold on. What am I promising ?

A: Say it.

B: Alright. Extra special super promise, never to be broken. It's really starting to pour.

A: If you do ever change your mind ... If you do ever want to run off in the rain.

B: I don't want to run *off* in the rain. I want to run *out* of the rain.

A: But if you do – just tell me first. Promise ?

B: I promise. Now can we get out of the rain ?

A: Over here.

THEY RUN DOWN STAGE. THEY HUDDLE TOGETHER UNDER A'S COAT.

B: Anyway, I'd never run off in the rain ?

A: No ?

B: Haven't you read the play ? I'd catch cold and die.

A: Don't do that. I wouldn't like that.

B: Neither would I. Too late. I've probably already got pneumonia. (PAUSE) Hey, how come you always get off so easy in this ? We hardly ever talk about you and Karen.

A: I don't think about Karen.

B: And I don't think about Ian.

A LOOKS AT HER.

B: Well just a little bit. Guilty conscience. You know what they say ?

A: Tell me.

B: Guilt is stronger than love.

A: Who said that ?

B: Someone smart. I think it's stopping.

A: Ready.

A & B: Run.

THEY RUN OFF.

15. Afterglow

A's apartment.

A AND B ENTER, STILL SHELTERING UNDER THE COAT.

THEY START TO UNBUTTON EACH OTHER'S WET CLOTHES. THEY START KISSING AND TUMBLE ONTO THE BED, STILL RIPPING AT EACH OTHER'S CLOTHES.

LIGHTS FADE. MUSIC, THE SATIE RETURNS.

LIGHTS UP HALF.

B: (SIGHS, DRAWN OUT) God ...

LIGHTS FADE ONCE MORE.

16. Breaking up is Hard to do

On one side of the stage **A**'s apartment – **A** sitting on his bed. On the other side **B** sitting on a stool. She is wearing **A**'s coat. They both hold cell phones.

They both look up, thinking for a moment. **B** takes a deep breath. They both dial.

A: (TO PHONE) Helen, it's me.

B: (TO PHONE) Hi.

A: So, how was your day ?

B: Just rehearsing.

A: Oh, bad day. (TO HIMSELF) Great.

B: How's the design going ?

A: Reasonable.

B: The wall fell down *again* ?

A: It's coming along.

B: Hopefully it'll stay up now.

PAUSE.

A: Karen, I've been meaning to ...

B: Learning my lines.

A&B: No, no I'm fine. Big day at rehearsals.

SHORT PAUSE.

A&B: Of course I'm sure.

A: Is it that obvious ?

B: Well, there is something ?

A: Why do I find this so hard ?

B: I don't know how to say it ...

PAUSE.

A&B: I think I've met somebody else.

SHORT PAUSE.

A&B: You don't know her (him).

SHORT PAUSE.

A&B: No of course I haven't slept with them.

A: Nothing's happened.

A & B: I just don't think it's fair for us to keep seeing each other at the moment.

B: I need space.

PAUSE

A: Karen that's not true.

B: Ian, don't say that.

A: I do care about you.

B: I do love you.

A: I didn't mean for this to happen.

B: I wasn't looking for anybody else.

A: We met each other and

A&B: We just clicked.

B: Of course you're special.

A: Yes.

B: No.

A: No.

B: Yes.

A&B: I don't know.

B: I might be making a mistake.

A&B: But I just think it's time to move on.

PAUSE.

A: I'm not saying that.

B: I'm not being cold.

A: I just think it's –

A&B: For the best.

A: Karen, please don't cry.

B: Stop yelling at me.

A: It's got nothing to do with you.

B: Don't say that.

A: Karen, listen ...

B: Ian, you're scaring me.

A: Please Karen.

B: Stop saying that.

A: Don't -

B: Ian.

A&B: I didn't mean that !

A: Karen ? (PAUSE) Karen ?

B: Alright. I'll be there soon.

THEY BOTH HANG UP. THEY LOOK UP, THINKING FOR A MOMENT. **A** SMILES AND LIES BACK ON THE BED. **B** STANDS AND EXITS. FADE.

17. Petra and the Beeper

Theatre. **A** IS STANDING IN THE AUDIENCE.

A: Okay and stand by lights. Stand by sound. Cue lightning.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING ILLUMINATES THE STAGE.

A: And cue thunder.

WE HEAR A LOUD THUNDERCLAP. **B**, IN FULL PERIOD DRESS, MAKES HER WAY ACROSS THE STAGE AS IF THROUGH A THUNDERSTORM.

ANOTHER FLASH OF LIGHTNING FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER THUNDERCLAP.

B STUMBLES AND FALLS. SHE STANDS AND WALKS ON. LIGHTNING AND THUNDER. SHE STUMBLES AGAIN. SUDDENLY WE HEAR A CELLPHONE RINGING.

A: What's that ?

B: Shit.

B SCRAMBLES BACK STAGE. MORE LIGHTNING. MORE THUNDER.

A: Hold it. Lights please.

HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP. THE PHONE STOPS. **B** RETURNS.

B: Sorry. I thought I'd turned it off.

A: Perfect. From the top please. Lights.

LIGHTS DOWN.

18. Repercussions.

Dressing Room. **B IS CHANGING. A ENTERS. HE SITS.**

B: Sorry.

A: Forget it. I'm sure you didn't leave it on on purpose. (PAUSE) Was that who I think it was ?

B: Who else ? (PAUSE. **B SITS**) I don't know.

A: What don't you know ?

B: What are we doing ?

PAUSE.

A: You didn't tell him.

B: I did.

A: You didn't tell him.

B: I did. It's just complicated. I've been with Ian for six years. Not four seconds like you and Karen.

A: Four months.

B: It's still not the same.

A: Don't get angry at me just because you didn't have the guts to break up with Ian.

B: He kept telling me about the design and how he couldn't do it without me.

A: And you believed him ?

B: He can't

A: Welcome to the new Millennium. Now it's not "Stay, I can't live without you." It's "Stay, I can't finish my design."

B: You've never seen his designs. His room is full of stuff. He's an amazing artist.

A: And I'm a shit director ? Is that what you're saying ? Is that why you won't leave him ? Because he's a great designer and I can't direct.

B: Some of your notes are unclear. You waffle.

A: Since when ?

B: Not a lot. Just a little.

A: No one else is complaining.

B: (STANDING) I gotta go.

A: To see him ?

B: No.

A: Where then ?

B: To a casting, if you must know.

A: What for ?

B: Yoghurt, tampons, unleaded petrol. What does it matter ?

A: Well I'll just stay here and waffle on unclearly by myself.

B: Don't be so touchy.

B KISSES HIM ON THE CHEEK. SHE STARTS TO LEAVE.

A: Why do you always do this ?

B: Do what ?

A: Run away. Whenever we start to discuss us you always have an excuse.

B: I have a casting.

A: I'm not talking about now. Whenever things get too hot you fly.

B: I'm not running away but I must go.

A: Just like Petra.

B: I'm not Petra.(EXITS.)

A: (ALONE) And I don't waffle.

BLACKOUT.

19. Breakdown

Stage.

B AGAIN IN PERIOD DRESS, SITTING ON A CHAIR. SHE HOLDS A HANKIE. SHE COUGHS.

B: Jacque I must depart.
 Why do you look at me in such a way ? Your eyes are cold. Fierce and cold.
 I must go for a walk.
 It is a light shower. Nothing more. Water filtered by the sun.
 My dress is in need of repair. I must visit Mrs Henderson, the seamstress.
 The seam is lose. It must be mended or I will come all undone.
 Why do you look at me with such a look ? So odd and inquiring.
 It is only a slight chill. A short stroll will not make it worse.
 Please ... Please do not ...
 Sorry, I've got a problem with this. Sorry Keith.

A: (IN AUDIENCE) What's wrong ?

B: It's nothing.

A: Shall we try again ?

B: Yes, it's just ... Well, I don't understand why she does this. Sorry Keith.

A ENTERS FROM AUDIENCE.

A: This is a run.

B: I know but I just don't understand why makes up such a stupid excuse. She's going to be found out. She must know she's going to be found out.

A: Didn't we talk about this ?

B: But it still doesn't make sense. I'm sorry everyone.

A: It's okay. (HE GOES TO HER) We're rehearsing. This is what rehearsing is for.

B: Just talk me through it again.

A: Petra is anxious. She is nervous about meeting Henri, her lover, at the appointed time. If she doesn't meet Henri she is scared he will think she is not coming and leave for Paris without her. In her agitated state, made worse by the fact that she thought Jacque would not be at home and her deteriorating health, she makes up a desperate excuse about having to go and visit Mrs Henderson.

B: But why Mrs Henderson ?

A: It's all she can think of on the spur of the moment.

B: But that's crazy.

A: Is it? She looks at her dress. It is a little shabby. On the spot – bang.

B: Is she an idiot?

A: I don't think so. You don't think so.

B: But Jacque knows Mrs Henderson. He'll find out she didn't go there.

A: But by then it won't matter. She'll be in Paris.

PAUSE.

B: No. I think you're wrong.

A: What?

B: I think maybe she wants to get caught.

A: This is new.

B: Yes.

PAUSE.

A: It's a thought.

B: Maybe she's giving Jacque clues because she's changed her mind. She doesn't want to leave with Henri anymore and she wants Jacque to stop her.

A: She's changed her mind?

B: Yes.

A: She doesn't want to be with Henri anymore?

B: Yes.

A: She wants to be with Jacque?

B: Maybe.

PAUSE.

A: But if she doesn't want to be with Henri then why doesn't she just not go?

B: Because she's weak.

A: Weak?

B: Or maybe she's testing Jacque. She wants to make sure Jacque loves her. To see just how far he will go to keep her. Just what he would be willing to do.

A: To Henri ?

B: Or to her.

PAUSE.

A: That's pretty twisted.

B: Maybe she is twisted. Maybe after all this time she still loves Jacque. So she helps him to discover her affair to see how he'll react.

PAUSE.

A: Interesting.

B: It is possible.

A: Isn't it a little late to be realising this ? It is a major change to her motivation.

B: I'm just starting to see it. She's not so stupid after all. She's actually brilliant. The Mrs Henderson story is a brilliant plan to "accidentally" let one lover find out about the other lover, and then she'll finally know where she stands. (PAUSE) Well ?

A: Lover.

B: Yes.

A: You said one lover find out about the other lover. Jacque and Petra are married. Jacque is her husband.

B: That's what I meant. I meant Husband. Yes, of course.

PAUSE.

A: Why don't we take a short break ? We've lost it anyway. But ten minutes only please. We still have a lot to get through.

B: Sorry Keith. Sorry everybody.

A: Stop apologising. It's okay.

PAUSE. A WAITS FOR EVERYONE TO LEAVE.

A: In the end you have to decide one thing. The answer to all your doubts. Who does she really love ?

B: What do you think ?

A: I think the thing about Petra is that she is true. She's also strong. She goes after the man she loves with all her heart. All you've got to decide is who. And quickly. Our first audience is in three days.

B: I just want to be sure.

A: I thought you were.

B: I was talking about the play.

A: So was I.

A EXITS. B ALONE. SHE EXITS.

20. Nothing happened.

Street.

A STANDS AGAINST A WALL, WAITING. ABOVE HIM LIGHT COMES FROM A WINDOW. B ENTERS. A STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

A: Good evening.

B: (HUSHED) What are you doing here ?

A: I could ask you the same question.

B: Are you following me around now ?

A: I live just down the road remember ? I went out for some milk and I saw your car. I was curious.

B: How long have you been standing here ?

A: A while.

B: I've known him for six years. I can't just –

A: Like putting on an old shoe.

B: Nothing happened. Listen. Come over here.

SHE LEADS HIM AWAY FROM THE WINDOW.

A: Scared he might see us ?

B: Yes. Look I've known Ian for six years. That's almost a quarter of my life. I can't just walk out on him.

A: Why not ?

B: I just can't. He got me through some really hard times. Now he's going through a hard time. His girlfriend is leaving him. I owe him my support.

A: It's not very smart.

B: He's my friend – and that's all.

A: It only makes it harder for him. If you really do want to leave him then you shouldn't see him at all. For quite awhile. That is of course if you really do want to be with me.

B: Can't I have both ?

A: No.

B: Can we not have this conversation now ?

A: What conversation ? This conversation is over.

B: Please, try to ...

A: I was just starting to believe we had something.

B: You can still believe it.

A: Bullshit.

B: Christ ! Keep your voice down.

A: Why don't you run away ? Like usual.

PAUSE.

B: Look if I was still with Ian why would I be going home ?

A: You were leaving ?

B NODS.

A: Yes. You were. (PAUSE) Good point. Where were you going ?

B: Home. Or maybe to your place.

A: Are you ?

B: We have a preview tomorrow.

A: We do.

B: I should get some sleep. It's alright for you. You don't have to be on stage.

A: I have to watch. It's far more exhausting.

PAUSE. EMBRACE. THE LIGHT FROM THE WINDOW GROWS BRIGHTER.

B: (HUSHED) Shit.

A: What ?

B: Ian.

A: Shit.

B: Go. Quick. I'll call you when I get home.

A: Bye.

B: Bye. Quick.

A EXITS.

B: (LOOKING UP) No, it's alright. I just couldn't find my keys. I've got them now. I'll call you tomorrow. Good night.

THE LIGHT DIMS AGAIN. B ALONE. SHE LOOKS OUT.

B: Fuck me.

FADE.

21. Interview

TV studio.

A SITS ON A SWIVEL CHAIR. BRIGHT LIGHT. HE WIPES HIS FOREHEAD WITH A HANDKERCHIEF. PAUSE, THEN:

A: Thanks for asking, and it's good to, uh, see you've taken the time to ... read the story before seeing our production. Not your average Talk Show host. (PAUSE) But to answer your question. Well ... it's not easy. Petra is a very ... uh ... complex person and it's these complexities we have tried to discover during the ... during the rehearsal process.

HE SHIFTS UNCOMFORTABLY. PAUSE.

A: The actress herself playing the role, has asked many similar questions. (PAUSE) So why does she act the way she does? Well, there's been a lot of exploring and a lot of discussions. Many, many discussions – but in the end, when it's all said and done, she's her own person. (PAUSE) I mean the reason she acts the way she does is ... is ... I don't know. (CORRECTING HIMSELF) I mean you'll have to come along to the show and find out.

HE SMILES WEAKLY. PAUSE. BLACKOUT.

22. Opening Night.

Dressing Room.

B PUTTING ON MAKE UP. **A** ENTERS, HOLDING A CARD.

B: (CALLING) Director's in the dressing room. Director's in the dressing room.

A: I just wanted to give you this.

HE HANDS HER THE CARD.

B: I didn't get anybody one. Haven't had time, what with everything that's been ...

PAUSE. A HUGS HER. HE TRIES TO KISS HER.

B: Not here.

A: Are you coming over later ?

B: I don't think I can. Ian's here.

A: So's Karen.

B: Naughty us. I'll try.

A: I'd really like to see you.

B: So would I. It's just really ... difficult at the moment, you know ?.

A: I know.

B: Just don't expect too much from me.

A: I don't expect anything from you.

B: Then good. Keep it up.

PAUSE.

A: You better go.

B: See you afterwards.

A: Have a good one.

B: Thanks.

A STARTS TO LEAVE.

B: You did get everybody else one, didn't you ?

A: (STOPPING) Excuse me ?

B: Cards.

A: Of course.

A EXITS. B READS THE CARD. SHE SMILES. BLACKOUT. LIGHTNING, FOLLOWED BY A THUNDERCLAP.

23. Curtain.

A graveyard. Tombstones, open graves, crypts and overhanging trees.

LIGHTNING AND THUNDER. MUSIC.

TWO COFFINS SUDDENLY BURST OPEN AND SKELETONS FLY OUT. THE TOMBSTONES SWIVEL AROUND TO REVEAL NEW "HONEST" INSCRIPTIONS.

LIGHTS ON A THIRD GRAVE. THE TOMBSTONE READS: "Here lies one who was truly loved."

THE MUSIC BUILDS. THE GRAVE BURSTS OPEN. LIGHTNING, THUNDER.

B PULLS HERSELF OUT OF THE COFFIN. SHE IS DRESSED IN PERIOD COSTUME, COVERED IN DIRT, FACE COVERED IN GREY MAKE UP.

SHE GOES TO HER TOMBSTONE AND WIPES OFF THE INSCRIPTION TO REVEAL THE "HONEST" INSCRIPTION UNDERNEATH: "She went out in the rain to deceive her lover. Caught cold and died."

SHE TURNS TO FACE THE AUDIENCE. SHE STANDS AND BEGINS TO WALK SLOWLY FORWARD. SHE STRETCHES OUT HER ARMS TO THE AUDIENCE. MUSIC BUILDS. BLACKOUT. SILENCE.

STAGE LIGHTS UP. **B BOWS. WE HEAR APPLAUSE.**

THE STAGE MANAGER ENTERS WITH A BOUQUET OF ROSES. SHE HANDS THEM TO B. THE APPLAUSE BUILDS. B INDICATES SOMEONE IN THE AUDIENCE. SHE BECKONS FOR THEM TO JOIN HER.

A LOOKING A LITTLE EMBARRASSED, COMES ON TO THE STAGE. SHE TAKES HIS HAND. THEY BOW.

A STANDS BACK, URGING B FORWARD. B STEPS FORWARD AND BOWS AGAIN. SHE SMILES BROADLY. FADE LIGHTS AND APPLAUSE.

24. Aphrodite Re-visited.

Several weeks later. Bar. Daylight. Again upstage, the copy of the Venus de Milo.

A WAITING AT A TABLE. **B** ENTERS.

B: Sorry I'm late. You been waiting long ?

A: Just got here. Coffee ?

B: Not just yet.

B SITS. PAUSE.

A: Here we are again. Aphrodite.

B: Lauren Bacall. (PAUSE) So, how have you been ?

A: Good.

B: The new show ? How's it going ?

A: Alright. And you ?

B: Busy. Lots of castings. Just wish I'd get one.

A: How is everybody ?

B: Fine.

A: And Keith ?

B: Much better. You know he had to go to hospital ?

A: Really ?

B: His throat got so swollen he couldn't even swallow.

A: I didn't know it was that bad.

B: Neither did we till he keeled over in the Green Room. We all thought he was putting it on – the old faker. Still didn't miss a show though.

A: Wild horses couldn't drag Keith off stage.

B: Don't I know it. (PAUSE) Were you in the other night ?

A: When ?

B: Tuesday.

A: No.

B: I thought I caught a glimpse of you.

A: It wasn't me.

B: You must have a twin. How were the reviews ?

A: You didn't read them ?

B: I don't.

A: Mixed. Parker loved you.

B: Did he ?

A: Said you were breathtaking.

B: Maybe I should make an exception for that one.

A: Said I butchered it but you were wonderful.

B: Maybe not.

PAUSE.

A: How are the houses ?

B: Good. Packed on the weekend. I think they even turned some away last Saturday.

A: A play ? Sold out. What are we coming to ?

B: It's all thanks to the wonderful director.

A: And the beautiful star.

PAUSE.

B: To tell you the truth, I'll be glad when it's over. I don't really enjoy it.

A: The show ?

B: Playing Petra.

A: What do you mean ?

B: Well she dies. I don't really enjoy playing the victim.

A: No.

B: Anyways, over soon. How's Karen ?

A: I haven't seen her. (PAUSE) Did you get my note ?

B: How could I miss it ?

A: I didn't hear from you. I thought maybe you didn't get it.

B: No, I got it.

A: You didn't come ?

B: I didn't think it was such a good idea.

PAUSE.

A: You're back with Ian ?

B: No, God no. I haven't seen him for weeks. I just didn't think it was a good idea.

A: Why not ?

B: It's just so long ago for me now. I'm in a totally different space.

A: Right. (PAUSE) I have a sinking feeling this is going to be one of those conversations.

B: Let's not have it then. Let's just drink some tea and chat about the weather.

A: I don't understand. I thought that if I gave you a couple of weeks we could pick up where we left off. I thought you felt the same as me.

B: Obviously not.

A: What does that mean ?

B: Well, from your note I take it you'd like things to continue and grow, but as for me ..

A: You ... don't ?

PAUSE

B: I didn't come because I didn't think it was a very good idea for us to see each other. It was starting to get a little intense and that's the last thing I need at the moment.

A: Are you angry at me ?

B: No of course not. I'm actually quite grateful to you. You have given me some much needed clarity in my life, and that clarity has allowed me to see that I no longer want to continue my relationship with Ian. But I can also see it would be foolish to go

B: (CONT) straight into a new relationship with you. I need some space. That's why I was surprised at your note. I thought I'd made that clear.

A: When ?

B: In the dressing room. Opening night.

A: I didn't get that impression.

B: It may not have been then exactly but I just thought it had become ...

A: What ?

B: Clear.

PAUSE.

A: You need some space ?

B: I need some space. Corny isn't it.

A: You are seeing Ian ?

B: I'm not.

A: You're back with him. Just admit it.

B: I haven't seen him.

A: Then it's someone else.

B: Stop it. Why does their always have to be someone else ? Next you'll say I'm seeing Keith. Ian asked the same question.

A: Did he really ?

B: Just calm down.

A: The actress doesn't want any drama.

B: Not in a crowded cafe.

PAUSE.

A: I think I'm in love with you.

B: I'm sorry to hear that.

A: Sorry ? (PAUSE) So that's it. End play. Blackout.

B: For the moment - yes. Maybe I might feel different in two months, but right now ...

A: Couldn't we just see each other once a week -

B: I really don't want anything like that at the moment.

PAUSE.

A: You're very ruthless.

B: Not really.

A: Trust me.

B: To be happy I guess you've got to be a little ruthless.

A: Were you like this with him ?

B: I did tell Ian I couldn't see him for awhile also. (PAUSE) It's not the end of the world.

A: I don't think you have the slightest idea how I feel about you. No one means anything except you. Ian's feelings for you are nothing.

B: I think you're exaggerating.

A: I'm not.

PAUSE.

B: I'm surprised to hear that. I really didn't know.

A: Well now you do.

PAUSE.

B: I don't want this.

A: Is that all you ever think about ? What you want ?

B: Please. I feel bad.

A: Oh really ? And what about me ? No, you're not ruthless. You're selfish.

B: Don't get nasty. We had fun. Let's just leave it at that.

A: We had fun ? I've never had what we had with anybody else in my life. I've never felt that close. Ever. A relationship is like a journey. You've just got to be ready to go on it.

B: And I'm not. (PAUSE.) I'm gonna go.

A: Running away - again.

SHE STARTS TO STAND. A GRABS HER HAND.

A: Don't go. Stay. I'm sorry.

B: I don't think this conversation is going to achieve anything. Try to understand. I'm not going back to Ian.

A: I don't give a fuck about Ian.

B: Please let go of my hand. (HE DOESN'T.) Let go of my hand. People are looking.

HE RELEASES.

A: I'm being ripped apart.

B: It'll be okay.

A: I don't want to be just okay. You've given me a taste of something else now you're taking it away. How can something between two people change so quickly ?

B: In a few weeks you'll –

A: Have you any idea how long twenty-four hours can be ?

B: Right now I just have to do what's best for me.

SHE PICKS UP HER BAG.

B: We'll see you on the last night ?

A IS SILENT. PAUSE. B EXITS. FADE.

25 Party.

Theatre Foyer. In the background music (Billy Bragg – “Wish you were her”), chatter.

A AND B STAND ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE IN SPOTLIGHTS AS AT START. A WITH MINERAL WATER, B WITH CHAMPAGNE.

A GLANCES TOWARDS B. B LOOKS TOWARDS HIM. A TURNS AWAY.

B GLANCES AT A. A LOOKS TOWARDS B. B TURNS AWAY.

SUDDENLY THEY BOTH LOOK UP. THEY RAISE THEIR GLASSES.

A&B: To Keith.

THEY SIP THEIR DRINKS. PAUSE. A RAISES HIS GLASS AGAIN.

A: To Petra.

B TURNS TO A AND NODS. SHE SMILES AND RAISES HER GLASS. THEY DRINK. SPOTLIGHTS FADE.

26. Avalon

In darkness, the music returns: “Gymnopedes” by Erik Satie.

SPOTLIGHT DOWN CENTRE. A WALKS INTO IT.

A: So what is the story of this play ? It’s a story about a man, a young man, let’s call him an artist. He meets a lady, a beautiful lady and falls in love with her. They get married and for a short time he lives in a state of total bliss. But then one day she gets sick and dies. He is heartbroken and each night he goes to lie on his lover’s tomb to weep for her loss. Then one dark night in the graveyard he is visited by a dream, a nightmare, a terrible vision – where all is revealed. And after that, what he thought was real, no longer seems real and what he thought was illusion is suddenly larger than life. And the subject of this dream, the trigger of this transformation ?
Read on.

A RAISES HIS GLASS AND DRINKS. HE TURNS AND EXITS.

THE SPOTLIGHT FADES. END PLAY.