Earthquakes in London
Mike Bartlett
Mike Bartlett’s plays include *My Child* (Royal Court Theatre, 2007); *Artefacts* (Bush Theatre/Nabokov/59E59, 2008) which won the Old Vic New Voices Award; *Contractions* (Royal Court Theatre, 2008); *Cock* (Royal Court Theatre, 2009); *Earthquakes in London* (National Theatre/Headlong Theatre, 2010); and *Love, Love, Love* (Theatre Royal Plymouth/Paines Plough, 2010). Work for radio includes *Love Contract, The Family Man* (both BBC Radio 4, 2007); *Not Talking* (BBC Radio 3, 2006), which won the Writers’ Guild Tinniswood Award and Society of Author’s Imison Award; *The Steps, Liam* (both BBC Radio 4, 2009). He directed D.C. Moore’s monologue *Honest* in its first production by the Royal & Derngate Theatre, Northampton, in 2010. He is currently Writer-in-Residence at the National Theatre and Associate Playwright at Paines Plough.
Earthquakes in London
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This play could not have been written without Elyse Dodgson, Jonathan Donahoe, Clare Lizzimore, Rachel Wagstaff, Duncan Macmillan, the cast and production team, and particularly Miriam Buether, Rupert Goold and Ben Power.

The playscript that follows was correct at time of publication but might have changed during rehearsal.

Acknowledgements

‘Deep Water’ written by B. Gibbons/G. Barrow/A. Utley. Published by Chrysalis Music Ltd © 2008. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Earthquakes in London was first performed in the Cottesloe Theatre at the National Theatre on 4 August 2010, in a co-production with Headlong Theatre. The cast was as follows:

Marina
Tom
Young Robert
Grace / Receptionist / Jogger
Simon / Roy
Colin
Carter
Peter
Businessman / Daniel / Student / Doctor Harris / Barman
Mrs Andrews
Supermarket Worker / Young Man / Tim
Freya
Robert
Jasmine
Casey / Old Woman / Sally / Liberty
Steve
Sarah

All other parts played by members of the Company.

This version of Earthquakes in London was first performed at Theatre Royal Plymouth on 22 September 2011, in a Headlong Theatre and National Theatre co-production. The cast was as follows:

Simon / Roy / WWII Officer / Polar Bear / Passer by 1
Understudy / Dance Captain
Peter / Mother
Tom
Colin
Marina / Mother / Understudy

Ben Addis
Sam Archer
Helen Cripps
Kurt Egyiawan
Seán Gleeson
Siubhan Harrison
Steve
Mrs Andrews
Sarah
Jasmine
Supermarket Worker / Casey / Old Woman / Liberty / Mother
Carter / Daniel / Police Officer / Dr Harris
Robert
Grace / Receptionist / Mother / Jogger
Young Robert / Business Man / Scammer / Bar Man / Dr Tim / Passer by 2
Freya

All other parts played by members of the Company.

Director Rupert Goold
Set Designer Miriam Buether
Costume Designer Katrina Lindsay
Lighting Designer Howard Harrison
Music Alex Baranowski
Projection Designer Jon Driscoll
Choreographer Scott Ambler
Sound Designer Gregory Clarke
Company Voice Work Jeannette Nelson

Project developed for Headlong by Ben Power

The creative team for the 2011 UK tour included:

Tour directed by Caroline Steinbeis
Associate Set Designer Lucy Sierra
Lighting Designer Tim Mitchell
Associate Projection Designer Emily Harding
Associate Projection Designer Paul Kenah
Associate Choreographer Steve Kirkham
Act One
Proper Coffee

Act Two
All The Mothers

Act Three
Mad Bitch

Act Four
Thomas Hood

Act Five
Certain Destruction

The play is presented using as much set, props and costume as possible. The stage should overflow with scenery, sound, backdrops, lighting, projection, etc. Everything is represented. It is too much. The play is about excess, and we should feel that.

Scenes crash into each other impolitely. They overflow, overlap. The production should always seem at risk of descending into chaos but never actually do so.

(/) means the next speech begins at that point
(–) means the next line interrupts
(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off. On its own it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates that the next speech follows on immediately.

A speech with no written dialogue indicates a character deliberately remaining silent.

Blank space between speeches in the dialogue indicates a silence equal to the length of the space.
Characters
Grace
Freya
Steve
Jasmine
Tom
Colin
Sarah
Simon
Supermarket Worker
Peter
Attendant
Businessman
Robert
Mrs Andrews
Many Students
Many Swimmers
Carter
Daniel
Roy
Young Man
Fifteen Mothers with pushchairs
Old Woman
Second World War Officer
Receptionist
Tim
Maryna
Liberty
Emily
Usher
Police Officer
Commuters
Passer by 1
Passer by 2
Other passers by
Doctor Harris
Nurse
Act One

Prologue

1968
Cambridge.
Black and white.
Robert Crannock is on a date with Grace, who is wearing a floral dress. They eat. Robert is awkward.

‘2525’ is playing quietly in the background.

Robert
I’m sorry if the letter was too forward.

Grace
I liked the letter.

Robert
I got carried away, I’m sorry.

Grace
No.

Robert
I didn’t mean to sound strange.

It wasn’t strange. I liked it. Love letters in my pigeon-hole. Romantic.

Grace
What do you do Robert? I mean I know you’re a postgraduate, but what exactly do you … do.

Robert
I’m doing a doctorate

Grace
In?

Robert
Atmospheric conditions on other planets.

Grace
Other planets? Like aliens?

Robert
Some of the work is to do with finding life yes.

Grace
Like Star Trek?

Robert
Well … NASA are interested, so –

Grace
You’re joking?

Robert
No.

Grace
NASA?

Robert
Yes.

Grace
Wow.
Robert: Yes.
Grace: Wow.
Robert: …
Grace: So how do you know? If there’s life?
Robert: Well, all life gives off excretions of some kind. Gases, minerals.
Grace: We all give off gases?
Robert: Yes.
Grace: Even girls?
Robert: And all these gases –
Grace: Have you / researched this?

These excretions, from all of these creatures, they go up into the atmosphere, and you can imagine globally they would make quite a difference to its composition. So it follows that if we could accurately measure the composition of gases in the atmosphere of a planet like Mars, we could tell whether there was life.
Grace: And?
Robert: What?
Grace: Is there?
Robert: We don’t know.
Grace: Oh.
Robert: We haven’t done it yet. Not enough funding.
Grace: Right.
Robert: But as I say, NASA are interested.

*She looks at him.*

Grace: So all the time, every bit of life, animals, humans, everything, change the environment.
Robert: Yes. You are right now. The room is entirely different because you’re in it.
Grace: You think?
Doesn’t matter what I think. The atmosphere in this room is completely dependent on how much you move, whether you talk, if you’ve got a cold, how hot you are.

How hot I am?

Yes. Imagine if we all came in with a fever, the room would get much hotter, and then we’d get even hotter as a result, our fever would get worse and the room would become hotter in turn and so on and so on, upwards and upwards.

Hotter and hotter.

Exactly.

Sorry. Whittering on. Supposed to be a date. I like your dress.

No, Robert, you’ve raised a very important question.

Really?

Yes. How hot do you think I am?

How hot?

How. Hot.

Well …

Oh.

You mean …

It’s 1968. It’s the summer. We’re young. We can do what we want.

puts his hand on her forehead.

She smiles.

Above average.

She smiles, and puts her hand on his head.

Boiling.

So what happens now?

They look at each other.

‘2525’ plays – gets louder. Cross fade scene and music into –

Proper Coffee
A kettle boils.

Freya’s face isolated. Freya

is singing along to a cover of ‘2525 Venice Beat’ ft Tess Timony. She loves it.
She sings some more.

We see Freya. She is pregnant, wearing a man’s shirt and making coffee in her kitchen. She has headphones on and dances. A television is on as well.

Everything is done in rhythm – coffee, kettle ... sugar ... eats a spoonful herself.

We see Steve in the shower. He hears her singing – bemused.

Steve Freya?

Freya keeps on singing.

Steve Freya!

Freya sings a bit more then takes a headphone out. The music is quieter.

What?

Steve What are you / singing?

Freya I’m making coffee.

Steve What?

Freya Coffee! Do you want some?

Steve Proper coffee?

Freya It’s always proper coffee.

Steve What?

Freya It’s always proper coffee, / no one drinks instant.

Steve What? I can’t hear you! I’m in the shower! I can’t hear you!

Freya dances. The music becomes background in Starbucks.

Tom enters and offers a coffee to Jasmine.

Tom Full fat latte, two brown sugars, cream on top.
Jasmine: Do I know you?
Tom: Thought I’d do the honours. Did I get it right?
Jasmine: Don’t know yet what does Rohypnol taste of?

She drinks a bit.

Tom: It was Marxist Criticism. We used to get our coffees at the same time. I liked the look of you, remembered your order. I’m Tom.
Jasmine: Yeah.
Tom: You’re Jasmine. I heard you dropped out.
Jasmine: I had an argument with my lecturer.
Tom: What about?
Jasmine: Charles Dickens. Do you smoke?
Tom: I can.
Jasmine: Good boy.

Sarah appears, talking to Simon, her assistant.

Sarah: There aren’t any plants.
Jasmine: Let’s take this outside.
Sarah: Department of climate change, massive office and nothing’s green. It’s ridiculous.
Simon: It’s on the list. And you need to put something in for Casey. She’s leaving.
Sarah: Who’s Casey?
Simon: By the wallchart? Under the window?
Sarah: Why’s she going? Pregnant?
Simon: Redundant.
Sarah: Oh.
Simon: She’s the chaff we talked about.
Sarah: Right. Yes. Right.
Simon: Smaller government. That’s your policy.
Sarah: Not my policy Simon.
Simon: I’m afraid so, minister. What sort of plants do you want? You mean flowers?
Sarah: Here’s ten for Casey. No not flowers. Flowers are dead. We want some life round here. Get a cheese plant. They still have those?

Freya continues to make the coffee. Watches television at the same time.

Colin is in a supermarket and approaches a young assistant.

Colin: Excuse me.
Sarah: They had them in the eighties.
Colin: I’m looking for a guava.
S. Worker: A what?
Colin: A guava.
S. Worker: What’s that?
Colin: It’s a vegetable.
S. Worker: Right.
Colin: Possibly a fruit.
S. Worker: Vegetables and shit are over there.
Colin: I’m sorry?
S. Worker: Vegetables and fruit and all that are over there.
Colin: I know but I’ve looked and I can’t find it.
S. Worker: Probably don’t have it then.
Colin: Probably.
S. Worker: Yeah.
Colin: Can you check?
S. Worker: Chhh.

Supermarket Worker goes off to check. Still the music in the background. Jasmine and Tom are smoking outside.
He’s sat there opposite me, I said I’m not being funny but if you want two thousand words by Monday you can whistle, I have to work weekends, different for you Gary, fucking baby boomers, get your grant, got your degree then don’t pay for your kids. So he says ‘Do you have financial difficulties Jasmine?’ and I’m like ‘Gary. We all have financial difficulties, read the fucking papers’. Then he suddenly goes red, shouts that I’m ‘thick as corrugated shit’ whatever that means and says I only got in here because of who my sister is, so I lost it completely, threw a bookshelf at him.

Tom

A bookshelf?

It was Bleak House that got him in the eye, hardback so he had to go to hospital. They said I was a menace, attacking my lecturer with a weapon, I said something about the power of the written word and that was it. Out.

Tom

You don’t look like a menace.

Jasmine

I am, Tom.

Supermarket Worker comes back.

S. Worker

Is this it?

Jasmine

I’m a natural fucking disaster.

Colin

How should I know? I don’t know what a guava is. You tell me.

S. Worker

Yeah. This is it.

Colin

You’re sure?

S. Worker

Yes.

Colin

Positive? Because this is important. I want you to understand that if I get home and this isn’t a guava I’m in big trouble. So it follows that if I get home and this isn’t a guava you’re in big trouble, yes?

He reads her badge

… Sue. You’re in big trouble if this isn’t a guava Sue. So.

You’re sure?

S. Worker

Candice said it was and she’s good with fruit.

Colin

Right, thanks.

Steve enters with his suitcase, just as Freya, dancing, throws his coffee across the kitchen.
Steve jumps out the way. Freya takes her headphones off:

Freya Didn’t mean to do that. Oops.

Steve  Oops.

Steve smiles and grabs a cloth instantly to mop it up.

Freya I can make another.

Steve  No, I have to go really, sorry …

Freya  Don’t be sorry.

Steve  Sorry I’m going at all.

Freya  Don’t be – we need work, money, especially now, in the current climate, the way things are, that’s what you say.

Steve  And it’s only three days so –

Freya  Exactly. It’s only three days so –

Steve  And you’ll call me if anything –

Freya  Yes I’ll call you if anything but nothing will nothing does nothing happens you know how it is round here these days.

Steve  I meant the baby.

Freya  Oh right the baby, well of course / the baby

Steve  You’ve got the number of / the hospital.

Freya  There was a programme on TV they’re detecting something in the ground.

Steve  / Freya?

Freya  They think something might – What? Yes I’ve got the number of the hospital. It’s on the cupboard where you put it.

Steve  On the fridge.

Freya  On the fridge exactly. Are you sure you don’t want any of this coffee? It’s fair trade, kind of fruity, I like it.

Steve  I have to go – but you’ll be alright?

Freya  The building might collapse while you’re away.

Steve  Freya –
Freya  This is what I was trying to tell you. They said there’s going to be an earthquake.

Steve  There’s not.

Freya  There is.

Steve  Not here.

Freya  Right here, yes, they’ve detected tremors. It was on television. Do you fancy my sister?

Steve  What?

Freya  Not Sarah, obviously. Obviously not her. The other one. Jasmine.

Steve  No – Freya where does this / come from?

Freya  Why not? She’s pretty.

Steve  She’s nineteen.

Freya  Exactly. Thin, good-looking, bet she’s good in bed. Of course you like her, you’ve had that thought. I used to look like that when we first met, I found some photographs, but what happened? Look at me now, fat and red like a massive blood clot or something. No wonder you don’t want sex with me anymore. You should give her a call I’m serious I really am.

They look at each other. He moves closer, hugs her.

Steve  I don’t think you’re a massive blood clot.

Freya  Or something, I’m definitely something.

Steve  I wanted sex with you last night as it happens.

Freya  I can’t I can’t not with this, it’s like it’s watching.

Steve  I love you.

He kisses her tummy.

You too. I’ll call when I get in.

Freya  I’m a bit lost at the moment, Steve, really. Don’t go.

A moment.

Steve  Just three days. That’s all. It’s not as bad as you think. Never is.

Freya  Oh. Okay. Good.
He kisses her again and leaves. As the door shuts, Freya jumps and the walls shake a little. She’s scared. As Tom and Jasmine talk, Freya looks around her, then produces a packet of cigarettes and lights one.

Tom

So your sister’s famous?

Jasmine

My older sister is. Not in a good way. She’s a politician. I didn’t get in here because of my sister, I got in despite her, they hate her here.

Tom

What does she do?

Jasmine

When my mum died, my dad was a mess, so my sister looked after us but she was awful at it, really bad, because she’s got absolutely no heart. Totally cold. She’s made of metal, like the Terminator or something. But worse. She’s like Terminator 3.

Sarah is giving a speech for her team.

Jasmine

Yeah, she’s Terminator 3.

Sarah

Hello! Hi. We’re so sorry to be seeing … Casey … go, leave. Yes. And although of course I absolutely believe our new … policy of smaller government is the right one at this difficult time, it doesn’t mean it’s not a … sadness … when it impacts on someone personally. Casey’s been fantastic as part of the ministerial team, a real laugh, ever since I’ve been here I’ve noticed that she’s so … funny. Anyway, Casey, we’ve had a whip round and got you this.

Sarah gives a gift bag to Casey. Casey looks inside.

Casey

A coffee machine.

Sarah

Yes.

Casey

I’ve been here five years.

Sarah

Well it’s quite a good one I –

Casey

I don’t drink coffee.

Sarah

You don’t –

Casey

Herbal tea.

Sarah

Oh.

Casey

It’s always been herbal tea.

Sarah

Right … well … someone hasn’t done their research.

Research? Didn’t anybody know? Jesus. You have no idea. We don’t need less government. Everything’s getting worse, and you’re
Casey cutting the support. It’s what the Tories would do crisis or not, but I voted Lib Dem. I voted for you. And what good did it do?

She looks around at everyone and gives the machine back.

Put it on eBay. I’m leaving the country.

Sarah steps down, speaks to her aide.

Sarah Good idea. Get the car.

Simon You can’t, you have a meeting in your office in three minutes.

Sarah My stomach’s rumbling.

Simon Here. Egg salad. Tesco Express. You can eat it on the way back.

He gives her a horrible looking sandwich. She just stands for a moment. Exhausted. Freya watches scenes from a documentary about the planet. Tectonics plates. Storms and hurricanes.

Are you … ?

Another moment.

Should I …

She looks up and snaps out of it.


Sarah crams the sandwich into her mouth as she leaves.

There’s a knock on Freya’s door, she goes to answer it.

Tom and Jasmine are going back inside.

Jasmine My sister’s coming along tonight actually.

Tom To what?

To what I do now. To my job. It’s a bit political too. You could come along if you want. You’ll be shocked. First time I’ve done it.

Jasmine It’s very political Tom. Very in-your-face kind of political. You might not be able to cope. It might be all too – political for you. I’ve got a costume. So what do you think? Want to risk it?

Tom smiles.

Tom Yeah.

Freya opens the door. It’s Peter, a teenage boy with glasses in a grey hoodie.
Peter: Alright miss. You busy?

Freya: Peter. / What are you –

Peter: Is that whisky? You shouldn’t be drinking if you’re pregnant, we saw it on a video in Biology, Mr Greg showed it us yeah and it said if you drink your baby ends up disabled or something maybe it dies in you and they have to pull it out with tweezers. Can I come in? I’m not doing very good. I want your advice.

Freya: How did you know where I live?

Peter: Went on the internet, put your name in, it’s not difficult. Big bump you’ve got now. I need to talk. Can I come in?

Freya: I might get into trouble.

Peter: Nah you can’t be a paedophile cos you’re a woman and the hood’s not cos I want to cut you it’s cos it’s raining, come on miss it’s fucking biblical out here pardon my mouth used to talk didn’t we? I liked it when we talked but you only come into school two days a week and not even that now. You’re not busy clearly, you’re watching TV. Is your husband in?

Freya: He’s gone away.

Peter: His car’s outside.

Freya: He got a taxi to the airport.

Peter: Yeah not supposed to fly any more though are you? How long’s he gone for then?

Freya: Just a couple of days.

Peter: Bet you could do with the company then.

Freya: No.

Peter: Bet you could though.

Freya: Peter, you should go back to school.

Peter: No one visits you do they?

Freya: …

Peter: That’s cos pregnant women are a bit of a pain. Sweaty and fat, stuck in the house, moaning and moaning. I don’t think that miss, but most people do that’s why they don’t visit. But I’m here.

I got you a flower.
He holds out a flower. She looks at him.

Freya

Thank you.

She takes the flower. He enters.

Sarah is having a meeting with Carter in her office. She offers him a biscuit.

Carter

Thank you. It’s wonderful to meet you at last. Been a year. Thought I’d done something wrong.

Sarah

I’ve been very busy.

Carter

Well, better late than never. How are we doing?

Sarah

In two days time, after concluding my review, I recommend to the PM.

Carter

So I hear.

Sarah

And I thought you might want a heads up, to give you time to formulate a public response.

Carter

A heads up. Lovely. A response to what?

Sarah

We’re nice people, Mr Carter.

Carter

I’m sure you are. Everyone’s nice these days aren’t they? Even me. I bought my son Adam a bike, for his birthday. Very expensive. He loved it. And what have you nice people got to offer us?

Sarah

I thought you might want to come on board with the decision now, rather than wasting time and effort fighting it.

Carter

The decision.

Sarah

Yes.

Another biscuit?

He looks at her.

Adam’s learning quickly, he’s six, he looked at his bike, and he said ‘what’s the bad news Dad?’ He said you only buy me presents like this when there’s bad news. He was right. His mother had run over the cat. This coalition government, whatever it is, you’re supposed to be business friendly.

Sarah

We’re very business / friendly, yes.

Carter

So what do you mean, what are we talking?
The Heathrow decision played very well for us, the public didn’t want that third runway, they were pleased we got in, and stopped it, so now I’ll be recommending a complete halt to expansion.

Carter
Where?

Sarah
Everywhere.

Carter *is surprised.*

Look, Heathrow? Fine, I understand your position, you had to pull back, but it was assumed at the time, it was very strongly hoped, in fact, that in return, there would be balance.

Sarah
There isn’t the need.

Carter
We let Heathrow go, but we get Birmingham, Edinburgh, London City instead – Belfast – that was understood.

Sarah
It can’t be justified environmentally.

Carter
A few miles of concrete here and there, a couple of sheds, it’s not the end of the world.

Have you talked to your colleagues, because I can’t see this being very popular.

Sarah
A definitive halt to expansion will make a huge impact.

Carter
Only as a symbol.

Sarah
A symbol exactly. We have to be seen to be doing all we can to lower carbon emissions. We want to set an example.

Carter *looks at her.*

This is your big idea.

Sarah
If you like.

Carter
You’re a symbol yourself really aren’t you Sarah? Can I call you Sarah? Bet you never thought you’d be in power at all, but hung parliament, green credentials and a famous father –

Sarah
My position in this government has nothing to do with my father.

Carter
Everyone thinks it does.

Sarah
Then everyone is wrong.

Carter
Touched a nerve.
Sarah: Not at all.
Carter: You’re upset.
Sarah: Do I look upset?
Carter: The way you rub your fingers together like that yes.

*She’s surprised for a second, but look back at him.*

Sarah: We’re not short of airports. In two days I have a meeting and I will put the case very firmly. The Prime Minister will make a decision, and that will be it. We’ll announce next week.

Carter: You look tired.
Sarah: I work hard.
Carter: I don’t think it’s work.

Carter *takes a biscuit.*

Before tomorrow, I’ll change your mind.

Sarah: Really?

*He passes the biscuits across.*

Carter: Yes.
Biscuit?

Freya and Peter.

Peter: I like your posters, you into Hitchcock?
Freya: They’re my husband’s.

Peter: And Grand Theft Auto. You play that a lot do you?

Freya: That’s his too.

I find it a bit violent myself. I don’t think driving round killing people should be in computer games. There’s one where you can rape a girl. That’s a bit weird they allow that considering everything that’s gone on. Coldplay album? Everyone’s got a Coldplay album these days, saw them on TV at Glastonbury they were rather good. What’s yours then?

Freya: The books. I –

Peter: What are you reading at the moment?
Freya Late Victorian poetry. Peter –

That sounds really incredibly boring. Can I sit down? / Are you going to give me a whisky? What’s this?

Freya Of course you can sit down. I don’t know about a whisky –

Peter Jees, you’ve been smoking as well, your baby’s gonna be a scopoid by the time you’re done. Fucking ‘tato with what you’re doing.

Freya Peter, what do / you want?!

Peter What’s the programme?

Freya They say there’s going to be an earthquake.

Peter Here?

Freya My husband laughed as well but it’s what they –

No they’re right, it’s true. There’s going to be a massive tremor, the day after tomorrow, a huge seismic event, right in the capital. Things’ll seem very different after that.

*She looks at him. Shocked – how could he know?*

My problem is I don’t have any friends. Atomisation. It’s very common in society today. Increasingly people use internet dating to make a connection and find companionship but I’m only fourteen so I prefer porn. I am allowed a whisky actually. It is legal. In the home. If you’re fourteen. So.

Freya I’m not going to give you whisky.

Peter I think you should though. Then we can talk properly.

*She considers.*

Freya Why not?

Freya goes to get Peter a drink. Peter sits down in the chair and relaxes as a Businessman on a plane, next to Steve, does the same.

Businessman Remember when you could smoke?

Steve What?

Businessman Smoke. On planes.

Steve I see the ashtrays in the toilets. But I don’t ever remember …

Fifteen years ago, you could go to the smoking section and smoke,
Businessman: didn’t do any harm, no more planes went down, less than now, it was long before, you know … terrorism - maybe it’s linked. Frustrated Arabs. All they want is a fag. Cos they can’t drink can they? Could be linked. Joking of course. You going to Scotland on business is it?

Steve: No.

Businessman: Holiday then?

Steve: It’s personal.

Oh right, well. Keep your own.

Businessman: Fair enough.

Up to you.

Steve: I told my wife it’s business.

Businessman: Oh.

Steve: But it isn’t.

Ah.

Businessman: Yes.

Well.

I know all about that.

Steve: What?

Businessman: That.

Steve: No.

Sometimes I’m in LA, and I always let her know in advance, I say I won’t, say it’s not good for me, but I drop a cheeky email, turn up and we have the time of our lives. Keeps my marriage healthy. Keeps me trim she does. Carly.

Steve: Carly?


Why she goes for me I don’t know, well I do, flash the money a bit, but life’s short isn’t it so you do what you have to, and my wife knows, sure she’s done the same, my view is, if it keeps you trotting on, keeps you happy and the kids don’t know then what’s the harm? No you go for it mate. Full speed.
It’s not ...

Sorry?

It’s not an affair.

Oh. But you let me go on about …

I didn’t feel I could stop you.

Always do this. Always end up talking to strangers on planes. Must be nervous I suppose.

You fly a lot?

It’s bad for you.

Bad for you?

Of course, the more you fly, the greater chance you’ll be in a crash. It’s not natural.

If God had meant us to fly, he’d have his own airline.

Rumbling. Turbulence or possibly the sound of thunder.

The lights flash.

‘There She Goes My Beautiful World’ By Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds

Jasmine comes on dressed in branches and leaves.

She holds a sign which says ‘The willful destruction of the rainforest’

She dances.

She slowly peels off leaves and branches.

Eventually she is left with leaves in the vital places, à la Adam and Eve.

She picks up a sign

‘Originally, there were six million square miles of tropical rainforest’ Another sign ‘Only a third is left’

She raises her eyebrows.

She peels the leaves off her breasts.

There are cheers from the crowd.

Flirty eyes.

She picks up another sign.

It says ‘Don’t leave the world naked’

As she goes, leaves fall from the ceiling.

Freya brings Peter his whisky then lights a cigarette.

Hmm. I’m enjoying this. This is good, really good whisky. Did you buy it?
Peter, if there’s going to be an earthquake why aren’t people scared?

I was in an earthquake once in Tokyo. Me and my parents were doing karaoke in this room –

Can you answer / my question please.

– and the floor started moving and the walls tilted, shook a bit but not like you imagine, everything just went … drunk. Do you ever feel like that miss, stuck in this flat like you are, that the walls are moving and everything’s becoming dangerous?

All the time.

drinks the whisky.

But what can I do?

Tom and Jasmine are in a bar:

Never seen a stripper before.

It wasn’t stripping.

This is a strip club.

It’s burlesque.

You got your tits out.

You get your tits out in both yeah but in burlesque they’re not the focus.

They were definitely the focus.

Well they’re not supposed to be.

There’s a man waving.

Colin appears and waves. He’s still carrying a carrier bag with the shopping.

It’s my sister’s husband.

You invited your sister’s husband?

I invited my sister. She said she’d come so I got political, thought she’d like it, but she texted at the last minute, said Colin was coming instead. Colin’s been around since I was a kid, he was a banker, lost his job, now he’s got time on his hands. Warning: He can be a bit –

Brought my shopping!
Jasmine: I can see that.

Colin: Bit weird. Well done!

Jasmine: You liked it?

Colin: You can really dance.

Jasmine: Yeah.

Colin: Haven’t seen you perform since school.

Tom: And hasn’t she grown?

Colin: Well ... I ... I suppose so.

Jasmine: This is Tom.

Colin: Oh right. Hello. Are you her latest ...

Tom: Latest?

Jasmine: Thanks Colin.

Tom: Her latest?

Colin: Squeeze.

Jasmine: Oh God.

Tom: We’ve only just met.

Colin: Well the night’s young.

Jasmine: For fuck’s sake.

*An awkward pause.*

Colin: I thought you made a very good point actually Jasmine.

Tom: There was a *point*?

Jasmine: The signs?

Tom: I wasn’t really looking at the signs.

Colin: The destruction of the rainforest.

Tom: So that’s why you were dressed as a bush.

Jasmine: A tree.

Tom: Certainly looked like a bush from where I was sitting.
Awkward.

Colin
Do you want a drink either of you?

Jasmine
No thanks Colin.

Tom
Nah.

Right.
Well. Great to … see you. Jasmine.
I should probably be going … got some milk … needs the fridge, asap, don’t want it to …

Smell, but really …
Well done.
Good work!

Jasmine
Good to see you.

Colin
Right.
Bye.

A pause. He goes.

Jasmine
God.

Tom
Actually I did read the signs.

Jasmine
Really.

Tom
Yeah, I’m quite into the environment. My family from before, they’re Eritrean? and they –

Er sorry to interrupt you but I’ve had enough of the environment, hear about it all the fucking time, I only did it for my sister and she didn’t even turn up. I’ll do a Nazi one next week probably. They love Nazis. Have you got any pills? You look like the sort of person that carries drugs around in their pocket.

Tom
A sort of black person you mean?

Jasmine
A sort of careless person I mean, who leaves their coat lying around.

She holds them up.

Found them earlier.

She opens the bag.

Shall I be mother?
Freya and Peter.

Peter

I’m spinning.

I know what you mean. I don’t see anyone for days, the walls start shaking, so I think about going out but it’s all shouting and dirt, so I stay in, but then … I’ve started singing, ever since I got back. When I sing I forget she’s there.

Peter

Got back from where? Can I have a cigarette?

Freya

I don’t know what to do.

I didn’t see anyone for three days once and got really paranoid my head was too big for my body, but it’s not, is it? Is it? Is it? Cos earlier Gary Franks said I looked weird, chased me out of school said I was special needs.

Peter

You are special needs.

Not in a bad way, not like those deaf kids you spend your time with.

Freya

Don’t say that.

Peter

I can do an impression of a deaf person.

Freya

No.

Peter

I can, look, it’s funny.

Freya

Don’t.

Peter moves closer to Freya – threatening.

Peter

If you don’t give me a cigarette I’ll do an impression of a deaf person.

No!

Freya

Don’t

Here.

She throws him the cigarettes, Peter grabs them and stops. A throbbing beat has begun. Freya’s in pain.

Peter

I know cigarettes are supposed to be bad for you but apparently if you give up within five years you’re pretty much back to normal and I’m very young so I think I’ll be fine miss.

Freya

In my head.

Do you think that’s right?
Peter

Miss?
Do you think I’m right about that?
Miss?
Miss?!

The sound of a plane in the distance.

A computer screen is projected.

Someone is writing.

Writing

‘I feel that I would be right for the position of senior accounts manager as I am both strong …

He deletes.

strong both as a team player and a leader.

Lights up on Colin, who is typing.

‘ … I have demonstrated this on many occasions, leading my team through many years of excellent service over the last ten years. Ten. Years …’

The cursor goes to Google.

It types.
Student
Girls
Party
Pictures.

As images appear the stage becomes full of students dancing in miniskirts, boys with their tops off, grinding up against each other. Dance music gets slowly louder. In the middle are Jasmine and Tom. Colin stands up, watching, wanting to be involved.

Freya is now faced away from Peter, leaning against a wall, a throbbing beat in her head.

Peter is trying to light the cigarette.

As you know, I don’t really like being outside, around lots of other people, but do you remember what you said miss? I’d stabbed Luke Reynolds with a compass, and got detention, and you said I couldn’t just sit around feeling sorry for myself, I had to get off my arse and fucking do something. Find the good things.

Freya

I don’t think I used those words.

You did use those words. You definitely said fucking do something.
Peter I found the honesty quite bracing. You’re one of the only people in my life who tells me the truth.

Freya So you think I should get up and –

Peter I don’t know, but what with the shaking

Freya I was imagining it, the walls can’t –

Peter I didn’t mean the walls.

Freya Oh.

Peter Your hands miss. Look.

_Her hand is shaking._

You should pack a bag and get out and see what’s going on. Find the good things. Before it’s too late.

_They look at each other. He lights the cigarette, smiles and relaxes. Freya leaves. Determined._

Colin watches them dancing. Enjoys it. He then changes the track on iTunes to Coldplay – ‘Viva La Vida’. The students cheer – enjoying the cheese.

Sarah enters.

Sarah What’s this?

Colin Coldplay

Sarah You bought a Coldplay album?

Colin In Tesco on the way home yeah.

Sarah That’s the sort of thing boring middle-aged women do.

Colin Right.

Sarah You don’t look like a boring middle-aged woman.

Colin You do.

_Sarah’s tired of the bickering._

Sarah Found anything yet?

Sarah goes into the kitchen where the shopping is laid out. Colin, very quietly sings at the computer.

Colin shouts through to the kitchen.

Colin You see this is the problem, that’s always the first thing you ask, you
Colin get in and you don’t kiss me, touch me, even look at me –

Sarah What’s this?

Sarah *is standing in the doorway holding a fruit.*

Colin A guava.

Sarah No.

Colin Right.

Sarah Get the not a guava Colin, it’s a plum. Find a job. That’s the problem. Not me. Find a fucking job. I’ll make a sandwich.

Sarah goes. Colin keeps on singing to himself, restrained and shy, watching the students dance.

Steve appears, trying to hide from the wind, and starts knocking on a door. Tom dances with Jasmine, they kiss passionately. Colin watches. Sarah makes a sandwich. Peter goes to the CDs and looks at them.

Sarah goes to bed. The door is opened by Mrs Andrews.

Mrs Andrews Yes?

Steve I’m here to see Mr Crannock.

Mrs Andrews Mr Crannock is in bed.

Steve I’m Steve Sullivan. His daughter’s husband?

Mrs Andrews sighs.

Mrs Andrews Is he expecting you?

Steve No.

Mrs Andrews …

Steve Please. It’s very cold.

She lets him in. Jasmine and Tom dance. Peter chooses a CD and puts it on – the same Coldplay song. Listens. Mouths along. He likes it.

At the next chorus Peter sings loudly like a choirboy. Colin still very quietly.

Freya appears with a bag, hat and coat, ready to go out.

Freya You can put the heating on if you like. The switch is in the hall,

Peter What are you doing?
Peter
I didn’t mean you should go now. It’s raining cats and dogs out there, and you’re pregnant, you probably shouldn’t even stand up for too long, it might fall out or something.

Freya
You can stay here. You won’t steal anything will you?

Peter
Can I watch your DVD’s?

Freya
Yes.

Peter
Even the eighteens?

Freya
If you want.

Peter
Can I drink your whisky and vodka?

Freya
Whatever you like. You’ve got the place to yourself for a couple of days. Okay?

Peter
Okay.

Freya
Right.

Peter
Are you going to be alright miss?

Freya
She’s kicking. Stop it!

Peter
The good things.

Freya
I can’t stay here.

Freya opens the door and leaves.

Peter stands up and sings.
The students join in, singing the backing vocals.

Peter sings, the students dance, and Colin sits by his computer motionless and sad.

Everyone sings as Freya walks off into the night.

Lights fade.

Music in the dark.

Music fades.

End of Act One.
Act Two

Prologue

1973

Technicolour

Robert and two businessmen, Daniel and Roy. Roy is smoking.

Roy

Good to see you. Have a seat.

Robert

Thanks.

Roy

How’s the baby?

Robert

Oh, you – ?

Roy

Daniel mentioned there was a baby. A baby girl.

Robert

Right, yes.

Daniel

Wonderful.

Roy

Wonderful. And your wife?

Robert

Very happy obviously, well we both are.

Roy

Very happy. You both are.

Daniel

Perfect.

Robert

Perfect. So. Robert. You’re wondering why you’re here? When does the main UK airline call in a Cambridge boffin like you? Well, our bods predict that in thirty years time they’ll be thousands of planes in the sky, flying people all over the place, which makes us happy of course, because there’s a lot of money to be made.

Roy

Yes.

Roy

But there are increasing concerns.

Daniel

Questions.

Roy

Sorry?

Daniel

Questions, I think Roy.

Roy

Questions, exactly, about what the effect will be of all this air travel? With the emissions. Into the atmosphere.
Robert

Right.

Roy

People are starting to get worried.

Daniel

Curious.

Roy

People are starting to become *curious* about what burning all that fuel might do. To the world.

Daniel

The environment.

Roy

The *environment*. So we thought we’d get an expert in who could do a study.

Daniel

Look into your crystal ball and tell us what’s going to happen. So what do you think? Is it possible?

Roy

Well. We’d … we’d need to model the world on a scale no one’s done before. And … well … I don’t want to be rude, but obviously you’re hoping for a negative answer here aren’t you?

Daniel

No no.

Roy

A what?

Daniel

He means do we want him to get us the result which says these fumes are doing no harm at all? Should he fix it?

Roy

Ah. No. Robert, you do your science and you tell us what you find. We won’t interfere at all.

Robert

No interference.

Daniel

None.

Robert

Right.

Roy

And this is only the first phase. If this project seems promising, we’re authorised to commission further work, over the next ten years.

Robert

Really?

Roy

Absolutely. Because your results might not just be useful for us, but many similar organisations. The motor industry, oil companies. They would all be very interested in promising results.

Robert

What do you mean promising?

Roy

Results that seem to be useful.

Daniel

Meaningful.
Roy
Right. *Meaningful.* I need a coffee.

Robert
Well I’m sure it’s possible to achieve a certain clarity, but this is a very new subject, there’s no real way of knowing how quantifiable in real terms the …

Roy
This would be the fee.

Robert
Right.

*He reads it."

That’s … Oh. Yes. That’s good. I’m sure we could make a start with that.

Roy
No. Robert.

That’s not the budget.

The project will have a separate budget.

That’s your fee.

That’s for you. To keep.

Daniel
And remember there’s potential for a good deal more of this to come. I would imagine someone like you, in your position, academic, young family. This could make a real difference.

Robert
Yes.

Roy
Why don’t you take it away and have a good old think?

All The Mothers

*The present.*

*Hampstead Heath – Early morning. Birdsong.*

**Freya** is sat by the pond.

*A number of male swimmers are in the ponds, swimming. They have similar swimming hats and swimming costumes. One by one they come and stand in the fresh morning air. Birds fly past, a clear blue sky.*

**Freya** watches them for a while.

*One of the swimmers starts to play ukulele.*

**Freya** starts singing along to ‘Deep Water’ by Portishead. The first swimmer is surprised, but
interested. Three other swimmers stand in a line and act as backing singers.

Freya

I’m drifting in deep waters
Alone with my self-doubting again

I try not to struggle this time
For I will weather the storm

Sarah gets to her desk, piled with papers. It’s first thing, but she’s exhausted – she sits down and makes a start.

Jasmine sits on the end of the bed, waits, upset.

I gotta remember
(Gotta remember)
Don’t fight it
(Don’t fight it)
Even if I
(Even if I
Don’t like it
(Don’t like it)
Somehow turn me around
(Somehow turn me around)

No matter how far I drift
Deep waters
(Deep waters)
Won’t scare me tonight

Sarah picks up the phone. Freya’s phone rings. The swimmers look annoyed with Freya.

Tom appears, and Jasmine goes off with him.

The swimmers go off.

She answers.

Sarah

I missed your call.

Freya

I thought we could meet up?

Sarah

I can hear birds.

Freya

I’m on the heath.

Sarah

Hampstead Heath?
Freya: Yeah, by the ponds. I packed a bag, left early.
Sarah: You don’t live anywhere near Hampstead Heath.
Freya: Very early. Apparently there’s a view where you can see the whole city.
Sarah: Parliament Hill.
Freya: I think I’m looking for that. So are we going to meet then?
Sarah: I could do Thursday?
Freya: I meant today really.
Sarah: I’m busy Freya.
Freya: You’re always busy Freya, but Steve’s not here and I couldn’t get hold of Jasmine, so I thought we could -
Sarah: Don’t ask Jasmine, you called Jasmine?
Freya: You have got time, I know you have.

*A beautiful perfect woman dressed in black with black sunglasses, pushing a pram goes past.*

Sarah: Get here, to the department, for one o clock. We’ll have twenty minutes. Well, ten. Come to the desk and tell them who you are.
Freya: Thanks.
Sarah: Right.

Sarah hangs up. *The mother accidentally drops a leaflet from the pram. Freya picks it up and reads it.*

A picnic, on Parliament Hill.
Freya: Perfect.
Excuse me.

Freya follows the woman, off through the Heath

Mr Crannock’s House.

Steve is asleep on the sofa. *Mrs Andrews clatters in, open the curtains.*

Mrs Andrews: Are you not awake yet?
Steve wakes up.

How did you sleep?

Steve

How do you think?

Steve stands up in just his boxer shorts, woozy.

The sofa’s too short, so I tried the floor, but there was a draught.

Mrs Andrews

Mr Sullivan …

Steve

What?

Mrs Andrews

You’re not at your best.

Steve

Oh.

He puts his jeans on. Then a t-shirt.

Isn’t there a spare room?

Mrs Andrews

There’s my room.

Steve

I’m sorry?

Mrs Andrews

If you’d called ahead, we could’ve made arrangements.

Steve

What do you mean?

Mrs Andrews

When your wife visited, I stayed at my sister’s.

Steve

Oh – you … Freya called ahead?

Mrs Andrews

Do you two not talk about these things? Now, Mr Crannock has got up and gone out. He starts very early, and won’t be disturbed. You’ve never met I understand?

Steve

No.

Mrs Andrews

No, well if he trusts you you’ll get a drink, if he likes you, he’ll talk all night. He’ll be back to the house later this afternoon, as will I.

Steve

What am I supposed to do until then? You’ve got no television, I didn’t bring my computer, there’s no reception on my phone.

Mrs Andrews

You’ll have to occupy yourself I suppose.

Steve

With what?

Mrs Andrews looks at him.

Mrs Andrews

There’s a radio.
Freya sees an Old Woman laying flowers at a war memorial. The Old Woman wears a coat and headscarf.

Freya: Excuse me.

Old Woman: Alright dear?

Freya: I like your flowers.

Old Woman: Thank you dear.

The Old Woman smiles. They both look at the memorial.

Was it … your husband?

Old Woman: Dunkirk.

Freya: And you still miss him?

Old Woman: I miss what went with him. How it was, when we were together.

Freya: Did you have children?

Old Woman: It was a different country then. England was made of wood and metal. Not plastic, like this. You know what I’m saying?

Freya: No I -

Old Woman: It had teacakes, cricket whites, cut grass. Yes? Blitz spirit, rooms full of smoke.

Freya: Okay. Yeah I suppose it / must’ve been

Old Woman: Short trousers, dinner jackets, tea dances.

Freya: I always wanted to go to a -

Old Woman: Devonshire cream, Coventry steel, the home guard, the muffin man, the post man, larders in the kitchen, fires in the living room, the damp smell of gravel in outdoor toilets. You don’t know what I’m talking about.

Freya: No.

That was our England. All gone now of course. Things move so fast. The cars, the internet. Yes we had children, but I never see them. Always got something better to do.

Old Woman: So instead, I come to the heath.

And wait.
Freya

What for?

Old Woman

The silver lining. Soon it’ll all be over.

They look at the memorial.

Simon enters Sarah’s office.

Simon

Your sister’s at the front desk.

Sarah

Now?

Simon

Now.

Sarah

I said one o’clock.

Simon hands Sarah an envelope.

What’s this?

Simon

Not sure. It just arrived. What about your sister?

Sarah

Send her up, and get me a Starbucks.

Simon

Skinny?

Sarah

No. Fat. Really fucking … fat.

Simon goes. Freya is with the Old Woman

Freya

I’m looking I’m really looking for something good, happening now, but you’re saying things are only getting worse.

Old Woman

Religious intolerance, economic collapse, tsunamis, riots … it’s the perfect conditions.

Freya

I don’t understand.

Old Woman

Is it a boy?

Freya

A girl.

Old Woman

A little girl. Well. I hope she can fight.

A young man in a Second World War uniform comes on. He takes the Old Woman’s arm and kisses her.

Freya

What?

Old Woman

There’s a gathering storm

He takes off her headscarf and she stands upright – a young couple from the 1940s.
Freya How do you know?

Old Woman Old people can predict the weather …

_The man opens an umbrella and it starts to rain._

You see?

Freya She can fight. I’ve felt her kicking.

Old Woman Haven’t you got anyone to take you home?

Freya No. He’s …

Gone.

_The Old Woman goes with her husband, just as a mother comes past with her pram. Freya goes off after her._

Jasmine enters Sarah’s office with Tom.

Jasmine I’ve got a problem.

Sarah Where’s Freya?

Jasmine Where she normally is, probably – at home, eating crisps.

Sarah Who’s this?

Jasmine He’s the problem.

Sarah Does he have a name?

Jasmine Tom.

Sarah takes them in for a second.

Sarah Okay. I’m going to look over my letters but I am listening.

Jasmine Last night, I was at a party.

Sarah Thought you were dancing last night.

Jasmine After that. It was a porn star party, we all dressed as porn stars you know

Sarah Not really.

Jasmine And I went back with Tom. We fucked and stuff, and he was taking pictures on his phone I thought for fun yeah?

Sarah Yep.
And then today this morning when I’m a bit morning-ey, just woken up, he tells me that his family in Africa are being affected by climate change and that you aren’t doing anything so his family are going to die. Apparently you’re making this big statement about ‘airport expansion’.

Sarah

Next week, that’s right.

Jasmine

So he says why don’t we go and see your sister and get a commitment.

Sarah

And you said.

Jasmine

There’s no way I could change her mind she doesn’t listen to a word I say.

Sarah

Absolutely right.

Jasmine

But then he said he’s only gone with me, he’s only done any of it, so that he could blackmail you. He’s part of some group or whatever. He says if he doesn’t get an assurance, he’ll send the pictures to the paper.

Sarah

What were they of?

Jasmine

The pictures? Drinking, puking. Us in his room fucking.

Sarah

Nothing illegal?

Jasmine

Nothing in the pictures.

Sarah

Does he speak?

Tom

This is happening, right now, to people like me, to my family. And if you don’t believe me …

He gets papers out of his bag.

Letters, photographs, measurements. Rainfall, crop growth, all from my family in Eritrea. Now, I realise you probably don’t even know where Eritrea is but -

Sarah

Borders in the west, in the south, and in the southeast …

Tom

Yeah okay, yeah, exactly, and they’re struggling to -

Sarah

The population’s an estimated five million? The capital is – I assume you’re going to tell me about the current and tangible effects of climate change on the agriculture, on the villages, your family.

Tom

You’re aware of all that.
Sarah: That’s sort of my job. Then it’s worse. You know what’s going on and you still allow runways and flight paths. You don’t listen, we’ve raised petitions, spoken to our MPs, all you say is you ‘appreciate our view’, you ‘encourage the debate’ – but nothing happens.

Sarah: You don’t know what we’re going to announce.

Tom: I can guess.

Sarah: You can guess absolutely you can have a wild stab in the dark but you don’t know.

I want you to understand a couple of things Tom. Firstly my sister’s a student. She has sex. So what? You think the public are going to be interested? I’m not interested.

Secondly, in this country you elect your government, and then we consult and make decisions based on what is right for the people. We take into account different factors – environmental, economic, social. It’s complicated because we have to consider everything. Transport means investment. Investment means greater employment. Greater employment means less poverty, which presumably you’re in favour of? That’s why you have people like me, to make a judgement. So what are you doing, Tom? Blackmail? Of a democratically elected member of parliament?

Tom: slams his papers on her desk.

Tom: It’s a protest.


Tom: Are you going to read all this?

Sarah: I’m certainly going to file it.

Tom: You can’t dismiss me.

Sarah: This isn’t the student union Tom. We’re the fucking government. Go away.

Tom: turns to go. Jasmine turns as well.

Not you.

Tom: stares at Sarah for a moment. Then goes.

Jasmine: I only came here for your sake.
Sarah: You didn’t want your arse in the Daily Mail.

Jasmine: Wouldn’t be the first time.

Sarah: What?

Jasmine: When I run out of toilet paper the Daily Mail’s just what I need.

Sarah: You have absolutely no idea how hard I’m working, do you? How many meetings I have, the paperwork -

Jasmine: Yeah, Colin said you’re always here.

Sarah: It’s public office. It’s the most important thing in my life, I can’t -

Jasmine: He’ll leave you.

Sarah: What?

Jasmine: Colin. Surprised he hasn’t already.

Sarah: You have no idea.

Jasmine: I know what men want. And I bet you’re not giving it to him. Fucking ice woman, frosty the snowbitch think you’re all big and clever power tights and shoulder pads, fucking Thatcher look at you. I’d have been better off with Dad probably.

Sarah: Be careful Jasmine.

Jasmine: He can’t have been worse than you.

Sarah: You’ve never met him.

Jasmine: You’ve never let me.

Sarah: Let you? You’re nineteen. He’s a shit Jasmine, if you don’t believe me, yes please give him a call instead. Or you could talk to some friends about all your problems – you never do that either do you? For some reason you never have friends to turn to. You ever wonder why you’re always being fucked over like this?

Jasmine: I’m not being -

Sarah: Again and again I think you are, clearly you are, you ever thought why?

Jasmine: You’re jealous.
Sarah

Jasmine, when you want to know just ask. I’ve got a whole thing ready to go, I know exactly what your problem is.

Jasmine

...

Sarah

You want to hear it?

Jasmine is upset. Simon enters, interrupting.

Simon

One fat coffee.

Jasmine goes. Simon gives the coffee to Sarah, as Sarah makes a phone call.

Sarah

Call John Carter. Tell him I got the letter, and I want to meet, this afternoon.

Simon

You don’t have time.

Sarah

I’ll make time.

Simon goes. Freya is on Parliament Hill looking for mothers. She answers the call.

Freya

Do you know where Parliament Hill is?

Sarah

I’m sorry?

Freya

There’s this big event, this afternoon. Why don’t you come here?

Sarah

Freya -

Freya

A picnic. There’s stalls, and a band. The sun’s out. I’m going to buy some sandwiches. Ice cream.

Sarah

Can you listen. I’ve had to move things around, I can’t meet you anymore.

Freya

You said you’d make time.

Sarah

I know but things change and you’re alright aren’t you? Your … picnic.

A Young Man, dirty and sweaty, runs up to Freya grabs her arm.

Young Man

Please! Please. Please. Please.

Sarah

Everything’s just gone a bit mad here.

Young Man

My kid. My kid’s in trouble.

Freya

Yeah, everything’s gone a bit mad here too.

Sarah

Got to go.
He’s in hospital, I’ve just found out, I need the bus fare to get down the road, I don’t have any … change … I’m sorry, I’m really in a hurry. Shit. Shit.

How old is he?

What?

Your kid.

Seven. He fell over at school I think, I -

And you dropped everything and ran.

Yeah -

She reaches in her pocket -pulls out the fiver.

It’s all I’ve got. I was going to get lunch. Here.

She gives it to him.

Bless you love. Bless you.

The Young Man runs off, ecstatic.

Good luck!

The sky gets darker.

Feels a sharp kick.

Ow!

Clutches her stomach.

Jasmine is in the street, unhappy, in the rain. Tom is following her.

It was basically rape.

What?

What you did. Bit like rape or something.

No it wasn’t, you had a good time. I didn’t plan it like -

So you took the pictures because -

You took the pictures. You suggested it. I was just hoping to persuade you to talk to your sister, but then when you wouldn’t and I
had the pictures on my phone -

Jasmine  
No / no no

Tom  
I realised I could do something.

Jasmine  
Have you ever even been there?

Tom  
What?

Jasmine  
To … You know.

Tom  
Eritrea.

Jasmine  
Yeah. You ever actually been there?

Tom  
I want to but I’d have to fly so -

Jasmine  
Right so, your family? Shut up. Never met them. Are you sorry? What you did to me?

Tom  
I tried three times to talk you about it instead, but you just shouted me down, get another drink, walk away. So no I’m not sorry, you didn’t leave me a choice.

She pushes him away and storms off, leaving him in the street.

Mrs Andrews is sorting through table cloths. Steve talks to her. The clock strikes four o’clock.

Steve  
How much longer is he going to be?

Mrs Andrews  
He’ll be home soon.

Steve  
I could help if you like? With that?

Mrs Andrews  
Go and stand over there.

Steve does as he’s told.

Steve  
You were here when my wife visited.

Mrs Andrews  
In the day, yes.

Steve  
What was she like?

Mrs Andrews  
I don’t know. She was polite, she was like a young lady. I hope you know better than me.

Beat.

Steve  
They talked.

Mrs Andrews  
All night I believe.
Steve What about?

Mrs Andrews You think I was in there listening? I stayed at my sister’s.

A pause.

Steve You know he hasn’t seen his children in years.

Mrs Andrews Aye.

Steve You know why?

Mrs Andrews I stay out of his business. You’d best talk to him. If you’re sensible, and you might be, you might not be, I don’t know, but if you are, you’ll not cross him.

Steve Why not?

Mrs Andrews takes a towel and begins unfolding it.

Mrs Andrews Because, Mr Sullivan, while I’ll admit you don’t look stupid, whilst I’ll concede you seem to have some kind of brain, you’re no genius.

Steve And he is?

Mrs Andrews Yes.

Steve A genius?

Mrs Andrews Aye.

Steve What does that even mean?

The door bursts open and Robert Crannock enters. A seventy-year-old man, in a raincoat, and holding a small wind turbine.

Robert A person of extraordinary intellect and talent.

A person who has great influence over another. Take this.

He gives the turbine to Steve.


Mrs Andrews shuts the door and gives him the towel on cue.

Mrs Andrews Mr Crannock.

Steve I’m sorry to just -

Shh. I’ve had the data, had that for a while, but now you’re here in person, now I’m looking at you … you don’t work too hard, that’s clear, a sense of humour but nothing with edge. You used to be a
sportsman. Cricket?

Steve

Football.


Robert

Children’s food. You haven’t cut your fingernails properly, tells me you’re self-employed. Yes? Good.

So? Me?

Come on Steve. Who am I? Am I what you expected?

Steve

You’re lonely. But I knew that already.

Robert

Oooh. Killer. But no actually, not so lonely. Mrs Andrews keeps me company. She’s a blessing. Problem is. She loves me.

Mrs Andrews

Those eyes. I tell her, Mrs Andrews, it’s not you, it’s your age. It’s prohibitive. I know why you’re here.

Steve

Good.

Robert

And I’m not interested, could’ve told you over the phone. Now this …

Robert pours himself a drink.

Is a very fine single malt. Should I be drinking at my age, at this time in the afternoon, you’re thinking? You’re not a whiskey drinker are you Steve?

Steve

Not really.

Robert

Not really? You are or you’re not. Where did you sleep?

Steve

On the sofa.

Robert

We don’t have a spare bed do we?

Mrs Andrews

No.

Robert

Flirting! Look at her. There isn’t a bed, there you have it, straight from the horse’s mouth – no offence Mrs A – and you didn’t call ahead, so it looks like you’re on the sofa again tonight.

Steve

If we can just talk now I can get going, I don’t -

Robert

I work hard, you can see this I work all day I’ve got things to do.
Robert
I’m very busy.

Steve
I’ve come all the way here -

Robert
So make the most of it there’s hotels – scenery. A loch nearby, a castle.

Steve
I’m here because of Freya.

Robert
I know Steve, I know why you’re here.

Steve
She said this about you.

Robert
What?

Steve
That you get angry quickly.

Robert
She told me about you too.

Steve
Did she?

Robert
About the problems.

Steve
What problems?

Robert
Exactly.

Have you made up your mind?

Steve
What about?

Robert
Are you a drinker of whiskey?

Steve
Alright.

Robert
You are?

Steve
Yeah, I’ll have one.

Robert
Good.

Steve
Good boy. Better.

Doing better.

He pours one. Gives it to Steve.

There.

They drink.

Steve
It’s good.
Robert: Mine is. You’ve got the cheap stuff.

It is late and overcast now. Dark. Windy.

Jasmine arrives at a bar. A Barman comes over.

Jasmine: I want the strongest drink.

Barman: I’m sorry?

Jasmine: The most alcoholic drink you sell.

Barman: Look, it’s only five.

Jasmine: Are you a clock?

Barman: What?

Jasmine: Cos you look like a barman, you work in a bar, but you’re telling me the time. It’s quite simple, I want to get as drunk as I can, as quickly as possible, so -

Barman: Absinthe.

Jasmine: Two please.

Barman: One for you and one for …

Jasmine: The sheer hell of it. Come on …

She reads his name badge.

Paul.

Paul! This is urgent.

I need to get off my face …

Jasmine hits the bar suddenly.

Come on!

The Barman pours Jasmine her shots. Freya follows the two mothers to a picnic, listening to ‘Happiness’ by Goldfrapp. The sky is clouding over, getting darker.

Meanwhile, Carter is waiting in the street. Sarah approaches him, windswept, and unhappy.

Sarah: I’m late I know. Long day. Where are we going?

Carter: Don’t you have an umbrella?

Sarah: Clearly not.

Carter: This way.
They go off, under his umbrella.

The group of mothers in black with black prams and sunglasses appear again. They dance and sing, holding their wrapped up babies, showing them to each other, drinking their coffee and ignoring Freya.

They sing and dance to ‘Happiness’ by Goldfrapp.

Freya watches them, and tries to take part.

After a while Freya takes a headphone out and speaks to them.

Freya Excuse me?

Mothers Yes?

Freya I’m here for the picnic.

The Mothers look her up and down. Smile in a fake way.

Mothers Not being funny but -

Freya Okay.

Mothers Yeah.

Freya My baby’s kicking.

Mothers How sweet!

Freya Not in a good way.

Mothers Ahhhh.

Freya Do you worry about the future?

Mothers Not really.

Freya What might happen?

Mothers No.

Freya What might happen to your children?

Henry’s very bright, he’s already reading.

He’ll go into hedge funds

Or a surgeon.

Something like that.

How was the birth?
Mothers    Natural.
Freya     How do you manage with it all?
Mothers    Easily.
Freya     None of you got down about it?
Mothers    None of you felt your child was a …
Freya     A?
Mothers    A mistake?
Freya     No. God. No.
Mothers    And what about people who are poorer than you?
Freya     We do what we can.
Mothers    Yes but -
Freya     Charity work. Every Thursday. Primrose Hill. We carbon offset holidays.
Mothers    You know.
Freya     But that’s not enough, and if it’s not enough, then what’s the point.

She clutches her belly again. They look at her for a moment, more serious now, almost threatening. They stand, wielding their children, almost like weapons.

Freya (over singing) Call me an ambulance.

Please.

Please!

The singing continues.

Then they slowly encircle her.

She is scared but has nowhere to go.

The women throw the babies up in the air.

They explode into black powder, like soot or dust, that covers everyone, and is blown about by the wind.

The music continues as the women disappear, Freya falls to the floor, and the lights fade.

End of Act Two.
End of Act Two.
Act Three

Prologue

1973

Roy, Daniel and Robert.

Roy and Daniel are looking through a few sheets of paper. Roy is smoking.

Robert

It’s just a preliminary document. To give you some idea of the way it’s going.

Roy

We understand what it is.

Robert

So you know where it’s headed. I thought it would be good to get your … views.

At this stage.

Roy

You think this is what will be in the final report.

Robert

The way it’s going yes.

Roy

You can’t imagine that they’ll be any … surprises.

Daniel

New factors.

Roy

New factors yes, still to come.

Robert

I can’t see how there would be no.

Roy

Right. Can’t see how there would be.

Daniel

Hmm.

Roy

Because the thing is, these aren’t really the results we were expecting.

Daniel

They’re not meaningful.

Meaningful.

Roy

Exactly.

What do they tell us?

Quite a lot actually. If you do this sort of work it’s clear that releasing huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at such a high altitude will cause heat to be reflected rather than released, potentially causing rising temperatures and -
Roy

No.

Hang on.

With respect.

All that you’ve just said, that tells you a lot.

It tells us very little.

We wondered if there was any way you could make them meaningful to us.

Robert

If there was a way the report could focus on something that we can understand. Because if there was. A clearer focus.

Roy

This could be the start of a very fruitful relationship.

Robert

Yes but this is -

Roy

As we spoke about.

Robert

Right.

Roy

Perhaps it’s a question of how you present it.

Perhaps it’s as simple as that?

Robert

Or maybe you need some more resources.

To see things clearly.

Daniel

Is that what we’re talking about?

Are we talking about resources?

Or should we discuss the fee?

Robert

It’s not about money

Daniel

Of course.

Daniel writes on a piece of paper.

He passes it across. Robert reads it.

I think you should keep going. There’s six months before the final report. That’s a long time. Anything could happen.

Mad Bitch
The evening. Dark.

**Freya** is at the reception of a hospital. She meets **Maryna**, a Polish cleaner, who is playing ‘I Am Not A Robot’ on a tinny radio.

**Freya**
You have to help me.

**Maryna**
Nie potrafie mowie po angielsku (I don’t understand English).

**Freya**
It’s hurting. It’s really – Ow!

*A Receptionist* comes over.

**Maryna**
Jestem tułko sprzątaczka, / idz eej znajdż lekarza (I’m just the cleaner, go / and talk to a doctor.)

**Freya**
This is a hospital you have / to help me.

**Receptionist**
Alright …

**Maryna**
She says it hurts.

**Receptionist**
I can see that.

**Maryna** looks **Freya** in the eyes.

**Maryna**
Po burzy zawsze slonce przychodzi (After the storm, the sun always comes).

**Receptionist**
Thank you Maryna, I’ll deal with it.

**Maryna** picks up her mop and watches.

Now what’s your name?

**Freya**
I’m not telling you my name.

**Receptionist**
You can’t be treated until we / have some information -

**Freya**
I’m pregnant. You have to treat me.

**Receptionist**
Let’s just start with a / name, can you give me a

**Freya**
I pay my taxes, the whole point is you treat me so treat me I don’t want to talk to you, where’s the doctor?

**Receptionist**
You will see a doctor, I’m just trying to get some details. How / long have you been -

**Freya**
I’m not telling you anything, I don’t like you, I’m in pain. It’s kicking so hard. Ow!
Receptionist  How many weeks?

Freya

Receptionist  How many weeks?

Freya  Let me in!

Dr Tim comes in.

Dr Tim  Is there a problem?

Maryna  I think you should let her in.

Jasmine is knocking on Colin’s front door.

Colin  Alright!

As the receptionist takes Freya into the hospital, Maryna watches, then walks away.

A baby is crying somewhere. The rhythmic sound of a heart beat.

Colin answers the door:

Jasmine  I’m wet as fuck.

Colin  It’s not a good time.

Jasmine  Can I come in or what?

Colin  What?

Jasmine  Funny.

She walks past him into the house.

Colin  She’s not back till late.

Never is these days. She’s got a reception till nine, then a late meeting, checked with her secretary, went over, had an argument today, so I know.

Colin  You went to her work?

Jasmine  I’m not interested in her anyway that’s not why I’m here.

She looks at the house.

I hated it when you moved. That was my house. I loved that place. But this is so … House and Garden. Yeah … none of my mates are around got exams or whatever so I thought you’ll be on your own and you could probably do with a laugh so I brought a bottle of tequila. And a spliff or two, or three.
Colin: I don’t really smoke illegal drugs, it’s sort of frowned on for -

Jasmine: You should.

Colin: For husbands of government ministers.

Jasmine: You should, given everything that’s happened to you.


Jasmine: You lost your job.

Colin: I’ll find something else.

Jasmine: To take?

Colin: A job.

Jasmine: You probably wanted kids but she’s past it now.

Colin: Not really.

Jasmine: No she is, well past it, trust me.

Colin: I mean we don’t want kids.

Jasmine: The house must feel empty, with you here, on your own all day.

*She lights a cigarette.*

Colin: You can’t smoke inside, you know that.

Jasmine: She isn’t here.

Colin: So. Why can’t you get a job? Too old is it?

Colin: In their terms, and I’ve never been one of the city boys really. Never done that stuff.

Jasmine: What stuff?

Colin: Cars, booze, coke.

Jasmine: Strippers.


*A moment.*

And you’re right, it’s not been the easiest of months for her either, so she tends to take it out on … well …

Jasmine: You.
Colin

People.

Jasmine

You. It’s all got a bit bleak recently, hasn’t it?

Colin

Why are you here?

Jasmine

I’m your fairy godmother.

She offers him a cigarette.

Colin

I don’t smoke.

Jasmine

If you’re gonna have a mid life crisis, better have a fucking good one. It won’t kill you.

He takes one. She lights it.

She pours two shots of tequila.

Bad things are happening. Let’s stick our heads in the sand.

They drink.

Sarah is in a restaurant with Carter.

For me, a restaurant is never about who will be here, but who certainly won’t. And there are a lot of people who certainly won’t be here. The wine’s excellent, the meat isn’t local which in London is a good thing, the service is eight out of ten. The cheese. Well, the cheese is something to write home about. Dear mother I have just tasted the most delightful cambozolla -

She gives him the sheets of paper.

Oh.

Straight to business. Thank you.

Sarah

Why don’t you tell me what they are?

Carter

Well. They are … results. Of some tests. Photocopies of the originals I think. It’s a preliminary report by Robert Crannock … your father yes?

Sarah

Why did you send them?

Carter

Me?

No I didn’t send them. I don’t know anything about them.

The waiter comes over and pours some wine. Sarah drinks straight away.

Sarah

Alright well, why might someone …
Carter: Why might someone have sent them?

Sarah: Exactly, yes, let’s imagine.

Well these are signed by your father, the results of a project he did for the largest airline in the UK, oh hang on that’s my company isn’t it? Yes I remember this, a project over twenty years to investigate whether emissions from aircraft would have any lasting impact on the environment. Now this report seems to suggest that clearly, yes. Yes.

A huge impact.

These emissions would prove disastrous, for the world.

Sarah: Right. That’s what he thinks.

But that wasn’t his conclusion Sarah. Not at the time.

For twenty years, his public reports said the opposite. That burning fuel, and carbon emissions, would have little or no effect. It was one of the main factors in the expansion of the industry. So the question we … sorry. Not me. The question you have to ask yourself is why would he do that? For twenty years.

Carter: When he knew the truth. Why would he lie?

Of course, everyone makes mistakes, we don’t mind it took him twenty years to work it out, but if it were revealed that he knew all the time … in green circles he’s a god … if this came out, his reputation would collapse.

And you’re his daughter. Perhaps it would rub off on you.

I presume he was paid. I wonder how much?

Sarah: smiles.

Sarah: Yes.

Carter: Yes?

Sarah: You’re right. The public should know. I’ll give the report to the press in the morning.

Carter: You will.

Absolutely. And thank you, because this is a lovely restaurant, the wine is delicious, and especially for this, because I think my father deserves whatever he gets.

Carter: Really?

You should’ve done your research. I hate him.
Sarah

I’m more than happy to disown him publicly. Any excuse.
So sorry, John – no more runways.

*She drinks from the wine.*

Carter

I like the way you hold the glass. By the stem.

It’s impressive. You’re wasted.

Sarah

Not yet.

Carter

In politics, I meant.

Carter takes the papers off her.

You’ll forgive the attempt? This sort of thing normally works on politicians. They get scared. Because most politicians are geeks, as you know Sarah. That’s why they’re so ugly.

*The waiter arrives again.*

But you.

You’re not ugly at all. You’re … striking. Intelligent. So what are you doing?

What do you want?

Sarah

What do I want?

Carter

To eat.

Sarah

Oh.

I’ve done my best. It didn’t work.

So, let’s relax now, eat, drink.

Carter

Enjoy ourselves. Make a night of it.

Let’s talk like men do.

*The sound of a baby in the womb.*

A young doctor, Tim, is standing with Freya.

Tim

We’ve run all the tests. I’m pleased to say, it’s perfectly healthy.

Freya

I’ve been smoking. And drinking. I fell over in the bath.

Tim

She’s fine.

Freya

Other mothers aren’t like this.

Tim

Women often go through many feelings, but when you give birth –
Freya: You should get rid of it. The baby. Before it’s too late. Ow!
Tim: It’s not possible.
Freya: You do it all the time.
Tim: Not in these circumstances. She’s too advanced.

If I was a cave woman, I could do it myself. Punch myself in the stomach.

Freya: Or wait till it was born and hide it or bury it or something. Maybe I will. I thought this was civilised. I thought I had rights.

Tim: We are civilised. You do have rights. But at this stage, so does your daughter. Is someone picking you up?
Freya: I’m on my own. There isn’t anyone. I’m staying here. I need to stay here.
Tim: We don’t have room.
Freya: Sign a piece of paper and it’s done – what?
Tim: What’s really the matter?
Freya: I keep on telling you, there’s something wrong.
Tim: Not with the baby?
Freya: I was out all day, I saw so many people and none of them cared. Are you a good doctor?
Tim: Are you a good patient?
Freya: Good patients would tell you their names.
Tim: I’m Tim.
Freya: Hello.
Tim: Hello Freya.
Freya: Oh, you know.
Tim: Found your wallet in your bag. Now all we need is an address.
Freya: Good hands.
Tim: Thanks.
Freya: I bet you keep your girlfriend happy.
Boyfriend actually.

Boyfriend right, I bet you wouldn’t leave him by himself if he was having a baby.

Hard to say.

I’m not very happy at the moment. Brave face, but I’m struggling. You should let me stay.

Freya I can’t unless you’re in for a … Do you want to see her?

Who?

Your daughter.

No.

If you see her, you can stay the night. That’s the deal.

smiles.

You’re just like my husband.

In what way?

He’s always smiling too, like nothing’s wrong.

She winces with pain.

Steve looks, very seriously, at Robert.

It’s a nice house.

Jealous.

Not really.

Small flat you’ve got. She finds it claustrophobic.

Is that what she said?

What do you think? Is she happy? With the house? Is she happy? With you?

These are the questions.

Point is, you don’t know.

What do you do Steve?

I’m sure she mentioned it.

Of course, but – I want you to be proud of it, Steve. I want you to
Robert
declare it.

Steve
I’m a writer.

Robert
You’re a writer. Good. Of?

Steve
Books. Sort of trivia books.

Robert
Sort of trivia books. That’s right. What sort of trivia books?

Steve
For the Christmas market mainly, they’re like stocking fillers.

Robert
And what do they like, fill the stocking with. What are they called?

Steve
The latest one was ‘Fifty Shit Things About Britain’.

Robert
Fifty Shit Things About Britain. Wow.

Steve

Steve
Yeah, nothing to be proud of really.

Robert
Well I don’t know, there’s always your book.

Steve
We’re working on a sequel actually, for this year.

Robert
Another Fifty Shit Things About Britain?

Steve
Fifty Shitter Things About Britain.

Robert
They sell very well.

Steve
The first bought the flat.

Robert
This one’s for Emily.

Steve
Emily?

Robert
Tell me some of your shit things.

Steve
Look, this isn’t the point, I’m not here to chat -

Robert
Why not? Are you staying? Tonight?

Steve
You said a hotel.

Robert
There isn’t one, and it’s terrible anyway. Stay here.

Steve
No.

Robert
Why not? Scared?
Robert: What does that mean, ‘doesn’t feel right’?

Steve: To stay under your roof.

Robert: You don’t know me.

Steve: I know what you did to them.

Robert: What I *did* to them. I didn’t *do* anything. I said things. I told them the truth. *Did something*, sounds like you’re implying I hit them.

Steve: No.

Robert: Or fucked them something like that. You’re not implying something like that are you?

Steve: Of course not.

Robert: Then watch your fucking language. Choose better words.

Stay. And we’ll talk. We’ll find the time. Later on. Yes?

Steve: Okay.

Robert: Good. Now, tell me why Britain’s so shit.

*Jasmine and Colin have wine and are quite stoned.*

Jasmine: I feel so fucking aimless Colin, I want to go where I want, do what I like, spend money, I want to shout all the time. Cos it’s bullshit, just everyone, isn’t it? Pushing emails around, shall we meet? Shall we have a pre meet? How about Thursday? I’m busy Thursday, well how about we meet to work out when’s good, let’s pencil that in, fucking about on facebook, events, messages, profiles, pretending to have friends, and I don’t mind but none of it’s *achieving* anything, it’s one big ‘general meeting’, just chatter, and when it all fucks up, which it will, just statistically, historically, when it all goes pear shaped, they’ll be full of regrets. ‘I should’ve slept with him, I should’ve gone there, done that while I had the chance’. And I never want regrets Colin so while I still can I’m gonna fuck some shit up.

Colin: I’ve never done that.

Jasmine: What?

Colin: Fucking … shit … or …

Jasmine: Oh Colin.

I’ve found for the sake of dignity it’s better to stay away from the …
Colin I’ve found for the sake of dignity it’s better to stay away from the … shit.

Jasmine We have to sort you out.

Colin *lets out a long strange depressing sigh.*

Sarah and Carter *in a bar – more relaxed now.*

*Cocktails and a night time view over London.*

Sarah I have a fundamental belief in the role of government. I’m very clear about that.

Carter Sarah, it’s wonderful your clarity.

Sarah And we’re very different you and me.

Carter Different in many ways, I’m not denying that, I’m simply saying that with your skills, contacts, your background, you don’t know how much you’re worth.

Sarah I’m not interested in money.

Carter A thousand a day, possibly more.

Sarah It’s not what motivates me.

Carter I know I know, okay, but the improved quality of life that’s something else. I spend my evenings with my children. Do you spend your evenings with your children?

Sarah I don’t have any children.

Carter You don’t have any children alright, do you see much of your husband?

Sarah Enough.

Carter Enough?

*He smiles – you see?*

Sarah We’re going through a … thing at the moment it’s not … oh.

Carter This is what I mean.

Sarah Fuck. What am I doing? I’m telling you about my *marriage* why am I telling you about that? Jesus. Shut up Sarah.

Carter We’re just talking.

Sarah *drinks her Mojito.*
But alright so quality of life, that’s not a factor either, because there are important things you care about. I understand. Targets, limits, carbon trading, an international agreement. How’s all that going by the way? Cos these days I don’t hear so much about it.

Sarah

There’s a lot of momentum to get something done.

Carter

Momentum.

Sarah

Yes… . I know I know alright.

Sarah **grabs a waiter.**

Can I get another Mojito?

*He goes.*

Carter

Come on Sarah, you like things to *happen*. You know really that the solution will lie in utilising the market. Technology and innovation.

Sarah

Carbon ingesting algae you mean?

Carter

Carbon -

Sarah

An orbiting umbrella.

Carter

Sarah, you’re being / naughty.

Sarah

No no, my favourite – turning the moon into a huge solar panel.

Carter

That’s kind of how innovation *works*. It’s *new*? If people will pay, the world will change, fast. The internet existed for ten years, no one had it, but as soon as it could do adverts it went in every home.

Sarah

The environment is longer term, less quantifiable, without government incentivising industry there won’t / be any commercial activity.

Sarah, *Sarah!* You could be doing so much more than incentivising. This is what I’m saying. There aren’t many people around like you. If you were in business you could solve environmental issues right now, you could save lives and build economies and you could do it quickly. And then after work you’d go home to your big house, your happy husband, and do what you like. Concerts, painting, cooking.

Sarah

I used to like cooking.

Carter

What’s your husband’s name?

Sarah

Colin.

Carter

Colin? Right. Colin?
Carter: Colin? Right. Colin?

They both smile.

Carter: Right.

Sarah: He’s an amazing man.

Carter: I’m sure he is.

Sarah: But when I come in these days he just looks at me.

Carter: Because you’re killing yourself with this half-arsed government when you’re capable of so much more. He knows it. I know it.

Sarah: Well …

Carter: We’ll have to wait and see.

Sarah: The next election, see where we are.

Carter: That could be three years.

Sarah: Slowly slowly -

Carter: Why wait?

Sarah: You mean …

Carter: Come to us in the new year.

Sarah: I thought we were talking theoretically.

Carter: No.

Sarah: You want me to work for you.

Carter: Well actually Sarah, if you came across, I would be working for you.

She looks at him.

Sarah: This is an offer?


Sarah: Yes.
Carter

And so do we.

They look at each other.

Sarah

You’re a clever boy.

She drinks. This is the deal.

Carter

The things you could do Sarah. So much bigger than planes and runways.

Robert, Steve and Mrs Andrews are having dinner.

Robert

Did you fly here Steve?

Steve

I didn’t have much choice.

Robert looks at him.

Robert

You haven’t read my books have you?

Steve

I had a look today, while I was waiting.

Robert

You had a look?

Steve

A skim, yes.

Robert

They aren’t difficult, even Mrs Andrews managed them.

Steve

Your books aren’t why I’m here.

Mrs Andrews, let me explain. Steve is worried about his wife. Now I haven’t spoken to any of my daughters for twenty years. They don’t like me, they’re doing their own things – My eldest is the environment secretary. My youngest is at university. And Freya. What she does I don’t know. She’s pregnant, does that count?

Steve

She’s a teaching assistant.

Yes, she helps deaf children or something, but quite strangely one evening, Steve got home and found his wife had gone. Where? Well he eventually discovered that she had got on a train and come up to Scotland, to talk to her dad. And yes. We spoke. You gave her fruit cake.

Mrs Andrews

Aye.

Very appropriate in retrospect, because after she got home, she wouldn’t tell her husband what we spoke about. He knew where she’d been, but Freya refused to talk. She wouldn’t even say why she went in the first place. I presume she’s become unhappy. Confused.
Steve: She hardly leaves the flat anymore, she cries at night.

Robert: Right, so then even more strangely, Steve decides to fake a business trip and come and talk to me himself. Not realising of course that if he needs to do that then there’s much bigger issues at stake.

Steve: Like what?

Robert: Like not what I said to her.

Steve: Okay.

Robert: But why she won’t talk to you. Why you’re sneaking up here without telling her.

Steve: I need to know what’s happening.

Robert: I’m in two minds as to what to say, Mrs Andrews. Steve’s come all this way. But do I betray the trust of my daughter, and get involved or do I keep my mouth shut, for once?

Steve: Go on.

Robert: Everything in the planet is co-dependent. It exists in ever changing, ever evolving balance much like a gigantic organism itself. Did you get that far with the books?

Steve: Yes / I did.

Robert: Species live and die and evolve and the planet evolves too through cycles of hot and cold and responding to the demands of life, and life responds to the demands of the planet. But the problem is / Global warming.

Mrs Andrews: You see, there’s a keen brain under all that – Global warming, yes. You know how that works. Of course you do. You’ve seen Blue Peter. And people draw their graphs, they show the rise in temperature, they show a small but steady rise, they say it can be limited, you know by how much?

Steve: A couple of degrees?

Robert: Two degrees yes, as long as we recycle, do you recycle Steve?
Steve

Yes.

Robert

And insulate our homes, I expect you’ve done that too.

Steve

Looked into it -

Of course you have I’m sure you’ve got a bag for life, and all that makes you feel better I know but it’s a complete waste of time because the global climate has never been interested in two degree anything. If we look at geological records of historical climate change, the onset of the last ice age for instance, we see there is no steady climb, no year-by-year increase. There is in fact a relatively stable climate system, and then something happens, the system is stretched and in a moment, it collapses and changes, in hundreds not thousands of years. You understand?

Robert

Let’s imagine this house is a planet. What regulates the climate?

Steve

The thermostat?

Robert

Mrs Andrews. When the house is too hot she opens windows, when it’s too cold she switches on the heating. She brings in new material to eat or drink, and she removes the waste when I’m done. She cleans the air and the ground and she regulates my life, don’t you? We are symbiotic, she would not exist without me. I couldn’t live without her.

Steve

Right.

Robert

But she’s very unhappy at the moment Steve. Because when the population is doubled like this, her systems are stretched. The house gets hotter, quicker, food and drink are consumed at twice the rate, the floor is twice as dirty. She’s under pressure, but is there a steady increase in her anger? Can you detect a slow rise in her temperament? No. She’s stable, she’s holding it together. But there will come a day, if you stay too long Steve, when the system’s been stretched too far, and she’ll snap. Suddenly she’ll take away your sofa, she’ll hide the food, leave the heating on, steal your phone and spit in your drink, she’ll do everything in her power to remove the problem. To remove you. And she’ll succeed Steve, you’ll be gone, because she’s stronger than any of us.

We were part of system, a relationship, and we abused it. The world will be fine in the end, and it knows what it wants. It wants to get rid of us.

Mrs Andrews

The end of humanity.
Steve looks at them.

Steve Can we get back to Freya?

Robert You don’t believe me?

Steve I don’t see how it’s relevant.

Robert The end of humanity not relevant?

Steve To what we’re talking about, no.

Robert Mrs Andrews. He doesn’t believe me. You think I’m a strange old man.

A pause.

Robert stands up, goes to Steve, grabs him.

Robert Up.

Steve What?

Robert We’re going.

Steve Where?

Robert The end of humanity. We’re going to see it.

Jasmine and Colin are smoking a spliff.

Jasmine I’m not wearing underwear. I never do.

Colin Uncomfortable.

Jasmine It makes life that bit more exciting. You should try it.

Colin I don’t think it’s the same with men.


Nothing for a moment.

Jasmine looks at him.

He’s blank.

Jasmine Colin!

What’s gonna change?

She pokes him.
Come on!!!

What’s happening!?

She pokes him.

Pokes him again.

Keeps on poking him.

Poke poke.

He looks at her.

Then he stands up.

What?

What?

Have I pissed you off now?

Goes to the CD player. Picks a CD. Puts it on.

What are you doing?

The Arcade Fire – ‘Rebellion (Lies)’. It plays.

What’s this?

Colin

Arcade Fire.

Jasmine

Okay, yeah I remember them.

Colin is standing moving a bit.

Freya gave it to me one Christmas.

Used to play it in the car.

Colin starts to dance to it, very awkwardly. He knows the words, but is not used to moving his body.

Oh.

Jasmine

My.

God.

Colin

You like it?

Jasmine

Er … I …

Jasmine is amazed.

Colin dances.
Colin dances.

Yeah.

Colin sings along, loudly now.

‘Sleeping is giving in, 
no matter what the time is. 
Sleeping is giving in, 
so lift those heavy eyelids. 

People say that you’ll die 
faster than without water. 
But we know it’s just a lie, 
scare your son, scare your daughter.’

As he goes he grows in confidence, he starts to let go. There is a kind of beauty to it.

Jasmine is laughing and smoking.

Carter pays for the drinks at the bar.

Carter You look different Sarah.

Sarah What?

Carter You look younger.

Sarah smiles.

Colin dances with things in the room. Bashes around. Starts to go crazy. No ironic moves. He means it.

He pulls Jasmine up. Dances with her, sings to her. She can’t believe it.

‘People say that your dreams 
are the only things that save ya. 
Come on baby in our dreams, 
we can live on misbehaviour.

Every time you close your eyes 
Lies, lies! 
Every time you close your eyes 
Lies, lies! 
Every time you close your eyes 
Lies, lies! 
Every time you close your eyes 
Lies, lies! 
Every time you close your eyes.

Jasmine You’re mental!
Colin

Every time you close your eyes.
Every time you close your eyes.
Every time you close your eyes.

He lets himself go completely.

Freya and Tim. The music playing underneath.

Freya

She’s not kicking anymore.

She seems happy. I think she likes you.

She smiles.

Maybe she could be a doctor, do something good.

He smiles.

Tim

Back in a minute.

He goes out.

Carter and Sarah are outside in the rain under an umbrella.

People try and hide the night.
Underneath the covers.
People try and hide the lie.
Underneath the covers.
Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.

Colin

Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.

Hide it from your brothers.
Underneath the covers.
Come and hug your lovers
Underneath the covers.

Carter

There’s a fifty. For the cab.

Sarah

It won’t be that much.

Carter

Buy something for your husband.

Sarah smiles, gets in a cab and drives off through the city.

Colin continues to dance and mime along with the words.

‘People say that you’ll die faster than without water,
but we know it’s just a lie, scare your son, scare your daughter,'
Jasmine is going as mad as he is. They dance close

Scare your son, scare your daughter.
Scare your son, scare your daughter.’

She kisses him suddenly.

He stops her. Stands back.

They look at each other as the music continues to play.

Jasmine sits. Relights the spliff.

Colin listens to the music a bit, then fades it down and switches it off.

We hear the sound of the storm outside.

Robert is walking with Steve up to a tree.

There’s a nest in this tree. Redwings, beautiful patterning. They were the reason I moved here. I found the birds, bought the house nearby.

I’m asking about / Freya.

The birds were endangered and climate change was the cause apparently. So I thought, they will be my barometer. Like the ravens in the tower, when they leave, it’s over. They said rising temperatures were driving them elsewhere. What do you think?

Doesn’t feel warm right now.

Well exactly, how could you know it was the air temperature? If you want to understand these things, you have to look at the entire system, the mountains, the animals, the air, the sea, it’s infinitely complicated Steve, but that’s what I do, I sit in that shed and I try to see the future.

Just you and your shed.

Every model suggests things are going to be worse than anyone imagines. I’ve seen something terrible,

You’re the only one who’s noticed.

People say they want the truth – facts, and figures, but actually they want to be told it can be avoided, with minimum effort. When Neville Chamberlain came back from Hitler. He said he had a peace treaty, said he could trust this obviously evil man. Why did he believe it? Why did we believe it? Because we had to, or we’d be
facing untold horrors. Always **Steve**, faith will come before truth. That’s who we are.

**Steve**

Freya’s read your books, she knows what you think, so why did she come all the way up here?

**Robert**

They all know what I think. Best way to reduce the carbon footprint?

**Steve**

What?

**Robert**

No foot. You want to be green?

**Steve**

Okay -

Hold your breath. The planet can sustain about one billion people. We currently have six billion. So in the next hundred years it will balance the books. You understand?

**Steve**

I don’t -

Five billion people wiped from the face of the earth in a single lifetime. Mass migration away from the equator, world wars, starvation …

**Robert**

And Freya -

**Steve**

And Freya came to ask my advice about children.

**Robert**

And what did you say?

**Steve**

You have to understand -

**Robert**

I told her to do whatever it takes.

**Steve**

What did you say?

I told her that her child will regret she was ever born. Hate her mother for forcing her into a terrible world.

**Robert**

I told her to kill it.

**Steve** looks at him. Horrified.

**Tim** is operating the ultrasound on **Freya**.

*We see a very blurred image. Of something. Faint sound of the womb.*

**Tim**

There. Can you see?

**Freya**

No.

**Tim**

Look.
Freya

I can’t see anything.

**Steve and Robert.**

**Steve**

You told her to kill it.

**Robert**

Yes.

**Steve**

Emily.

**Robert**

It’s a foetus.

We’re calling her Emily and I’ve no idea what’s going to happen, but she’s there, and growing, and she’s my child too, not just Freya’s, she’s much more important than your theories … your fucking birds.

**Robert**

It’s not just theory / it’s

**Steve**

You had no right. No right to say that to her.

**Robert**

It’s the truth.

**Steve**

You listen! To me.

**Robert**

The birds? You want to know about / the birds?

**Steve**

For once, you listen. You had no right to say that to her. Do you understand?

**Robert**

Steve

**Steve**

No -

**Robert**

The birds had gone before I even moved in.

**Steve moves away, to avoid hitting him.**

It’s Weimar time, it’s Cabaret, across the world. You feel it, we all do. We know there’s nothing to be done, so we’re dancing and drinking as fast as we can. The enemy is on its way, but it doesn’t have guns and gas this time, it has wind and rain, storms and earthquakes.

**Steve**

Just shut up. / Shut up.

**Robert**

This isn’t theory. This is death, this is loss and pain. Freya’s not the first to suffer, and she won’t be the last.

**Steve**

She’s beautiful and clever, but she’s not strong, she came up here for help. She wanted her dad to make her feel better.
Robert

Then she came to the wrong person.

Steve

What did she do?
What did she do when you told her?

Robert

The world as it is, a disgrace.
The world as it will be, unbearable.

Steve

I have to get back. I couldn’t get through to her at home. She’s gone somewhere.

Robert

You can’t get back now.

Steve

She might be killing my baby, so -

Steve leaves.

She had to know the truth.

Robert

It’s better it never lived.

Tim is still trying with the ultrasound.

Freya

You aren’t what you seem.

Tim

I’m sorry?

Freya

I saw you. Through the glass. Talking to the nurse. Ow! It’s started again.

Tim

I just need to find the …

Freya

I teach deaf children at school. Part of my job.

Tim

Really?

Freya

Means I lip read.

Tim

Oh.

Mad bitch.

Freya

Waste of time.

Then you both laughed.

Tim

It was a joke.

No. It’s what you think. And it doesn’t matter except I thought you were the good thing, you were the last glimmer.

Freya

And then you went out.

Aghhh!
Aghh!
She hates you now.

*On the screen is a very clear image of a foetus.*

I’ve had a long day. I’m sorry.
But look.
There she is.

**Tim**

Things’ll seem better.
She’ll make a difference, won’t she?
When she’s here.

Yes.

**Freya**

She will.
She will make a difference.

*The foetus is on the screen. Kicking.*

*Its mouth moves and we hear a small voice.*

**Foetus**

Mummy?

**Freya**

It spoke.

**Tim**

What?

**Freya**

It moved its mouth.

**Tim**

It’s just -

**Freya**

No. I lip read. It’s speaking.

Mummy?

Mummy?

**Foetus**

Help.

Help me.

*Sound of the womb getting louder and louder.*

*Sounds like an earthquake.*

**Mummy**

Shaking.

*The foetus turns its head to face us and screams. Blackout.*

**End of Act Three.**
Act Four

Prologue

1991

Robert is watching television in the dark, drunk.

A door opens onto a hall where bags are packed.

Sarah comes in.

I’ve packed enough for a week, for all of us, but we’ll have to come back for the rest at some point, if you’re serious about all this.

Sarah

There’s too much, there’s all the baby things, the nappies, the sheets, the toys, the bottle, I mean I can’t fit the cot in my car, we’ll have to get a van or something, I don’t know, if you’re serious.

I don’t know if you are serious but if you mean what you said, I’m going right now.

Robert

With you I tried.

Sarah

What?

Robert

Everyone had said if you have a child you’ll change, you’ll know what to do, everything will fall into place, and so I went into the hospital on the day you were born and there was your mum sat in the bed, and she gave you to me, to hold, and I looked at you, and I waited.

For that moment when I would feel like a father.

The moment everyone spoke about, when I would love you, completely, above anything else. But it wasn’t happening.

I looked over at your mum and she smiled. It had happened for her.

I looked down at you.

Still nothing.

So I looked up at your mum and smiled back, and right then, I started pretending. A few years later we had Freya, and Jasmine, and every moment, all the time, I wasn’t a father. I never felt it.

But now she’s gone, now your mother’s dead, there’s no reason to pretend. She was the one I loved. Just her. Yes. I’m serious.
Sarah  What work?

Robert  What?

Sarah  You said you had work to do, that you needed to focus.

Robert  I’ve got to stop pretending.


Sarah  So every time you’ve hugged me and talked to me at bedtime, and drove me to university –

Robert  Yes.

Sarah  All the hours we talked, all that was –

Robert  You believed it at the time.

Sarah  All the hours we talked, all that was –

Robert  That’s what mattered.

*A baby is crying.*

Sarah  I left Jasmine with Freya.

*Coldly, Sarah goes over and kisses Robert.*

Robert  You look like your mother. That’s what I can’t deal with. You all look just like her.

Sarah *exits, leaving the door open.*

*The baby cries.*

Robert  Don’t have children.

Robert  Don’t ever bring me grandchildren.

*He turns back into the room, facing away from the door.*

*We hear the ten-year-old Freya’s voice.*

Freya  Daddy?

Robert  Go away.

Freya  I found this dress. I think it was Mum’s. Can I have it? I like the flowers.

Robert  Don’t touch a thing.

Freya  Daddy?

Robert  Leave me alone.
Freya Daddy?

Robert No!

Freya I’m pregnant.

Robert turns. Facing him is thirty-year-old Freya, pregnant, holding the dress.

What do I do?

Growing sound of white noise again, like a rumble, maybe like water, building up into ...
Thomas Hood

Early in the morning.

Light just on Freya in her hospital bed. She gets out of bed fully dressed, and puts her bag on. She puts her headphones in and presses play, and sets out.

Maryna, the Polish cleaner from before, sees Freya and starts singing ‘I Am Not a Robot’ by Marina and the Diamonds.

Freya leaves the hospital with Maryna, and passes a group of men smoking outside, Freya steals one.

The man steals his cigarette back.

Freya Oh.

Freya walks down the road into the city, with Maryna, and picking up some other commuters behind her. They walk with her, singing.

As Freya starts to become happier, the commuters stop and lift her up and around, as she sings.

They put her down and they run – into Covent Garden! Various street performers appear, including a robot performer, a juggler, a few tourists, and some kids. Freya plays with them all, hopscotch, eating fruit from a stall, dancing with a waiter.

Everyone dances. A marching band appears, some people dressed as animals. People on TV in shop windows joining in. Everything moving. Signs, shops, the sun!

Huge lights, glitter from the ceiling, or a newspaper seller throws her free papers in the air. Ushers dancing and singing in the audience.

Peter appears, looking for Freya. Everyone starts moving off, going about their normal boring business. Maryna goes home.

The newspaper seller clears up her papers, slightly confused and leaves.

Freya starts to text on her phone.

Freya is crying, and texting, she leans against a wall and sinks down to her knees. Peter taps her on the shoulder.

Peter Hello miss.
Freya: Oh / no.

Peter: Was that you singing?

Freya: You’re supposed to be at home.

Peter: I know but I got bored it’s all box sets and nothing in your flat, led me to a complete feeling of apathy sat around like that, I see what you meant now, so I thought I’d come and find you, you don’t mind do you? You look terrible. Not being rude but you look completely white. Like someone addicted to heroin. Or someone that’s dead. What are you doing?

*Dark clouds appear. White noise.*

Freya: Nothing. Leave me alone.

She gets up and walks off, still texting.

He waits for a moment, then follows her.

*The white noise turns into radio in a cab office. Steve is arguing with Mrs Andrews.*

Mrs Andrews: Forty minutes

Steve: No, I’ve been here all night, I’m not waiting any longer.

Mrs Andrews: Well I’m sorry but they said the driver’s on his way and a Ford Focus only goes so fast in this weather.


Mrs Andrews: It’s no bad thing you learn a lesson. You may be worried, you may want to get home but you can’t beat nature. You can’t hold back the tide.

Steve: Well we can.

Mrs Andrews: What?

Steve: That’s exactly what the Thames Barrier does. Stops the tide coming in. We build tunnels, we fly, we go to the moon, of course you can beat nature –

*Steve receives a text message. He reads it.*

We can do what we want, and right now I want my fucking taxi. So.

*He looks up.*

Forty minutes, you’re sure?
Sarah has made breakfast in the kitchen.

Colin comes in.

Sarah Late night?

Colin Can you not?

Sarah I made some tea.

She puts it on the side.

Colin Shouldn’t you have gone by now?

Sarah I want to talk.

Colin I know I know, we made a mess, we’ll tidy up. Don’t worry, go.

Sarah I’ve made a decision.

Colin A decision?

Sarah I’ve had an offer.

Colin Right … you’re …

Sarah I’m going to resign. Take a new job.

Colin Look, I’ve got a headache.

In the commercial sector. I’ll start in the new year.

Sarah I was. Wrong. Colin.

Sarah I’m sorry.

Sarah You come first.

Colin smiles.

What? That’s funny?

Colin You’re going to work for a company?

Sarah A multinational company, position on the board maybe. It pays well, the hours are better.

Colin You used to throw things.

Sarah I … what?

Colin You used to throw things through windows.
Sarah  
I’m sorry Colin you’re not making sense.

Colin  
You’d bunk off work, go into town and shout your lungs out.  
Protesting against whatever it was, I’d come and pick you up round  
the corner.

Sarah  
Well thankfully I’ve grown up so –

Wearing those dresses, you used to get in the car, your face would  
be red with shouting, and your hair down, you’d have thrown  
something at some bank, or the police and you’d jump in the car and  
say drive – just drive, and we’d speed off, like a film, in my Volvo.

Sarah  
You hated all that.

Colin  
At least we argued about things that mattered.

Now you want to be on the board.

Sarah  
I thought you’d be pleased. I thought you’d at least talk to me about  
it.

Colin  
Look.

Sarah  
What?

Colin  
We hate each other.

Sarah  
I don’t hate you.

They look at each other:

It’s Jasmine.

Colin  
No.

Sarah  
She’s been talking, making you like this, while I’m the one mopping  
up, dealing with her fucking …

Colin  
Just fun.

Sarah  
Her vomit, I take her to the doctor, pay her rent, credit cards and –

Colin  
It’s not Jasmine.

A moment. Sarah picks up the tea, offers it.

Sarah  
Are you going to drink your tea?

Colin  
You should go. You’ll be late.

Jasmine comes down, in her nightdress, smoking a cigarette.
Jasmine: Tea! Great.

*She takes it off* Sarah and drinks.

Sarah: You can put that out Jasmine. You know not to smoke inside.

Jasmine: I’m not smoking.

Sarah: This is my house.

Jasmine: Yeah, it looks like you.

Sarah: What?


Sarah: I’ve done everything for you and you’re …

Jasmine: Do you know what comes before part B?

Sarah: What?

Jasmine: Part A!

Sarah: For Christ’s –

Jasmine: Come on that was funny.


Jasmine: Wouldn’t know would I?

Sarah: Colin can we have a conversation …

Jasmine: We should take you shopping today Colin, find you some new clothes, sort you out, what do you think?

Sarah’s phone gets a text message. *She picks up the phone, looks at it, puts it in her pocket* – *looks at Colin*.

Colin: Good luck with your job.

Sarah goes, upset.

We so got it on last night – alright, we didn’t exactly get it on but you were a bit frisky for a minute or two – alright maybe you weren’t a bit frisky, but your heart was going like bang bang bang, bang bang – alright maybe not bang bang bang but –

Colin: I nearly told her I wanted a divorce.

Jasmine: Oh.
Colin

Just now.

Jasmine

Because of us? Cos you’re great Colin but I don’t know if I want a proper relationship.

Colin

Don’t be stupid Jasmine.

I’m serious.

Jasmine

…

Colin

So what do you think?

Jasmine

A divorce? Don’t know.

Jasmine’s phone gets a text. She picks it up. Shrugs.

Things change.

A hint of white noise. Jasmine reads her text.

Steve, tired and unshaven, comes into the living room and picks up his bag. Robert is there.

Robert

Did you call her?

Steve

She’s texted. She wants to meet.

Robert

Good, she wants to meet. Good.

Steve

You’re right she’ll have a difficult life.

Robert

Freya?

Steve

Emily. She’ll not have the things we had, maybe.

Robert

That’s right.

Steve

The world could be terrible. It could be.

Robert

Yes.

Steve

But she’ll be clever, like her mum, so that’s good, and she’ll have a practical attitude which comes from me. An intuition.

Robert

This isn’t the point Steve.

Steve

I think it is. The point. I really think it is. Even if things do get difficult, really tough, like you said, the world’ll be better with her in it. She’ll add something special.

Robert

Don’t you think all fathers think this?

Steve

No, not all fathers. No.
Robert

... And anyway this isn’t the future, she’s already there, thinking, learning. Sucking her thumb, listening.

Steve

You like things simple. I understand. Fair enough. You don’t want to think about it.

Robert *laughs, sits down. The taxi beeps.*

Do what you want. Not my problem anymore.

Steve *picks up his bag, takes out a book and gives it to Robert.*

Steve

My book.

Robert

Your book.

Steve

There’s something on page thirty-seven you’d recognise. It’s about angry old men who think they’re prophets and stand on street corners with signs, shouting at anyone who walks past.

Robert

Fascinating.

Steve

They want the world to end when they do.

Robert

Really?

Steve

And they smell.

Robert

What?

Steve

Because they’re on their own, they smell, a bit, of piss.

Don’t get up.

*He leaves. Robert sits in the chair. White noise grows.*

Tom’s phone rings. He’s in his underwear, just woken up.

Sarah has arrived at work, and is trying to get through.

Simon

The PM says half an hour this morning but only if it’s important.

Sarah

Say it’s vital.

Simon

Are you sure?

Sarah

Use that word when you tell him.

Simon

/ ‘Vital’.
Tom

Hello?

Sarah

Tom. This is the secretary of state for energy and climate change we spoke yesterday, you came to visit.

Tom

How did you get my number?

Sarah

I’ve been thinking about what you said and I wondered if you’d be around for lunch.

Tom

Lunch?

Sarah

Yes. Today. Somewhere nice.

Tom

I’ve only just got up.

Sarah

That’s fine. Get dressed. You’ve got a tie?

Tom

I’m a student.

Sarah

I’ll send a car. He’ll bring a tie. Half twelve?

Tom

How do you know where I live?

Sarah

44 Lonsdale Road.

Tom

Yeah but –

Sarah

Perfect. Half twelve. See you then.

She hangs up.

Simon

Minister, what are you doing?

Sarah

I’m cooking.

Freya

is walking down the street followed by Peter, walking behind her.

Peter

Did you walk all the way here?

Freya

Yes.

Peter

Like Dick Whittington?

Freya

What?

Peter

It’s a pantomime.

Freya

I know what it is. / Jesus.

Peter

I saw Dick Whittington at the Hexagon in Reading.

Freya

Peter –
Peter

It had Les Dennis in it. It was a bit embarrassing all round I thought. But anyway in that he walks to London and becomes Mayor. Maybe you’ll become Mayor.

Freya

I’ve had enough. I want to stop.

Peter

Or perhaps you’re here because of the earthquake.

She stops.

It’s supposed to happen today.

Freya

I know, I know it’s *supposed* to but –

Peter

Right so when it does you’ll need a sidekick. Dick Whittington had a cat, I can be the cat?

*She turns away from him.*

Freya

I’m imagining you. The drink or the pills in hospital or some kind of paranoia, schizophrenia something like that, the blood rushing to my head.

There’s a long history of earthquakes in the capital. One in 1580 killed two people and made everyone think that it was Judgment Day.

Peter

Peter … / shut up.

Freya

Another one in 1931 originated in Yorkshire but made chimneys fall down in Clapham. The most recent was in 2008. They happen quite a lot.

Freya

You should be interested in girls or something.

Peter

I am.

Freya

I’m tired.

Peter

I am interested in girls or / something.

Freya

Why isn’t there ever anywhere to sit down!?

*She sits down on the ground.*

They say when you give birth, the pain is unbearable. That’s why women forget. Your skin tears, there’s blood and there’s shit and you scream and it feels like you’re going to die.

*She scratches at her stomach a bit.*

Peter

You still got my flower?
She has the flower stuck in her bag.

Freya I like it.

Peter You should keep going miss.

Freya Why?

Peter I think you’re nearly there.

That way.

Freya stands and carries on. Peter smiles and follows.

Liberty, on Carnaby Street.

Jasmine sits with a Liberty Girl, waiting for Colin.

Jasmine I’m not going to steal anything.

Liberty Do you have to wear all that make-up?

You must be depressed working in a shop like this, standing here all the time, you look really depressed.

Liberty This isn’t just a shop.

Jasmine What?

Liberty This is Liberty.

Jasmine But how much do you get paid?

Liberty I’m sorry?

Jasmine It’s probably not much is it?

Liberty What do you do?

Jasmine shouts through the changing room.

Jasmine Colin! You know how to get dressed right?

No reply.

You should break out, come with us, what’s your name?

Liberty Liberty.

Jasmine That’s the name of the shop I meant what’s your name?

Liberty
Liberty

Jasmine

Not really. I wanted to work here from when I was fourteen. I love this place, the people, the lighting. Most items cost well over two hundred pounds. I used to come here for hours and walk around and touch things. Then when I was eighteen I applied for the job. I put Liberty on the form, as my name. I thought it would get their attention. I was right. When I got the job, I applied to deed poll, so my bank details would match. I wear this amount of make up so my skin tone goes exactly with the colour of the walls? And you’ll notice my clothes co-ordinate with the posters, and the sign outside.

Jasmine

Well, Liberty, that’s brilliant but we’re drinking Ouzo and you should blow this off, come and have a laugh with us.

Liberty

You and your dad?

Jasmine

He’s not my dad. We’re together, out on the town, we’re going to have it, what do you think?

She looks at Liberty and smiles.

Liberty

No thanks.

Jasmine

Can’t believe you’re called Liberty. What was your old name?

Liberty

Nicola.

Jasmine

I like Nicola.

Liberty

Nicola’s shit. Liberty’s better. What’s your name?

Jasmine

Jasmine.

Liberty

Who called you that? Your mum or something?

Jasmine

...

Liberty

Jasmine doesn’t mean anything. Liberty’s better.

It means freedom.

Sarah, Tom and Carter in a restaurant.

Carter

How are you feeling today?

Sarah

I’m feeling really good, thank you.

Carter

Stronger constitution than the country you’re running. Not many people can say that. Who’s this?
This is Tom.
Hi.
Work experience?
Tom’s a friend.
Hi Tom. Nice tie.
She said we were going somewhere posh.
Posh? Here? No. This isn’t posh.
I met Tom yesterday. He has family in Eritrea. Do you know where that is?
There are so many countries aren’t there? Africa or something probably? We don’t fly there, I know that.
The crops don’t grow anymore. The temperature is rising year on year. The people, my family, they’re getting to the point where either they move or they die.
Tom doesn’t really approve of your plans.
What are you doing Sarah?
You think your suit looks really good don’t you?
It’s not about what I think, actually, Tom, it’s a fact. This suit is really impressive.
Tom tried to blackmail me. He thought at the time Heathrow wasn’t enough he heard I was due to make an announcement and he demanded a complete halt to air travel expansion. Now, I gave him hell because I don’t like to be blackmailed. As you know. I told him I hadn’t made up my mind.
Which turned out to be true.
But speaking to my husband this morning, he mentioned how I used to throw things at the windows of large corporations like yours. As you know we’re going through a difficult time at the moment but he seemed to think I was more attractive back then, and I could see what he meant.
Oh I get it, you’re making a point, she’s using you Tom. Well look, Africa’s a pretty shit place to grow vegetables global warming or not, what with the sun and the desert and the civil war. Maybe your family should move, get away from it all on one of our nice big
planes, or is that not the point you’re making?

Sarah
I was reminded why I went into politics, Tom and I / aren’t so different.

Carter
I know a fantastic therapist, Sarah, if that’s what this is really / about.

Sarah
So I gave Tom a call, asked him to join us.

Carter
This thing with teenagers / it’s strange

Sarah
Then I called the Prime Minister’s office to bring forward the meeting.

Carter
The Prime Minister?

Sarah
I sat down with him and put forward my case.

Carter
You did.

Sarah
A total halt to expansion, guaranteed. No more runways, control, terminals, nothing. right across the country. I said he had to be firm, make a lasting decision. I told him a strong message on this would unite the government, and be popular with the country.

Carter
And what did he say?

Sarah
He’s very green. He’s got a wind turbine on his roof. Next week, we announce. It’s over.

Carter smiles at them.

In Liberty

Colin comes out from the dressing room. He’s wearing a very expensive suit, shirt and tie, with new shoes. He’s had a hair cut as well. He looks fantastic.

Jasmine
Wow.

Colin
Is it alright?

Liberty
How does it feel?

Colin
Not sure. How much is it?

Liberty gets out a calculator.

Liberty
Well, with the suit, the shoes, the tie, the shirt. The cufflinks, the vest, the care cover, you’ll want that, the socks, the laces …

Five thousand pounds and forty-four pence.
Colin  Oh my god.
Liberty  Perhaps your girlfriend would like something of her own?
Colin  She’s not my girlfriend.
Liberty  She said she / was –
Colin  Is that what you told her?
Jasmine  No.
Colin  Jasmine!
Jasmine  Colin!
Colin  She’s my wife’s sister.
Liberty  Oh just your … well … that explains it then.
Jasmine  What?
Liberty  Why she’s trying so hard.

* A moment. *

Anyway what do you think?

Shall we put it through?

Is it something you think you could own?

**Sarah, Tom and Carter.**

Carter  Tom, do you have a computer?
Tom  Yeah.
Carter  Phone?
Tom  Of course.
Carter  You drive a car?
Tom  And get to the point?

All of them developed for profit. It’s how we progress. But Sarah thinks we’ve reached the first moment in human existence where we have to stop, and go backwards. She thinks this moment is entirely different to anything that’s ever happened.

Carter  But the world *is / different. It has limits.*
There will be more air travel Tom. Because people want it. People have the right. To be free, to make their own choices.

What’s more important, a stag weekend in Amsterdam or the entire nation of Tuvalu sinking underwater? Six flights a year to a second home, or starving families in Eritrea?

I admire the passion Tom, and clearly you’re a bright boy with huge potential but is this really what you want to do? You could come with me in a minute, I’ll show you round the office, I’ll pay your university fees, and before long you’ll be eating in restaurants like this, with beautiful people and respect and all the resources you need to protect the people you love. Or, you could end up serving in restaurants like this, on the edge, struggling financially, a slow crawl to last place. Sarah’s just made the wrong decision, there are so many women like her, lonely, past it, no children but she needs a project, so now we’re all her fucking children, stupid and careless and in need of protection, and that’s fine, she’s nothing, she’ll be forgotten, but it’s not too late for you Tom, what do you think?

Tom’s got what he wanted.

What?

This is a good day for him.

This isn’t / what I wanted.

Like me, he just wants things to be fair.

So you’re not enjoying the restaurant Sarah? Or the bar last night? Your big house? / Nice holidays?

I’m not denying people their lifestyle but –

Why / not?

There has to be a balance between –

You should’ve seen the salary we offered her. And we never ask twice so –

I’d rather eat my own shit than work for you.

Sort of thing you’d actually do. And anyway –

* A bit of bread hits Carter.*

What.

Shut the fuck up.
Thrown by Tom, who’s standing up. Sarah smiles.

Sarah Good shot.

He throws another bit at Sarah.

Sarah Hey.

Tom No.

We shouldn’t be flying at all.

Carter Ah, now, you see?

Sarah Tom

No expansion still means thousands of flights every single day. You’ve all had your whole lives to sort out the planet, and you’ve done precisely nothing. Now, according to the best scientists, we’ve got about five years left before it’s too late, so you’ll forgive me if I don’t wait for the next election, you’ll understand if I’m impatient. Because while you continue to have conversations like this, in London restaurants, in government lobbies and Notting Hill gardens, while you show off your little wind turbines, and while you’re talking and talking, you’re still doing absolutely fuck all. And meanwhile, the clock is ticking, the ice caps are melting, people are dying and it’s my generation who’ll pay the price, long after you’re both dead, so I think this is the turning point. Right now. I’m going to sleep with more sisters of elected politicians, I’m going to handcuff myself to railings, I’m going to attack police, issue bomb threats. Until something is done, something real, I’m going to add to the long and noble tradition of direct action.

He takes a plate and smashes it onto the floor:

There are children dying that shouldn’t be dying. Lifestyle? Fuck your lifestyle.

He kicks over a chair:

Cunts. All of you. Are you embarrassed? You should be.

Tom leaves. Carter smiles. Sarah drinks her wine.

A busker appears and starts playing.

Freya is now walking with Peter by the Houses of Parliament.

My dad says, in a few years, they’ll look back, on the ruins of London, when the city’s underwater, and the old people will say, do you remember walking down Oxford Street? The view from St
Freya

Pauls? By that time there’ll be heat waves, storms, even this earthquake might be caused by us they think. Something to do with ice sheets crashing into the sea. Decreasing amounts of sediment between the tectonic plates.

Peter

I think it’s God.

Freya

What?

Don’t you think if there is a God, he’s pissed off? Like when you leave a mug in your room too long and it grows into this rank horrible green pus. You throw it away when that happens don’t you? You get a new one. Start again.

Steve is in Victoria station, a man in a polar bear costume approaches him. He is holding a bucket of money.

Steve

I’m in a hurry.

Polar Bear

I’m dying.

Steve

Do you know where the tube is?

Polar Bear

I know my whole habitat is disappearing down the tube, I know that.

Steve

Right, excuse me.

Polar Bear

Melting icebergs, whole eco-systems eradicated, maybe you could spare a few pounds?

Steve

I don’t have any change.

Polar Bear

I’ll do a dance.

Steve

Can you get out of my way?

Polar Bear

It’s a good dance.

Steve

Who are you?

The Polar Bear reveals his face.

Polar Bear

It’s Rag week. Greenpeace.

Steve

Can you just / get out of the –

Polar Bear

Cheer up, might never happen.

Steve struggles with the bear, pushes past and off.

A Young Man, dirty and sweaty runs up to Freya grabs her arm.
Young Man

Please! Please.

Freya

Oh. You … How was –

Young Man

I’m sorry but my kid! My kid’s in hospital, I’ve just found out, I need the bus fare to get down the road, I don’t have any … change … I’m sorry, I’m really in a hurry, I’m really sorry. Shit. Shit.

Freya

You asked me this yesterday.

Young Man

What?

Freya

About your kid. I gave you five pounds. You said exactly the same thing then.

Young Man

Oh. Right, yeah yeah.

Freya

You don’t … have a kid, do you?

The Young Man looks at her – of course he doesn’t. He runs off – the Polar Bear leaves as well. A rumble.

Peter

Depressing, isn’t it?

Come on.

Freya looks at Peter.

Freya

Peter. What’s going on?

Peter

What?

Freya

You don’t make sense, following me.

Peter

I register very high on the autism spectrum. It’s the sort of thing I’d do.

Freya

You’re not even that convincing. Shouldn’t your voice have broken by now?

Peter

Yes, that’s true, it should’ve broken by now.

Freya

Right. So. Peter. What’s going on?

I think I have some kind of purpose. Maybe it’s to do with the earthquake. Sometimes people imagine a figure who represents death, the bringer of bad news, a man who will guide them from this life into the next. I could be Peter, at the gates of heaven.

Peter

My version of death is a sullen fourteen-year-old boy with behavioural difficulties?

Freya

He takes many forms.
**Freya** walks away, upset.

**Peter**

Or I maybe I’m a herald.

**Freya**

What am I supposed to do?

**Peter**

Peter Rabbit. At the rabbit hole.

**Freya**

I don’t know why I’m here, or where I am, I don’t want the baby –

**Peter**

Miss –

**Freya**

– but I can’t get rid of it, my family hate me, not a single friend has called me all week.

**Peter**

Miss –

**Freya**

I’m a fuck up, a fuck up, on my own. A complete fucking MESS.

*She looks at her belly.*

I don’t want you! Little fucking …

*She punches it.*

**Peter**

Miss! I can feel it.

**Freya**

What?

**Peter**

It’s time.

**Freya**

Peter, I’ve had enough!

**Peter**

I’m a carrier signal.

**Freya**

A what?

**Peter**

Someone wants to talk to you and they’re using me to get through.

This is the moment when … The time has come. This is the moment.

**Freya**

The moment?

**Peter** starts to remove his hoodie and his glasses.

**Peter**

This is the moment when I …

Who are you thinking of most?

The moment when I …

Who do you think of all the time?
Freya  I don’t –  
Peter  Who are you thinking of right now?  
Freya  Emily.  
Peter  Emily, yes.  

**Peter lets his hair down.**  

*Now revealed is a sixteen-year-old girl.*  

Emily  Hello Mum.  

*A long pause.*  

*They look at each other.*  

Freya  starts to cry. Horrified. She backs away.  

Emily  Mum –  
Freya  I don’t … – Oh god … you’re all grown up.  
Emily  Oh god.  

Emily  looks upset.  

Freya  pulls herself together and tries to smile.  

Freya  Sorry.  
Sorry.  
Your hair.  
It’s a bit like mine.  

Emily  I’ve got dad’s nose apparently.  
Freya  Yeah.  
Emily  His sense of direction too.  

*They look at each other.*  

Freya  I look shit to you, probably.  
Emily  Well …  

Freya  reaches out and touches her on the arm.  

What are you doing?
Freya: Maybe we could, have a coffee. Do you like coffee?
Emily: We don’t have time.
Freya: But that’s what mums and daughters do. They have a coffee together. They talk. Don’t have time before what?
Emily: No, we should go.

Freya follows Emily.

**Jasmine and Colin are walking along the river.**

Jasmine: Five.
Colin: Shut up.
Jasmine: Five girls so far, checking you out.
Colin: Right.
Jasmine: How many before today?

Colin: When I was twenty a girl came up to me pinched my bum she obviously thought I looked good from behind but when she turned me round and saw my face she went urrggh, and walked away.

Jasmine: You’ve had a tough life haven’t you?
Colin: Fuck it.
Jasmine: Exactly, you know where we’re supposed to be going?
Colin: The South Bank. This way.

A woman walks past and checks Colin out.

Jasmine: Six.
Colin: !

She chases after him.

**Freya and Emily.**

Freya: What are you into?
Emily: What?
Freya: For fun. With your friends.
Emily: I …
Freya

Emily

Freya tries to smile.

Freya

That’s good.

Emily

Mum I –

Freya

Do you have a boyfriend?

Emily

Am I gay you mean?

Freya

No. I just.

Emily

I play football so I must be gay.

Freya

No. I didn’t mean that.

Emily

Yeah / okay.

Freya

What do you want to do when you grow up?

Emily

I’ll finish school, get a job somewhere probably, I don’t know.

Freya

Ambitions … ?

Emily

No point is there? I mean there’s nowhere to go. You don’t understand. Look at you. Thought when you were younger you’d look better.

Freya

What have I done? Why are you being like this?

Emily

Are you joking?

Freya

…

Emily

When you’ve been drinking, you sit on the sofa and apologise again and again. ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry Emily’. Then you fall asleep, spill it everywhere. I have to put you to bed.

Freya

What about your dad?

Emily

Dad left ages ago. Only see him Saturdays. Come on.

Freya

What?

Emily

We don’t want to be late.

Emily escorts Freya onwards.

Steve is on the South Bank.
A Jogger jogs past on the way to work.

Steve  Excuse me.

She comes to a stop.

I’m … meeting someone by the theatre, where’s the … theatre?

Jogger  The theatre? I don’t know.

Steve  Oh, okay –

Jogger  I don’t go to the theatre.

Steve  Okay – I just …

Jogger  Why would I go to the theatre?

Steve  It doesn’t matter.

Jogger  It’s just like TV. But more expensive. And further away.

Steve stops and waits.

Freya and Emily are walking along Waterloo Bridge.

Emily  You know where they’ve put the London Eye now?

Freya  No.

Emily  Bath.

Freya  Why?

Emily  Good question. After the flooding it was going to go on tour but no one had the money so they had a public vote and Bath it was instead.

You ever been on it? The wheel. I read about Bath in a book once. Looked nice …

Freya  No.

They stop.

Emily  So what have you done?

Freya  What?

Emily  What do you do? Day to day.

Freya  I … don’t really … I find it all quite …

Emily  You find it all too much.
Freya
Yeah.

Emily
You can’t cope.

Freya
I’ve never found it as easy as I think you’re supposed to.

Emily is looking out at the view.

Have we stopped then?

Is this where you’re taking me?

What am I supposed to do here?

Emily
You’ve texted Dad haven’t you?

Freya
Yes but –

Emily
And Jasmine, and Sarah.

Freya
To meet me. I want to talk to them.

Emily
Look where we’re standing. Waterloo Bridge.

Freya
…

You wanted them to watch you. Mum, if you could see what’s going to happen. The buildings and the parks are shanty towns. Immigrants everywhere, gambling and drinking, the streets – covered in shit, the air thick with smoke, there’s disease and rationing, blackouts and curfews. Every morning when we fetch the water we have to queue for an hour, and at night you keep a knife by the side of your bed, just in case. I hate it. So do you. Everyone has given up. You’re passed out on the chair, but I’m in the bed, under the covers, desperately trying to get a message to you. It’s what you tell me. It’s what you say you should’ve done, for both of us.

Freya
I’m sorry, I’ve really been trying.

Emily
It’s not too late. Just step over the barrier.

Freya looks at her.

Then climbs over the barrier.

Get used to it. Breathe. I’m sat inside you. Warm and happy and I won’t know anything about it. You have my entire support to throw yourself off. It’s better you do. I promise.

Freya looks out.

Breathe. And then, imagine there’s a step. Just step out. They say
most people die of shock before they hit the water.

A few people gather around, at a distance to watch. Emily stands amongst them, disappears in the crowd.

Freya
Emily?

Passer by 1
Who is she?

Passer by 2
I don’t know she just climbed over, but look at her.

Passer by 1
Yeah.

Freya
Emily … ?

Passer by 2
Just one of those women.

Passer by 1
/Yeah, god.

Freya
Emily, please!

Passer by 1
Why does she keep on shouting?

Passer by 2
Who knows? Emily! Fuck! Sorry – shouldn’t laugh. Has someone called the police?

Steve is on the South Bank.

Jasmine and Colin arrive.

Steve
She texted you too?

Jasmine
Yeah she didn’t say you were coming though, could’ve left you to it.

Steve
Colin, you look –

Colin
Yeah.

Steve
She’s supposed to be here supposed to be here by now but –

Jasmine
She gets distracted by bright colours. Don’t worry, it’s quite normal. She takes her time. Oh no.

Sarah appears.

Sarah
Proper family gathering. Steve, she said you were away.

Steve
I was.

Sarah
She’s texted everyone. What’s happened to you?

Colin
Right.
Jasmine
Colin’s got something / to tell you.

Sarah
So where is she?

Steve
I don’t know.

Sarah
Drags us all out here then doesn’t show up herself, / pretty typical.

Steve
I hoped she’d be waiting here, but –

Sarah
What do you mean Colin’s got something / to tell me?

Steve
Has anyone spoken to her? Sorry. / Has anyone actually spoken to Freya?

Sarah
Colin?

Colin
Maybe we should –

Sarah
I didn’t take the job. You were right. I turned it down.

Jasmine
He wants a divorce.

Oh … you … For fuck’s sake Jasmine he buys a new jacket, you think he’s having a mid life crisis. He doesn’t want a divorce, we’re just –

Jasmine
Ask him.

Sarah
I’m not going to ask him.

Jasmine
Ask him.

Colin
I think perhaps we should …

Sarah
What? Should what?

Colin
I think perhaps we should.

Yes.

Steve
Is that …

Jasmine
What?

Sarah
We’re, we’re not going to talk about it here.

Jasmine
You mean on / the –

Steve
/ Yeah.

Sarah
In front of her and everyone else. We need to –
Colin
Sarah.

Jasmine / fuck, fuck, shut up. Shut up.

Sarah I’m not doing this now.

Jasmine On the bridge.

They all look.

A crowd has gathered on the bridge – traffic passes. It is noisy. A Police Officer has arrived.

Freya In 1844 Waterloo bridge was called the bridge of sighs, there were so many suicides.

Police Officer I want you to stay calm.

Freya Thomas Hood wrote a poem about a homeless woman who threw herself off.

Police Officer You’re going to be alright.

Freya One more Unfortunate,

Police Officer Slowly come back/ over the barrier.

Freya Weary of breath, Rashly importunate,

Police Officer Help is / on its way.

Freya Gone to her death.

Passer by 2 / Come on. Fuck’s sake, get on with it.

The crowd laughs.

Freya Make no deep scrutiny

Into her mutiny

Rash and undutiful:

Freya’s phone rings.

Passer by 2 JUMP JUMP JUMP JUMP … !

Freya Fuck fuck shit …

The crowd chants. Freya answers her phone.

Steve Baby, it’s me. I’m here. I can see you.

Freya Steve … I’m scared. But I can’t … They …
Freya cries. Someone in the crowd starts playing ‘Jump’ by Kris Kross. The crowd chant.

Steve
Please. Climb / back down on to the road.

Freya
Who was her mother? / 

Steve
Calm down, listen. / I’m on my way.

There is a rumbling drowning the rest of the noise. The ground shakes.

An earthquake. The bridge is moving.

In she plunged boldly –

Freya
No matter / how coldly
The rough / river ran –

Steve
Please don’t. Freya. / I know what the problem is.

Freya
Cold inhumanity, / Burning insanity,

Steve
Freya. Freya. It’s okay. I understand.

The rumbling is loud now. The earth moving.

Freya
Steve. I don’t know what to do. I don’t want the baby, I really can’t have a baby.

Steve
We’ll work it out –

Freya
There’s a noise. It’s moving. Shaking. The bridge. Everything’s moving!

Steve
Hold on and / just wait or

Freya
I don’t want to hold on – I can’t wait anymore – It’s too late! This is important. Where have you been! This is it!

The earthquake is very loud.

Freya
Oh god oh god, it’s the earthquake. Just like they said.
I can’t, I can’t do anything.

Please please no.

Emily.

It’s breaking.

I can’t hold on! I … I can’t!
She slips.

Blackout.

The sound of destruction.

An earthquake.

**End of Act Four.**
As the noise fades, an animation plays.

We see blackboard animation that illustrates the story. The narrator is old and wise.

It is said that in the old times, in the early years of the twenty-first century, mankind only thought of himself. The people would steal from the land and plunder the seas, they would kill the animals, tear out the minerals from the ground and poison the sky. And as the earth grew darker, the sun burnt brighter, and the sea began to rise, the people simply closed their eyes and drank, and danced, and attempted to ignore their certain destruction.

It was then, in mankind’s greatest hour of need, that Solomon came. A young woman, accompanied only by one faithful companion, packed her bag, and came to the city of London. After three days, walking barefoot, she arrived on the bridge across the river, at the centre of the earth, and she spoke. Her words proclaimed the new enlightenment.

She was young, and so full of hope and truth that her speech, her words, the power and the light, was relayed, repeated, across the world, by radio, by television, by powerful rumour and written instruction to every man and woman on the planet and slowly slowly, the tide turned. People listened and people changed. Solomon spent the rest of her life travelling the world, walking a new path, showing us the future, a new way to live.

And the people of the world were happy. They were saved and they rejoiced.

The blackboard bleaches to white.
Certain Destruction

2525, or possibly a hospital.

A beeping sound.

A clean white space.

**Freya** is lying on a single white bed.

A **Woman** appears. *She looks like Grace, and wears a white version of the floral dress from the Act One Prologue. She also wears a veil.*

**Grace**

Freya.

Freya?

**Freya** wakes. *Tries to sit up.*

No, you don’t need to move.

**Freya**

I was in the river.

**Grace**

You’re safe now.

**Freya**

These aren’t my clothes …

**Grace**

How do you feel?

**Freya**

Where am I? Where is everyone?

**Grace**

It’s just me. Try to focus. You’ve been asleep a very long time.

**Freya**

What do you mean?

**Grace**

You’re in the future.

**Freya**

The future?

**Grace**

The year Twenty Five, Twenty Five.

**Freya**

You’re joking.

You’re alive. You’re warm. You’re safe. And now you’re awake.

**Grace**

Have a drink.

Here.

A glass of water.
Freya takes it, and drinks.

Freya Who are you?

Grace I’m Grace.

Freya My mum was called Grace.

Grace Yes.

Freya But she died. There was nothing they could do. It was cancer.

Grace We don’t have cancer any more.

Freya Good.

Grace We don’t have diseases or pain, we don’t have suffering or death, we have only peace. Peace and life.

Grace strokes Freya’s hair.

Freya She used to stroke my head like that.

Can I …

Freya removes Grace’s veil.

Mum …

Grace Hello Freya.

Freya Mum!

I was so scared! I didn’t … I didn’t know what to do.

Freya hugs her and cries. Grace hugs her tight.

Grace You’re safe.

You’re safe now.

Hospital

Freya is in a hospital bed, on a ventilator, unconscious.

Steve is watching her.

He paces.

Tim enters.

Tim Mr Sullivan?
Steve: Yes?

Tim: I was the doctor who treated your wife. They said you had some questions.

Steve: When she came in, didn’t you think there was something wrong?

Tim: She was worried about the baby but we tried to put her mind at rest, we let her stay in overnight, and then in the morning she checked herself out. We had no reason to think she would … well.

Steve: You just let her go.

Tim: It was out assessment that she would be fine.

Steve: Just let her walk out the door by herself.

Tim: She said she didn’t have anyone to collect her.

*They look at each other.*

Steve: What do you think?

Tim: I’m sorry –

Steve: Does she have a chance?

Tim: I’m sorry, it’s not my department.

Steve: I’m sure you’ve spoken to your colleagues before coming in here, you all talk, don’t you? You wanted to know the situation before you confronted the husband. So you know the situation, what do you think?

Tim: They’re conducting some tests.

Steve: But what do you think?

Tim: If there isn’t a chance, you should tell me. If there’s nothing any of us can do anymore and we should all just give up, I’d rather know.

Tim: I’m sure there’s a chance.

Steve: You might want to talk to her.

Steve: Why? She’s in a coma. Why would I talk to her?

Tim: Some people find it helpful.
Tim...

Is there anything else I can do?

Steve Her family are outside. Can you ... make sure they have what they want, tell them what's going on, get them whatever they need.

And keep them out.

I don't want them coming in here.

Tim goes.

The music plays again. Grace enters.

Freya is sat on the edge of the bed.

So – Dad bought into one of those cryogenic things and we’ve all been frozen at the point of death, you as well, revitalised only when medical science has the power to heal us.

Grace smiles.

Is that right?

Grace just looks at her.

Is that what’s going on?

Grace You look better.

Freya I feel better. I want to have a look round. The future! Have you got flying cars?

Grace We don’t need cars.

Freya And robots.

Grace You have no idea.

Freya When can I see?

Grace When you’re well enough.

Freya I’m fine, look.

Grace We have some questions first.

Freya What about?

Freya, the date of your preservation is of vital historical
Grace

significance. It is said, that this was the turning point. The moment you fell, the place it happened, Legend has it that it was from that place at that time that the speech was made. From the bridge. From that moment. The tide turned. The world became better, and better until we solved the problems. All the problems. And we survived.

So. Did you hear it? Did you hear the speech? Is that why you were there?

Freya

No. I don’t know anything about it.

Grace

This is important, you were on the bridge, in that time.

Freya

Yes but –

Grace

Why were you on the bridge, if not to hear the Solomon’s speech?

Freya

Solomon?

Grace

Yes.

Freya

Solomon on the bridge?

Grace

Solomon, the greatest woman in the world, she walked to London, stood at the centre of the earth and changed everything.

Freya

Solomon … Mum. It’s not Solomon. It’s Sullivan.

Grace

What?

Freya

It’s me. I walked all the way to the bridge, I stood in the centre of the earth.

Grace

But Freya …

Freya

I’m Solomon. I changed the world.

Grace

Freya you can’t be.

Freya

Yes! Why not?

Because you died.

Grace

And Solomon …

Solomon lived.

Sarah and Colin are in the hospital café. Sarah brings back two coffees.

Sarah

There.

Colin

Thanks.

They drink.
Colin

How are you?

Sarah *shrugs.*

*They drink.*

Sarah

Do you remember the jacket you wore at Suzie’s party?

Colin

What?

Sarah

I just thought of it. You remember? It had shoulder pads.

Colin

Yes.

Sarah

It was far too big.

Colin

My lucky jacket.

Sarah

Well, that’s what you used to call it –

Colin

Yeah.

Sarah

Lucky in what way exactly?

Colin

It got attention.

Sarah

You looked stupid.

Colin

Like I said, attention.

Sarah

Well …

Colin

From the birds.

Sarah

Birds. Jesus.

Colin

Got your attention.

Sarah

You used to roll up the sleeves.

Colin

Nothing wrong with that, not in the eighties.

*He rolls up the sleeves of his jacket.*

See?

*She smiles.*

Good look.

*He unrolls them.*

Sarah

Probably just ruined it.
Colin: What?
Sarah: That jacket.
Colin: What do you mean?
Sarah: Just … that it … looks expensive, you probably shouldn’t –
Colin: Not your problem now is it?
Sarah: Colin …
Colin: What?
Sarah: I was trying to –
Colin: What?
Sarah: Colin …
Colin: We shouldn’t talk about this now.
Sarah: When you lost your job yes I probably thought I should compensate in some way. I know things aren’t like they were, I know I’m different these days. But I don’t think it’s too late.
Sarah: I’ll change.
Sarah: Or something.
Colin: Do you like this suit?
Sarah: Yeah, I mean …
Colin: Honestly.
Sarah: …
Sarah: I don’t think it’s very … It’s not who you are.
Sarah: I love it. I really do.
Colin: It is absolutely, who I am.
Sarah: …
Sarah: reaches to him.
He moves away.
Sarah: Do you even like me?
Sarah: I mean.
You say you’ve fallen out of love with me and
that’s … fine … that’s …
You don’t want to see me any more.

But do you think I’m a nice person?
Because, with what everyone’s said.

With Freya.
And what Jasmine says.
I don’t have anyone else.
So this is kind of crucial.
Colin?
Do you like me?

You live in a million pound house with two cars. You’re a Liberal
Democrat minister in a Tory government. Then you tell me you want
to join the board of a multinational airline. It’s not that I don’t like
you Sarah. I hardly know you.
Jasmine was right.

Jasmine’s never been right about anything.

…

What did she say?

Things change.

They look at each other:

2525. Freya is on her feet now.

Then … then I have to go back and do what I was supposed to do.

Back? Freya you can’t go back. That world crumbled to dust
hundreds of years ago. This is all that exists now.

But I was supposed to say something. That’s why Peter was there.
And Emily. I wasn’t supposed to fall, I was supposed to speak. The
crowd was there, ready to listen, I was supposed to give them the
message.

Freya come and sit down.
But I messed it up. There must be something you can do.

It’s too late.

Mum!

Sit down!

No. I’m getting out. I’ve got to find someone who can help.

Where’s the door? There isn’t a door.

No.

How do you get in and out?

Freya.

What?

You don’t need to go anywhere. Everything’s good here. Everything’s perfect.

And where is everyone? You keep on saying we think this, and we’re very interested, but I’ve only seen you. There should be hundreds of people wanting to talk to me, I’m historically important remember.

I’m your closest relative and carer, of course I’m the one to look after you and if you give it time you’ll –

There’s something going on.

…

Please. Mum. Don’t lie to me.

I always knew when something was wrong.

Have you got a headache?

How did you know?

Sit down, with me, on the bed, and I’ll explain.

is in the waiting room.

enters.
Er. This is a private room?

Really?

We’ve paid for it.

I’m sure you have.

Family only yeah?

She looks at him properly.

Oh. Shit. Shit.

Shit, didn’t recognise you. Jesus. Seen pictures but they must be from a while back. You look … old. Shame we haven’t met before something like this, isn’t it?

You look … really –

What? Here you go, they said you like to answer back, okay yeah, I’ve been up all night, I’m not my best. What? I look like what?

Like your mother.

Do I?

When she was your age.

She’s floored.

Yeah right well done. Good tactic. I look like my mum, put me off my – That must freak you out then. Sarah says Mum was never happy, often crying she said, looks like Freya got those genes.

Look, I know there’s a lot to talk / about but –

And I got yours, apparently I’ve got a mouth on me reminds Sarah of you, yeah there’s a fuck of a lot to talk about where do you want to start?

This isn’t the time.

Never is, is it? Never is the fucking time by the sound of it.

Jasmine –

Such a lonely old fucking – look at you –

You’re not a teenager so –

Actually I am.
Robert: Can you stop –

Jasmine: Technically I am? Nineteen, if you’re counting, which you’re probably not, so – stop what?

Robert: Stop being so fucking petulant.

Jasmine: Christ they said you got nasty quickly I thought they meant hours not minutes look at you, big red face.

Robert: Sit down.

Jasmine: I’m not the one getting angry Gandalf, you’re shouting, I don’t think you’re allowed to do that I might call security.

Robert: I hate planes. I’m shattered. Fine. You’re nineteen. I’m seventy. Sit down, and shut up. What are you wearing?

Jasmine: Whatever the fuck I want.

Robert: You look like prostitute.

Jasmine: You talk like this to everyone?

Robert: Yes. You?

Jasmine: Yes.

* A moment of respect.

Robert: Good.

* He sits.

* She reluctantly sits as well.

Jasmine: Read your books.

Robert: And?

Jasmine: Bit dry.

* He smiles.

You told her to get rid of it.

Robert: I told her the truth yes.

Jasmine: Probably regret that now.

* A moment.

Robert: I could do with a drink.
Jasmine takes a bottle out of her bag. Gives it to Robert.

What’s this?

Jasmine Ouzo.

Robert Oh.

He drinks from the bottle. It’s awful.

You want some?

She takes the bottle. Drinks. They continue to share it.

Robert I should’ve put my work first, from the beginning. That’s what I regret.

Even though Freya’s nearly dead.

Jasmine Sarah’s a fuck up, getting divorced.

Robert And me … well … look.

Jasmine Even given all that?

Robert Because of all that exactly.

I should never have had any of you in the first place.

Jasmine So why have you come now?

Robert To say goodbye.

Jasmine She’s not –

Robert Yes. From what I understand she doesn’t have much of a chance.

Jasmine No fuck off you don’t know if anything had happened Steve would’ve told us, you don’t know shit. Fuck’s sake. Thought you’d have big eyes actually. We’ve all got big eyes. Suppose it must’ve been Mum.

Robert Yes.

Jasmine Right.

Robert But she had your hair. Your hands.

Jasmine What else?

Robert …

Jasmine What’s in the bag?
Robert
One of your mother’s dresses. Freya liked it, wanted it, years ago. I
wouldn’t let her. I thought maybe I could …

Jasmine
Bit fucking late now.

Robert
You’re not like the other two.

Jasmine
No. You would’ve liked me.

Robert
Yes.

I think I would.

Sarah enters

Sarah
You’re here.

Robert
I am.

Sarah
You’ve met.

Robert
We have.

Jasmine
Where’s Colin?

Sarah
Colin’s gone.

As the next scene continues, Sarah sits with them and drinks the Ouzo. 2525.

When you fell in the river, Freya, you hit your head. You did some
damage. And sometimes, when that happens, people become unable
to see a distinction between their own particles and those around
them. They can’t see the edges of their body anymore – where they
stop and the world begins. They can instead understand instinctively
that we are all just different recycled pieces of a larger, older
creature. We are simply earthquakes ourselves, wonderful
irregularities in an evolving system. We die and the earth uses us for
something new.

Grace

Young Robert enters, dressed in white, and wheels in a cot.

Yes Freya, this is the future, and I am your mother. But this is also
the past and the present, and I am your father, your sisters, your
friends, your husband, the table, the bed, the ground, we are
everyone that is, was, and everything that will be. I’m nature all in
one. So are you.

Freya

This isn’t real.

Grace

Your brain is doing what it always does. Making sense of what it
receives. Combining imagination, memory, information.
Freya
I’m dreaming.

Grace
You’re on your way.

Freya
Where?

Grace
We’re here to help you.

Young Robert
Freya. Look.

*The sound of a baby crying.* Freya goes and looks in the cot. She picks up the baby.

Freya
Emily.

**Doctor Harris** is with **Steve**, who sits on the bed.

Doctor Harris
I’m sorry. Her condition is worsening.

Steve
I …

*Steve doesn’t know how to react.*

Doctor Harris
It’s a matter of when to say goodbye. It should be soon.

Steve
Alright. Yes.

Doctor Harris
Alright then.

And what about the family? I know they’re outside.

Steve
…

Doctor Harris
Will they want to be here?

Steve
Or would you rather it was just you?

Steve
Let them in.

*The family goes through.*


*A hymn.*

2525

*The worlds beginning to merge.*

Freya frantic.

Freya
Wake me up … please.
Grace

No.

Freya

Please. I need to go back. I can’t stay here. Emily’s alive. I can hear her. She’s calling for me.

Grace

Freya. You can’t.

Freya

I made a mistake. I need to go back.

Tell them all. Give the speech. Walk the earth.

Grace

No.

Freya

You can’t stop me. This isn’t real. I need to wake up and tell them what’s going to happen, or the world doesn’t change. The world stays as it is!

Darling!

*She puts Emily back in the cot.*

I’m going to be with you. I’m going to wake up.

Freya goes to the bed, lies down and shuts her eyes.

Grace

Freya. I’m sorry.

Freya

Now!

Yes!

Now!

Grace

It’s over.

*The music continues, the worlds blurring. The family gathered around the bed, Grace stood slightly apart.*

*We can’t hear what’s happening – the music plays.*

Doctor Harris stands close by. Steve sits on the bed with Freya, holding Emily.

One by one the family say goodbye. Robert stands back and watches.

Steve gives Emily to Sarah, and then lifts Freya and hugs her. Crying.

Some distance away ... during this, Emily enters, sixteen, very different to how we saw her before. Bright, optimistic, intelligent.

*She wears the floral dress worn by Grace in the Part One prologue. And she carries a back pack.*
Epilogue

The kitchen of a large house in the west Oxfordshire countryside. Night. On the table there is food out.

It is sixteen years later.

Emily is packing food into a backpack.

Some of it doesn’t fit. In the rearranging, we see a map, a torch.

A knock on the door.

Emily goes and opens it.

Tom enters, now thirty-five, a man, rather than a boy. He is dressed much better, ready for a long walk. He is sure of himself.

Emily Shhh – / Dad’s asleep – you look nervous.

Tom You’ve barely left the town on your own before, you don’t know what it’s like.

Emily I’ve done my research.

Tom You should let me come with you.

She smiles. Touches his arm.

Emily I’ll be fine.

Tom And what are you wearing?

Do you like it? Before she died, Mum told Dad it was her favourite dress. Dad gave it to me this afternoon, for my birthday. I like the pattern. How about you? Did you get me a present?

Tom gives her a small bag.

Tom Papers, ID, map, new phone.

Emily Good.

Tom All in the bag, as ordered.

Emily Perfect. I’m thinking maybe I should go barefoot…

Tom It’s a long way.
Emily

It is, and people should notice.

*She takes her shoes off.*

Definitely barefoot.

**Tom**

You’ll call me if you get into trouble?

**Emily**

There won’t be trouble.

**Tom**

There might be, maybe we should tell your dad what you’re doing. If he wakes up and you’re gone –

**Emily**

When did you care what he thought?

**Tom**

This is different.

I’ve told them for years, over and over, when I’m sixteen, this is what happens. At dawn, I’ll be on my way. Not my fault if they never believed me.

**Tom**

At least leave a note –

**Emily**

Right. Toothbrush, bag, towel.

*She puts the backpack on.*

**Tom**

Speech?

**Emily**

Don’t need a speech. It’s all up here … Tom! I’m half your age and you look petrified.

**Tom**

It’s ridiculous.

**Emily**

You know what I can do?

**Tom**

Yes.

**Emily**

And you trust me?

**Tom**

Of course.

**Emily**

Then smile. It’ll be fine. Now, how do I look?

*He looks at her, takes her in.*

**Tom**

Emily Sullivan.

Magnificent.

*She smiles.*

*He smiles too.*
She looks at him, goes to the kitchen blackboard, and writes, in large letters.

‘Gone to London’

As she goes on her way, **Steve** finally lets go of **Freya**, and she dies. Blackout.

**End of Play.**
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Acknowledgements

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