

Writing Figures of Political Resistance for the British Stage

Volume Two (of Two)

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September 2015

Table of Contents

Volume Two: Accompanying Material

Table of Contents.....	224
<i>The Ends</i>	225
<i>Quicksand</i>	285
<i>The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins</i>	364
PhD in Theatre, Film and Television Portfolio	470

The Ends

- Helena** Minister for Women and Equalities, forties.
- John** Helena's husband, forties. A writer, faded scouse accent.
- Fierce** an activist, twenties.
- Mark** an activist, ex-military, forties.
- Negotiator** off-stage presences
- Bodyguard**

When an actor is required to eat or drink, simulation can be used and in places the script facilitates this (e.g. simulated drinking through a straw/ simulated eating from a container). But there must be some actual consumption, particularly building towards the climax of the play.

The video in the play can be projected or not, depending on technical circumstances, but it should at least look like Mark and Fierce are filming at the relevant points.

/ denotes the beginning of the next line.

– denotes an interrupted line.

... denotes an unfinished line.

A spacious open plan flat with doors going off to the stairwell, the bathroom and the bedroom. The action takes place in the main sitting area, which opens on to the kitchen.

Mark sits leaning against the wall in the bedroom, waiting. The radio is playing, the end of a speech by **Helena**:

I think we need to stop thinking about income equality as the be all and end all. What about families in meltdown, substandard education, people out of work for decades, spiralling debts. / These are factors that need to be considered and this is what these reforms propose to tackle. Hand outs are not a foot up. We only need to look at the thirteen years of the last government to prove that.

(Interviewer) Yes but is it not the case –

Keys in the lock. Mark reacts to the noise and lifts himself up into a squatting position.

John bustles in laden with shopping bags and puts them down. We hear **Helena** before we see her. **Mark** is hidden from their view.

John You left the radio on. You left you on.

Helena (off, out of breath) ... if this is what it's like now I'm fucked if I'm climbing those stairs when I'm eight months.

John turns the radio off as a journalist begins asking awkward questions. He begins unpacking a bag of groceries onto the table.

Helena enters, breathing heavily, and immediately sinks into an armchair.

John You left the radio on. That was you getting grilled by what's-her-face.

Helena Oh fuck her.

John Fuck her with a barge pole.

Helena You must have left it on not me.

John Wasn't me. You sure?

Helena Positive.

John begins making a sandwich with the things he's bought.

John You might not remember. In your condition and all.

Helena stands and turns to face **John**.

Helena I'm pregnant, John. I'm not losing my mind.

Mark *lifts his head on hearing this.*

John (*pointing with a knife in his hand*) Like your Aunt Jemima.

Helena *stares at him, then begins to laugh. John smiles.*

John What?

She beckons him to her. She kisses him. He responds.

John What was that for?

Helena For making me laugh. You always make me laugh. I need laughter.

John You're beautiful when you laugh. You can see who you are. See your essence.

They kiss.

She follows him back to the kitchen and leans over his shoulder as he finishes making his sandwich.

Helena You should put that line in your next book.

John What do you mean, I stole it from my last one.

She slaps his arm.

Helena You didn't. Did you?

John No! What do you take me for?

Helena I don't think I've even read your last book. Haven't had time to read any books.

John You see, it's all about the bread. This bread. See the little black bits? Olives, you're thinking. The best Italian olives, marinated, baked into the crust to give it that tangy sharpness.

Helena You told me all about it last time.

John But no, wait. I've worked it out. They aren't olives at all.

Helena No?

John It's opium.

John *holds up the bread and looks at her, deadly serious. She laughs again.*

Helena Opium?

John Opium. Baked right into the crust. Little chunks of sticky opium.

Helena You shouldn't say things like that. The press would have a field day.

John *That's* why it's so moreish. I'm hooked.

Helena 'Cabinet minister denies husband addicted to opium.'

John Or for the Sun, just... 'Tory Smackbread'.

They both laugh.

John Voila.

John *holds aloft the sandwich. He gives it to **Helena** to take a bite.*

Helena (*chewing*) Mmmm.

John Oh yeah.

John *takes a huge bite and savours it, eyes closed. **Helena** shakes her head and sits down again.*

Helena When you've finished wanking off over that sandwich I could murder a coffee.

John (*still chewing*) You're the boss.

John *puts the kettle on. While he waits he rummages around in one of the bags and brings out some baby clothes. He brings them to show **Helena**.*

John What about this?

Helena What is it?

John A quilted pramsuit. (*reading*) 'To keep your baby warm and snug.' It's got detachable mitts, look.

He passes it to her. She glances at it and puts it down.

Helena Lovely.

John I was gonna get the yellow one but it didn't have the same... you know... effect.

Helena Effect?

John No.

Helena (*to the baby*) What do you think of the effect, baby girl?

John *He can't see the effect. There's too much womb in the way.*

Helena *holds her hands on her belly and stares at it. John holds up an outfit expectantly. She doesn't notice.*

John You alright?

Helena I'm tired, John. Can't we just sit for a minute without bloody baby fashion week?

John I'm just taking it seriously, that's all.

Helena (*pointing to her belly*) Excuse me. This is serious.

John *sits down, playing with one of the outfits.*

John I would if I could, you know that.

Helena No you wouldn't.

John All that time off work. Creating life, I mean.

Helena All that time *out* of my career.

John Yeah, but if the Minister for Women and Equality can't have time off to have a baby, who can?

Helena We've been through this, darling. Equality for women means having the baby and doing the job as well.

Pause.

John I just don't think pink works. Won't it blend in with the face? It's like human camouflage. NHS might lose him.

John *smiles and waits for her to laugh.*

Helena Actually...

John What?

Helena I was thinking about going private.

Pause. John looks picks up a baby hat and examines it.

Helena John. Did you hear what I said?

John We already got a hat, but look at this fur-lined Russian thingy –

Helena John.

John Were you thinking of asking me at all?

Helena I'm scared, alright? I don't want anything to go wrong.

He stands and returns to make the coffee. Mark stands up silently.

John There's nothing wrong with the NHS.

Helena It's not about that.

John I can't believe you'd / do that.

Helena This is our child.

John How's it going to look, anyway? Minister too good for the hospitals you rely on.

Helena Don't start.

John What's wrong with Royal London? It's a good hospital.

Helena It's our choice to go where we want. If we can afford it, there's nothing wrong with it.

John Well you'll do what you want anyway.

Helena *stands.*

Helena John.

John You're the decision maker. I mean, obviously. It's your job.

Helena You're being unfair. This has nothing to do with my job.

Pause.

Helena I have to *have* this baby. I have to...

John After last time.

Helena Yes.

She approaches him.

John A private hospital couldn't have changed that.

Helena Perhaps not. But don't we have the right to give ourselves the best chance we can?

John Maybe.

Helena It's not a crime. We can afford it. It's not harming anybody else.

John No.

He holds her. Mark turns towards the living room and approaches the doorway. We see that he left side of his face is disfigured by burn scars.

A knock at the door.

John If that's her from upstairs again...

Helena Who else can get in?

Another knock, more insistent.

John I'll bet the Defence Secretary hasn't got to put up with mentalist neighbours.

Helena His neighbour is his mistress. Can you believe that?

John No shit.

Helena She won't become a problem until he chucks her.

Another knock, extremely insistent.

John Sit down. I'll pretend you've got morning sickness. Make some retching noises or something.

He disappears into the hallway. Helena smiles. She rubs her belly and her smile fades.

John (off) Can I help you?

Fierce (off) Hello. Do you have a minute to talk about world hunger?

Helena rolls her eyes. She makes a huge retching noise.

John (off) Sorry?

Fierce (off) Every day sixteen thousand children die / from hunger-related causes.

John (off) We donate to Oxfam, thanks. How did you get in here?

Fierce (off) Good question, Mr Wallace.

Helena *turns towards the door.*

John (off) Excuse me? I think you better leave, love.

Mark *steps into the room.*

Helena John? Do you want me to call Special / Branch –

Mark That won't be necessary.

Helena *jumps out of her seat. John hurries in, and Fierce slinks in behind him.*

John Who the fuck are you?

Helena I'm calling Special Branch.

Helena *looks for her handbag, which is on the counter. She hesitates and then strides towards it.*

John *approaches Mark, who watches silently. Helena finds her phone and tries to call her security.*

It doesn't work. She tries again. Nothing.

Helena I have a security detail and they're on their way.

Fierce Telepathic, are they?

She startles John and Helena. John is unsure who to watch.

Helena Try yours.

Mark It's no good.

John *takes his phone out, looks at it, and then looks at Helena.*

John I don't know who you are, mate. But you're making a big mistake coming in here. There's coppers watching all the time. You need to leave. (to **Fierce**) You too.

Mark Please. We're not going to leave just yet.

John and Helena are confused by the lack of action.

Helena Fine. We can all wait for the police together.

Fierce I wouldn't mind a coffee. We're going to be here for a while.

Helena The police will be here before the kettle's boiled.

Fierce It's already boiled by the looks of it.

Helena What do you want?

Fierce Coffee –

John Besides fucking coffee.

Fierce *smirks at him.*

Mark We'd *like* you to sit down. Please.

Helena We'll sit down once you've been removed.

Fierce Stop bullshitting. They aren't coming. You didn't call them. You *can't* call them.

Helena *turns to Fierce and tries to push her out of the door. Fierce pushes her back and Helena stumbles backwards, catching her balance on the counter.*

Helena How dare you?

John That's it. Out.

John *strides over to Fierce and pushes her towards the door easily. Mark strides quickly over.*

Helena John!

He turns to face Mark. Fierce skips round him and goes over to the landline, taking a small metal box from her rucksack.

John Hel. Come on, we need to leave.

Helena *is unsure whether she can get past Mark. John stretches out his hand towards her.*

Mark Sit down, please.

John You're fucking crazy, mate. Hel, come on.

Helena dashes towards him but **Mark** stretches out his arm to hold her back. **John** launches himself at **Mark** but his punch is swept aside. **Mark** gives **Helena** a push and strikes **John** forcefully in the face. He puts **John** into an arm lock.

He takes him round the neck, takes a cloth from his pocket and holds it to **John's** face. **John** struggles as he steadily loses consciousness.

Helena makes a dash for the door. **Mark** drops **John** and catches her by the hair, dragging her screaming back into the room. She trips backwards, **Mark** catches her and doses her with chloroform, laying her down gently, even tenderly. He brushes the hair from her face.

Fierce Are they out?

Fierce finishes connecting the metal box to the telephone line.

Mark Are we in?

They nod to each other from across the room. They meet in the centre. A moment.

Mark We have work to do.

Mark goes to check the phone line.

Fierce What's up? Relax. It's going fine.

Mark Close the curtains.

Fierce closes the curtains.

Fierce I can't believe we did it, Mark.

Mark We haven't done anything yet.

Fierce approaches him. He doesn't acknowledge her.

Fierce You were great. The way you handled him / it was just –

Mark I'm well trained, he isn't.

Fierce persists in getting his attention. She reaches round and runs her hands down his chest. He stops what he's doing. She goes further down. He closes his eyes.

Fierce Who would have thought *hardcore* activism would be such a turn on?

Mark Fi.

Fierce What?

Mark *smiles and turns to face her. He kisses her. She pulls back and looks at him. He bows his head slightly. She touches his scars. He returns her gaze.*

Mark There's a lot to do.

Fierce I can think of a few things.

Mark *takes her more firmly by the shoulders.*

Mark Come on...

Fierce I want you.

Mark This isn't a game, Fi.

Mark *releases her and turns away in exasperation. She is embarrassed.*

Fierce Sorry. I mean... I don't know why. I just feel...

Mark It's just the adrenaline.

Fierce Alright. Sorry.

He tries to make eye contact until finally she looks at him.

Mark The wait will intensify it.

Fierce Will it now?

Mark Come on.

Fierce *begins quickly unpacking the rucksack. She hands Mark a large needle attached to an IV line.*

Helena *(faintly)* John?

Fierce *looks up at him. Mark walks over.*

Fierce Why is she awake?

Mark Don't worry.

Helena John ... who's there?

Mark Help me.

Mark and Fierce *grab Helena and move her to a chair.*

Helena No! Get off me! Help!

*They dump her in the chair and **Fierce** clasps her hand over **Helena's** mouth.*

Fierce Shut up. If you don't keep quiet... we'll gag you. Understand?

Helena *nods.* **Fierce** releases her.

Helena Where's John?

Mark Be quiet. You've said enough already.

Helena I want to know / where my –

Fierce *slaps her face.*

Fierce I said shut up, didn't I?

Mark Fi!

Fierce What?

Mark Get the office chair.

Fierce *wheels the chair over as **Mark** hoists **John** up with ease. He drops him into the chair. **John** begins to stir.*

Mark Bind him before he comes to.

Fierce *takes a roll of heavy duty electrical tape from her rucksack. She sets about binding **John's** arms and legs to the chair.*

Helena Please. What are you doing? What are you going to do? (*standing*)
You can't do this to us! I'm a fucking cabinet minister!

Mark *turns on her and pushes her back into her seat. He moves behind her, holding her shoulders.*

Mark For Women and Equalities. I know what your title is. Give me the tape.

She chucks him the roll. She tries to stand up but he pulls her back down. He begins to tape her arms and torso to the chair back.

Mark I also know that you've got no interest in equality. I think you've probably forgotten what it is.

He finishes binding her to the chair.

Helena Are you from Fathers for Justice? Are you?

Mark and Fierce *look at each other. She bursts out laughing and **Mark** smiles.*

John *regains consciousness.*

John Helena...

Fierce We're not here because of some trivial gender politics bollocks.

Mark *smiles and rummages in the rucksack. He pulls out a machine and attaches it to the large needle via the IV line. He takes out a small bag full of clear liquid and attaches that to the machine also.*

Helena's *attention is drawn to the machine by Fierce's gaze. She struggles to turn in her seat to see what's going on.*

John Helena. What's happening?

Helena Everything is OK, sweetheart.

John Who are they? Who the fuck / are you?

Mark Tell him to keep quiet.

Helena John, please. Just keep calm.

Helena *turns and sees the needle.*

Helena Please. Please... I'm pregnant.

Mark *pauses.*

Fierce You're what?

Helena I'm pregnant. Please don't hurt us.

Fierce Right... I thought you were just a bit... tubbsy.

Helena Excuse me?

Fierce Don't worry. This isn't for you.

John *struggles violently as Mark tries to insert the needle into his vein, preventing the insertion. Mark stops and lifts the needle towards John's face.*

John Get off me. Get off!

Mark This is a very big needle. If I slip...

John *stops struggling. Mark finds the vein and inserts the needle. Fierce tapes the line and the forearm to the chair. The machine beeps twice as he activates it.*

John What the fuck is in there?

Mark We're ready to go. Get the feed set up.

Fierce *takes a camera, a small tripod and a laptop from the rucksack and proceeds to frame the shot of **John** in the chair.*

John What the fuck are you putting into me!?

Helena Just tell us what you want, please!

Mark Sssh....

Helena Please!

Mark This is insulin. Yes? You know what insulin is? If you don't stop shouting I'll turn this dial all the way round. What do you think would happen then?

Fierce I know.

Mark She knows. Do you know? No? Cat got your tongue now, has it?

John You're gonna kill me.

Helena No, listen –

John They fuckin' are, Hel. They're gonna poison me.

Mark He's right. Sort of.

Helena What would be the point? You must want something. I have power, I can make things happen. Please.

Fierce For fuck's sake.

Mark She knows what's going to happen and I want you to know. And I want you to know why. But you'll need to listen.

Fierce If you listen nobody needs to get hurt.

*The video feed is set up. The image from the camera is projected. **Fierce** frames the shot.*

Helena You'll never get that footage out of here. You know that? Whatever it is you think you're going to film.

Mark It's already being broadcast.

John Well then the police'll be here in no time then.

Mark It's being broadcast to our network. They'll release it when the time is right.

Helena Excellent! It'll be easier to lock up the rest of –

Mark You're a government minister. (to **John**) And you know a thing or two, from what I hear.

Fierce I read your books. They were pretty good.

John Really.

Fierce Kind of like trashy holiday stuff with a bit of politics thrown in.

Mark We just want you to hear us out. And watch. We're going to show you something. We think we can all reach an understanding.

John Tell us why you're here, then.

Mark I'm coming / to –

Helena Absolutely not! Release us, now.

Mark You're not listening. What did we just ask you to do?

John We're listening.

Helena John...

Fierce It must be difficult being powerless for a change.

Helena Get on with it.

Mark OK. Great. So... according to current economic wisdom, growth is good. How much growth, roughly, is acceptable?

Silence.

Mark Have a guess.

Silence.

Mark We haven't got round to this bit yet, but time is extremely important right now. Especially to John.

John We don't know!

Mark Minister?

Helena Three per cent. Or more, obviously.

Fierce I'm surprised!

Helena Well don't be, you little shit.

Fierce *laughs.*

Mark Three per cent. A healthy number for a healthy economy. Every year, our economy grows by three per cent. Many economies. Some grow even more, which is considered a positive thing. Some not so much. Some shrink. Which is considered a negative thing. In order to keep all this growth going, we need to consume. So consumption must be good.

Mark *inputs information into the machine.*

Mark John will begin receiving insulin directly into his bloodstream. At first it will just be a small dose. But the dose will increase by three per cent every ten minutes. Eventually the insulin will send John's body into a hypoglycaemic coma and shortly after he will die.

Pause.

Mark What do you know about diabetes?

Helena *is horrified. John is in shock. He starts struggling against his bonds violently but to no avail.*

John Let me go!

Fierce My dad got diabetes. From the drink and shit food. After the Tories destroyed all the industry round our area.

Helena What?

Fierce Ignorance is bliss.

Helena That's not our fault! John's Labour, for God's sake! I was a child when Thatcher was in power.

John So that's it?

Mark I asked you what you know about diabetes.

John Insulin stops it.

Fierce Insulin *regulates* it.

Mark By decreasing blood sugar. It stops your blood sugar from getting too high, which can kill you as well but much more slowly. It's all about balance.

John So I need to eat to stay alive.

Fierce Bingo.

John I'm tied up.

Mark Is that the novelist's eye for detail we're seeing there?

Mark *takes the knife from his pocket and approaches them. He leans over **Helena**. He pauses before cutting her loose.*

Mark She'll feed you. Think about this dilemma for a bit and then we'll talk.

Fierce Let us know when you get it.

Helena *doesn't move. She and **John** look at each other.*

Fierce Come on. Chop chop. Nom nom nom.

Helena *stands and walks slowly to the kitchen. She gets to the counter and stops. She stares at the counter. She walks to the fridge and stares into it for a long time. She turns.*

Helena John.

John What?

Helena What is it that you'd like?

John *is incredulous and starts laughing. **Mark**'s phone rings and he goes into the bedroom to answer it.*

John What would I like?

Helena I don't know what you want. What you eat. Usually.

John Usually? This isn't exactly usual, Hel.

Fierce You want fast carbs and slow carbs. Make him a cheese sandwich. With that chutney he likes.

John What chutney?

Fierce The gorgeous caramelised pear and red onion one from the deli.

Mark returns. **Helena** sees the phone in his hand. He returns it to his pocket and stares at her.

John How the fuck do you know what chutney I like? Have you been spying on us?

Fierce You wax lyrical about your favourite things to eat with all the yummy mummies in the little café. Any day of the week pretty much – and there you are, grandiloquizing about pate. It's hardly spying.

John Sounds like spying to me.

Fierce I overheard. Why do you waste your time going there every day?

John Research.

Fierce Fucking writers.

John How long have you been following me?

Fierce I haven't. I just visit the café now and again. Call it *research*.

Mark Fi.

Fierce What?

Mark Go check the video link.

Fierce *does so after a moment's hesitation.*

John So, boss. What's this all about?

Mark We're hoping you can tell us.

John Growth and all that bollocks, yeah. But what do you want? You must want something.

Mark *ignores him.*

Fierce We want *her* to understand what she's doing to people.

Helena *brings the sandwich over. She hesitates.*

Helena Can't you untie him?

Mark No.

John Just one hand. Clearly I'm not going anywhere.

Mark No. She has to feed you.

Helena I just don't / see –

John Save your breath, Hel. There's nothing to understand. Gimme the sandwich.

Fierce *stares at them. John takes a bite of the sandwich and chews rapidly. He continues to eat.*

Fierce Actions have consequences, even if you're not around to see them. This way she gets to see the consequences of her actions.

Helena I'm well aware of the consequences of my actions. Are you aware of the consequences of yours?

Fierce My actions?

Helena Have you ever been to prison?

Fierce Don't / lecture –

Mark There are worse things than prison, Minister. Something that will be made abundantly clear to you.

But while we're on the subject, let's talk about some other things that are worse than prison. You made a speech yesterday in support of the plans to reform the welfare system. You spoke at great length about equality, and how we must as a nation, *together* I think you said, work to achieve it.

You talked about expanding our understanding of poverty beyond income inequality, by looking at substance abuse, family breakdown, debt and poor education. And finally you spoke about reducing or removing the welfare entitlement of some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Pause.

John (*mouth full*) And that's / why you're trying to kill me?

Helena You've totally misunderstood what we're doing. The problems you mention aren't *caused* by low incomes. They're a product of the choices of individuals, of families. Poor choices. Continuing to give these people hand-outs won't solve their problems.

Fierce That's what you said on the radio.

Helena No I didn't.

Fierce It's exactly the same. You're like a fucking robot.

John *finishes the sandwich.*

John It's just a different approach to the same problem.

Fierce Did you enjoy your sandwich?

John It was fucking lovely. Thanks for asking.

Mark Approach to a problem? Come on. It's an ideological assault on a group of people motivated by vested interests. It's OK, you can tell us.

Helena That's ridiculous. Exactly what gives you the power to judge? Have you any evidence to back up what you're saying?

The machine beeps twice.

Pause.

Helena What / was that?

Mark It isn't a judgement. It's very clear to see when you look at history, at the hierarchies that exist and / have always existed.

John What the fuck is that beeping?

Fierce Growth.

Helena *stands.*

Helena You've upped his dose.

Mark And by how much?

Helena Fuck you.

John You can't... I mean what the fuck? I don't agree with everything Helena agrees with, or anyone else. There are problems with... fucking everything but that doesn't mean you can go around torturing people! What are you expecting to happen? The workers to unite and rise up and make everything alright?

Fierce You clearly don't have a clue how some people live.

John Which people?

Fierce People on low incomes, people from areas where there's nothing for them.

John You don't have a monopoly on hardship, you know. Most of my family worked on the shipyards but you don't see many ships being made in Liverpool now, do you?

Mark Now that would be an interesting encounter! I wonder what your ancestors would make of you?

John You don't sound too salt of the earth yourself, mate.

Mark Anyway. We think that you've forgotten how unequal life can be. Or you choose to ignore it. We want you to realise that growth capitalism preys on people like your ancestors, how it keeps them in their place. Because you benefit from it.

John I benefit from it?

Fierce Of course you do.

Helena Everyone benefits from it. Don't try and tell me that the vast majority of people in this country aren't better off than they've ever been.

John Which is why I'm not a welder like my dad, and his dad, and so on.

Mark Technically I would agree.

Helena Right... so...

Mark Things have got better by an incredible amount for some, somewhat less for a larger minority but for the majority of people by nowhere near enough. And we're heading backwards, aren't we? You and your cabinet pals want to get rid of our whole social infrastructure.

Helena *stands.*

Helena That's your opinion. I've seen plenty of evidence that suggests otherwise. And I don't see what inequality has to do with *this*. Or growth. Or fucking anything.

Pause.

Mark They know not what they do, but they are doing it.

Mark *smiles.* **Helena** *approaches him and stares at him.*

Helena What happened to your face?

Mark *looks up and returns her stare.*

Mark Does it make you uncomfortable?

Helena No.

Mark I'll explain again, shall I? Let's make it personal.

Helena Personal.

Mark John's quantity of insulin is growing. He must consume sugars to keep this growth going. Only this growth doesn't benefit him. It benefits me and my cause. He doesn't want this growth to continue because it doesn't benefit him, but I do. And so I maintain the conditions for this to happen, if I can.

Eventually I'll no longer be able to, and he will crash. It's a disaster for him. But I, knowing what will happen, have prepared for it. I can simply begin again. With you.

Helena You're fucked in the head. Do you know that?

Mark Remember. The crash is inevitable. But when it happens, some people will be ready to take advantage of what comes next and the rest will suffer because they'll have no idea. It's remarkable how the lessons of history are so easily overlooked. Or how people can be made to *forget*.

You know as well as I do what the relationship between growth and inequality is. Dumb rodents on a wheel, striving for something they'll never get. The question is who put the wheel there? Who keeps them on it?

Helena I've heard everything that you're saying hundreds of times before. The world simply doesn't work like that.

Mark *smiles again. He stands and turns away to check the video feed.*

Mark Keep watching! You'll get there eventually.

John You better get me something else to eat, Hel.

Helena *stares at Mark. She realises.*

Fierce It's rude to stare, you know.

Helena Mark?

Silence.

Helena It's you, isn't it?

Fierce *approaches the centre of the room.*

Helena Look at me. Mark.

Mark *turns to face her.*

John Do you know him? Hel?

Helena We both do. Mark Standish.

Silence.

Fierce Mark?

Helena Did you think we wouldn't recognise you?

Fierce Mark, what the fuck is going on?

Helena Mark's given himself away. They don't know it, but they are doing it. That old line. The way you said it. It's like we were back in the student union twenty years ago, us girls adoring *you*, the great revolutionary.

Mark And now you're a Tory minister. How did you get from there to here?

Fierce What is she talking about?

Helena Whereas you've gone down the traditional communist route, haven't you? When you find out people don't want what you want, you torture them.

Fierce Why aren't you listening to me?!

John Hel I want some food.

Mark Good idea.

Fierce I don't know what I'm doing here...

Mark Fi. Listen.

Fierce I'm listening! What the fuck?

Mark I didn't think it was important but if you insist on / knowing then –

Fierce If you don't tell me straight I'm leaving.

Mark Just – let me explain.

Fierce I'm going.

She heads for the door. Mark runs over and stops her.

John Steady, love. You might be sat here next to me if you're not careful.

Fierce Let me go.

Mark Listen to me. This doesn't change anything.

Fierce Of course it does! You said it had to be her because of her position, because of her / policies.

Mark That *is* the reason. Nothing's changed.

Fierce You fucking know them! I don't even know...

Mark I haven't seen them in twenty years. There's nothing personal in this.

Pause. Mark's restraining hand becomes a gentle one.

Fierce You should've told me.

Mark *nods. Fierce relaxes.*

John Hel.

Helena Food. I'll get you something.

She runs to the fridge.

Helena What shall I get?

Mark Juice. Then bread.

Helena *grabs a carton of fruit juice and runs back to John. She tips it to his lips. Some spills down his front as he drinks. He starts laughing, spraying more juice.*

Helena John, it's not funny. / Drink it.

John Are you trying to fucking drown me, like?

Fierce *laughs.*

Helena What the fuck are you laughing at?

Fierce Nothing, / I just –

Helena You're torturing my husband. You don't get to laugh.

Mark Well technically you're the one perpetuating his condition.

Helena Are you completely insane? *You* tied him up, *you* poisoned him!

Mark We're just showing you what growth is. From a different perspective. You can see that, can't you?

John I can see you're a fuckin' psycho, mate. What happened to your face, then?

Fierce I'd stop wasting your time and get him something to eat.

Helena *reluctantly fetches some bread.*

Fierce Put honey on it.

John I don't want honey.

Fierce Jam then. Marmalade. Nutella. Lemon curd.

Helena *goes back and fetches a jar of marmalade. She slathers it all over a slice of bread and feeds John.*

Helena So what have you been doing for twenty years, Mark? Besides terrorism.

Fierce We're not terrorists.

John (*mouth half-full*) I think you need to check the definition of terrorism, love.

Fierce We're responding to a something that affects the whole world! We're pushing our fucked up economics on everyone else so that we can profit, people die in their *thousands* every day because of this obsession with growth. If we keep going everyone dies because the planet is fucked.

We are not the terrorists.

John Right. Excuse me.

Mark The rich countries defend their wealth by exploiting poorer countries. We are fighting for the disenfranchised.

Fierce And you keep making things worse.

John I do?

Helena I'm a politician. I've only been in office for two years, for fuck's sake. And what has he done?

John I would fucking love to know.

Fierce You're no better. You do nothing.

John About what?

Fierce About anything!

Helena This doesn't justify what you're doing.

Fierce It's nothing personal...

John Well it feels pretty fucking personal to me, love!

Pause.

Mark Someone has to be made an example of. Unfortunately you are somewhat more symbolic than most.

Helena So this has nothing to do with me and you?

Fierce What do you mean?

Mark Tighten the shot, Fi. Let's get some footage.

Helena is watching Mark and Fierce. She isn't watching what she's doing and keeps pushing bread into John's mouth.

John Alright. I've had enough.

Helena Are you sure?

John I'm thirsty.

She gives him a drink. Fierce watches.

John You enjoying this?

Fierce looks away and goes to check the video feed. Mark's phone rings. He answers as he walks to the bedroom.

Mark As expected.

He shuts the door.

John and Helena make eye contact. He nods his head.

Fierce You need to keep eating.

Helena And then what?

Fierce *ignores her.*

Helena What do you think this will achieve? Really? I mean, what's the exit strategy for a plan like this?

Fierce Think about what we've been telling you.

John What are you gonna do when I'm dead, love?

Helena Fi. Please listen to me. Mark can be very persuasive. I know, believe me. I was sleeping with him for nearly three years.

Fierce *turns to face them again. John closes his eyes.*

John That's not important / right now –

Fierce Were you? I don't care what someone like you thinks about anything. OK?

Helena You'll see / through –

Fierce OK?!

John Just calm down.

Fierce *approaches Helena.*

Fierce You don't fucking tell me what to do. OK?!

Beat.

Helena Does he still like to gouge your tits as he comes?

Fierce *lunges at Helena and they grab each other by the hair, the throat.*

Mark *opens the bedroom door. He ends the call quickly and puts the phone on the counter. He runs to restrain Fierce.*

Mark Stop. Fi. Stop!

Fierce Get off me!

Mark *wraps his arms around her and gently pulls her away. John notices the phone.*

Fierce Alright. Mark, I'm alright. Get off.

John I need some water, Hel.

Mark *lets Fierce go and she sits down. He kneels besides her.*

Helena *moves to the tap. She pockets the phone as the water runs.*

Mark What happened?

Fierce Nothing. She was. I don't know. Winding me up.

Mark Winding you up how?

Fierce Why didn't you tell me?! Don't you trust me?

The machine beeps twice. They all look at it.

Mark *realises. He looks up and sees Helena. As he springs to his feet she runs to the bedroom and slams the door behind her.*

Mark *crashes into the locked door. We hear Helena talking on the phone as Mark crashes his shoulder into the door again and again. It is breaking.*

Helena (off) Chris! It's Helena. Listen! We've been taken hostage we need medical assistance my husband is being poisoned he's armed he's got a –

Mark *finally bursts through the door, falling into it. Helena screams. We hear a loud slap, and she cries out.*

John Helena! I'll fucking kill you you fucking prick! I'll fucking kill you! Helena!

Fierce *looks shocked as Mark drags Helena into the room by her ankle. He slaps her again and Fierce flinches. John is rocking in his chair violently, trying to get free.*

Fierce Mark...

John Helena! / Helena! Fuck!

Helena I'm alright, I'm fine. I'm fine.

Mark You stupid bitch... you don't know what you've done. Sit down.

He drags her to her feet and throws her into a chair.

Fierce What has she done?

John You're gonna die today, prick. I swear.

Mark Go to the window. Keep an eye out for police, anyone watching us.

Fierce I don't understand.

John You hear me?

Fierce We need to go. Mark, we need to get out.

Mark We're not going anywhere.

John Look, it's over. Get yourselves out, you'll be gone by the time they arrive.

Mark *approaches John. He stands over him and lifts up his chin with the point of the knife so that they're looking directly at each other.*

Mark Shut the fuck up. OK?

Fierce Mark, come on.

Mark It's too late, Fi.

Fierce Too late for what?! Let's go!

He picks up the machine.

Helena Please. Just go... please...

Mark *glares at Helena as he changes the settings. The machine beeps three times.*

Pause.

Helena What have I done...

John Come here, Hel.

Helena I shouldn't have done it.

John Hel.

Helena *goes to him and holds him.*

Mark Seeing as we're going to be pressed for time, we'll have to speed things up slightly.

Fierce We're not staying. I'm not staying, Mark.

Mark And where are you going to go?

Fierce This isn't the plan! How are we going to get out?

Mark We're probably not going to get out, Fi. You need to wake up.

Fierce Wake up?

Mark This isn't some domestic disturbance. She has a security detail. She told them it's a hostage situation. They will be here *yesterday*. You should have been prepared for this.

Pause.

Fierce Prepared? For the fact that she's your ex or the fact that we're in a *hostage crisis*?

John Go, love. Hand yourself in, tell them what's going on.

Mark *remains silent.*

Fierce I can't believe it. She said the charm would wear off, but I can't believe it happened so quickly. It's practically fucking prophetic.

Mark Watch the window.

Fierce I'm not watching the fucking window, Mark! You lied to me!

John Just go.

Mark I didn't lie to you. Did I?

John It's all just fucking gone off. Gone off big time. Just go, love, go on.

Helena *quietens him. He is beginning to go low.*

John What?

Fierce You weren't honest. You *know* these people, for fuck's sake!

Mark I didn't lie to you – I mean, I fucked up. I'm sorry. But we've got to see this through.

Fierce How can we?! We were supposed to get the footage and go!

Mark We can still get the footage.

Fierce We're gonna go to prison, Mark! Or worse.

Helena Fi, you should go. It's obvious that you've been led on. I'll testify / in court that –

Fierce Just shut up. You don't know me. I *believe* in these ideas. I know what's right.

Mark *approaches her. He takes her by the shoulders.*

Mark I know you do. It hasn't gone to plan. I fucked up. But I think you're willing to make that sacrifice.

She shrugs him off.

Helena I fucking knew it. You haven't changed a bit.

Mark You've said enough.

Helena I knew you were fucking her. I could practically *smell* it.

John I feel strange.

Mark Shut up and feed him.

Helena gives him some juice. She feeds him more bread and marmalade.

Fierce *remains with her back to Mark.*

John Fuckin'. Bread.

Helena How many more impressionable young women have you got torturing innocent people on your behalf?

Mark If we're going to make comparisons let's talk about how your inherent selfishness is going to cost your husband his life. Nothing's changed there.

Helena This is not down to me.

Mark No? Is nothing ever your fault? If you'd done as you were told, we would've been gone within a few hours.

Fierce Mark.

Helena You're terrorists, for God's sake!

Mark Label me as you will. I prefer to look to actions for clarity.

Fierce Mark.

Helena You're ridiculous.

Mark That's what the powerful say when faced with / uncomfortable –

Fierce Mark!

Mark What?

Fierce I want to go. I'm going.

Pause.

I have to go.

Mark and Fierce gaze at each other, the short distance between them too far to reach. They are in the frame of the camera shot.

Mark Fi...

Fierce walks towards the door.

A knock on the door. **Fierce** stops. **Mark** moves quietly towards the door.

Bodyguard (off) Hello? Please don't do anything rash. I'm not trying to enter. OK?

Mark stalks across the room and takes **Helena** as before in a stranglehold. He takes out the knife. She screams.

He drags her towards the entrance, pressing the knife to her throat. She screams louder.

John Mark, no! Don't be stupid! Please!

Fierce Mark...

Mark (hissed) Shut the fuck up.

John (whispered) OK.OK.

Bodyguard (off) Is it Mark? Please, just calm down. There's no need to hurt anyone. I just want to talk to you. You need to talk / to us or we –

Mark presses the knife closer to her throat and she cries out.

Mark You can hear that! Move away now or you will have your first body on your hands. *You*, specifically.

Bodyguard (off) OK. OK. I understand. I'm not trying to / threaten –

Mark If I don't see you walking out of the building with your hands in the air in less than a minute the Minister's corpse will be splattered all over the pavement. Do you understand?

Bodyguard I understand, Mark. I'm leaving now. But please / stay in contact –

Mark Run!

Pause.

*He relaxes his grip on **Helena**. He lets her go and stalks to the window, peering through the curtains. She thinks about leaving...*

Mark If you try to leave I'll cut his throat before you get ten yards.

Helena *backs towards **John**. He pushes his head against hers, the only part of his body he has any control over.*

Fierce *pulls at her hair and holds her head in her hands. She paces the room.*

Fierce Now we're trapped...

Mark It's her security detail.

Fierce *is on the verge of tears. **Mark** wraps his arms around her from behind. He rests his head against hers.*

Fierce I'm scared.

Mark Prop this against the door.

Fierce I don't want to.

Mark Please.

Fierce *takes the dining chair and goes into the hallway.*

Helena Mark. It's hopeless.

Mark He needs to consume.

HelenaHe needs a hospital.

Fierce *wanders back in.*

Mark *takes out his phone and calls the last number. All eyes are on him.*

Fierce Who are you calling?

Mark Guess again (*pause*). Yes that's correct (*pause*). You'll have to find that out for yourself (*pause*) it's more than one, in case you're thinking of barging in so think carefully before – (*pause*) good.

*He looks up at **Fierce**.*

No... I'm alone. (*pause*) You'll find out what I want shortly (*pause*) no, absolutely not. Remember – (*pause*) remember! You're not dealing with some crackpot. If you

approach the door again or attempt to enter the property you'll have bodies on your hands.

He hangs up and pockets the phone.

Helena They'll have special operations units here in minutes.

Fierce Why did you say you're alone?

Mark We haven't got much time. Let's see what you have.

Mark *goes to the fridge and starts rummaging around. He chucks a pot of yoghurt onto the floor.*

Helena What the fuck are you doing?

Mark *chucks a blackening mango onto the floor.*

Helena (*standing*) What are you doing? We might need that!

Mark *turns around and stares at Helena.*

Mark You might need it?

Mark *picks up the mango and approaches Helena.*

John You ruined our mango you prick...

Mark When exactly were you going to eat this?

Helena It's rotten.

Mark This mango is from *Peru*.

Helena I was going to throw it out.

Mark What did you buy it for if you're going to throw it out?

Helena Well obviously we meant to eat it.

Mark But you didn't. *Now* you need it. I *fucking* hate waste. You think that you are free to consume or not consume everything, to buy it. The price doesn't matter, so long as you can / have it.

Helena Jesus! We're busy people. We fancied a mango, we bought one, so what?

John Why are you shouting...

Mark Let me tell you about this mango. This is a Kent variety mango, farmed in much of Peru. A large exporter will take it from farmers living on poverty wages, somewhere like Piura in the north. The monthly living wage for a family is around seven hundred and sixty US dollars, this is according to the Peruvian National Institute of Statistics. Four hundred and seventy dollars is the poverty line.

But because the Peruvian government is decent and good, they've legislated to set the minimum agricultural wage at less than eight dollars a day. Working eight hours a day, every day of a thirty day month, the two adults in a family would earn two hundred and twenty-nine dollars each. That's four hundred and fifty-eight dollars a month. Just below the poverty line.

Of course, given the seasonal nature of the work in reality families earn much less than this.

Helena And this is our / fault, is it?

Mark But don't be so impatient, Minister. It gets better. Let's follow this little fellow on his journey. So let's say he's from Piura. First he gets driven the six hundred and seventeen miles to Lima, at which point he boards a plane and flies the six thousand, three hundred and nine miles to London. Let's say Heathrow. Another fifteen miles drive to a supermarket near here and a short walk back to your flat. In total, around six thousand, nine hundred and forty two miles, from branch to door.

It's taken a lot of energy to get him here. Massive carbon footprint. The irony is that carbon is leading to higher temperatures in Piura that are contributing to lower yields. They like it nice and balmy at night, you see. So the farmer is unwittingly ruining his own livelihood. And it was a shit livelihood to begin with.

Mark *stares at Helena.* *He holds up the mango and squeezes it between his fingers.*

Mark And now this mango is sitting, rotting, in your fridge. This is why you're in this situation.

He holds his hands out towards John.

Mark Eat.

John *stares at Mark.*

Mark If you don't eat this, you'll fall into a hypoglycaemic coma and die.

Helena Give him something else!

John Why are you shouting?

Mark Eat. You bought it, you can eat it.

Helena It's rotten.

Mark You'll get nothing else. John. Come on. Eat this.

John No.

The machine beeps twice.

John *reluctantly begins to suck the pulp from Mark's fingers.*

Helena I don't understand why / you're doing this.

Fierce Wake up, Helena. For fuck's sake.

Helena It's degrading.

Fierce I agree. Although I doubt we're talking about the same thing.

Helena I'm talking about *this*. You could kill him! It's torture!

Mark Torture is about more than killing somebody. Remember that.

Mark *wipes his fingers on John's shirt. He sits apart, thinking about his next move.*

Fierce The point is you're contributing to this exploitation.

Helena How, exactly? The market sees to it that prices equalise. The economic problems of Peru are not something that I can control.

Fierce What about the things you can control? What about abandoning these reforms? The people you're targeting are in more a position to drag themselves out of poverty than the farmer who picked that mango. Why are you pushing them further down to save small change? You could save a lot more by stopping corporations avoiding tax.

Helena Your understanding of human nature is flawed. That's why communism never worked.

Fierce I'm not a communist.

Helena Socialist, then. Marxist, whatever. I know he is.

Fierce I'm not a Socialist either.

John Well what are you, then?

Fierce *goes to get a drink of water. She drinks like someone dying of thirst. She watches the argument ping back and forth with growing dismay.*

John We *bought* it, didn't we? Fuck's sake...

Helena Exactly, the farmer's been / paid –

Mark Not enough. Consumers here squeeze the supermarkets who squeeze the exporters who squeeze / the farmers –

Helena They're still getting paid.

Mark Not. Enough.

Helena Ok, the farmer might not get all the money but he can't sell it / without help, can he?

Mark Shut up, I need to think...

Helena Whatever he gets it's probably enough. For the standard of living or whatever. In Peru. I don't buy into these 'statistics'.

Mark *sweeps everything off the counter.*

Outside, brakes squeal and car doors slam shut. Raised voices are heard. Mark darts to the window and peers down. He shuts the curtains.

Silence.

Helena You can't just bully your way out of an argument.

Mark People are starving in Africa while you've got a fridge full of rotting food you don't need. Meanwhile we are in the middle of a hostage situation. All of a sudden I have more important things to think about than arguing with you.

John Right-o.

Mark *checks the window, peering through the curtains.*

Fierce It's not really about the farmer. It's about us. Individual agency. The farmer can't change the way the system works because it's weighted in our favour, it's there to serve *us*. That's what needs to change.

Helena Well it's all very well looking at this in isolation and telling the story you want to tell with the statistics. Tell me, how important are mango exports to the Peruvian economy?

Fierce They're a big part of it...

Helena What does big mean?

Mark Eighty per cent.

John / Eighty?

Helena So what you're saying is... what, exactly?

Fierce It's complicated.

Helena Is it?

John What happens to the farmer when we stop buying his mangoes?

Helena Exactly.

John I agree that the wages sound low.

Fierce Exactly because there's no social mobility / if there –

Helena Social mobility isn't relevant. If you've got mangoes, produce mangoes. What you're effectively saying is that we should, what? Legislate against people making a living?

Fierce Legislation isn't always the answer, if / people act –

Helena Oh I see so we should just stop buying mangoes. Collectively. Is that it?

Fierce We over-consume. It's unsustainable.

Helena So you want to help the farmers by destroying their livelihood?

Mark He won't have a livelihood if we keep going the way we are.

Fierce You need to factor the environmental cost into the price.

Helena That nobody is willing to pay?

Pause.

John I prefer apples, if I'm honest.

Fierce *goes to the fridge. Mark turns back to face them.*

Mark You have an example of your philosophy in action in him. Perhaps instead of reaffirming your ideals you should examine the effects of them in practice.

Fierce *returns with a plastic container full of leftover pasta. She gives it to Helena.*

Fierce Here.

Helena *begins to feed John again. By now it is unpleasant for him to eat.*

John Not so fast.

Helena I'm sorry. You have to.

Mark *goes to the camera and zooms in on Helena feeding John. Fierce's attention flickers between the two images.*

Helena How can you say you're not terrorists?

Fierce We just wanted the footage. The metaphor, as an example.

Helena You may as well just decapitate us. How's that for a metaphor.

Fierce How can you defend these ideas? Look at him!

Helena *is getting angrier and feeding John more quickly. The less he wants to eat, the angrier she gets.*

John Slow down.

Fierce Let him chew it properly.

Helena I don't need your fucking advice, alright?

Fierce I'm just / trying to –

Helena You don't get to help! OK? You don't get to help him.

Fierce It'll help him digest / faster –

Helena Just get the fuck away from us! Go! Go help him make your fucking snuff movie.

Fierce *steps away. John spits out a mouthful of half chewed pasta.*

John Stop! For fuck's sake, I'm gonna choke.

Helena *throws the spoon down and slumps to the floor, on the verge of tears.*

Mark Are you beginning to see things differently yet?

John Hel. I'm sorry. Come on. Just take it easy.

Mark's *phone rings. He takes it out and cancels the call. It rings again.*

Fierce Aren't you going to speak to them?

Mark They're not in control. I'll speak to them when I'm ready.

Helena Think about who I am. They're not just going to sit around outside waiting for you to make your mind up.

He answers the phone.

Mark Yes. (*pause*) I will speak to you when I'm ready (*pause*) I don't (*pause*) no. Absolutely not. I'm warning you.

Fierce What is it?

He holds his finger to his lips to silence her.

Mark You already know I have a woman up here (*pause*). I'll leave you to your deductions. (*pause*) I said no. I don't care if it's only outside the door, I said – (*pause*) no. Be warned.

He hangs up.

The machine beeps twice.

John Fuck's sake. Why are you doing this?! To me! Look at me! You're doing this to *me!* I'm a human fucking being.

Mark Where is he?

Fierce What now? Mark? What now?

Mark Check the feed.

She does so.

John My lips are tingling.

Helena Your lips?

John I don't feel right I mean I just who is this / prick –

Helena Ssshhh.

John Don't shush me!

Helena I'll get you something else.

She goes to the fridge. Nothing. She looks in the cupboards and finds some cereal bars. She unwraps one and holds them up for him to bite.

Fierce zooms out. Mark moves away from the window.

Mark I didn't see him.

Fierce Are you sure?

Mark He's still inside. I told him to wave his arms in the air.

Helena You can't see the entrance from the window.

John Give me another one.

She unwraps another cereal bar and feeds it to him. He is eating lustily as his body begins to enter a condition known as 'starvation brain': a person will consume compulsively but no 'full' response will be triggered as it would normally.

Fierce How many have you got left?

Helena *looks at her, before looking in the box.*

Helena Two.

Fierce I'll look for something else.

Pause.

Helena Thank you.

Fierce *begins searching the kitchen. Mark is pacing around, looking out of the window, listening at the door.*

During the following exchanges, Fierce follows the arguments with increasing despair. She is troubled by John's suffering.

Helena Mark. Speak to me.

Mark About what?

Helena About all this. You aren't like this.

Mark Aren't I? You used to be a socialist. Things change.

Helena Please, you've got to cut off the insulin.

He stops his activity and approaches her.

Mark But the insulin is key. The insulin is surplus capital. And surplus capital needs to *work*. It has to generate more capital, it has to be active. Capital equals growth. The more capital, the more growth must follow, and not just some / growth but lots of it.

Helena Mark! This isn't about capital. / For fuck's sake!

Mark To keep this growth going we must consume more and more, not just us but new consumers are being sought every day and the truth is that this is (*shouting in her face*) unsustainable!

Mark's phone rings. He ignores it.

Helena Yes well I think that I've heard all this before. At the debating society in first year. I know your arguments inside out. Did communism work? Or was it an indisputable failure?

Mark Many people preferred life under communism –

Helena Under Stalin? Under Mao? That's freedom, is it? That's the workers in control of the means of production? Men with guns knocking on the door in the night, the gulag and the firing squad. Whole populations / starving –

Mark It wasn't like that.

Mark's phone rings. He ignores it.

Helena But anyway, that's all in the past, isn't it? Answer me another question. What exactly is it that you propose to do? Get rid of capitalism?

Mark A return to a more socialist capitalism would be a start. Initially.

Helena laughs. Fierce puts down her findings on the counter and follows their argument.

Helena Isn't that a contradiction? How can capitalism work if you're telling people what to do all the time, putting up barriers? What if they don't want to do what you say? That's why you need the gulag.

Mark This isn't the Soviet Union. We don't have to fuck up the whole world just to survive, do we? It works. In Norway / and –

Helena And Sweden and Finland et cetera et cetera totally ignoring the fact that they're oil-rich countries with small populations / and that –

Mark Japan, then. A perfect example of a functioning, fair capitalist economy and why because after world war two we went in and wiped the slate clean, redistributed everything.

Helena Japan has been in recession for two decades.

Mark So! This is your problem. There is more to life than economic growth.

Fierce Mark's right. It works in other countries, so why not here?

Helena We tried socialism, in *this* country, and your beloved workers brought the country to its knees. Because people I'm sorry to say are generally greedy and deceitful.

Fierce / I don't believe that.

Mark Some people are. People like you. The sort of people who become bankers and politicians and have other bankers and politicians round to dinner. Because politics *is* business, that's the problem.

Helena *stands and faces off with Mark.*

Helena Come on. If you give people more power they want more still. Make everyone equal before the law and let the market regulate itself.

Fierce So bailing out the banks was the free market at work, then?

Fierce *begins to feed John from a carton of juice. She's found a straw for him to use.*

Mark's *phone rings. He ignores it.*

Helena And you'd do the same. The only reason you're agitating is because you want the power and the wealth, but without working for it. I've worked fucking hard all my life to get where I am today.

Mark And the person who cleans your office hasn't? The child labourer working fifteen hours a day in a sweatshop to make your clothes hasn't?

Helena They're making clothes and cleaning. Can you really say their *labour* as you like to put it is as valuable as mine?

Mark Can you really say that yours is worth so much more?

Helena *turns away from him.*

Helena (to **Fierce**) Thank you but I'll do that. John. John, love.

Helena *takes the juice from her.*

Mark If you don't understand just look at your husband. This is what's happening to billions of people.

Helena So you keep saying. But I don't agree. Things aren't perfect, but your ideas are false. They've failed whenever they've been tried. They've resulted in *this*.

Mark resumes checking the window and the hallway.

Helena Mark. Mark.

Mark Would you prefer to be gagged, Minister?

Helena You've got to talk to me.

Mark It's a waste of time talking to you if you won't listen.

John Fuckin' hypocrite.

The machine beeps twice.

Helena breaks down.

Mark's phone rings. He looks at it for a few moments before cancelling the call.

John Don't, Hel. Just keep it coming. We'll be out of here soon.

Helena can't control herself.

John Would you just fucking stop, Helena! I need more!

Fierce Have this.

She brings John some old fruit cake.

John Where's that from?

Fierce A tin. At the back of the cupboard. I think it's quite old...

John nods his head. **Fierce** holds it up for him to eat. He is ravenous. Bits of cake fall as he devours it.

John (*mouth full*) More.

She feeds him another piece. She cups the crumbling cake in her hands, holding them to his mouth.

John Drink.

Fierce takes a carton of juice from the counter, puts the straw in and holds it for him to drink. He sucks on the straw intently until the glug of the dregs. Some juice spills from his mouth.

Helena I can't stand it.

Fierce His brain is telling him to gorge.

John Gorgeous.

Helena But it won't be enough. Will it?

Pause.

Fierce Unless he can...

Helena Unless he can continue to eat. Which he can't.

Fierce I'm sorry.

Helena You're sorry?

John *belches loudly several times.* **Fierce** *hands some bananas to Helena.*

Fierce Try mushing them up first.

She hands Helena a bowl and a fork. Helena starts to mash all the bananas in the bowl.

Fierce *approaches Mark.*

Mark You shouldn't get so close to them.

Fierce Close to them? I've only just met them.

Mark Just remember who they are.

Fierce Mark, I think he's suffered enough. We're trapped. We've got what we wanted. The others will get their footage as well so why don't –

Mark's *phone rings. He looks at the screen and cancels the call.*

Helena *looks across and begins to spoon banana mash into John's mouth. He has become quiet and docile.*

Fierce *touches Mark with her fingertips, lightly. He turns to face her.*

Fierce I'm scared.

Mark I know you are. But I'm going to get you out of this.

Mark's *phone rings. He looks at the screen and cancels the call.*

Mark They're not getting the message.

Fierce What do you expect them to do? Get bored and go home?

Mark Fi. I'm going to get you out of this.

Fierce How can you? I've... I'm accepting the fact that I'm going to prison / but I'd much –

Mark You're not. I won't let you.

Fierce For *murder*, Mark! Let them go, please!

Helena *watches them. The banana mash is nearly gone.*

Mark *looks over at John and Helena.*

Mark It's not enough. You don't understand what she's done, what she represents.

Fierce *holds his face in her hands.*

Fierce This isn't right, Mark. Maybe I don't understand. Maybe *you* don't.

Helena That's all there is. I don't know what else there is.

Mark *takes the opportunity to escape Fierce's attempts to persuade him. He looks on the counter and through the cupboards, not finding much.*

He returns to her with the marmalade.

Helena Just that?

Mark It's sugar, it's what he needs.

Helena There must be some bread.

She looks for herself. Mark returns to check the window.

Fierce I want to know what the point is. What more do we need? The others will get footage too, it's not just down to us.

Mark She has to renounce her beliefs, Fi. She has / to give –

Fierce Renounce? Renounce?

Mark She has to admit she's wrong. Don't you understand?

Fierce Who the fuck are we? The inquisition?

Mark Well obviously you don't. But I won't end this without her, on camera, admitting that she's punishing people with her ideas.

Pause.

Fierce I'll tell her then.

Mark No you won't. She has to *realise*. Otherwise it has no power. Some empty gesture to save her husband's skin isn't going to persuade anybody.

Helena *has found some chocolate. She tries to get John to eat it but he is very docile. Fierce watches them.*

Mark's phone rings. He cancels it without looking at it.

Mark Fuck off.

A knock on the door.

Mark rushes to Helena and grabs her as before.

Negotiator Mark. Don't be alarmed, I just want to speak with you. If you don't speak to us we can't work this out. I'm a negotiator. My name's Neil.

Mark manoeuvres Helena toward the door.

Negotiator Can you hear me, Mark? Is everyone OK? We just need some assurances.

Mark presses the knife to Helena's throat. He whispers in her ear.

Helena It's Helena Slater. Please don't come in. I have a knife to my throat –

Mark slaps his hand over her mouth as he realises his mistake.

Mark Fuck.

Negotiator Minister. Is everybody alright? Is your husband alright?

Mark whispers in her ear. He removes his hand from her mouth.

Helena You can't come in. You need to leave.

Negotiator That's fine, I won't try to enter. But we need to keep talking.

Mark I've told you to leave. Presumably you don't believe I am capable.

Negotiator I do, Mark. I'm taking you very / seriously –

Mark quickly runs the flat of the blade across Helena's throat. She screams.

Negotiator What's happening?

Mark I'm making myself clear.

*He whispers in **Helena's** ear. She nods.*

Helena (*strained*) Please. He'll kill me if you stay. Please go, I'm begging you.

Pause.

Negotiator Mark, I'm going. Just keep calm. I'm leaving now. Just sit tight. But we need you to talk to us. Answer the phone, OK?

Pause.

Mark releases **Helena**. *She is remarkably calm. She returns to **John**, who is conscious but unaware.*

Mark *doesn't* move.

Fierce Mark? The window.

*He doesn't respond. He checks the feed again and zooms the camera onto **Helena** feeding **John**.*

Fierce Shall I check?

Mark No. Don't go near it.

Fierce Why not? Don't you want to know / where –

Mark They have snipers. They plan to shoot me through the window.

Fierce I think you're getting paranoid.

Mark I'm not. They won't wait much longer. Fuck.

Fierce *leaves him and sits down next to **Helena**. She watches her struggling with **John**, who chews slowly.*

Fierce The marmalade might be better.

Helena I can't get him to eat quick enough.

Fierce He's really low. He'll eat whatever he's given but it will be difficult for him.

Mark's phone rings. *He cancels the call.*

Fierce You've got to speak to them, Mark.

Helena He's dying, isn't he?

Pause.

Fierce Helena. You need to listen to what we're saying.

Helena I have listened.

Fierce But we need you to question your beliefs.

Helena I don't just accept things. I'm always questioning things.

Mark It's not enough, though. Is it?

Helena Exactly.

Fierce But history is no accident. People make choices, all the time. You just need to choose to see things a different way. You talk about choices a lot.

Mark's phone rings. He cancels the call.

John Juice.

Helena John? Are you feeling OK?

John No.

She glares at Mark and opens another carton of juice. John drinks through the straw slowly.

Helena You said it's about choices.

Fierce Exactly.

Helena OK, then. How do you get people to make the right choices? What about young girls getting pregnant and having twenty kids and sitting on their arse all day smoking fags? Where's their individual responsibility? How do you get them to *choose* to contribute to society rather than leeching off of it?

Fierce It's not that simple.

Helena Nothing is. That's the problem with people like you.

Mark What is? People like who?

Helena Like you. You're idealistic. You haven't got a clue *how* to improve things. You just sit around talking about it and making the rest of us feel bad.

Mark We're not sat around now.

Helena So torture and murder is how you're going to solve the ills of the world? Governments don't negotiate with terrorists.

John The Iranian embassy.

Mark Fuck the government. They're irrelevant. We're addressing the people. People are free to make their / own decisions.

Helena Fuck the government, right. You want to bring back socialism, or communism, or some warped version of a failed system. All of which tended towards mass murder and repression.

Fierce Stop! For fuck's sake!

Pause.

Helena Shall I go and tell the neighbours they're next?

Silence.

Fierce Helena, work with me. Why is it that young girls get pregnant and live on benefits et cetera et cetera?

Helena What are you trying to do?

Fierce Just talk to me. Please.

Helena They choose to. Because they can.

Fierce Some do, maybe. But isn't the real problem that most don't have the opportunity *not* to do that?

Helena There are plenty of opportunities and they come in packs of three.

Fierce Helena, stay with me. Please.

Mark *sneers and paces the room.*

Fierce Middle class girls get pregnant too, they just tend to have abortions. You can't blame it all on lack of awareness.

Helena Lack of common sense, then.

Fierce So we agree there's a lack of something. Or that things are at least different for people with different experience of life.

Helena I suppose so.

Fierce The question is why.

Helena I've told you why.

Fierce You've told me your opinion.

Helena Based on experience. I've been to these places. People are responsible for their actions. People have every opportunity in this country.

Fierce Look at more egalitarian countries. They don't have these problems on the scale that we do.

Helena They don't have our people.

Mark Yeah, wouldn't it be nice if we could pack 'em all off in boxcars.

Mark *stalks into the bathroom, furious.*

Helena What's he going to do?

Fierce Helena. Why are these poorer areas like they are?

Helena I've told you why!

Fierce You've told me what you think. But *why* is it different? Are they all animals incapable of rational thought? Evil and stupid? Why?

Helena *looks up, ready to agree. The two women hold their gaze. Helena looks down.*

Helena I don't know. Is that what you wanted to hear?

Fierce I'm not attacking you.

Helena *holds up her hands and looks around.*

The machine beeps twice.

She laughs, defeated.

Helena Really?

Fierce *looks down.*

Helena Let me take the drip out. Please.

Pause.

Helena Fi. Please. This isn't right.

Fierce *nods without looking up.*

Helena *hurriedly tries to free the needle. Fierce stops her.*

Fierce The machine.

She reduces the dose.

Helena Is it working?

Fierce I'm not sure...

Mark What's going on?

Fierce *quickly rises. Mark returns, zipping up his fly. He glares at Helena.*

Mark What's going on?

Fierce Nothing. We were just talking.

Mark Well don't let me stop you.

The two women make eye contact.

Helena Help me. Please.

Mark *(to himself)* They know it's only a knife...

Fierce Dilute it in water. Honey.

Fierce *rushes to the counter. She pours some water into a jar of honey and mixes it. She rushes to John and pours the thick liquid into his mouth. Helena holds his head back.*

Mark Is this how you think the world should be run, Minister?

Helena Fuck you.

Mark You understand that your ideas will inevitably lead to disaster?

Helena I understand that torture will never change anything!

Mark We'll see. Stubborn and selfish to the last.

Helena *tears pieces of bread and dips them in the marmalade. She feeds them to John. He is accepting, but the pieces keep coming.*

He starts to shake his head, subtly at first and then with as much vigour as he can muster. He returns briefly to some form of lucidity.

John No.

Helena John? You've got to. I'm sorry. You have to.

John No. No.

The pieces of sugary bread keep coming. The sips of the diluted honey keep coming. He tries to move his head out of the way.

John No!

Helena You have to!

*He spits out a piece of bread. **Helena** holds his head still and forces them into his mouth.*

***Fierce** stops and withdraws. She can't continue. **Mark** records everything in close up.*

Helena Please, darling.

John No.

The feeding reaches a frenzied climax.

***John** vomits.*

Fierce Oh fuck...

Helena What?

Fierce Fuck fuck fuck.

Helena What?!

John Don't want...

***John's** head lolls from side to side. He mumbles incoherently.*

Fierce Mark, we need to stop this now.

Helena John...

Mark It'll end soon enough.

Fierce No, Mark. Now. I'm stopping it.

Mark If you stop it I'll kill him myself.

Helena No!

Helena *rips the drip out of his arm and hurls the machine across the room.*

Helena I won't let you kill him like some animal!

Mark Admit it. You've stopped this because it's wrong. Your system is wrong!
Admit it...

Helena *cradles John's head and kisses it.*

Mark *walks towards her. Fierce blocks his path. He tries to go round her and she blocks him again. He pushes her aside.*

Mark We're finishing it.

Fierce No we're not.

Fierce *grabs the long IV needle and brandishes it at Mark. He laughs.*

Mark What are you going to do with that?

Fierce You're not going to get some sort of confession. You've got what you needed.

Mark What we needed.

Fierce *You.* I didn't agree to this. He was never supposed to die.

Mark *tries to move closer, but she lunges towards him. She is scared but determined. He raises his knife, ready to use it.*

Mark I don't want to hurt you.

Fierce I know.

Mark What's the difference, Fi? He's just one human being. There are / thousands –

Fierce Thousands dying every day yes I know but it matters because we are here now! We are killing him. Mark, please. Release the footage. They'll get the message or they won't. His death won't change that.

Pause. Mark is less certain but looks intent on following it through.

Mark I can't release the footage, can I?!

Fierce Why not?

*They are stalled by **Helena's** words.*

Helena I want you. I want you. John. I want you. I need you. I need you, my love. Come back. Come back to me.

I want you. John? John...

Helena *stares at him. He is unresponsive. She looks at them.*

Mark Because of you.

Pause.

Fierce What about me?

Mark It will incriminate you.

Fierce What do you mean?

*Pause. **Mark** lowers the knife.*

Helena You killed him.

Fierce *backs away from **Mark** goes to check **John's** breathing and pulse, still holding the needle.*

Helena You killed him.

Fierce He's alive.

Helena You killed him!

Fierce He's / breathing –

Helena You fucking killed him! You killed him!

*She is up and pointing at **Mark**.*

Helena For what?! Because I stopped fucking you twenty years ago? Because you've got nothing to believe in? Because you can't stand to be wrong about *everything!* You fucking coward!

Mark It's nothing personal.

Helena It's all personal! Everything! People need things. They want things. *You* want things. You pretend that you're above everything and that everyone feels the same as you and they don't!

Mark Fi feels the same as me.

Helena You're pathetic. Look at you. Clinging to her, to me, your fucking needs. *You* admit it. You admit that you need, that you want. Well you can't save her. You can't.

Mark What you feel now is what I feel every day! What millions feel. And you don't like it, do you? Well this is your world. Enjoy it.

He looks at Fierce.

Fierce I'm going to get help.

Mark No.

Fierce We have to.

Helena It's too late.

Fierce It's not.

Mark It is.

Fierce *holds John. He is comatose, but still alive.*

Fierce I'm not going to do nothing.

She stands and strides towards the door. Mark hurries to stop her.

Mark No.

Fierce Let me go.

Mark I'll kill him.

Fierce He's going to die anyway.

She pushes him but he blocks her path.

Mark Wait. I'll go. Fi, wait. You weren't involved. It was all me.

Fierce I don't care about that.

Helena You can't save her. You can't even save yourself.

Mark *stops.*

Mark What?

Helena You can't save yourselves.

Mark I don't want to save myself.

Helena You can't save her.

Mark *approaches Helena.*

Fierce We don't have time.

Helena If it's not about what we want... let her go. Let her answer for what she's done.

Pause.

Fierce She's right.

Mark It's not that simple.

Helena You're no different from me or anyone else. Admit it. It's human nature. All the arguments and ideas just disappear. The only difference between you and me is that I'm honest about my actions – the world is unequal, millions in poverty... well so what! Do you think they would treat us any different if the tables were turned?

Mark They? They haven't had a choice.

Fierce Stop...

Helena She has seen reason. She helped me. You're on your own.

Mark You're lying.

Helena Ask her.

Fierce We don't have time!

Fierce *checks John's condition again. Nobody is listening to her.*

Mark (to **Fierce**) I'll take the blame. Just wait here. I kidnapped you.

Helena No.

Beat.

Mark What?

Helena I won't let you. I won't.

Mark You can tell them it was me. I'll take / responsibility –

Helena I'll tell them everything.

Fierce We don't have time! He's still alive, help me! Helena!

Mark *stares at Fierce.*

Mark Please.

Helena No.

Fierce Mark. Go get help. Or let me go.

Helena You're both going to rot in jail for what you've done. You'll be alright, you always are. You're tough. Who's going to mess with you? But your little revolutionary slut is going to be fresh meat for some dyke, she's going to be crying herself to sleep every night because she gave up her life for *you*. For these dead ideas.

Fierce He's breathing. Feel it.

Mark *remains still, silent, staring at Fierce.*

Helena She won't be locked up forever, though. Not with the prison system these days. But that doesn't matter. Who's going to employ a terrorist? A torturer? A murderer? You've ruined her life. You've ruined your own life. You could have done anything.

Fierce What is wrong with you?! We need to do something!

Helena You have no answers, do you?

Mark Neither do you.

Mark *runs at Helena. Fierce tries to stop him but he throws her out of the way, knocking the camera over. The shot now centres on John.*

Fierce No!

Mark *bundles Helena to the ground. She gasps as he stabs her once in the heart, holding the knife in until she stops moving.*

He stands.

Fierce *is crying.*

Mark I had to. I did it for you.

Fierce I don't want anything from you.

He kneels down beside her and grabs her by the shoulders. She screams.

Hammering on the door.

Negotiator Mark! What's going on?!

Fierce Get off me! Get off me you *fucking* psycho!

Mark Listen!

Fierce You make / me sick –

Mark Listen! You had nothing to do with this. I acted alone. I misled you. You thought it was a prank.

Fierce *shakes her head.*

Mark When you realised what was going on, you tried to stop me. I held you hostage.

Fierce No.

Mark Yes.

Fierce I *did* this.

Mark The only evidence is your word.

Mark *touches her face. She pulls away.*

Mark I love you.

He stands and strides towards the hallway, bloodied knife in hand.

A loud thud against the door. Another. Fierce cowers as Mark strides towards the sound of splintering wood.

We hear multiple voices shouting for him to stop, to drop the knife.

Mark (*off*) I killed two of them. There's one left.

More shouts for him to stop. A final warning.

Two gunshots ring out. Fierce jumps at each one.

She remains, holding John. She slowly kneels up. She listens to his heartbeat and feels for his breath. She shakes him gently. Despite the skewed camera angle, they are perfectly framed.

Fierce Can you hear me?

She takes one of the half-empty jars and takes a spoonful of honey. She is unsure what to do. She is about to feed him, but she doesn't. She puts the spoon down.

Fade out to the sounds of armed men, orders, and the beeping of the machine as the video goes viral...

*In the audience, the sound of text messages and emails being received, sporadically at first then growing in number. The video of **Fierce** choosing not to feed **John** rewinds, and plays through again. A still from the video appears as an internet meme, with the caption: 'Super-size me'. Another meme shows an image of an obese man holding a spoonful of ice-cream, with the caption: 'Put the weapon down, sir!'*

*Audio intermingles with the images, snippets of conversation discussing **Fierce's** refusal to feed, her refusal to accept the system. News footage of the Prime Minister, condemning this terrorist incident.*

*Two teen vloggers record a pretend copycat video. An anarchist vlogger rants about its significance. A comedian on a panel show parodies **Fierce**. A vlogger records a copycat video where a middle-aged man in a suit is actually drowned with corn syrup. In the US Senate a senator satirises the gesture by feeding himself, quipping that, well, he ain't hungry! A young female Asian vlogger is speaking about being inspired when heavily-armed police bust into the frame.*

The images and conversations and video continues, swelling in volume, changing so rapidly that they can hardly be distinguished one from the next – across the globe, across political divides, across all ages.

Black out.

Quicksand

Si	Twenty, a lance corporal
Cat	Twenty-two, a lance corporal
Magic	Twenty-two, a corporal
Youngy	Nineteen, a signaller

Audio sources are marked **S1-S14**.

The characters don a few symbolic items of clothing over their uniform for scenes in 2013; a suit jacket or a tie for the males, a dress for **Cat** adapted to allow quick costume changes.

A high cam net lit from above marks the desert scenes, through which a chandelier or glitter ball can be lowered for the wedding scenes. The patterns cast should be distinct from one another.

/ marks the beginning of the next line.

– denotes an interrupted line.

... denotes an unfinished line.

1

February 18th 2003. The desert, northern Kuwait.

We hear fragments of overlapping news reports: France and Germany's opposition to the war, no sign of an outcome in the UN, public opposition in the UK.

They fade out as the sun rises. Sunlight dapples through the cam net overhead, covering a green military Land Rover. Around the tailgate, three bodies in thick green sleeping bags. Webbing and bergens are scattered around. It is cold.

All is still. All is quiet.

Far off we begin to hear metal banging rhythmically on metal, hollow and tinny. Shortly after a vehicle horn sounds, one second on, one second off, over and over. A cacophony of similar sounds builds up, growing closer, interspersed with shouts of 'gas gas gas!'

*The sleeping bodies begin to stir. And suddenly they're fighting to get out like escape artists from strait jackets. One of the bodies seems to be trying to punch its way out; it is **Youngy**.*

*The other two are more measured. **Magic** rolls out of his sleeping bag in his boxer shorts, socks and a t-shirt. He quickly begins getting dressed but then stops. With his trousers round his ankles he rips open his respirator pouch, slips his respirator on and exhales hard.*

***Cat** dons her respirator without emerging from her sleeping bag. She exhales forcefully but doesn't shout a warning. She begins fumbling about inside the bag, evidently putting her clothes on.*

Youngy Fucking zip!

Magic Gas gas gas!

***Youngy** is finally out of his sleeping bag. He searches for his webbing.*

Youngy Fuck, man!

Magic What you doing?

Youngy I can't find me ressy!

Cat Dickhead. This could be for real.

***Youngy** stops. He covers his face with a headscarf and resumes his search.*

Magic What's that gonna do?

The rhythmic banging of metal on metal draws closer. They all look for the sound.

Si enters the detachment, masked up in full NBC suit, banging a pair of mess tins together. He carries a set of webbing over his shoulder.

Magic Who's that? Foxy?

When Si says jump, they jump:

Si Get your fucking suits on! What're you waiting for this is for real I don't want to have to tell your weeping mothers you died shitting yourself and spazzing out in the middle of nowhere so get your fucking kit on *now!*

Cat and Magic start digging in their bergens for their NBC suits. He looks at **Youngy**, who is maskless.

Youngy Sir...

Si hurls the webbing at **Youngy**, who quickly dons his respirator.

Si If we'd just been hit by nerve agent you'd all be dead! (To **Youngy**)
You would have been *deader* than dead! You would have been fucking *well* dead!
Dead as fuck! Proper fucking dead!

Si can't help laughing. **Magic** stops. **Cat** stops and looks at **Magic**. She looks at **Si**.

Together they run over, tackle him to the ground and rip his mask off, followed by their own.

Cat Si!

Magic You prick!

Youngy Is it a drill, then?

Si What do you think.

Magic laughs.

Cat Why?!

Si I just arrived.

Cat So you sound a gas alarm?

Si Nobody was about!

Cat *kicks him in the balls.*

Si Fuck!

Magic *(laughing)* Serves you right, bro. Good to see you though!

Magic *gives Si a big bear hug as he writhes in pain.*

Si Get off!

Magic Gimme some love, man!

Si *(strained)* My fucking nuts...

Cat and Magic *start packing their NBC kit away. Youngy is a bit behind.*

Youngy *(to Si)* Did you steal my fuckin' webbing?

Si You left it on the bonnet of the rover.

Youngy No I didn't!

Magic Youngy. Come here.

Youngy I didn't, Magic! He fucking nicked it.

Magic On me.

Youngy *slopes over.*

Youngy I didn't...

Magic Why do you keep your respirator to hand at all times?

Youngy Come on, Magic...

Cat Answer the question.

Youngy Fuck off, fem.

Magic *pulls Youngy's head back and smothers him with his dirty underwear.*
Youngy *struggles violently but Magic is too strong.*

Magic Gas gas gas!

Cat Magic... are they your fucking undies...?

Magic Why do you keep your respirator to hand at all times?

Youngy (*muffled*) Nuclear biological chemical attack.

Magic Nuclear, biological or chemical attack.

He lets Youngy go. Youngy gasps for air and spits into the sand.

Magic In this case, biological.

Youngy Fucking chemical, more like! You're a dick, Magic...

Cat And you'll be a dead dick if anything happens. Listen in for a change.

Si How many days, Magic?

Magic Four.

Si and Magic *burst out laughing.*

They've all stowed their kit away and are dressed. Si disappears and returns with his bergen. He dumps it on the ground.

Cat No wonder you're single.

Magic How do you know I'm single?

Cat *raises her eyebrows. They look at each other until he turns away.*

Magic You alright, Youngy?

Youngy No.

Magic Day one week one. Saddam's got anthrax, fucking sarin nerve agent. You don't wanna go out like that, trust me.

Si *takes a newspaper (source S1 Million March) from his bergen and throws it to Magic.*

Si He's got fuck all. That's what they reckon.

Magic Whoa ho, page three.

Si Not exactly.

Magic *(picking up the paper)* The *what!* The flippin' *Guardian!*

Si If I wanted tits I'd buy a porno. If I want to know what's going / on I buy
—

Magic You buy the Guardian. You've changed, man.

Si I wanna know what the fuck is going on.

Magic I wanna see tits. Cat?

Cat Fuck off, Magic.

Youngy Go on Cat. If you let me go first I'll do your shift later.

Magic Dream on, boy. I ain't having your sloppy seconds.

Cat *(quietly)* Just fuck off.

Cat *grabs her towel and wash bag and stalks off.*

Magic Chill out! I'm just messin'...

Magic *shakes his head.*

Si Is she alright?

Magic How should I know, man. Been ratty ever since we got out here.

Youngy Must be her time of the month, like.

Si For a whole month?

Youngy What?

Si Time *of* the month, you daft twat.

Youngy You know what I mean.

Magic Leave him alone, Si. Get us some water, Youngy.

Magic *kicks an empty cardboard box towards Youngy, who sulkily picks it up and walks off.*

Si Fetch.

Magic *shakes his head.*

Magic I am *glad* you're here, seriously.

Si I'd eat my gun if I had to spend a month alone with those two.

Magic Mate, try six weeks. I was still pissed from New Year's Eve when I got deployed, no shit.

Si Where's your brother at?

Magic Darren's further north.

Si You seen him?

Magic Yeah, a few weeks back.

Si Do the Marines have a scooby what's going on?

Magic Nope.

Magic *goes to the tailgate and takes out a beige package. He opens it and takes out little packets of food.*

Magic Check it out.

Si What's that?

Magic American rat pack. It's what we've been getting and they're fucking good too.

Si Well at least they bought us dinner before fucking us up the arse.

Magic You what?

Si Why else would we be out here if it wasn't for them?

Magic You get *three* a day. That's like... ten thousand calories or something.

They laugh.

Si No wonder they're all fat fuckers.

Magic Only good thing out here. It's basic as fuck.

Si The papers say the Iraqis are fuck all. It'll all be over in a few days.

Magic Don't be naïve, man.

Si Can't be that much of a threat if we haven't even got our gats yet.

Magic Yeah, well I think that's just a plain old fuck up. They'll be stuck on a ship somewhere.

Si Or in some container. Less than a mile away.

Magic Yeah, that's probably more like it.

Si Just doesn't make sense to me. We've been sent all this way to fight an army that's so dangerous we're out here with no rifles, no body armour, everyone reckons they're a pushover anyway, it's like...

Magic What?

Si Why?!

Magic WMDs mean anything to you, bro?

Si Yeah.

Magic So how can it be easy if they've got all that nasty shit?

Si They're disarming.

Magic Disarming?

Si Apparently.

Magic Apparently. Months, man. I'm telling you. Saddam is a fucking *mad* dog.

Si *shows him the newspaper.* **Magic** *looks at the headline (source S1 Million March).*

Magic Million march against war... no shit.

(reading) 'Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets of London to voice their opposition to military action against Iraq. Police said it was the UK's biggest ever demonstration... organisers put the figure closer to two million.'

Marching, man. I thought that was our job.

Si They can't ignore that.

Magic My dad was all CND back in the day. They had a million in eighty-three. I wouldn't believe everything you read in the papers.

The light changes to mark the days passing, their shadows lengthening and shortening under the movement of the sun.

2

February 25th 2003. The detachment about midday, the sun is warm. Various crates and bergens have been arranged to serve as makeshift furniture.

*Cat is writing a bluey. **Youngy** watches **Si** and **Magic** play chess. Some are in desert camouflage, some in green.*

Youngy Check mate!

Si No it's not. You are one irritating twat, do you know that?

Youngy Well fuck off and give me a turn, then!

Magic Winner stays on. You can play him, I'm done.

Youngy Sound.

***Magic** stands and stretches. **Youngy** quickly takes his place. **Si** stands up and stretches.*

Youngy Where you going, like?

Magic Give him a game, Si.

Si I vote you play Magic. It's a better match.

Cat I vote Si makes a brew.

Magic I second that.

Si I called the vote.

Youngy I third that!

Magic Motion approved!

Si Not funny.

Cat You started this voting shite.

Youngy Two sugars, / Si.

Cat Nice and strong tiny bit of milk please, Si.

Si *shakes his head and turns to the grinning Magic.*

Magic You know how I like it, baby.

Youngy *grins at him as Si leaves the detachment to go brew up. Si takes a swipe at him but Youngy dodges it.*

As Youngy speaks, Si doubles back and slaps him around the back of the head.

Cat Check mate.

Youngy Suck my dick.

Cat You what? Wee gobshite.

Youngy *sits and pushes the chess pieces around. Cat continues writing.*

Youngy I'm so fucking bored. I don't know why I bothered joining up.

Cat Because it was that or the dole.

Youngy Fuck off.

Magic Stop complaining. You're getting paid a shit load to sit out here in the sun.

Cat And you've got absolutely nothing to spend it on.

Youngy Exactly.

Magic So think about when you get back.

Cat I'm buying a house.

Magic You've already got married quarters.

Cat I want my *own* house. A nice house. Not some cheap mouldy flat. A big house. With a garden.

Magic You don't earn that much, house prices are through the roof.

Cat Shush. I'm getting a big house one way or another and it's going to be awesome. I'm no having Amy grow up in an asbestos-filled, grotty army pad.

Magic I always had to share a room with my brother.

Cat That why you always steal the covers?

Youngy How do you know?

Beat.

Cat I don't... just a joke.

Magic We're out of water again, Youngy.

Youngy Oh come on, Magic...

Magic Get a couple of cases while you're there.

Youngy I always get it!

Magic *points to his rank slide and holds up two fingers. He points at Youngy and holds up no fingers.*

Youngy *reluctantly gets up to fetch the water. Cat is reminded of the Disney Jungle Book as Youngy departs.*

Cat (*singing*) I will go to fetch the water, till the day that I am grown.

Magic (*calling after him*) It won't always be you!

Cat It will always be him. Only way *he* gets promoted is if everyone else gets scudded. And he'll *still* fetch the water because he's the only cunt left.

Magic *laughs.*

Magic You're too hard on him.

Cat Am I fuck.

Magic He'll be alright. He's got a good heart. If he keeps his head down and does his job he'll be a sergeant in five years.

Cat Yeah well. He gets right on my tits.

Magic *raises his eyebrows and smiles at her.*

Cat *(quickly)* Don't.

Magic You're the one who mentioned your tits, you know what I'm saying.

Cat So?

Magic Alright. Sorry. It's been... a while.

Cat No excuse.

Magic I know. Listen. I'm sorry for being a dick lately.

Cat I get enough shit from those two. I don't need it from you as well.

Magic You must be missing Ross.

Cat Don't, Magic.

Magic You can talk to me though, if you want. It must be hard, I mean. Your little girl and that.

Cat Amy. You did meet her, Magic.

Magic Yeah. Amy. Sorry.

Cat I miss *her* more than anything. I miss... fuck.

She drops her letter and looks up at the sky.

Magic What?

Si *returns with three tin mugs of coffee and hands them round.*

Si Get it while it's tepid! You'd think being trained chefs they'd be able to manage boiling water.

Magic Didn't you get Youngy one?

Si Gave it to him on the way back. Got some gossip, though. Looks like we might be getting out of this shithole.

Cat *stands and approaches him.*

Cat What?

Magic What're you banging on about now?

Si Overheard the boss chatting to Major Richardson.

Pause.

Cat And? Spit it out, you twat.

Si Not that you two would know but the UN have been debating this whole cluster fuck for weeks.

Magic And?

Si An agreement's been reached. They're gonna disarm Iraq as planned.

Pause.

Magic Fuck off. You're winding us up.

Cat Are you serious?

Si Why would I lie?

Youngy *appears. Ducking down to enter the cam net he stumbles and drops the crates of water. His face is wet. They all look at him.*

Magic Because you're a funny fucker.

Youngy *picks himself up off the ground and dusts himself down. He picks up the crates and stacks them in the back of the Land Rover.*

Cat You lying fuck.

Si How do you know I'm lying? The UN was / in –

Cat And the first thing you thought to do on hearing this momentous news was to tip a mug of coffee over Youngy's head?

Si I didn't!

Youngy You knew it'd spill!

Cat *storms off, clearly upset.*

Magic Cat...

Si It was just a joke!

Magic (*angry*) You've just told her she'll be going home.

Si It was a joke...

Magic To see her kid, dickhead. How's she gonna have a sense of humour about that?

Si Alright, Lancelot! You'd think you're fucking her or something.

Magic *takes a bottle of water and drinks deeply.*

Si Is it really such an unbelievable thing? It might happen!

They ignore him.

Si They were debating it!

Magic Don't matter how you put it, man. If it ain't true it don't mean shit.

*Fade out to a barrage of news coverage from the time intercut with significant news stories from the next decade (**source S2 UN**), which warps into the idle chatter and background music of a wedding reception...*

3

August 22nd 2015. A quiet corner of a wedding reception in a large hotel. As the sound fades lights up to reveal...

Cat, wheelchair-bound, sits alone. She observes the people with dull interest. Her dress has seen better days. Out of the blue something catches her eye. She sits up in her chair.

Magic enters, in an incredibly sharp suit. He stops a few feet away.

*They are watched from the other side of the room by **Si** and **Youngy**, sitting at another table.*

Silence.

Magic Cheer up. It's a celebration.

She doesn't reply.

Magic Didn't realise you'd be here.

She doesn't reply.

Magic When was it I last...

Cat You can keep walking, you know.

Magic I know.

Cat I wouldn't want you to feel you had to talk to me or anything.

Magic Do you want me to keep walking?

Pause.

Mind if I sit down?

Cat Do what you want.

Magic I will.

Cat As fucking usual.

Silence.

Magic I could do with a drink. You want one?

After a moment, Cat nods.

In another part of the hotel Si is watching Youngy try to dance with some girls. He dances intently at each one in turn, until they finally manage to close ranks on him. He gives up and returns to where Si is standing.

Youngy Fuckin' dykes.

Si That old chestnut.

Youngy Why dress like that if you're not up for it?

Si Maybe they're just not up for it with you.

Youngy Why wouldn't they be?

Si How long has it been?

Youngy Five months.

Si Jesus.

Youngy If I don't cop off today I'll rape something.

Si Is that your new chat-up line?

Youngy I wonder if there's a whorehouse round here.

Si I doubt it.

Youngy Could you lend us fifty quid if there is?

Si So you haven't been getting any love inside?

Youngy Fuck off. That doesn't happen.

Si You were dancing a bit funny. Thought maybe you had a jail daddy.

Youngy Fuck off. That's how I dance.

Si Don't worry I won't tell anyone.

Youngy You have a go, then.

Si I don't dance.

Youngy You're scared.

Si I'd rather talk girls into bed.

Youngy Oh, right. Think you're a big sexy brainy student now.

Si Not those girls, though.

Youngy What's wrong with them?

Si I've had more girls in the last five months than you've had shit dinners, mate.

Youngy *doesn't reply, continues looking at the girls.*

Si Do you want another?

Youngy I'm not supposed to drink.

Si How they gonna know?

Youngy Cunts breathalyse you.

Si *raises his eyebrows and downs the rest of his pint.*

Magic and **Si** meet at the bar. **Magic** appraises **Si**'s suit.

Si Alright. Thought you were back in Iraq.

Magic Just got back. You look like an undertaker.

Si I'm a student, I'm skint.

Magic Still?

Si Master's degree.

Magic *laughs.*

Si What?

Magic Sounds like a waste of time to me. What is it now?

Si Postcolonial studies.

Magic Fucking hell.

Si Beats being a fucking mercenary.

Magic Security contractor. Where did you get that suit though, Oxfam?

Si *smiles.* **Magic** *doesn't.*

Magic Don't be tapping me up for drinks.

Si *doesn't appreciate his tone.*

Si How's it going with Cat?

Magic What?

Si You're Amy's dad. I know all about it.

Magic Do you now.

Si You guys gonna make a go of it, then?

Magic Fuck off, Si.

Si Alright, I was only asking.

Magic Yeah well it's none of your business.

Si Alright, Dad.

Magic *isn't impressed.*

Si If you want to talk about it.... a secret's a tremendous psychological burden.

Magic Never did know when to keep your fucking mouth shut.

*He takes his drinks and leaves. Suddenly cheesy wedding music blares out, distorting into a parliamentary speech (**S5 Clarke speech**).*

4

February 27th 2003. The detachment around dusk. The light and warmth is fading from the short day as the cold night approaches.

Cat is repairing cables, using a head torch for light. **Magic** is searching for something in the back of the Land Rover. **Si** and **Youngy** are playing chess.

Magic I'm sick of this shit. Nothing's where it should be. There's no space.

Cat What're you looking for?

Magic Have you been in my tools, Si?

Si Nope.

Magic Youngy?

Youngy is one hundred per cent focused on not losing again.

Magic Youngy!

Youngy Check.

Magic throws a roll of electrical tape at **Youngy**, disturbing the board.

Youngy What the fuck!

Magic I asked you a fucking question.

Youngy I didn't hear you, like!

Si There was no need for that.

Si starts picking up the pieces.

Youngy I was gonna win there, Magic.

Si Were you fuck.

Magic Go see Bravo Troop and see if they've got any zip ties.

Youngy *fishes some out of the box.*

Magic Why didn't you say nothing? I've been banging around in there for half an hour.

Youngy You didn't ask!

Cat You didn't.

Magic *looks at them both. He thinks better of saying anything further on the subject.*

Magic This place... is doing my head in.

Si Should have joined the Marines like Daz.

Magic That's the first sensible thing you've said since you got here.

Cat Go check the mail if you're gonna do nothing.

Si Already checked twice, there's no point.

Cat Maybe no for you, but I've got a family that loves me.

Si You go, then. Your turn anyway.

Youngy I had my first letter *waiting* for me when I got out here.

Cat Me too.

Si Fuck off.

Cat He's just pissy because he's been sent fuck all.

Si Looks like rag week is over, then.

Cat Fuck. All.

Youngy Who votes Si goes to check the mail?

Magic Go have a look, Youngy.

Youngy *doesn't move.*

Youngy We're voting.

Magic *stops organising things and gives him a look. Youngy trudges off. Magic looks up at the sky. It is almost dark.*

Si It was her turn.

Magic Call it a day, Cat. Pretty much time for black out.

Si *shakes his head. Magic takes a couple of glow sticks from the Land Rover, snaps them and chucks them around the space.*

Si I hate this. There's nothing to do now.

Magic If you'd actually done some work you might appreciate the down time. Get prepped for exercise with the Yanks.

Si Like we've come all this way just to go on exercise.

Magic You don't know anything more than anyone else, Si.

Magic *is getting his sleeping bag and mat out. The others start to do the same.*

Si I'm sceptical about what we've been told. A trait that has stood me in good fucking stead ever since I joined up. For example... basic training. The bad tree. The corporal says, 'run to the bad tree.' We all do. 'Not quick enough. If you put in the effort we won't do it again.' We all run our arses off. 'Where's the effort? Again!' Obviously we're slower this time. 'Again. Again! Again!!'

Cat and Magic *are laughing. Youngy returns.*

Cat And that's why we're no going on exercise with the Americans?

Si My point exactly.

Youngy What's so funny?

Magic *stops laughing.*

Magic What did you say?

Youngy What?

Magic Where've you been?

Youngy Checking the mail...

Magic What took you so long?

Youngy / I didn't –

Magic Don't answer me back!

Youngy Eh?

Magic Are you fucking eyeballing me?

Youngy No...

Magic Run to the bad tree. Move!

Youngy But...

Magic What're you waiting for?!

Youngy ...but....

Magic Are you taking the piss?

Youngy ... but there aren't any trees, Magic!

Magic *stares at Youngy. He is unsure what's going on.*

They burst out laughing.

Si He would have done it!

Cat He'd have been halfway to Kuwait City.

Youngy With your mail.

They stop laughing and move towards him.

Cat For me?

Youngy Who's laughing now. Cunts.

Si Hand it over.

Youngy You can all wait 'till morning.

They all make a lunge for him.

Youngy Alright!

*He hands out letters. He pretends some of them are for **Si** a few times, only to give them to the real recipients at the last second.*

Si Don't mess about.

Youngy And... that's it.

Cat and Magic *retreat to their sleeping bags with their letters. They read them by the light of the glowsticks.*

Si You gotta be kidding...how are you supposed to find anything out in this place?

*Silence falls as they read. Fade out as news of the House of Commons vote on course of action plays. The Government-tabled motion is passed despite a significant rebellion among Labour backbenchers and members of the Tory opposition. Fade out as the news coverage warps into wedding reception music (**source S5 Commons vote**).*

5

The wedding reception. Magic gives Cat her drink. Empty glasses suggest they've had a few already.

Magic Look at those two over there.

Cat I'd rather not.

Magic Why's that?

Cat Have you spoken to Si recently?

Magic Yeah. He talks like a right wanker.

Cat Bingo.

Magic *laughs.* **Cat** *manages the faintest of smiles.*

Magic What about Ryan?

Her smile vanishes.

Cat What do you think?

Magic You never used to get on that well, I know.

Cat *What?*

Magic Forget it.

Cat You always did treat him like some diamond in the rough. Everyone else gets treated like shit.

Magic Did I fuck.

Cat Oh yes you did.

Magic I've got no illusions about Youngy, believe me. You know he's in prison?

Cat What? Now?

Magic He's on day release. He's got an ankle tag on and everything.

Cat What a fucking numpty.

Magic You should talk to him. Clear the air.

Cat Where've you been, Magic?

Magic It'll do you good.

Cat I don't give a fuck about Youngy. Where the fuck have you been?

Pause.

Magic Iraq, mostly. Afghan. Same old shit. Six months on six months off.

Cat You must be tapped in the head.

Magic I'm not crazy, I'm well paid. Unlike in the army.

Cat Money's no everything.

Magic No?

Cat No.

Magic If you say so.

Cat And what about when you're no out there?

Magic Tell the truth I've been out there for three years.

Cat Three years?

Magic More or less.

Cat But you said –

Magic What am I going to do with six months off?

Cat I could think of a few things. See your daughter, for example.

Magic It's not about that. They needed people.

Cat So you volunteered. What a hero.

Pause.

Magic What's the matter with you?

Cat What do you think, Magic? It's been twelve years since I told you and you've not been to see her once.

Magic You never asked me to.

Cat I shouldn't have had to.

Magic You didn't seem like you wanted to talk to me. In the hospital, I visited you.

Cat I was traumatised! You were there five minutes and then you just left.

Magic Some fucking time to tell me as well.

Cat You really had no idea? Not once did it cross your mind that she might be yours?

Beat.

Magic I'm not a fucking mind reader. But that's not what I'm talking about. You've changed.

Cat *(indicating her wheelchair)* Oh really? Thanks for the insight.

Magic You know what I mean. You weren't like this, even when it first happened. You're... angry. You're bitter.

Cat Yeah, well. Perhaps the saying that things get easier with time is total fucking bollocks. My husband leaving me doesn't exactly help. Although on the plus side I couldn't give a fuck about him anymore. The bedroom tax is another story.

Magic What the fuck is that?

Cat Never mind.

Magic Why did he leave?

Cat Who cares. He knew about you. Although that didn't appear to matter that much until his wife came home crippled. Funny that. A few years of homecare obviously did wonders for his sense of moral outrage.

Magic You shouldn't have told him.

Cat I was being honest. In a relationship you've got to be honest.

Magic Even when you've fucked up?

Cat Especially when you've fucked up.

Magic You shouldn't have slept with me in the first place.

Cat Well that's for fucking sure.

Magic Got to take responsibility for your mistakes.

Cat Oh, that was a mistake alright. In more ways than one.

Magic Maybe it wasn't meant to be, you and him.

Cat What are you doing here, Magic? Are you just here to wind me up or what?

Magic No.

Beat.

Cat So what are you doing here?

Magic It's my mate's wedding. I was invited.

Cat Why are you talking to me? You've shown no fucking interest in me or our daughter for over twelve years.

Magic I've been working.

Cat You're fucked in the head.

Magic I can't just go on earning this sort of money forever, this is my life. I'm not going to be one of those washed up deadbeat squaddies with no money and no future.

Cat Like me you mean?

Magic Don't play the victim, it doesn't suit you.

Cat Why didn't you come and see her?

Magic I was working.

Cat You can either answer with some semblance of sincerity or you can fuck off and talk to somebody else.

Magic *tries to answer but doesn't know what to say.*

Magic I don't know.

Cat You don't know? Finally, an honest fucking answer.

*She downs her drink and pushes her glass towards **Magic**, who walks off to the bar. He passes **Si** and **Youngy** sat across the room.*

Si Breakfast, better or worse.

Youngy Better.

Si Beds, better or worse.

Youngy Better.

Si Screws.

Youngy Better.

Si So you *are* getting some shower time action.

Youngy What?

Si You said the sex in prison is better than in the army and there are no women in prison *ergo* you're obviously enjoying big daddy shower love.

Youngy Screws as in guards. Corporals.

Si If I meant that I would've said guards.

Youngy Piss off.

Si That's called a play on words.

Youngy You talk like a right wanker now.

Si No I don't.

Youngy You do. Why can't you just talk about normal stuff?

Si I did better or worse. I can't believe you think prison's better than the army.

Youngy It is.

Si But you get locked up.

Youngy Only at night. I'm not in fucking Strangeways.

Si *downs the remains of his pint.*

Youngy Bastard. This is well boring.

Si Thanks. Why don't you have one?

Youngy Can't.

Si Go on.

Youngy I can't.

Pause.

Si Ryan. What did you do? To get put inside.

Youngy Why?

Si I just can't believe you're a criminal.

Youngy I can't believe you actually got a degree the amount of shit you talk.

Si That's what a degree's all about. Seriously, though. What happened?

Pause.

Youngy Aggravated burglary.

Si Jesus. Why?

Youngy What was I supposed to do? I had no job, no money. They wouldn't let me go on the dole because I'd been overseas and hadn't paid national insurance or something. Which was bollocks.

Si What did you rob?

Youngy Nothing! We broke into this shop and the fucking raghead who owned it comes down with a cricket bat and starts leathering us. So I took it off him and give him some back.

Si Fucking hell, Ryan. That's fucked up.

Youngy And I'd been done when I was a kid as well. Got two years. Would've been more but I'd been in Iraq.

Si Never had you down for the violent type.

Pause.

Youngy Get me a drink then, dickhead.

*An early 2000s pop song blares out. It dissolves into static and resolves into a report about troops in the desert, people being interviewed and asked if they've got anything to say to their family (**source S7 Radio Soldiers**).*

6

March 14th 2003.

Si and Youngy are both now in desert camouflage, laid about listening to the radio.

Youngy I don't know why you bother with all this politics shite.

Si It's important.

Youngy Why? They don't listen.

Si Then don't vote for them.

Youngy They're all the same.

Si There are more than two political parties, Ryan.

Youngy Who'll never win anything. They get like, five votes. So what's the point?

Si Well vote for them and they get six. And so on.

Youngy I don't see the point.

Si There is no point if people think like you do.

Cat comes stumbling through the entrance with four sets of body armour. She drops them on the ground and sits down.

Youngy Forget your politics bollocks, Si. Body armour's here!

Cat As if by magic. What are you two lazy fuckers doing? Youngy, get me some water.

Youngy Why?

Cat Because I just carried that lot from the QMs. Because I *told* you to.

Youngy It's right there!

Cat I outrank you, so I win. Get me my water.

He digs around in the back of the Land Rover for water. He hands one to her.

Cat Democracy in action. Cheers.

Youngy *tries on a set of body armour.*

Youngy Fucking hell. It's heavy enough already.

Si *stands and examines another set.*

Si I'd rather wear a life jacket.

He chucks a set to Cat.

Si Here, this is the smallest.

Cat *tries it on. She struggles to fasten it up at the front. The boys laugh.*

Cat Fucking shut it.

Youngy Your tits aren't always an asset after all, like.

Cat Youse'll both get kneed in the balls if you don't button it.

Cat *starts prodding the body armour she's wearing.*

Cat Is this supposed to stop rounds?

Si You need breast plates.

Cat Say what?

Si Breast plates.

Youngy *sniggers.*

Cat Are you trying to be funny?

Si Although you might not.

Cat What're you talking about?

Si You've got a rack that could stop an RPG –

The boys burst out laughing.

Cat *struggles out of her body armour and throws it at Si.*

Cat Fuckin' pair of numpties!

Si What! Breast plates. Armour plates. Here (*he shows her the pockets*).
And at the back. Back plate. Breast plates. Jesus.

Cat Well why didn't you just say so!

Si I did! You just *assumed* we were talking about your tits!

Cat And you did!

Si Try that shit on Magic, not me.

Cat *stares at Si. He moves away and turns on the radio. He closes in to hear over the noise of the argument.*

Cat Right. Like the word *breast* doesnae instantly trigger your fucking infantile sense of humour, bollock brains!

Youngy If you hadn't been so thick it wouldn't have / happened.

Cat I'm thick?

Youngy Well even I know you need plates, you daft twat.

Cat The next time you talk to me like that I'll have you charged for insubordination.

Youngy *smirks and turns away to look at the body armour.*

Magic (off) I can hear you lot from HQ, you know.

Magic enters the detachment and **Cat** immediately approaches him.

Cat Well did you hear what he just said to me? I want him charged. Wee prick.

Magic Just... leave it, alright? I'll talk to him. We can sort our own shit out without running to the boss.

Cat Why are you sticking up for him?

Magic is exasperated and walks away from her. **Cat** stands seething.

Si That was quick. You've only been gone three hours.

Magic Yeah, right.

Si We need plates for the flak jackets, Magic.

Magic Forget it.

Si Oh what a nice caring det commander you are.

Magic There aren't any.

Cat I need another set, none of it fits me.

Magic There aren't any.

Cat So what happens if I get shot?

Si And it'd be all your fault, Magic.

Magic shakes his head and departs.

Cat Why are you giving him shit?

Si Me? I'm not the one in hysterics.

Cat No I wasn't.

Si What do you care anyway? Are you fucking him or something?

Cat Why are you jealous?

Si Shut up!

Cat What?

Si turns up the radio. They listen intently to the end of a report about the UN vote on Iraq.

Si The UN aren't going to sanction the war. France, Germany, Russia, China... they're all going to veto the war resolution.

Youngy Fucking fannies.

Si You stay out here, Youngy. I'm going home.

Youngy But we've come all this way!

Cat Right. May as well do it now, eh? Are you sure?

Si You heard what it said.

Youngy Why wouldn't we?

Si Because we don't have a mad religious crusader in charge, do we? You should have seen it before I came out here. Nobody wants this.

Youngy I do.

Cat Aye, and you're a fucking first class, grade A, king size numpty.

Magic *returns and dishes out boxes of pills.*

Magic Present for you.

Cat NAPS tablets. No way.

Youngy They make you sterile.

Magic And nerve agent makes you dead. I know which I'd rather be.

Cat Where's the combo pens?

Magic Yeeeah... they don't have them yet.

Cat *laughs derisively.*

Cat So we take these tablets which probably make you sterile and then get hit with nerve gas and then when we try and stop our *spines* from melting, there's no injection to activate the tablets?

Magic You don't have to take them, it's your choice.

Cat No shit.

Youngy I'm not taking them.

Cat He hasn't even *got* any nerve gas.

Magic You don't know that.

Cat I know we wouldn't be sat here in a big fucking *cluster* well within missile range if Saddam was tooled up with Sarin.

Youngy Yeah... that's pretty smart you know, Cat.

Cat Don't act so surprised, shit for brains.

Youngy Have you always gotta be such a bitch to me?

Cat Me? I'm no the one who bullies you twenty-four seven am I.

Magic *dishes out morphine auto-injectors.*

Youngy Oh mate is that morphine? Anyone fancy a party, like?

Youngy *does a little junkie dance.*

Magic Signed for.

He thrusts a piece of paper at Youngy, who just looks at it.

Magic Or you don't get any and die in agony.

Youngy *signs.*

Cat Are we going in?

Magic Looks that way, don't it.

Si The UN won't sign off on the war.

Magic So?

Si So it's important.

Magic Forget that, get yourself over to HQ they need volunteers.

Si For what? I went last time.

Magic Don't fucking give me lip, Si.

Si Send her.

Magic *is getting up in Si's face.*

Si I think you need to chill out, mate.

Magic I'm sending you because you're sat around here doing fuck all stirring up rumours. Now get your arse over to HQ.

Si Yes. *Corporal.*

Magic Don't fucking corporal me with that sad puppy routine. Just do as your fucking told. Right?

Si Yeah...

Magic Alright?!

Si I said yes.

Pause.

Magic *is right up in Si's face and isn't moving.*

Si (*quietly*) Now get the fuck out of my face.

Magic Or?

Si Or I'll fucking floor you. I don't give a fuck.

Pause.

Si You've said your piece.

Magic *grabs Si. They fall to the floor grappling.*

Youngy *watches.*

Cat Stop it!

Cat *drags Magic away but she can't hold him.*

Cat Youngy!

Youngy *helps her. They manage to separate them.*

The brawlers pick themselves up and dust themselves down. The rage drains out of them in fleeting stares.

Magic Get this place tidied up, all of you. This shit is serious.

Cat We will.

Youngy Yes, Magic.

Youngy *gets busy.* **Cat** *starts to help but* **Magic** *calls her back.*

Magic Cat. Boss needs to speak to you.

Cat What about?

He leaves. The rest look at each other.

Fade out as the faint sound of cheesy ballads, broken up by glitches, is heard.

7

The wedding, early evening. Several more empty glasses litter the table.

Magic Of course we're right to go in. We should go in whenever necessary. To look after our interests.

Cat And spend how much?

Magic It pays for itself in the long run.

Cat Oh, right. Inspiring and arming Isis was all part of the plan, eh? You might have to explain that one to me again, Mr Security Expert.

Magic What about all the immigrants coming in and going on the dole?

Cat *shakes her head.*

Magic Can't answer that one, eh? Because I'm right. They just want a free ride.

Cat And that's got nothing to do with Iraq either. You think they might just want to live somewhere where getting bombed isn't a daily occurrence?

Magic Yeah, well. It is how it is. You can't just let thousands of Syrians and Iraqis in, Isis will have guys coming through for sure.

Cat When did you become such a dick, Magic?

Magic No need to get personal.

Cat Personal? You wanna talk personal let's talk about me.

Magic What about you?

Cat What do I deserve?

Magic What do you mean?

Cat A house. Money to live. Money for transport. Money for Amy.

Magic You've got a war pension. You earned it.

Cat So why are they taking away half my pension?

Magic The army?

Cat The fucking government! The bedroom tax? My husband leaves me and suddenly I've got too many rooms and the bastards tax me for it. So what's that about?

Magic Well... yeah, that's fucked up. But if it wasn't for people taking the piss there'd be more money for people like you.

Cat And you think they'd spend it on me? They'd spend it on laser-guided missiles and fucking useless nuclear submarines.

Magic Well we've all got to do our bit, we're in debt. You could find work.

Cat How much tax do you pay?

Magic I work abroad.

Cat Oh, right. Of course.

Pause.

Cat *tears up.*

Magic What's up?

Cat You don't give a fuck. Nobody gives a fuck.

Magic I'm sorry.

Cat For what?

Pause.

You don't even know what you did. Find work. What a fucking joke. I'm ragged. I'm ragged, Magic. And all you can talk about is fucking immigrants and war. You mercenary fucking prick.

Pause. Magic struggles to find the right words.

Magic It's just – I didn't... realise. I didn't realise, OK?

I'm just keeping my head down. Doing my job. Earning. I had no idea about any of this. And once Iraq is sorted...

Cat. Don't cry. Please.

Fuck.

He shuffles over and put a hand on her arm.

Pause.

Cat Why do you go out there? Why do you choose to live in a war zone?

Magic It's not a war zone. It's pretty stable these days, I mean it was. It is where we are. I get paid five hundred quid a day. I'm just an engineer, it's not like I'm slotting people all day.

Cat But *why*?

Magic In a few years' time Iraq will be absolutely fine, and I'll have helped sort it out.

Cat You could work here.

Magic For eight pounds an hour? No thanks.

Cat What's wrong with that?

Magic I don't wanna sound harsh, Cat. But look at the situation you're in. Forget your injuries, you can't help them. But money. It makes a difference. I don't want to end up like Youngy.

And definitely not Si.

Cat *laughs bitterly.*

Cat No. Or me.

Magic I didn't mean –

Cat Relax. Joke. That's the risk you're taking though, right? You'll end up like me, or worse. End up dead. Fucking beheaded on Youtube.

Magic Don't.

Pause.

Cat You don't know why, do you? Is it Amy?

Magic Don't...

Cat Is it me?

Magic I can help out with money.

Cat I don't want it.

Magic Why the fuck not?

Cat Do you still think about your brother?

Magic *sits back upright.*

Magic What's that got to do with anything?

Cat Do you?

Magic I'm sorry I upset you. If you wanna take your revenge –

Cat That's no what I want.

Magic Yeah.

Cat You say I've changed, but so have you. You're cold. You're arrogant.

Magic Nice.

Cat You're unhappy.

Magic Whatever. We only just –

Cat You're a bit of an arsehole, frankly. Question is why.

Magic I'm going to the bar.

Cat *slides her empty glass over to him.*

Magic Buy your own fucking drink.

Magic *stands and walks away.*

Across the room Youngy returns from the bar with cocktails.

Youngy Get that down you, son!

Si What the fuck is that?

Youngy Can't remember. It's got loads of booze in it.

Si Where's my change?

Youngy *shakes his head as he sips his drink intensely through his straw.*

Si That was twenty quid!

Youngy *nods.* **Si** *tastes his cocktail.*

Si That's minging.

Youngy Ah! Delicious!

Si Last time I give you money for the bar.

Youngy Relax. Government money anyway, like.

Si It's my money.

Youngy Aye, that I paid for with my taxes. When I still paid taxes.

Si Yeah yeah. And my taxes pay for your two years at Butlins. I mean they would, if I paid taxes.

Youngy Shut up and get it down you. I thought students were supposed to be big drinkers.

Si I'm not some eighteen-year-old posh twat pissing around in philosophy. I'm serious.

Youngy *I'm* serious. Drink your drink.

Si You should go easy.

Youngy Bloody hell you can't win with you. Have a drink, don't have a drink, I'm a serious student.

Si *shakes his head and sips his drink.*

Si You want to really know why you're in prison?

Youngy I do know.

Si Why?

Youngy Cause I leathered a paki with a cricket bat.

Si Not literally, dickhead.

Youngy *(in a poncy voice)* Oh, I'm sorry. Not literally.

Si Bourgeois power.

Youngy Who's he? EU cunt, eh?

Si Prison is there to discipline you into performing as the bourgeois want you to. In the old days we had a king, absolute power, then we chopped heads off because the king can do what the fuck he likes. But now power is spread out and we like to think we're humane and so we don't kill or torture, we invent little narratives about reforming criminals and rehabilitation to make ourselves feel better. We invent day release.

Youngy Progress!

Si No, not progress.

Youngy I'd rather have day release than not. I'd rather have day release than get my fucking... head chopped off! You're talking bollocks, Si.

Si I'm trying to tell you what's really going on.

Youngy What's really going on is you're doing my head in. Come on, only got a few hours left!

Si You're a fucking idiot, Youngy.

Youngy So?

Si Do you never stop and think about what's happened to you?

Youngy Fucking hell, Si. I'm trying to enjoy myself while I can.

Si You went from the army to prison via unemployment. You keep getting fucked over by the government but you don't do anything about it.

Youngy The army wasn't bad.

Si Iraq? Afghan? That was good, was it?

Youngy Yeah, I fucking loved it.

Si You loved it when Chalky got blown up?

Youngy Fuck off.

Si When Cat got –

Youngy I said fuck off.

Si You think we did good things over there?

Youngy Yeah! I do. It was the best time of my life. I had a job, loads of mates, loads of money. A gun.

Si And what about the Iraqis? How do you think they liked it?

Youngy Fuck the ragheads. They deserve what they get. We went and got rid of Saddam, give them everything they need, and all they can do is kick the shit out of each other. They don't want democracy. Or freedom, or McDonald's or anything that's good.

Si Freedom? Like you, you mean?

Youngy The one mistake we made was letting the cunts come live here. All I needed was a job, but the fucking Arabs and the Romanians had them all. Don't get me started on these Syrian Isis cunts.

Si The government made you redundant because they needed to save money to pay off the banks. Same reason there weren't any jobs, all this fucking austerity bullshit. Easier for you to blame the brown people than think about it though, eh?

Youngy You're starting to piss me off now, Si.

Si No shit.

Youngy You always did think you were smarter than everyone else, but you're not. I've met blokes inside who've seen all this happening with their own eyes, not what they've read about in some book written by some posh twat with five degrees who's never worked a day in his life.

Si What are you in the fucking BNP now?

Youngy Don't be stupid.

Si I'd stay away from these nutters, Ryan.

Youngy English Defence League aren't nutters.

*A loud burst of static becomes President Bush's ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, giving him forty-eight hours to leave Iraq or face military action (**source S10 Ultimatum and UN failure, S10 Bush ultimatum**).*

8

March 17th 2003.

Youngy and **Si** are listening to Bush's speech on the radio.

The detachment is tidy; it looks ready to be packed away at short notice.

Youngy No fucking way is he gonna run off, like.

Si He might.

Youngy Don't be daft, man.

They sit languidly. Si half-heartedly reads a book while Youngy messes around with the chess pieces.

Youngy (*brightly*) Do you want a game?

Si I'm not that bored.

Youngy You will be.

Si Probably.

Cat returns. *She throws her webbing down heavily. The boys regard her warily.*

Si You alright?

Cat Fucking bastards. I could fucking kill 'em.

Youngy What did they say, like?

Cat That I'm needed.

Si What about Emma? She's a spare body.

Cat They sent her home. Fucking anaemic. Should have given her a fucking iron tablet and told her to get on with it.

Si Shit.

Cat Yeah, shit. My daughter's lying ill wi' meningitis and I'm stuck in the middle of the desert and that's not reason enough for me to go. She might...

She breaks down.

Si goes to comfort her, unsure whether to touch her or not.

Cat She might die. She might die and I'm... fuck.

Si puts his arm round her shoulders. She shrugs him off.

Cat Don't fuckin' touch me.

Si Alright. Alright. I'm sorry.

Cat Magic said he'd talk to the boss. Obviously he fucking never.

Pause. The boys are unsure what to do.

Si Bush gave Saddam forty-eight hours to leave today.

Cat So.

Si Well... if he leaves, we won't have to go in.

Youngy Aww, I wouldn't pin your / hopes on –

Si And why wouldn't he leave? That's all the Yanks want. And if the war isn't gonna happen, then things will start winding down.

Cat Don't, Si. I can't stand it.

Si Stand what? I'm just / trying –

Cat The hope! I can't stand the hope, alright?

Pause.

Si Have you tried phoning?

Cat No phone cards. Nobody's had any for over a week.

Youngy I'd give you mine if I had any, Cat.

Cat Thanks. Do you really think he'll leave?

Si He's dead if he doesn't. Sooner or later.

Magic *returns carrying four large brown padded envelopes. The boys look at Cat.*

Magic You seen the boss, Cat?

Cat You spoke to him?

Magic Yeah.

Cat I'd rather have heard it from you, Magic. Could you not have told me?

Magic Cat, seriously. I didn't know. I tried. I mean, it didn't look good...

Cat It's fucking not! Please, you've got to speak to them again.

She moves closer to him, looking into his eyes, holding on to him.

Magic Cat...

Cat Please, Magic.

Magic I would if I could you know that.

Cat Please...

Magic I can't!

Pause. She lets him go.

Cat Do you think they'll let me go if the war's called off?

Magic What do you mean?

Cat Si said Saddam's been told to leave or face war. So if he / leaves –

Magic Hang on.

Si It was on the radio.

Magic Yeah, I know. I heard it.

Cat So if the war's off, do you think they'll let me go? Sharpish?

Magic *glares at Si.*

Si What?

Cat Magic?

Magic Listen. All of you. You need to get your head *sorted*.

Si *joins Youngy in messing around with the chess pieces.*

Magic *walks over and kicks the board to the ground. Si doesn't look at Magic, even though he is trying to make eye contact.*

Magic Si. Look at me.

He does so.

Magic My brother is attached to the Yanks, and he says this is happening. Not maybe, not if. It is happening.

Si Sure he's not winding you up?

Magic Don't fucking try and tell me about my brother, alright? You need to get your head *right*. You hear what I'm saying?

Si Yeah. You gonna ask Youngy as well or is it just me?

Magic I'm not worried about Youngy, I'm worried about you. And not in a best mate big brother I'm so fucking concerned sort of way.

Si Good to know.

Magic Don't bullshit me. I'm worried because she's got enough stress as it is and you're upsetting her, getting her hopes up.

Si Oh I am sorry, didn't mean to mess with *her*.

Pause. Magic stares at Si.

Magic If you don't get your head round this, that's too bad. But you will not make this harder for the rest of us. You hear what I'm telling you?

No response.

Magic Do you hear what I'm telling you?

Si Yes.

Magic Enough with the fucking guessing games.

Si Alright.

Magic *hands out the envelopes. Cat is distraught.*

Magic Cat. I'm sure she'll be alright. Ross'll be taking good care of her, yeah?

He touches her shoulder. She doesn't stop him.

Cat So that's it. No way out.

Magic You just need to get your head right. That's all you can do.

Cat She needs her mum. She needs her...

She looks up at Magic. A moment.

Youngy What's the envelope for?

Si Sanitisation.

Youngy What... like... eh?

Magic I need you... you need to put all your docs in here. Anything with your name on it goes in the envelope. You need to put all your letters in, anything with your address on it. Anything with personal info.

Youngy What about me dog tags?

Si Don't be a twat, Youngy.

Cat My letters? My photographs?

Magic Anything that could be used against you if you're captured.

Cat Photos?

Magic They could use them to get into your head. It's not for long.

Cat What about letters I haven't sent?

Magic *doesn't answer.*

Si Nothing in or out.

Magic Sorry, Cat. No letters, no calls, in or out. Just until we're over the border.

Cat But my little girl's sick!

Magic I know. It's fucked up.

Cat This is unbelievable. She could fucking die and I wouldn't even know!

Magic I don't make the rules, Cat. I'm sorry.

Cat Even if she gets better... I won't be able to stop worrying, will I?

Magic *just looks at her. There's nothing he can do.*

Cat And what if I accidentally fall off a wagon? Get sent home like that bitch Emma for fuck all.

Magic Hey! Don't be stupid. We've just gotta get on with it. I'm sorry.

Pause.

Si When are we going, then?

Magic Not sure. A few days. But this is it.

*The light changes to mark the days passing. They stow everything away neatly, clearing the space. As they do we hear Blair's speech advocating war before the decisive House of Commons vote and a news report of the result (**source S12 Blair, S12 Commons vote result**). The UK goes to war with Iraq.*

9

The wedding, late evening. Si has joined Cat, sitting on her left.

Si Remember when he was gonna run to the bad tree? In Iraq?

They share a little smile at the memory.

Cat Yeah.

Si Funny.

Cat Yeah.

Pause.

Si I just don't understand what the fuck is happening to people. Do you think he's a nutter or what?

Cat He always had a bit of a nasty streak. I'd leave him well alone if I were you.

Si But he's my mate. I know we haven't seen each other for ages but I feel like we've got something between us... some – I don't fucking know. And that's the problem, isn't it? Doesn't matter how I put it to him, he hasn't got a clue what I'm talking about. Because he's been through what he's been through, and I've been through what I've been through.

Cat Can we not talk about him?

Si You hate him, don't you?

Cat I don't hate anyone. I just never want to see or hear about him ever again.

Si Sounds like hate to me.

Cat Dictionary definition, is it?

Si No.

Cat Chill out, I'm taking the piss.

Si What's up with Magic?

Cat Fucked if I know.

Si You guys gonna get together?

Cat He doesn't want to. I don't want to, not if he's gonna be such a prick.

Si He's never gotten over his brother, you know.

Cat What's that, your one class on Freud.

Si No. He's phoned me up a few times in a right state.

Cat When?

Si Every now and again. Last time was pretty recent.

Cat Why's he talking to you?

Si I don't know. Don't think he was thinking straight. Who else is he gonna talk to? He's usually in some compound in Baghdad. I don't think banging on about his dead brother to the sixteen stone South African mercenary or whoever the fuck he's bunking with would go down too well.

Cat He could've talked to me.

Si Maybe he didn't think you'd wanna talk to him.

Cat I would've.

Si You don't exactly come across as the type to forgive and forget, Cat.

Youngy *wanders over. He's drunk and morose.*

Youngy Alright.

Si What's up?

Youngy Can I sit down, like?

Si *looks at Cat. She looks unsure.*

Si Why don't we go to the bar?

Youngy I think I've had enough.

Cat Sit down if you want.

Youngy Cheers.

He sits to Cat's right.

Youngy How you doing Cat?

Cat Alright thanks.

Youngy Listen, I'm sorry about –

Cat It's alright. Forget about it.

She is tense, but holding it together.

Youngy Si thinks I'm a racist.

Cat Are you?

Youngy No, I just hate foreigners.

Si That's a racist.

Cat Did you see Magic anywhere?

Youngy He's outside.

Cat I'm gonna go find him.

Youngy You don't need to go just 'cause of me.

Cat I'm not.

Youngy *stands up.*

Youngy Do you need pushing?

Si Leave it out, Ryan.

Youngy What? I'm being a gentleman, you twat.

Cat I'm fine. Thanks. I can do it.

They sit apart from each other, watching her go.

10

*It is dark outside. **Magic** stands on the terrace looking at nothing in particular, deep in thought.*

Cat approaches him.

Cat Magic?

He doesn't react. She moves next to him.

Cat Oi. Shit for brains.

Magic What do you want?

Cat I want you to talk to me.

Magic Nothing to talk about.

Cat Will you come sit down.

He glances at her.

Magic I prefer to stand. Stretch my legs.

Cat What, so you can run away quicker?

He looks at her. She stares back at him. She isn't going away.

Magic Run away from what. You?

Cat No.

Magic Then what?

Cat You're hurt, Magic. You've been hurt.

Magic *You've* been hurt, Cat. Not me. Look at you. I'm fine.

Cat Are you fuck.

Magic *sneers.*

Cat I'm trying not to be angry with you. You're not exactly making it easy.

He bows his head slightly.

Cat I'm not talking about you and me. About Amy. That's part of it but it's not what you're running away from.

Your brother died, Magic. He went to war, some stupid fucking pointless little war and he got killed. And you didn't. You keep going back out there, over and over and over. What are you looking for?

Magic Money.

Cat You never gave a shit about money. What about life? You've got to let it go, this grief or whatever it is. You fucking scare me, Magic. It's like you're chasing death. It's like you're wanting to die.

Magic *lifts his head up high. He sways, then crumbles to his knees.*

Cat Magic.

Magic I'm alright just pissed.

He falls back into a sitting position, steadying himself on Cat's leg. He shakes his head to try and clear it.

Cat What happened? Do you need a doctor?

Magic I'm alright.

Cat Are you sure? Look at me. Let me see you.

He looks at her.

Magic I'm alright. I'm alright.

She takes his hands in hers. He grips them tightly. He slowly gets to his feet and sits at a bench. She stays close to him.

Magic Fuck me.

Cat What happened?

Magic Like lager in my skull.

Cat You sure you're alright? Why don't we go home?

Magic Staying here tonight.

Cat You can stay with me. If you want to.

Magic I wouldn't want –

Cat I want you to. If you want.

Magic *nods.*

Cat We're all hurting. But it's not the end. Not if we can accept it.

*A commotion from inside spills out into the night. **Youngy** storms out, closely followed by **Si**.*

Youngy Get the fuck away from us.

Si Would you just listen for one fucking minute?

***Youngy** walks to the right of **Magic** and **Cat**, **Si** to the left. The presence of the others has interrupted their quarrel slightly.*

Cat What's going on?

Si I'm trying to talk some sense into him.

Youngy Trying to brain wash me.

Si You're already brain washed. I know what I'm talking about, Ryan.

Cat I think you should leave him alone, Si.

Si No I won't. I'm sick of this shit. Times get hard and everyone starts eating each other, hating the wrong people. And I don't want my mate to be one of those people.

Youngy You're not my mate.

Si I am! If you'd fucking let me.

Youngy No you're not. You just want to make me look stupid so everyone knows how fucking clever you are.

Si Explain to me how getting rid of all the immigrants is going to change anything? How cutting ourselves off from Europe, from everyone, is going to help people like you get a job?

Youngy It's obvious. Less people, more jobs.

Si It's not obvious. Do you have a clue about economics –

Youngy There you go again. All you do is make out like I don't know anything.

They begin to speak over each other increasingly until the argument degrades into two entirely isolated tirades.

Si You're a classic case, you're just like the Nazis or any other nationalist.

Youngy I love my country and the people in it.

Si Blame it all on the Other and forget trying to figure out what's actually going on.

Youngy Why should we put foreigners before ourselves?

Si Doesn't matter that we paid off the banks despite our huge national debt.

Youngy They send me down for fuck all and we can't even deport some terrorist because it's against his human rights.

Si Doesn't matter that they're privatising the NHS not because of the Hungarians but because that's what big business wants.

Youngy Anyone can come here and get a doctor but try going over there and doing the same.

Si This is when all the wannabe brown shirts come crawling out of the woodwork.

Youngy All these experts are just the same as the politicians out for themselves it's all a big fucking game.

Si It's changing. Look at Greece, look at Spain. Labour is going back to representing people.

Youngy Oh yeah the fucking IRA supporter, fucking jihadi lover.

Magic Stop it.

Si Is it any wonder people want to blow us up when we've destroyed their entire fucking country?

Cat Shut up.

Youngy Hard working English people are treated like shit by everyone.

Cat Can you shut the fuck up!

Pause.

Youngy What about Cat?

Cat Ryan, just shut the fuck up.

Si What about her?

Youngy She's served her country and got fucked up in the process.

Si So?

Cat The both of you can just shut up now.

Youngy So she gets some measly pension when anyone can just tip up and get a free ride. She's earned it!

Magic Stop it.

He is starting to look unsteady again.

Si That's got nothing to do with anything. Not to mention it's fucking plain wrong.

Youngy Alright, let's ask her shall we?

Cat Leave me out of it.

Youngy Do you think it's right that you get treated like shit?

Cat No but –

Youngy See! Why should she lose out to some raghead?

Si You didn't let her finish.

Cat You think what you want, Ryan. But do not fucking use me as some poster girl for fucked-up fascist propaganda, alright?

Pause. Si smiles maliciously.

Youngy I'm trying to defend you...

Cat I don't need defending.

Youngy Oh yeah?

He steps towards her and grabs her wheelchair.

Si What you doing?

Cat Get off.

Magic Ryan.

Youngy How about I push you down that hill? How about I push you into the fucking road?

Magic *stands up. He's unsteady but determined.*

Magic Get off.

Youngy *squares up to him. Si does nothing.*

Si That's it, Youngy. Classic, take it out on the weak.

Cat Don't, Magic. Just leave him. Sit down.

Youngy Come on, then. I don't give a fuck.

Cat Magic. Come with me.

She puts a hand on his arm. He listens to her and slowly sits down. He and Cat are almost huddled together, vulnerable, in between the volatile, polarised young men.

Black out.

11

March 19th 2003.

The detachment is stripped down. Everything that can be packed away has been. Orders are expected at any moment, but for now they wait. Life is more tedious but the tension has increased. It is very hot, everyone stripped down to t-shirts.

Magic *is checking his webbing, making sure everything is in order. Youngy is pacing, kicking sand about. Cat sits apart, lost in thought.*

Si *returns. He stows his toolbox in the Land Rover.*

Si Don't go over there, whatever you do. They're all running around like headless chickens.

Youngy Fucking officers.

Si Fucking right. You'd think they'd just found out this morning that there's going to be a war and they've got to run it.

Magic Don't let it bother you.

Si It does bother me, though. So what, they're excited. Don't have to speak to us like that, just because their dad's loaded.

Youngy Fuck 'em.

Si We got orders?

Magic Nope.

Si What are we meant to do?

Youngy Hurry up and wait.

Magic Get some rest while you can.

Si *sits on the ground.*

Si You've packed away Star Wars chess!

Magic Sort your kit out.

Youngy *resumes pacing.*

Si I might go get a brew.

Magic Wait 'till you're off call.

Si *stares at Magic. He doesn't say anything.*

Youngy *begins pacing in an elaborate manner.*

Magic Ryan. Sit down, man.

Youngy I'm fucking bored, Magic.

Magic You're anxious. You need to chill the fuck out.

Youngy How can I be bored and anxious?

Magic You are. And you're doing my nut in, so sit down.

Youngy *slumps to the ground.*

Growing increasingly louder and closer, cries of 'take cover!' and 'gas gas gas!' ring out. Vehicle horns start sounding on and off.

Magic *is the first to start scrambling for his respirator. The others do likewise.*

Magic *runs outside. The others start putting on their suits. He runs back in.*

Magic Forget that! Bring it with you!

Cat What?

Magic Missile! Fire trench, now!

Cat Fuck.

Magic Bring your suit!

Si and Youngy *run for the trench. Cat stumbles and falls, knocking her respirator off. Magic goes back to help her.*

Magic Come on. Mask on.

Cat The strap's fucked.

He tries to help her put it back on. The alarm cries have suddenly stopped. Silence.

Magic Just hold it on. Under here.

Cat The trench.

Magic Too late.

They scramble under the scant shelter of the Land Rover. Silence.

Cat Shit. It's not sealed.

Magic You'll be alright.

Cat I don't wanna die, Magic.

He takes his respirator off.

Magic See? Nothing to worry about.

Cat Don't. It could be chemical.

Magic Then we're both fucked.

She takes hers off. Silence.

Cat She's yours.

Magic What?

Youngy *enters the detachment and takes his mask off. Si holds up his hands in disbelief.*

Magic Youngy! Get in cover!

Youngy Nothing's happening!

The all clear signal is sounded. Shouts of 'all clear!' Cat and Magic wriggle out from cover. Si runs in.

Magic Why did you break cover?

Youngy It was clear!

Magic You wait for the signal!

Si Was that real?

Youngy I can't believe he tried to bomb us!

Magic You stay in cover. Get under there and stay there.

Youngy Come on...

Magic I'm serious.

Youngy We're all clear!

Magic *stares at him.* **Youngy** *crawls underneath the Land Rover.*

Magic Stay like that until I say. I'm off to find out what's going on.

He leaves.

Cat A few hours under there and you'll no forget to wait next time.

Si That was intense.

Cat Nothing happened.

Si He bombed us!

Cat You don't know that yet.

Youngy And you're the fuckin' expert, like?

Cat I cannae hear you, numpty.

Si Leave him.

Cat I won't leave him. As much of a numpty as he is I don't wanna have nightmares about his mutilated body parts all over the place for the rest of my life.

Youngy *crawls out.*

Youngy Why don't you just jump off a wagon and fuck off home!

Cat Get back under there.

Si Fucking hell, guys.

Si *gets in between them.*

Cat Now.

Youngy I don't take orders from a walking talking pair of tits.

Cat You fucking will!

Si Youngy, just do it.

Cat Stay out of it. Listen, you sexist fuck. You do as I say because I outrank you, end of fucking story. You're going on a charge for this.

Youngy Fuck off, twat. Stick to wiping your kid's shitty arse.

Si *pushes Youngy backwards forcefully.*

Cat *follows them.*

Cat Leave my daughter out of this!

Magic *returns. He stares at the scene.*

Si Fucking button it, Youngy. I mean it.

Youngy *sees Magic.*

Youngy Aye, I will. Don't wanna wind up Mummy when her kid's sick.

Pause.

Cat lunges at Youngy. Magic grabs her and pulls her back but not before she's managed to scratch his face.

Youngy tries to go for her but Si blocks him, catching a stray fist in the process.

Cat I'll kill you! I'll kill you!

Magic Calm down, now!

The violent intent ebbs away.

Magic Fuck me.

Magic and Si release the other two.

Magic (*quietly*) I don't know what the *fuck* happened here and I don't have time to find out. Si, Cat. Fault at HQ. Take your tools. Go.

Si What is it?

Magic Urgent is what it is. Grab your tools and get over there.

Cat I'm just / wondering –

Magic Corporal Jennings. The boss is giving me shit because he's catching shit from above and if you want me to shit all over / you –

Cat No we're going.

Magic Grab your tools, and both of you get your arses to that wagon *now*.

Cat We're away.

They grab a tool box and leave quickly.

Youngy Magic...

Magic holds his finger to his lips.

Youngy *looks like he might say something. Magic shakes his head.*

Magic That was a real alert. Scud. Got intercepted.

Youngy / Shit –

Magic Shut up. They don't know what kind of warhead was fitted. But seeing as we're here to recover chemical weapons, do you think it just might have been something that would *fuck us up*? Fuck *you up*?

What was all that about?

Youngy *remains silent.*

Magic Speak to me.

Youngy I dunno. Honestly. I know I fucked up. She just kept going on at us, like.

Magic With good reason.

Youngy I dunno, Magic. It's fuckin' mad, like.

Youngy I feel...

Magic Put your mask away.

He does so.

Magic You tread carefully. You do as you're told. You *don't* say a fucking word to that girl because she is going through a hard time right now. I don't care if she calls your favourite granny a rancid bitch you keep your mouth *shut*. Do you hear what I'm saying to you?

Youngy People treat us like shit and I just lose it, man.

Magic Si winds you up. I wind you up. Why don't you get nasty with us?

Youngy *doesn't respond.*

Magic Leave her alone. Do you hear what I'm saying to you?

Youngy I do, Magic.

Magic You can make something of yourself in this army, Ryan. You just gotta put in the work. Don't get distracted by all that other shit. Do your job. You get what I'm saying to you?

Youngy I try to but I just can't seem to do it, you know?

Magic I know, believe me. I was in all kinds of trouble before I joined up. But in this job, you've got a chance. I know you're smart.

Youngy Aye. Cheers, Magic.

Magic Even if you don't always show it. See if we've got any spare headsets and take them over to HQ.

Youngy *goes to the Land Rover to look for them.*

Helicopters fly overhead. Dozens of them. They both look up to watch their progress.

After a short time Si returns alone. He's in shock. He can barely speak.

Si Magic...

Magic *and Youngy glance at him.*

Magic What? What's wrong?

Si It's all wrong... everything.

Something in his voice causes them to stop and stare at him.

Magic Where's Cat?

*News reports from the first two days of the war; most importantly news of the first British casualties, a helicopter crash in which eight are killed (**S14 Heli crash report**,*

S14 War begins). *Fade out as the sounds of battle gradually become the sounds of an English summer evening.*

The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins

Frank Wainwright	twenty-one, a Socialist
William Hardy	twenty-two, a Quaker
Regina Gray	twenty, a feminist
Arthur Gray	forties, Regina's father and railway union leader
Herbert Ragg	sixties, a county politician
Edith Bracewell	fifties, a Jingo
Oliver Grove	thirties, a journalist
Captain Bannerman	thirties, York-based officer
Edward Mercer	fifties, a politician
Fred Stegman	forties, a butcher
Sergeant Daly	thirty one, Provost Sgt at a military prison
Private Clegg	nineteen, a Provost
Forewoman	forties, working class
Mrs Chapman	thirties, a butcher's wife
Marie	thirties, a factory worker
June	fifties, a factory worker
Widow	thirties, a factory worker
Manager	
Corporal	
Officers	
Soldiers	
Boss	

The play is recommended for an ensemble of thirteen actors, seven male and six female.

In later scenes, the conscientious objectors (COs) are on stage at all times in an appropriate state of incarceration. The factory women, similarly, remain on stage carrying out 'work'.

1

A makeshift classroom furnished with wooden chairs and a lectern. Attendees are dotted around the space, most sitting and some standing. Mercer is delivering the lecture.

Stegman As a German I can say that this is true.

Mercer Well thank you, Fred... as I was saying... I never thought I would see the day when conscription of British citizens would become law, as it has today. Now more than ever, Britain needs to realise that we are better off working with our neighbours than against them. As does Germany. But let's not forget the imperial rivalry that brought us to this point, in which we were the more active member.

Small round of applause from Hardy, Regina, Frank and Stegman. Mrs Chapman looks confused, but claps anyway.

Grove What do you mean by active member, Mercer?

Gray Sticking it up the hun!

Sniggers. Mercer is not amused.

Mercer Arthur, please. And this isn't a joke, Grove.

Grove An earnest journalistic enquiry, Mercer.

Mercer It's not a press conference either. Stop interrupting.

Soldier Are you saying I shouldn't have joined up? It's our duty. Every man knows that.

Frank Why are they having to conscript us to fight, then?

Mercer Both good questions, gentlemen. Which I shall consider soon enough, if that's alright with you.

Frank Aye, well don't take too long or I'll already be in France.

A few laughs from around the room.

Mrs Chapman Are you saying it's our fault, then?

Regina He's not saying it's our fault nor theirs.

Mercer Precisely –

Mrs Chapman That's not what my husband says.

Soldier You're the butcher's wife, aren't you?

Mrs Chapman I am.

Soldier Good sausages, Chapman's.

Grove Quite right, sir. The finest.

Gray (*loudly*) Alright, alright! Let the man finish or we'll be here all night.

Mercer Thank you, Mr Gray.

I am a Quaker, as some of you know, and I see other Friends here tonight. Quakers hold pacifist beliefs but like all beliefs individuals are often asked to reconcile their views to the world at large. It is incredibly difficult to be a Quaker in a time of war, as we are now.

It is my belief that violence of any kind, but especially war, should be opposed. It is a morally indefensible act for any Christian, in my view.

But the world has a way of testing personal convictions – it is a big place and a lot of people in it, and not all think alike; far from it. I opposed the war whole-heartedly when it could still be avoided, absolutely. The dilemma as I see it now, is how do I, as a Quaker, react to a war that is already in progress?

Hardy You oppose it. What else?

Bracewell You must support your country of course!

Frank By dying?

Bracewell If that is the will of God.

Frank Will of who?

Mercer I am almost finished, ladies and gentleman. I know many of you are here for the first time – although some should know better. The time for debate and conversation is after the lecture.

Grove A very Prussian approach, Mr Mercer.

Regina Shush!

Mercer I repeat my view that the loss of life is the greatest sin. It therefore follows that swift cessation of war is the most desirable, most moral outcome.

In pursuing this many Quakers have joined the Friends ambulance service, to help those in need of medical care. Others see this as assisting the war effort. But is it not expedient, under the circumstances? The sooner we can defeat the Germans, the sooner the war will end.

Hardy Why must we defeat anybody to end the war?

Mercer I do not believe simply retreating is a possibility to be entertained.

Soldier How you gonna stop ‘em coming over here and doing what they did to France?

Frank We’ve got a navy, haven’t we?

Gray So have they.

Frank Well they’re not going to bloody walk across the Channel, are they?

Grove And what about the poor Belgians? Whom we swore to protect?

Mrs Chapman Well why do we have to look after them?

Grove Because we are a great and proud nation, madam. How could Great Britain stand by while Prussian tyranny rules over Europe?

Regina Your Prussians wouldn't have been able to tyrannise Europe if they weren't trying to build an Empire like ours.

Grove Miss Gray, please. These things are beyond your capacity to comprehend.

Regina And why's that?

Gray Gina.

Regina Don't call me Gina.

Gray Calm down.

Grove Listen to your father, Gina.

Mrs Chapman You shouldn't think so low of women, Mr Grove. My husband keeps me well abreast of the latest developments.

Grove Underestimate you, Mrs Chapman? Never.

Frank You're a wormy sod, Grove.

Soldier You've a gob on you, haven't you lad? I've a good mind to stop it for you.

Frank Why don't you go stop some bullets instead. War's that way.

The Soldier stands. Violence is a likely possibility.

Bracewell Rubbish!

The room turns to look at Edith Bracewell. She regards them all coolly, until she is satisfied that she is the centre of attention.

Bracewell What utter rubbish.

Mercer What are you referring to, madam?

Bracewell You should be jailed for propaganda, sir! And you, my girl. Listen to your father and keep quiet about complex subjects you can't possibly understand.

Frank *laughs.*

Bracewell And you, young man. You clearly left school too early to know much about anything.

Mercer While this is a time for debate I must stress that this be conducted in a *civilised* manner.

Bracewell Civilised! We are dealing, sir, with the extremely *uncivilised* warfare of Zeppelins!

Regina What have Zeppelins got to do with it?

Bracewell What *haven't* they got do with it, young lady?

Mercer Why don't we take a question and start the debate from there.

Gray I thought this was the debate.

Mercer This is people bickering, Arthur. (*strained*) Let me propose a topic, perhaps...

I propose that our future prosperity lies not in an Empire of warfare and competition, but an Empire of cooperation.

Bracewell With whom?

Mercer With everyone! Can you not shut up for one second?

Pause.

Bracewell (*standing*) How dare you speak to me like that? I'm not some shop girl!

Mercer I'm sorry but you mustn't keep interrupting...

Bracewell And here I am thinking that this is a public debate!

Frank So sit down and wait for the topic.

Bracewell Excuse me?

Mrs Chapman You say cooperation, Mr Mercer. But my husband's a butcher and he's been near run out of business by foreigners coming in and setting up shop.

Grove It's true. I know a dozen local businessmen who've had the same problem.

Stegman You are speaking of me, Mrs Chapman?

Mrs Chapman Well I don't like to name names...

Frank It's a bit late for that.

Mrs Chapman I just can't see how we can all cooperate when all it means is immigrants coming in and taking the jobs.

Stegman I have a business in York for fifteen years. Nobody closes!

Soldier He does make good sausage but I wouldn't eat 'em now.

Regina Why not?

Soldier German.

Mercer I'm talking about countries working together. It's not so much about migration.

Bracewell And what about this poor woman's troubles? Why do we have so many foreigners here if not because of cooperation?

Frank You don't know what you're talking about.

Bracewell And why aren't you at the Front, young man?

Frank I'm a Socialist. Why aren't you at the Front?

Soldier Agitator. Why don't you bugger off to Russia?

Bracewell I doubt he'd have the courage.

Regina And what are you doing for the war effort?

Bracewell I'm a fifty year old woman. What would you have me do, join the cavalry?

Regina They might take you. Most of them are dead.

Bracewell Further proof that our civilisation is crumbling.

Regina That makes no sense.

Gray Gina, calm down.

Regina I won't calm down, dad. You have to stand up to people like her. And stop calling me Gina!

Mercer I've asked us to be civil, ladies and gentleman. This is becoming too personal...

Hardy (*loudly*) How can you take the high road, Mr Mercer, when you've turned full circle on your own faith?

The general hubbub dies down.

Silence.

Grove Well don't stop! This is cracking stuff.

Mercer I deeply resent that accusation, William.

Hardy I'm sorry, Mr Mercer, but it's true. You're no different to all the others who jumped on the bandwagon once war broke out.

Mercer You have no sense of what it means for me to tackle these questions...

Soldier He's a patriot, leave him alone. We're all Christians, aren't we?

Frank And so are the Germans. And the Italian's.

Bracewell And what about the Turks?

Regina What have the Turks got to do with it?

Mrs Chapman The Italians are taking over all the sweet shops, selling that jellytoe stuff.

Stegman It is pronounced *gelato*.

Soldier And how would you know? Been there recently, have you?

Mrs Chapman He could be a spy.

Stegman I am no spy! My sons are fighting for England at this very minute.

Soldier Which regiment?

Stegman I am no spy! Your husband has trouble because his sausages taste *cheap!*

Mrs Chapman Don't talk to me like that!

Soldier Watch it, Fritz!

Gray Leave him alone. He's lived here plenty long enough. I don't know you from Adam.

Soldier Take his side, will you?

Gray I don't take sides. I'll knock your bloody block off though.

Frank Don't trouble yourself, Arthur. Machine guns will take care of that.

Grove You can't say that to a man in uniform!

Hardy Why can't he?

Bracewell A more savage and rude gathering of people I have never met! I shall be writing to the newspaper about this nonsense. It reeks of peace-at-any-price to me!

Grove And I'd be happy to take your account, madam.

Bracewell Well, well. There is a polite member among you.

Frank Your opinions are nowt. Go find someone who'll listen to you.

Bracewell This young man clearly has a lot of energy. I wonder why he isn't using it to defend his home and peoples.

Regina He's a pacifist.

Bracewell A coward!

Soldier Let's see, shall we.

*The **Soldier** stands and advances on **Frank**. **Gray** gets in his way. People are arguing all over the place. As **Gray** and the **Soldier** scuffle, **Regina** tries to intervene and catches an elbow. Other rush into the fracas with **Gray** and the **Soldier** at its centre.*

***Frank** instantly puts his arms around **Regina** and pulls her away. Their familiarity with each other is noticed by **Mrs Chapman**, who was heading to help.*

Frank Regina! Are you hurt?

Regina My bloody head!

Mrs Chapman Are you alright, dear?

Frank Come on.

Regina My dad...

Frank He'll be alright. Come on, you need to get out of here.

Mrs Chapman What are you doing with her?

Regina No, Frank. My dad...

Frank *pulls Regina away from the ruckus and into the May dusk...*

2

As soon as they are on the street Regina takes her hand away from his. Frank walks next to her, trying to retake it; playfully at first, then more insistently. There are no street lights due to the threat of zeppelin raids.

Regina Get off, Frank.

Frank What's the matter?

Regina I said get off.

He grabs her more forcefully and tries to get her to look at him.

Frank What's up?

Regina You're doing it again!

He lets her go.

Frank What?

Regina I'm not some doll to be manhandled, Frank. You shouldn't have dragged me away like that.

Frank I didn't drag you...

Regina You're no better than my dad, telling me what to do, pushing me around.

Frank Regina... I'm sorry. I was worried about you.

Regina I'm a grown woman. I'm made of flesh and blood like you, not bloody porcelain.

Frank You're right. I'm sorry.

Regina Stop apologising.

Frank I'll just disappear, shall I?

He stops. She turns around.

Regina I'm just sick of it, Frank. How can people be so pig-headed? Haven't they learned anything? Eighteen months of slaughter and they're still whistling the same tune. And my dad should know better.

Frank He's a scrapper. Like you.

Regina I am not.

Frank You've certainly put me in my place.

She continues walking and he follows, trying to take her hand again.

Regina Give over.

Frank What?

Regina Playing silly beggars.

Frank Only want to hold your hand.

Regina Not in the street.

Frank Done a lot more than hold hands.

Regina Behind closed doors.

Frank Not always.

Regina *laughs.*

Regina Once!

Frank Still.

He smiles.

Regina I think I'll really have to take you down a peg or two.

Frank Will you now.

Regina You don't think I can?

Frank I'd like to see you try. You can try all night if you want.

She laughs and takes his hand.

Regina Seeing as no one's about.

They meander along. Regina slows and stops.

Frank What?

Regina I'm worried, Frank.

Frank It's only holding hands.

Regina You know what I mean.

Pause.

Frank I wouldn't worry. My job's protected, you know that. They need us on the railways, how else are they going to move everything.

Regina But what if it's not? What if it just keeps going on and on till there's no one left?

Frank *draws her towards him.*

Frank What if the lions and the tigers declare for Kaiser Bill? What if the crocodiles attack from the Thames?

Regina Daft sod.

She kisses him as Hardy approaches. He's stuck: not wanting to interrupt but not wanting to turn around. He eventually decides to walk slowly backwards.

Frank *notices him and breaks away from the kiss.*

Frank Bloody hell. How long you been standing there?

Hardy Sorry. I didn't want to...

Regina Hello, William.

Hardy Hello.

Frank What you up to?

Regina Leave him alone, Frank.

Hardy I saw you walking. Was going to come and say hello, then you... I didn't want to interrupt.

Frank Aye, well. Good.

Pause.

Hardy I admired what you said tonight. Francis, isn't it?

He offers his hand. Frank grudgingly shakes it very briefly

Frank Frank.

Regina We can't believe conscription's in.

Hardy It's a sad day indeed, especially for me. I'm Quaker, you see.

Frank You'll be alright then.

Hardy I'm not so sure. The way the war's going they'll be taking everyone they can get.

Regina That's what I said.

Frank Rubbish.

Hardy No, I think so. It's stalemate. But men keep dying. The logical conclusion isn't encouraging.

Regina I don't like it. Who knows where it'll end up?

Hardy What will you do, Frank?

Frank I think I'll go to bed.

He puts his arm round Regina. She moves away.

Regina It was nice talking to you, William.

Hardy And you. Nice to meet you, Frank.

Frank Yeah.

Hardy I'm going to a Friends meeting tomorrow... you should come, Frank.

Frank I'm not religious.

Hardy That doesn't matter. It's about conscription. It could be very useful to you. If you're going to refuse the draft.

Frank Who says I'm going to refuse the draft?

Hardy *smiles at Regina.*

Hardy I've known Regina since we were children. I know she wouldn't... be so fond of a man who... besides, you made your views quite clear tonight. I'm right, aren't I?

Regina Brilliant deduction, Holmes.

Frank Well anyway. We'll say goodnight.

Hardy Goodnight.

Regina Night.

Hardy Think about it, Frank. Friends meeting house, half past seven.

Hardy *walks on past them. They watch him go.*

Frank Hold up. Give the lad a head start or he'll be ambushing us in conversation again.

Regina For the last bloody time, don't grab me in public.

Frank Eh?

Regina I don't like it.

Frank I didn't take you for no prude, Regina.

Regina We shouldn't be so open.

Frank Why? Stuff the lot of them. Do you really care so much about what people think?

Regina You can't just laugh off everybody else on earth you know.

Frank I can.

Regina And it's gonna get you into trouble.

They stare at each other. She offers her hand.

*As night begins they move into a close embrace, remaining still while the rest of the world continues: **Gray** directs men loading large wooden stakes onto a freight car, a **Soldier** hurls a brick which makes **Stegman** sit up in alarm, women gossip.*

3

It is dawn. Frank leaves Regina's embrace and steps into the back alley behind her house.

Regina You better shove off, mister.

Frank Just one more.

Regina No. Someone might see.

Frank Who else is daft enough to be up at this hour?

Regina All the other romeos. Neighbourhood's full of 'em.

Frank You're a tease.

Regina Bugger off!

She smiles at him. He darts in for another kiss. She doesn't exactly resist.

Regina Now go on, he'll be back any minute.

Frank I'm going. See you tonight?

Regina After the Friends meeting?

Frank Forget that. Bunch of loonies.

Regina I think I'm busy tonight, actually.

She stares at him. He realises.

Frank Come off it.

Regina I'll see you next week maybe.

Frank Alright, I'll bloody go. See you after. Your dad's definitely on nights?

Gray What's it to you?

Gray *returns home.*

Regina Dad. You're early. You haven't been laid off again, have you?

Gray Quiet for a change. What the bloody hell are you doing here?

Frank Just out for a stroll before work.

Gray A stroll.

Frank Only chance you get, eh?

Regina And I'm up getting your breakfast ready. Come on, you must be starving.

Gray What's so intriguing about the back alleys? What's wrong with the Knavesmire?

Frank I've been that way. Just on me way back.

Regina Come on, then. I've got work as well, you know.

Frank Right. Cheerio.

Frank *slinks away.*

Gray I'm not a fool, Regina.

Regina I never said you were.

Gray You're making a fool out of me by lying to my face. In front of that little upstart!

Pause.

Regina You're getting all worked up over nothing.

Gray How can you go carrying on like that? He stayed the night, didn't he?

Regina No.

Gray He did. I bloody know it. And I'm not the only one.

Regina Who told you that?

Gray I just came home and caught him leaving my house! At half five in the bloody morning! Stroll! I'll bleeding strangle the swine...

Regina Dad...

Gray Regina, I'm his boss. Should I have to listen to rumours and gossip about you and him?!

Regina Like what? Who?

Gray Doesn't matter who. Rumour's enough round here. I won't have it. If I have to I'll get rid of him myself –

Regina Dad! I love him.

Pause.

Regina Well say something!

Gray If you love him, marry him for God's sake.

Regina I don't believe in marriage.

Gray Tough. I'm not having my daughter called a trollop by all and sundry. If you two are in love, get married. But you're not to see him again until you do.

Regina Why would I get married! With what's going on?

Gray Plenty do.

Regina I'm not 'plenty', I'm me. He could be taken off to be killed any day now. It's not you who has to fight this war, it's him. Us. It's all the young people whose lives are being ruined.

Gray He's filled your head with ideas.

Regina Yes! And so have you! All my ideas came from you and I'll never forget that. You used to be like him. What's happened to you, Dad?

Gray I've grown up, love. The world isn't as simple as you think.

Regina It is. It can be, if people would just bloody act like it.

Gray Well they don't! And watch your language.

Regina Why? Because I'm a woman?

Gray You've got to reconcile yourself to that sooner or later. Look, I don't want to argue. I want a boiled egg and some toast.

Regina You'll be lucky.

Gray Come on. We can talk about this later.

Regina Dad. There's nothing to talk about. I won't stop seeing him and we're not getting married.

Pause.

Gray He'll be working the same shifts as me from now on. Mark my words.

Regina Fine.

Gray Or worse.

Regina What's that supposed to mean?

Gray Regina. Please.

She turns to go inside.

Gray Regina! Wait.

Regina Get away from me. There's plenty of work for women at the moment, I'll go get some today. I can find lodgings elsewhere. And you can make your own bloody eggs!

She goes inside and slams the door. Gray realises he needs to act, but is unsure what to do.

Black out.

4

The Society of Friends meeting house. Frank sits with Hardy and a few other men. Mercer is discussing strategies for beating the draft.

Mercer From what I've heard so far, you can expect a rough time. Men from all the main political parties and organisations sit on the tribunal boards. Men like who you can expect a sympathetic hearing from, but also Tories and worse. Men who make the Tories seem reasonable.

A few laughs.

But you won't know who is on your board until you appear before it. You can't control that. But if members of your board start baiting you, saying the most despicable, ugly things to you, you mustn't bite. You mustn't waiver. Stick to your guns.

A few more laughs.

Quaker I've heard they'll give you partial exemption if you're a Friend straight off. Should we take it?

Mercer *looks at Hardy.*

Mercer Some of you may not approve of my advice. It is your choice. But I believe some good can be done by accepting partial exemption. The ambulance service, particularly. William here I know disagrees with me.

Hardy Absolutely. I won't accept partial. I don't believe fixing up soldiers so they can go back to the Front is acceptable.

Pause.

Frank What if you're not a Friend?

Mercer I noticed you'd joined us, Frank. I thought you'd found your faith all of a sudden.

A few laughs.

Frank Faith's a funny thing, by the looks of it.

Mercer It can be. Why do you object?

Frank I'm a Socialist. I won't fight other workers so capitalists can turn a profit.

Hardy I thought you were in a protected occupation?

Frank Like you said the other night. Who knows how long that's going to last.

Mercer I can't say for certain but so far workers and the like have been given pretty short shrift. Anyone political who's appeared so far has been refused.

Frank Why? Because they're not in your little club?

Mercer I'd certainly look favourably on you, Frank. But I'm afraid your views are anathema to many members. Landowners, businessmen, even some of the Labour party.

Quaker So his goose is cooked.

Pause.

Hardy Unless you do suddenly find your faith.

Frank *turns to look at Hardy.*

Fade out into silver light as the men disperse...

5

Regina watches **Gray** leave for work, **Frank** stares at her – she is his faith. A physical sequence shows **Regina** caught between her father and her lover. She chooses her lover. **Gray** notices this. We see the intensity of their physical relationship: they draw closer, clothes are removed, until we reach...

Frank and **Regina** lie in bed together illuminated by the silver light of a full moon.

Regina What are you thinking about?

Frank Nothing.

Regina Could've fooled me. You look like you're contemplating the mysteries of the universe. Or how to free a seized driving wheel.

Frank *smiles.*

Frank That's more like it.

Regina That's not it, though.

Frank Where do you keep it?

Regina What?

Frank Your crystal ball.

She looks incredulous, then slides her hand under the covers towards his crotch.

Frank No.... that's not it.

Regina No?

Frank Definitely not.

Regina You must be thinking about something.

Frank Well it's not what I was thinking about before, put it that way.

Regina So you were thinking about something?

Frank Maybe.

She removes her hand.

Regina I shouldn't distract you then.

Frank You can if you want to.

Regina I'd rather know what's troubling you. You always tell me what you're thinking about. Solidarity and the communist manifesto and a fair wage for all. Whether I want to hear about it or not.

Pause.

Frank I'm thinking about what Hardy said tonight. About what I'd do if I got called up.

Regina What would you do?

Pause.

Frank I don't know. I can't fight, I know that. I can't.

Regina You've got to stand up for what you believe in, Frank. Even if it means prison.

Frank I know. But part of me thinks it's pointless. What am I going to change by getting locked up? There's a dozen men round here who might do the same, that's it. A lot of those Quakers are going to take partial. They're supposed to be the true believers.

Regina But you will change things. It's all anybody can do, stand up for what they believe in. Say no.

Frank What if we just go?

Regina What do you mean? Go where?

Frank Somewhere else. America. Canada.

Regina You want us to run away?

Frank It's not running away. It's for us. What?

Regina I don't know. It seems almost... cowardly.

Beat.

Frank What do you mean cowardly?

Regina Frank...

Frank I'm cowardly? I'm a coward for wanting to live my life, spend my life with you?

Regina No... love, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I didn't.

Frank What else could you mean? I'm the one who'd have to go and fight, what else could you mean? You think I'm a coward.

Regina I'd fight if I could! Not fight, but take a stand. I can't take a stand and you can.

Frank A stand to prove what? It's useless...

Regina No, Frank, it's not. It's not useless, it's the bravest thing I can imagine.

Frank It's not about bravery. I am brave. But I'm not stupid either.

Regina I know you're brave. I know you're not stupid. That's why you need to take a stand because if you don't, who will?

Pause.

Frank Dear Regina.

Regina Dear Regina what?

Frank You say dear Frank. Dear Regina.

Regina Dear Frank.

Frank The corporal bashed me on the noggin this morning.

Regina It probably served you right.

Frank I gave him no cause to but he said it was his duty.

Regina Well at least he's not malicious.

Frank I hope you are enjoying cooking for your father thrice daily.

She slaps his chest.

Regina Give over.

Frank That's what it'd be like, you know. I'd tell you every grim detail.

Regina Better that than platitudes.

Frank My job's protected anyway.

Regina But what if it wasn't?

Regina *moves closer to him. Her hands caress him, hold him. They remain still while the rest of the world continues: **Gray** hands papers to his **Boss**, as men say goodbye to women.*

Fade out.

6

Regina visits **Frank** at work. *He is waiting for an engine to come in that needs work. They stand apart and face the tracks, she out of modesty and he out of annoyance.*

Regina Frank.

Frank What are you doing here?

Regina I wanted to talk to you.

Frank About what? You need to go, there's a train coming in.

Regina He told me.

Frank You're not supposed to be here, Gina.

Regina Don't call me that, Frank. And don't treat me like a child.

Frank A wonder he had the balls to tell you. He never told me.

Regina When will you go before the board?

Frank Couple of weeks maybe. Look, you need to go.

Regina What are you going to do?

He turns to her.

Frank What are you playing at?

Regina I just want to talk to you.

Frank You just want to check up on me. On what I'm going to do.

Regina I'm not checking up on you but I want to know.

Frank I'm going to do the right thing.

Regina You're going to refuse?

Frank We've talked about this. Why are you here?

Regina I just...

Frank I'm going to do the right thing. What more is there to say?

Regina I know you'll do the right thing. If it is the right thing...

Frank So I'll see you later. Come on, my boss'll have me if he sees you here.

Regina Are you scared?

Frank Of course I'm bloody scared!

Regina It's alright, Frank. You have a choice.

He moves closer to her.

Frank What choice?

Regina You can refuse but you can take ambulance service. You could do something else.

Frank What are you saying? We've talked about this. We agreed. Bloody hell, you were more certain than me!

Regina A lot of men are joining the ambulances. It's not fighting, just helping people.

Frank Trains coming, I can hear it. Go home.

Regina Please, just think about it.

Pause.

Regina You could say you're a Quaker.

Frank What?

Regina I spoke to William.

Frank What you doing sneaking round with him for?

Regina He lives on the next bloody street. We bumped into each other.

Frank What am I, Regina? Eh? Some half-baked idealist? I'm not going to patch up lads that've been blown up just to send them to get blown up again. I'm not going to plead piety and spout a load of nonsense I don't believe in.

Regina Oh for God's sake! It's not ideal, nothing is!

Frank Take a stand, you said.

Regina I know I did. So did you.

Frank Well?

Regina You can take a stand on the ambulances.

Frank That'll achieve nothing...

Regina And getting thrown in prison will?

Frank Yes!

Regina How is saying you're a Quaker any worse than getting locked up?

Frank Will you please go home.

Regina But what about us?

Beat.

Frank Us? Why don't you ask your dad about us? He's the one who took my protection away, your dear old dad –

Regina I've left home.

Beat.

Frank What?

Regina I've got a job starting next week.

Frank A job? What job?

Regina The munitions factory.

Frank *laughs.*

Frank I can't believe this.

Regina I had no choice it's all I could find.

Frank Have I not got enough on my plate? At least two minutes ago I knew you'd be safe at home. I want you safe. I don't want to be sat in some cell worrying about you!

Regina I can't stand him! Not after what he did. And how do you think I feel? Safe at home when you're god knows where.

Pause.

Frank Alright. It's alright. Come here. Quick. Come here.

They embrace. The train is approaching.

Regina Frank. What if they shoot you?

The thought hangs heavy between them. They look at each other, saying nothing.

He releases her. The train is pulling in.

Regina Get out of it, Frank. Please. Mercer will turn a blind eye.

Frank If I do will you stay at home?

Regina What? No...

Frank I don't want you working in a bomb shop. Stay at home and I'll do it.

The train screeches to a halt.

Black out.

7

The three members of the tribunal are seated behind a large table piled with stacks of papers. Applicants are called in and seated in a single chair in the middle of the room.

Hardy enters.

Mercer Hardy.

Hardy Mr Mercer. Mr Gray... what a surprise.

Ragg Quaker?

Hardy Yes, sir.

Ragg Not to give short shrift to the process, my fellow esteemed members – but perhaps Mercer can give us his assessment of this young man? If he knows him well. It's almost five o'clock.

Gray I suppose. He's known to me as well.

Mercer Do you have anything particular to say, William?

Hardy Only that as a Quaker I cannot take part in any action that causes loss of life, whether directly or indirectly. War is contrary to / the teachings –

Ragg I'm familiar with the arguments, Hardy. You needn't go on. He is sincere in his views, Mercer?

Mercer Yes.

The panel confer.

Ragg Then you are given conditional exemption, Hardy, the condition being that you report for non-combatant service if and when you are called to.

Hardy I thank you for your consideration but I absolutely cannot accept service of any kind that enables war to take place.

Ragg Excuse me?

Mercer It could mean the Friends Ambulance Unit, William. You could do a lot of / good –

Hardy No good can come of war, Mr Mercer. I should have hoped you, at least, would have learned this by now.

Ragg Hold your tongue, boy. Speak when you are spoken to and show / some respect –

Hardy I was spoken to and so I spoke. With as much restraint as could be expected given my strongly held beliefs. Sir.

Gray Think it over, Mr Hardy.

Ragg You'll receive a draft notice for non-combatant service in the near future. You'd be well advised to answer it but I expect we'll be seeing you again soon. Next.

Grove *enters.*

Grove Oliver Grove, sirs. Maam. I think that it is wonderful work that you are doing in service of your country and it is with great / regret –

Ragg Shut up, Grove.

Gray I've heard the name somewhere.

Mercer He writes for the Herald.

Ragg (*reading the case file*) You're applying for exemption on grounds of occupation.

Grove Yes, sir.

Ragg Well?

Grove The work of a journalist may not strike you as of national importance, gentlemen. I would be the first to admit that. If I was a tommy on the front line, or his

wife back home with his new born son, I'd think the same thing. But the Herald is doing important work – with all the conchies and slackers refusing to fight for their country, the German spy plots and zeppelin guiders around, we need men who will fight on home soil. Not with rifle and strong arm but with sharp mind and sharper pen.

Gray I don't see your point.

Grove I am making it, sir, I assure you.

Mercer Well make it quickly.

Grove Yes, sir. My point is that I am more use here, keeping our public informed and keeping our spirits up, than I would be in the trenches. You need only look at me to see I'm no strong man. I tried to join up in the first week of the war and I was refused by the staff sergeant. Too small, he said. I was disappointed at the time but then I realised that I had a job to do every bit as important as a soldier's.

Ragg It is fortunate for you that you weren't allowed to enlist. You would have been shot for giving away the position with your wittering.

Grove Ha. Very good, sir. I merely mean to make my case as simply as I can. It is complicated, as you can see.

Gray I think we see your argument, Mr Grove.

Grove Oh. Yes. In short, I wish only to fight for my country to the best of my abilities, gentlemen.

The members confer. Mercer is not impressed. It is a protracted discussion.

Mercer How many staff at the Herald?

Grove Only two in my position, sir.

Mercer How many in total?

Grove Well... about a dozen, sir. It is a daily and that's not many, we've lost quite a few men already.

The members discuss again. Mercer shakes his head.

Ragg I'm sorry, Grove. Your application is refused. You should respond to your draft papers when they arrive.

Beat.

Grove But Mr Ragg. Gentlemen... I beg you to reconsider. I'm not some shirker I'm doing important work.

Gray There's more important work to be done elsewhere.

Grove This is a mistake.

Mercer Next!

Ragg *cringes at the sound as Grove scurries out.*

Frank *enters. He almost stops when he sees Gray.*

Mercer Wainwright.

Ragg Wainwright. Not another bloody one of yours, Mercer. Let's see.

Pause. He reads and then closes the report.

Ragg Quaker.

Beat. Frank looks at Gray intently.

Frank Yes, sir.

Ragg You've been here before. Not in person but as a railway employee. Why are you here now?

Frank I'm no longer in a protected job.

Ragg And so now you appear declaring yourself to be a Quaker and a pacifist. How convenient. Well it's your lucky day, young man, because you seem to have friends on the –

Gray One minute, please, Mr Ragg.

Beat.

Gray Are you sure you're a Quaker, Wainwright?

Mercer Mr Gray.

Pause.

Ragg What do you mean, Gray? You mean to say he's not? Mercer? Is this man known to you?

Mercer He's known to me, yes.

Ragg And?

Gray He's no Quaker.

Beat.

Mercer Perhaps you're not familiar with this man, Mr Gray...

Frank I'm a Socialist. I've been a Socialist since I began working five years ago.

Ragg Then you've lied on your application. This is outrageous. Why should we believe a word you say?

Frank I don't believe working men should kill other working men, that's the truth. My convictions are sincere as any religious belief.

Ragg Not even Germans? Men who would think nothing of killing you, me and every last man, woman and child in Britain?

Frank The Germans are conscripts, sir. I don't believe that they're any different to us. They had no choice.

Ragg Would you consider yourself a gullible man, Wainwright? There are well documented accounts of German atrocities in France and Belgium. Were they committed by working men like yourself?

Frank If they were committed, they were committed by soldiers.

Ragg Working men, then.

Frank A soldier is a soldier, sir. Whatever he was before. I won't be a soldier.

Ragg Then you're a shirker, Wainwright. And a liar.

Frank I'm a member of the Independent Labour Party, which Mr Gray knows whether he'll say so or not.

Ragg That may well be, Wainwright, but I have not been convinced by any socialist that we've had before the tribunal, least of all you, that to be a socialist is to be a pacifist.

*The panel confer. **Mercer** argues passionately, **Gray** is implacable.*

Ragg Despite some objection the panel has decided to refuse your application for exemption. Unconditionally.

Beat.

Frank How is it that this country sees fit to conscript life before it conscripts wealth? Those who possess wealth risk nothing by war and those who possess nothing risk the only thing they have, their bloody life! You're murderers, the lot of you.

*The scene breaks down: **Hardy** and **Frank** are ushered away, people are shouting at them in the street, **Stegman** is abused by women, a limping **Soldier** with an overcoat over his uniform is white-feathered.*

Black out.

8

The munitions factory canteen. The women sit together, resting.

Forewoman Not the biggest I've ever had but certainly the ugliest.

Loud laughter, smiles and blushes in equal measure.

Marie Give over, Cath. You'll have 'em beating down the convent door.

Regina It doesn't bother me.

Marie Doesn't it, now? Watch out for this one.

Regina You can watch all you like, you won't catch me.

Forewoman A way with words, this one. Where were you schooled?

Regina Grammar school.

Marie Then what the bloody hell are you doing here?!

Forewoman She's doing her duty like a good lass. Not like these posh girls sat at home with their thumb up their arse.

Regina I'm not posh.

Forewoman I never said you were.

Regina It sounded like it.

Forewoman Bloody hell, may break time end and save me from this grilling. Is that what they teach in grammar school, obstreperousness?

June Oooo!

Forewoman A good one that, eh?

Laughter.

Forewoman You got a fella then, Gina?

Regina I prefer Regina, Cath. If you don't mind.

Forewoman I can't be saying three syllables every time I want to speak to you. What happens when I have to bark an order at you? Easier if it's just one, see.

Marie Just call her Gray.

June Do you have a fella, then?

Regina Sort of. He's away.

June What regiment?

She doesn't say anything.

Forewoman Leave it alone, you're upsetting her.

June Sorry, love. Who's your mother, then? Is she working?

Pause.

Regina No. My mother's dead.

Pause.

June Oh. I'm sorry, love.

Marie You will stick your nose in, won't you June?

June I didn't know!

Regina It's alright.

Pause.

June (*suddenly*) How did she die?

Forewoman June!

Regina Zeppelin raid.

June Zeppelin raid....

Forewoman Oh, love.

Regina It was a few months back –

Marie You don't have to tell us...

Regina The zeppelin crashed near Stamford Bridge. Flames, wreckage everywhere.

The women are aghast.

It was bound to happen to someone sooner or later. She always said, they're a bugger to fly. I don't know why I do it.

June Oh that's awful. Stop, Gina, I don't want to hear no more.

*She hugs **Regina** fiercely. The **Forewoman** and **Marie** smile.*

June I'll look after you. Those German bastards.

Forewoman Get off her! She's having you on.

June Eh?

Regina My mother died when I was still a baby.

Forewoman Stop making a spectacle of yourself.

June Well what kind of a joke is that?

Marie Serves you right for sticking your beak in.

June I was not.

The siren goes. Break time is over.

Regina I'm sorry, June. I thought you'd laugh.

June I will, love. In a minute. I'm just a bit in shock.

Forewoman Well you better snap out of it. Don't want you blowing us all to kingdom come.

The Manager enters with Mrs Chapman.

Forewoman They're just going now, sir.

Manager Mrs. Briggs. This is Mrs Chapman, a new starter. See that she's apprenticed to an experienced woman.

Forewoman Yes, sir.

The Manager looks at his watch deliberately before leaving.

Mrs Chapman Hello.

Regina is disturbed by her arrival.

Forewoman Gina, you're sharp. Take Mrs Chapman with you until dinnertime.

Regina Alright.

June I can take her, Cath. You live next door to me brother, don't you? Ken Farley.

Mrs Chapman Yes, I do know him. I'd prefer that, Mrs Briggs. (*looking at Regina*) Familiar face and that.

All the women leave except Regina and Marie.

Marie Dodged a bullet there, Regina.

Regina looks at her. The women go back to work, as Soldiers arrive at work places and homes. Hardy goes quietly, Frank less so, as they are lead away.

Black out.

9

The exercise yard of the guardroom. A Corporal is attempting to drill Hardy and Frank. They stand as they would normally. In contrast to the loud, on-the-double orders given to them, the two men are still and quiet.

Corporal Squad!

No movement.

Corporal Squad!

Now listen in, you men.

Squad!!

No movement. The COs are beginning to find it funny.

I said listen in! When I give the word of command 'Squad!', you push your arms down like this. Do you understand?

Frank Why do you keep shouting 'squab'?

Corporal That's the word of command, you bloody idiot.

Frank I thought squab was pigeon meat.

Corporal You'll be pigeon meat in a minute!

Hardy Come on, Terry. Just a joke, eh?

Corporal I never should have told you my bloody name. It's *corporal* to you!

Hardy Sorry. Try us again, see if we've got it.

Pause.

Corporal It's a simple movement. Like this, see?

He shows them and they observe closely, nodding their understanding.

Corporal Listen in. Squad!

The two men burst out laughing.

*The **Corporal** grabs **Frank** by his shirt collar.*

Corporal You keep making a monkey out of me and I'll bash your bleedin' 'ead in! That what you want?

Hardy Listen. We've told you. We're refusing to take orders. We refuse to do anything military. This isn't going to work.

*The **Corporal** lets him go.*

Corporal I don't understand you two. Wait here.

*He exits. **Hardy** helps **Frank** to his feet.*

Hardy You ought to give it a rest with the leg-pulling, you know. It's only a matter of time before he brains you.

Frank He's nowt.

Hardy The best thing to do is be polite. They can't understand it.

Frank Polite? When they're taking away our liberty?

Hardy He's just doing as he's told.

Frank Well he should think for himself.

Hardy One step at a time. Have a hard enough time sticking to your own principles, never mind changing anyone else's mind.

Frank You sound like you've done this before.

Hardy The Friends have a way of doing things, that's all.

*The **Corporal** returns with a few soldiers.*

Frank Here we go...

One of the soldiers throws down some uniforms.

Corporal You two have ideas above my station so you're going before the boss. But first you need to get dressed.

Frank We are dressed.

Corporal Don't give me no lip.

Hardy nudges **Frank**.

Frank (*affectedly*) Yes... ever so sorry. We can't wear those uniforms, I'm afraid. It would be quite against our principles.

Corporal Don't be daft. Just put the uniforms on. You'll look smart as a carrot.

Hardy I'm sorry, Terry. We can't.

Corporal Well I'm not getting a dressing down on behalf of you won't get dressed. Lads. Dress 'em.

*The **Soldiers** begin. It is awkward. They're not quite sure how to go about it. They take one man each at first but the COs refuse to move. They struggle for a while, managing to get a few items of clothing off.*

Corporal Work together, you pair o' clods!

*The two **Soldiers** start on **Hardy**. He smiles throughout.*

They end up dragging him to the floor. One holds his arms while the other pulls off his trousers.

Hardy What about my underwear, Terry? Do we get an army pair?

Corporal Your underpants are staying right where they are. Keep at 'im. Here...

*The **Corporal** joins in. Between three of them they manage to get his clothes off. The men are all out of breath.*

Soldier We gotta do both of 'em?

*A noise from inside the guardroom signals the arrival of the officer. The men stop with **Hardy** dressed in uniform but looking ragged.*

Corporal Boss is here. We'll have to finish his mate later. Inside, lads.

The men exit.

Frank You look like a right tramp, Billy.

Hardy *looks himself up and down. They laugh.*

Hardy I look terrible. I think I preferred my own. Hand me those, would you?

Hardy *quickly dresses in his own clothes again.*

Frank Bloody hilarious!

Hardy Almost feel sorry for them.

Frank I wouldn't go that far. You religious types...

*He is nearly done when the **Corporal** returns with **Bannerman**. He sees **Hardy** in his civvies and fairly screams the order:*

Corporal Squad, squad 'tion!

The COs remain still.

Bannerman The corporal gave you an order, gentlemen.

Hardy He's been doing that a lot. We've explained to him that we are conscientious objectors and will not follow any military order whatsoever. But he's kept at us, to be fair.

Frank No faulting his effort and determination, Mr...

Bannerman It's *Captain* Bannerman actually, gentlemen. But please address me as 'sir'.

Frank Well it's nice to meet you, Bannerman.

Bannerman And your names, gentlemen?

Corporal That's Wainwright and this one's Hardy, sir.

Bannerman Wainwright and Hardy.

The COs smile. Bannerman smiles back.

Bannerman Something funny, gentlemen?

Hardy *I'm* William Hardy, Mr Bannerman.

Corporal You are not!

Hardy I assure you, Terry, I am he.

Corporal Then you lied to me!

Frank Perhaps all that marching about has bounced your brain all out of shape, Terry.

Bannerman *watches in amusement.*

Corporal You cheeky swine –

Bannerman It's all right, Corporal. Why don't you attend to your duties.

Corporal *exits.*

Bannerman I've been eager to meet you both. An old school-friend of mine commands a company in Leeds and told me about a pair of conscientious objectors he had. But they sounded nothing like you chaps. They insisted on badgering the guards and trying to escape.

Hardy Not very nice of them.

Bannerman No. They had to be pacified.

Frank You mean beaten.

Bannerman That's another way to put it. You're both clearly intelligent young men. It certainly sounds like you've been giving the guardroom staff quite the run-around.

Hardy Just a bit of fun.

Bannerman It does rather seem like fun, I must admit. Not unlike how the Army operates, in fact. Except that the Army generally gives men the run-around for a specific purpose. I'm not sure I discern yours. On what grounds do you object to military service?

Hardy Armed conflict and killing are contrary to the teachings of Christ, whom I serve. I could not very well serve any other.

Bannerman And you?

Frank I'm a worker. A socialist. I'd sooner die than kill another worker for the sake of capitalists.

Bannerman You are not at all ashamed to be deserting your country in her hour of need, gentlemen? She has provided you with everything you have, after all.

Frank The sweat on my brow provides for me.

Bannerman You men do realise that the army will never allow this?

Hardy We are strong in our convictions, Mr Bannerman.

Bannerman *smiles at them again.*

Bannerman Very intriguing. My wife and boys will be delighted that I've met you.

Frank You also seem like an intelligent young man, Bannerman. Despite the uniform, I mean. So how is it that you can support this war? You've a wife, lads of

your own. The way it's going they'll be fighting on the Western Front in ten years' time. Or maybe I'm wrong. Maybe you don't see the connection.

Bannerman Oh I see the connection, Wainwright. But I was public school, you see. I've had my duty drummed into me from a young age. But I digress. On to formalities I'm afraid, gentlemen. Pick up those uniforms and put them on.

No response.

Bannerman Private Hardy. Pick up that uniform and put it on.

Hardy I cannot.

Bannerman Wainwright.

Frank I won't.

Bannerman Then you'll be locked up for disobeying a direct order and most likely moved to another camp. A pleasure to have met you both.

Bannerman *stares at the two men and then exits.*

The COs grin.

Frank One down.

Hardy Just a few hundred thousand to go.

*Lights down as the **Corporal** returns to usher them out.*

*The women down tools one-by-one and gravitate to the canteen. Wherever **Regina** tries to sit, there are turned backs, taken seats, and departures.*

10

It is break time at the munitions factory. She sits apart from the other women. A harsh laugh.

Forewoman You should be ashamed!

Marie Why should I?

Mrs Chapman My husband would never allow that.

Marie I wouldn't try it with your husband either. Not with the size of his cleaver!

Cackling laughter.

Mrs Chapman Don't be vulgar.

Marie Why vulgar? I was only saying you'd end up in his pies.

Forewoman What was it you were thinking?

Mrs Chapman Nothing.

Marie Nothing?

Mrs Chapman You know full well what you meant.

Forewoman Don't be soft. You've got a good man is all. Not like hers.

Marie (*unconvincingly*) He's not that bad.

Widow Be thankful for him, that's all I can say.

Pause.

Marie I didn't mean nothing, Sarah...

Forewoman You alright, luvvie?

Widow (to **Regina**) Who's that letter from, then?

She doesn't hear.

Widow Gray. I'm talking to you.

Regina What was that?

Mrs Chapman It'll be from her fella. You know.

Regina That's my business.

Widow From that coward, is it? A wonder they let him write when I didn't get nothing from Charlie for months before he died.

Mrs Chapman He's only been gone two minutes.

Forewoman A bloody travesty.

Widow Where is he, then? Holiday camp?

Regina I said it's none of your business.

Widow Well you'll know what it's like when he gets shot, won't you? He thinks he can hide... they won't have that. Charlie told us about deserters. Shot at dawn they are.

Regina He's not a deserter.

Widow Don't tell me what he is or isn't!

Forewoman Alright, ladies. Back to work. Come on.

*They move off, except **Regina**.*

Forewoman You too, Gray.

*The **Forewoman** leaves.*

Marie Don't let them get to you, darling. They're always picking on someone.

*She places her hand on **Regina's** shoulder as she passes.*

Silver light replaces the orange incandescence of the factory. She glances at the letter again.

Frank Dear Regina.

Regina Dear Frank

Frank I hope you're well

Regina Because I'm not.

Frank I'm so hungry I could chew my own foot off.

Regina And this pack of bitches are hounding me.

Both It's relentless.

Frank Of course I'll never tell you this.

Regina Got to put on a brave face, eh?

A train squeals to a halt. Men begin unloading crates of ammunition and wooden stakes.

11

*Adjoining guardroom cells where **Frank** and **Hardy** are kept separately. **Hardy** sleeps on the hard fold-out bed, while **Frank** sits back to the wall reading over a letter. They can communicate nevertheless, sat back to back with the wall between them.*

Hardy Are you awake, Tom?

Frank Who could sleep on these beds.

Hardy *paces and stretches.*

Hardy I could sleep anywhere. That might be the problem though.

He stretches and winces as his muscles twinge.

We get let out today at least.

Frank What do you think they'll do with us next?

Hardy More of the same. What else can they do?

Hardy *sits, back to the wall.*

Frank I don't know. They'll have to do something. Sooner or later.

Hardy Sending us here could mean they have a plan. Or that they don't. They seem to be gathering all us conchies together, in any event.

Frank I don't like it.

Hardy Have a little faith.

Frank Some of those fellas were in a bad way.

Hardy Terry thinks military prison.

Frank He's changed his tune since we arrived.

Hardy That's the system. He puts it on us so nobody puts it on him.

Frank Bloody coward.

Pause.

Hardy What are you going to do?

Frank What do you mean?

Hardy When they tell you to do something?

Frank Bloody refuse.

Hardy I never doubted it.

Pause.

Frank Don't worry, Billy lad. I've plenty of fight left yet.

*Banging of pots and pans outside. The **Corporal** enters to rouse the detainees.*

Corporal Shake a leg, you bloody slackers! Up! Ablutions and dressed in five minutes ready for inspection! Breakfast at oh six hundred.

Hardy Morning, Terry!

Corporal Get on with it!

Frank Bacon and eggs please, Terry!

Corporal Five minutes or I'll put the hose on you!

He exits. The COs begin to wash and dress.

Frank I think he's miffed they made him stay down here with us.

Hardy Oh I don't know. It's by the sea. Lot of people come to Felixstowe on holiday.

Frank I don't know why, look at the accommodation.

Hardy *smiles.*

Hardy Food leaves something to be desired, admittedly.

The Corporal returns with his pots and pans.

Corporal Come on, shake a leg! Up, washed and dressed, slackers!

Frank The band is bloody awful too.

They are dressed and ready. They both pace nervously.

The Corporal salutes as Bannerman enters. He unlocks the cells and orders each man to attention.

Corporal Prisoners, atten'tion!

The COs don't react. Bannerman visits Hardy first.

Hardy Ah, Mr Bannerman! Good morning. What a pleasant surprise.

Bannerman You shan't find it so pleasant soon enough I expect. I'll admit I would've welcomed the opportunity to converse with you again but I rather resent being sent far from home to do so.

Hardy I'd noticed a few familiar faces among the staff here.

Bannerman And you're Hardy, yes?

Hardy Yes.

Bannerman Your seven days detention are up, Hardy.

Hardy Thank you.

Bannerman Stand to attention when you address an officer, Hardy.

Hardy I honestly wouldn't know how.

Bannerman Then we'll teach you.

Hardy Oh, don't trouble yourselves. I wouldn't do it in any case.

Bannerman You are aware that you are disobeying a direct order, of course?

Hardy I am.

Bannerman You hold to your views, then?

Hardy I do.

Bannerman Corporal, bring this man to HQ after first mess.

Corporal Yes sir.

Bannerman *visits Frank's cell. Hardy sits down slowly.*

Corporal Prisoner, atten'tion!

Frank *stretches his arms above his head and yawns.*

Bannerman Ah. Another of our York contingent. Bain of my life. Your name?

Frank *says nothing.*

Bannerman I asked for your name.

Frank *says nothing.*

Bannerman My son says I should have you shot and return home with presents immediately. At this moment I'm inclined to agree with him.

Corporal It's Wainwright, sir. You won't get much out of him.

Bannerman I shan't waste my time trying, then. Wainwright, your seven days detention are over, congratulations. Now stand to attention.

Frank *does nothing.*

Bannerman Pick up that blanket.

Frank *does nothing.*

Frank I am a socialist and will follow no military order.

Bannerman You know what to do, Corporal.

Corporal Yes sir.

Bannerman *exits the cell area briskly.*

Corporal Come out, lads. I'm not *ordering* you or owt.

The COs emerge from their cells.

Hardy Free at last.

Corporal For now, aye.

Frank How are you, Terry?

Corporal I don't like it, you know.

Frank You're good at it though.

Corporal It doesn't mean I like it, alright?

Frank I believe you. Thousands wouldn't.

Corporal I respect what you're doing. I don't agree but I respect it. Think about what you're doing, though. It's gonna be rough from now on. Word's come down. You've had it easy here with me, believe it or not.

Hardy There's no need, Terry. We're prepared for whatever happens.

Corporal You're not, fellas. You can't be.

Frank Come on, then. I'm starving.

Corporal You will be, lad. You bloody will be.

Fade out.

12

*A store room somewhere in the factory. **Regina** and **Marie** are sweeping up yellow Lyddite powder, and their hands, face and clothes are tinged yellow. It has been a long day, and this final task a nasty surprise at the end of it.*

They sweep in silence, their movements tired.

Marie whistles like a canary. After a few times, **Regina** looks up.

Regina What are you whistling for?

Marie Cheer up, birdie.

She whistles again.

Regina Stop it.

She whistles her dissatisfaction.

Regina Let's just get this done. I want to be in bed by midnight.

Marie I thought you might understand me better.

Regina Why?

Marie Because you look like a canary.

Regina So do you.

Marie I know.

She whistles interrogatively. She receives no reply.

Marie Come on, Regina. Least you can do is take that face off for a bit. I didn't have to help you, you know. I volunteered.

Regina I appreciate it, Marie. I do. I'm just not in the mood. I'm tired.

Marie Most get silly when they get tired. Especially when they're all yellow.

Marie *approaches Regina and takes her broom from her.*

Marie You can't let them get you down.

Regina I'm just tired.

Marie You're not you're bloody miserable.

Regina I'm alright.

Marie It's your fella, isn't it?

She doesn't reply.

Marie Sit down. Here. Come on.

Regina It's mucky.

Marie It's yellow. Same as everything else in here. Sit your yellow arse down.

Regina Marie.

Marie What? Am I too crude for you, Miss Gray?

Regina *sits and Marie joins her.*

Regina Bloody yellow.

Marie What's the matter with you?

Regina Everything. This place. My dad.

Marie Frank? That's his name, isn't it?

Regina And Frank. Yes.

Marie You can't help worrying, it's only natural. But you have to put it from your mind and get on with it.

Regina It's not him. It is. But it's this place more than anything. Them. They're on at me all the time. Snide comments and the cold shoulder twelve hours a day. *This*. Nobody else gets extra jobs when they're due to knock off. It's no coincidence, is it? I can't just put all that from my mind, can I?

Marie No. I suppose not.

Pause.

Regina Why do you talk to me?

Marie What do you mean?

Regina They all hate my guts. Why don't you? Why are you helping me?

Marie Stupidity, mostly.

Regina *smiles.*

Marie Stubbornness. Boredom.

Regina *laughs.*

Regina Why really though? Your husband is away fighting. Why don't you hate me?

Marie Why? I'd like to say because I'm a kind and considerate soul but I'd be lying. I don't hate you because I see all this for what it is. The war. King and country and all that nonsense. Your fella has done a brave thing, I can see that. It'll be no picnic like them lot are making out. I also know my husband. He joined up first day and do you know what? My tears were tears of joy when he left. He's no hero. No brave and noble Tommy, that one. I know that much.

Regina You don't love him?

Marie I don't know. Perhaps I do in some strange way. But it's hard to love someone when they come home stinking of drink and batter your head in with their fists.

Beat.

Regina I'm sorry.

Marie Don't be sorry for me, darling. I should have left him years ago but I haven't.

Regina Why not?

Marie I don't know. Used to believe in marriage. My parents wouldn't understand divorce. My dad could be free with his hands at times. My mum said I had to get on with it. So I did.

Regina I don't believe in marriage.

Marie Smart girl. Takes most a lot longer than you to realise that and some never do.

Regina I wish I could do what Frank is doing. Not just to be with him, but to take a stand.

Marie You are taking a stand. By working here. By standing by him.

Regina I'm making shells. It's hardly furthering the cause of peace.

Marie Yes, well you can only do so much.

Regina I don't know if I can even do this...

She begins to cry.

Marie Regina. Don't take this the wrong way. But what if you left him?

Regina *looks up.*

Regina What? How can you say that?

Marie You're young. You should be enjoying your freedom, standing on your own two feet. Not skulking around here.

Regina Why don't you leave your husband if it's such a good idea?

Marie I've told you why. Besides, I'm holding out for him getting killed and then I won't have to.

Regina Marie! How can you say that?

Marie What? I owe him nothing. He's a mean-spirited bastard. It'd be no less than he deserved.

Regina I'd never leave Frank. Never.

Marie Don't be upset with me, darling. I'm only saying think about it. I can handle my husband. But if all of this becomes too much for you... for most folk you're disgraced because of him. It won't go away, that.

Look, let's call it a night.

Regina *stands up, takes up her broom and starts sweeping briskly. She is visibly distressed.* **Marie** *shakes her head and leaves. Silver light.*

Regina Dear Frank. Dear Frank.

Frank Dear Regina.

Regina I hope you are well.

Frank I tried to ingest myself but am too weak.

Regina I can't feel blue, because I'm all yellow.

Frank The stone floor is breaking my back.

Regina I found a friend at work.

Frank And the new sergeant wants to break my fingers off.

Regina She suggested I should... she has some funny ideas.

Frank How's the bomb shop?

Regina It's not so bad here really.

She stops sweeping.

13

A dark, bare stone prison. The cells are smaller than at the camp and there is no 'bed'. Frank sits awake while the others sleep, tossing and turning on the cold hard floor. He reads a letter.

Reveille is called by Daly, the Provost Sergeant, with a loud whistle. Frank hides the letter.

Daly Up! Move!

He paces up and down blowing the whistle.

On your feet and up! Work detail in two minutes!

They all scramble at the whistle, too shocked from sleep to react in any other way. Hardy isn't moving too well.

They are mostly fully clothed in drab smocks, but pull on their boots and quickly wash in buckets of cold water.

In no time Daly is back with the whistle. He carries a bucket full of hard scrubbing brushes. Clegg is with him – he opens the cells and the men step out.

Daly This floor needs scrubbing. Get to work. Breakfast in half an hour, if it's done right.

Keep an eye on 'em, Cleggy.

The COs begin scrubbing on their hands and knees. There is no urgency, because they understand that the job is only done when the Provost says it's done, and that his decision has little to do with the actual state of the floor.

The vitality has gone out of Frank's banter – it is more for the sake of routine and defiance.

Frank How are you, Cleggy?

Clegg Don't talk to me. If he 'ears I'm for it.

Frank Just being friendly.

Clegg I'm fine, thanks. That's all you're gettin'.

Hardy Wonder what breakfast will be today?

Frank I had a dream. In it, I saw biscuits and weak tea.

Hardy (*awed*) Biscuits and weak tea!

Clegg Ssshh. Keep it down or I'll not let you talk at all.

Frank Keep your hair on, Cleggy.

They scrub.

Frank This a good detail, then, Cleggy?

Clegg No.

Frank Beats getting' your head blown off, though?

Clegg We ain't all out to save our own skin, you know.

Hardy Neither are we. Do you think we'd be doing this otherwise?

Clegg Start doing as you're told, then. I wouldn't be stuck here if it wasn't for you.

Frank Why are you here?

Clegg Never you mind.

Frank He must have gone cuckoo at the Front.

Clegg No I haven't. I was too young. They found out before I got sent.

Hardy That's a new one. Throwing one back into the pond.

Clegg They've bloody forgotten about me. Stuck here, watching you scrubbers night and day.

The COs smile.

Hardy Well chin up, Cleggy. It could be worse.

Daly *returns and noses around.*

Daly It's not a bloody debatin' society. You need more water on it.

He kicks the bucket over, sloshing dirty water everywhere. The scrubbers stop scrubbing.

That water's dirty. You make sure they button it, Private Clegg, or you'll be joining 'em.

Well get on with it, slackers. There'll be no breakfast at this rate.

Frank Thanks for the help, Daly. You're a pal.

Daly You've a gob on you, Wainwright.

Frank Takes one to know one, eh?

Hardy Come on, Frank.

Daly You're a bloody lazy, shirking coward who don't know what's good for 'im. You're out to save your skin while lads are dying for their country.

He pulls up his sleeve to reveal scars.

I nearly lost my arm – you don't get to answer me back. You're nothing.

Frank Rather be nothing than a bloody brainless bullet catcher.

Pause. Hardy looks worried.

Hardy Sergeant.

Daly Not a word. If I have to catch a bullet I will. I ain't just a soldier, though. I gave up a lot. Yeah. Used to be a professional footballer. The mighty mighty Leeds City football club.

He raises his arms and holds his head high, eyes closed, remembering the atmosphere of Elland Road.

He stops abruptly.

Course that's all over for me now, what with the injuries.

*He kicks **Frank** viciously in the ribs, sending him sprawling across the wet floor.*

Still got a good boot on me though.

Nobody dares move.

The rest of you slackers get this mess cleaned up. Clegg. Go fetch two men and a uniform.

He exits.

Wainwright, up.

Frank doesn't move. **Clegg** returns with two other **Soldiers**.

Daly Get him up, lads. Get this uniform on him.

*The **Soldiers** haul **Frank** to his feet and begin to strip him. As they get his trousers off he begins to struggle more and more until he's totally off the ground, kicking and writhing.*

Daly Drop him. Drop him I said.

Frank lands heavily on the stone floor and cries out.

Careful, Wainwright. How are they supposed to hold you if you're gonna mess about?

Hardy Just let them do it, Frank.

Daly *rips his trousers away, then rips his underwear off, leaving Frank naked on the floor.*

Daly Put this uniform on. Or you can stay cold. And we'll put it on you anyway once you've frozen your bollocks off for a few hours.

Frank *remains motionless.*

Right, lads. Put it on.

They haul him up again and force him into the trousers and shirt. They are rough with him, hitting his joints to make them bend. By the end, Frank is no longer struggling.

They set him down.

Daly Finish this floor. You dare get out of that uniform and you'll wish you hadn't. Come on, lads.

The Soldiers exit.

Hardy Tom?

Frank *groans and sits up.*

Hardy I told you not to wind him up.

Frank Who cares.

Hardy *rises and moves over to Frank. He grabs him by the collar.*

Hardy I told you not to wind people up! You'll get yourself killed!

Frank What does it matter? We'll die if we have to live on four biscuits and a pint of weak tea a day much longer!

Well what else are you gonna do to us? We're in solitary, on punishment rations. Scrubbing all day long and shivering on a stone floor at night. We'll finish our stint, get sent back, refuse an order and then we're back here. We refuse an order in jail

and we're straight back in solitary. This is it. Twenty-eight days at a time. What else are you gonna do? Eh?

Hardy Stop, Frank. I think you should stop.

Frank Help me out of this uniform.

Hardy *helps Frank as women wearily load ammunition into crates, down tools and gravitate to the canteen.*

14

The munitions factory canteen. There are more women than in the previous factory scene. Regina is sat well apart.

Widow These fags aren't what they used to be.

June What is.

Widow Nothing you can eat or drink, that's for sure.

June Meat and bread are the worst.

Mrs Chapman Our meat hasn't changed.

Widow Yeah but you get half what you used to. That's changed to me.

Mrs Chapman That's just prices though. We can't help that.

Forewoman Calm down, Jean. Nobody said you could.

Pause.

June Makes you wonder though, doesn't it. How prices go up so quick as if by magic.

Regina Supply and demand.

June I blame the Scots.

Forewoman And why the bloody hell is that then?

June They jack up the prices of all the good beef.

Mrs Chapman There's no Scots beef in York.

Widow You'd know would you?

Mrs Chapman Ours comes local.

Widow What about that German, though? He always seems to have stuff in when your Charlie's got nowt but bones.

Mrs Chapman He charges too much, is all. We're looking after people best we can.

Widow I bet you are.

Mrs Chapman What would you have us do, take food out of our own mouths?

Widow No one's saying that –

Mrs Chapman Well you better not be.

Forewoman That's the most I've heard out of you yet, Jean.

Mrs Chapman Well what do you expect.

Pause.

June I wish that post would arrive.

Forewoman It better arrive soon before you wring each other's necks.

Widow That's another thing changed. Post.

Mrs Chapman It's not what it used to be.

Regina It's because all the trains are needed for other things.

Widow Who asked you?

Regina I thought you might want to know.

Widow You think you're smart but if you were you'd keep your thoughts to yourself.

Regina Why should I?

June Don't talk to her like that.

Regina She talks to me like dirt.

June That's because she's earned the right. Her husband give his life for his country.

Regina Why do you treat me like this? We're supposed to be working together.

Marie Be patient, Gina.

Regina I am. You give me the cold shoulder all day long twelve hours a day six days a week and I'm sick of it. I don't deserve this.

Mrs Chapman It's him. That conchie you're seeing. You can't expect decent folk who've had bereavements to treat you as normal.

June You should be ashamed. But you're not. That's what I can't fathom.

Widow I think about my / husband –

Regina I've left him.

Pause.

Marie You've what?

Mrs Chapman The conchie?

Pause.

Regina Yes.

Beat.

Widow Told him, have you?

Regina No.

June You should tell him. It's better to know.

Widow It might change his mind. You supporting him makes him think he's right. Should have done it straight off and he might have done his duty.

Mrs Chapman You should write to him.

Forewoman Give over, will you. Honestly. What's happened to you lot? Leave her alone. It's up to her. We all got worries.

Pause.

Widow It's alright saying that, Cath. But your husband is at home.

June And you don't have no lads to worry on.

Forewoman I worry plenty. I've got nephews all over the shop. And I'm sure our Molly's going with a boy from across the street.

Widow It's not the same.

Forewoman Face it with a smile. Or if you can't, keep it to yourself. Do you hear? Job's hard enough without everyone clawing each other's eyes out all day.

Silence. Several of the women stand, finish their cigarettes, and prepare to go back to work.

Forewoman Got a few minutes yet.

Everyone ignores her.

*The **Manager** enters with the post. He hands it to the **Forewoman**.*

Manager A boy brought this.

*He quickly exits. The **Forewoman** reads the envelope and remains still. The women move closer in to look. They see the telegram with the official stamp and the room becomes heavy with fear.*

Widow God help us.

*Everyone has eyes on the **Forewoman**. She takes the telegram and hands it to **June**.*

***June** shakes her head very slightly. The other women lower their eyes.*

Forewoman You better open it.

June No.

Forewoman He might just be wounded. He could be on his way home.

June I can't.

Widow I can do it.

She takes the telegram and opens it. She reads.

Widow I'm sorry, love.

She hands her the telegram to read for herself. The other women come closer, putting hands on her, trying to comfort her somehow.

June My boy is gone.

*She notices **Regina**'s hand on her arm. She looks up at her.*

June You get off me. Get away from me.

***Regina** steps away. The others crowd round **June**.*

June It's probably a mistake. Do you think? Cath? You'd know? It happens doesn't it? A mistake?

*Silence. **June** looks from face to face, desperately seeking the reassurance that nobody can give her. Finally her gaze falls on **Regina**.*

June Write that letter.

Regina Excuse me?

Forewoman Nell, take her home would you. Stay with her.

June I don't want to go home I want to see her write that letter.

Regina You're upset.

June Write that bastard coward of yours and tell him he's on his own.

Forewoman We should take you home, love.

June No. I want to see her write that letter.

Marie That's not going to help, June.

Widow How would you know? It might.

Marie You take her home, Nell. You'll be able to help her.

Widow How can I help? Maybe this letter will help.

Mrs Chapman At least some good will come of it, then.

Forewoman Nell.

Widow No.

Forewoman I want one of you to take Ada home and the rest of you back to work –

Widow Write.

*The **Forewoman** is no longer in charge. They bring **Regina** pen and paper. She tries to leave but is pushed back into her seat.*

Silver light. As she writes, her spoken words are clearly platitudinous, in stark contrast to her emotional state and the words she is being made to write.

Regina Dear Frank. Dear Frank. Frank.

Frank Dear Regina.

Pause.

Frank I'm being sent to my death but I'm winning at cards.

Regina I hope you are well.

Frank We may have to get married so you can inherit my winnings.

Regina Everything is fine here.

Frank I'd consider diving overboard but I can't swim very well.

Regina The work is hard but we all club together.

Frank Besides Cleggy is an excellent shot.

Regina Don't worry about me. We'll be together soon.

Frank Still. Mustn't grumble. I love you.

Regina *doesn't reply as the letter is snatched from her and folded into an envelope.*

Soldiers *drive wooden stakes into the ground.*

15

A cabin in a ship crossing the channel. Frank and Hardy sit playing cards with Daly and Clegg. Clegg throws his cards down with a flourish.

Clegg Flush!

The others look at his cards.

Daly That's a run, you wally.

Clegg Oh...

Frank You still win.

Clegg Grand!

Daly You shouldn't have told him.

He passes the deck to Clegg to shuffle and deal.

Still. I'm impressed at you fellas. Can't say I agree with you, but you've got brass in you.

Hardy Well I think that's the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me, George.

Daly Give over.

Clegg How many is it?

Frank Two to start. How do you keep winning? You ain't got a clue.

Clegg I'm just lucky, I suppose.

Daly With that face? Not bloody likely.

They all laugh, except Clegg.

We could do with lads like you at the Front, though.

Frank We'll be there soon enough by the looks of it.

Daly Yeah, well... you give 'em no choice.

Hardy We won't be much good, George. You know that.

Daly I don't mean you as being bloody pacifists. I mean your courage. I don't like what you're doing one bit, I've said so.

Frank Have you?

Daly *elbows Frank in the ribs without pause.*

Daly But there aren't many would do what you've done. At the front you don't have a choice, there's nowhere *to* run. You fellas could stop all this at any time. That's what I'm talking about.

Hardy It almost sounds like you understand, George.

Daly Oh no. Not one bit. But you do have courage, that's all I'm saying.

Frank What don't you understand?

Daly Don't you love your country?

The COs nod.

Then why don't you defend her? What'll happen to your loved ones if we lose? To Yorkshire? To the mighty Leeds City football club?!

Hardy It's all irrelevant. I can't kill another man, it's against God's wishes.

Daly Alright, you're one of them religious types. Peace at any price. But what about you?

Frank I've told you this before.

Daly Before you were a prisoner, it wasn't my job to listen to you.

Hardy And now we're free men.

Daly Well you are while you're on this boat, any road.

Frank I don't call being forced onto a boat to be sent to war free, exactly.

Clegg If you ain't locked up you're free. Go anywhere you like.

Frank You two are free as well, I suppose?

Clegg Course we are!

Hardy You had less choice than we did!

Daly Yeah... we were told to go and here we are. But we had a choice when we joined up. We have food in our bellies, clothing, warmth.

Frank What about in the trenches?

Daly Don't talk to me about trenches, Wainwright. Anyway, it ain't as bad as they make out most of the time.

Frank You're both working men, right?

Daly He wasn't. He was at school.

Clegg And you were a footballer. That's not work.

Daly It bloody was! You try playing Bradford Park Avenue on a frozen pitch, you're lucky if you can walk off at half-time.

Frank Well neither of you are going back to what you were doing before. You'll get a job, work for a living. You'll be a worker. Most of the army is blokes like you, and most of the German army as well. Any army that's ever been.

Daly So?

Frank So you are the ones who die. You are the ones who kill German workers, and German workers kill you. And meanwhile there are rich men back home, making guns and selling guns and selling bully beef and selling uniforms. Selling everything you need to make war. They make money. What do you make?

Clegg Sergeant!

Daly Button it, Cleggy.

The COs laugh.

Frank Yeah, you probably do make sergeant, even you Cleggy. Because all the bloody sergeants are dead.

Daly That's enough.

Daly *stands and paces.*

Frank I'm just telling you what you wanted to know.

Daly Yeah, well I don't wanna know. I've lost a lot from this war and here you are tellin' me it's all for nothin'.

Frank Not for nothing. For profits. None of which are coming your way, or my way or Cleggy's way.

Pause.

Clegg What about Billy?

Frank Billy? His lot own the bloody chocolate factories.

Hardy I don't own them.

Frank But you're not working class, exactly. I don't mean anything by that.

Hardy No.

Daly Teach me for asking questions.

Clegg But what if everyone thinks like you? We'd all be eating horses and saluting Kaiser Bill.

Frank If everyone thought like us, there wouldn't be a war. There'd be nobody to fight it.

Daly But hardly anyone does think like you, so here we are. Jesus.

He sits down again.

Here we are havin' a nice game of cards and you start with all that.

Hardy He can go on a bit. I thought you'd have learned that by now.

Clegg Should send you to Germany as a spy! You could talk 'em all into goin' home!

The COs laugh. Daly is distracted.

Daly They're gonna shoot you.

Silence.

Hardy Who told you that?

Daly That's the rumour.

Frank Just a rumour, then.

Daly No. No, makes sense. You've give 'em no choice. They're gonna make an example of you.

Frank They can't do that. It's murder.

Daly Soldiers get court-martialled all the time, and then they got shot. That's what you'll get – disobey an order in camp and you're in nick. Disobey an order in France when you're on active service... firing squad.

Hardy But we're not soldiers. We've never taken the oath.

Frank We've never done anything.

Daly I wish you'd change your minds, lads, I really do.

Pause.

There was a young lad, at Ypres. The first one. He must have been sixteen, seventeen maybe. We'd had the bloody wits blown out of us for days, and us shelling them back. And then we're up at dawn and lined up to go over the top to attack their line.

This kid wasn't up to it. He's like an animal. Just frozen with fear. He was in the first wave, didn't go. The sergeant sees him, shouting at him, not that he'd hear what he's bloody saying anyhow. Then he's in the second wave, and he doesn't go.

The sergeant shot him right there and then.

Just a kid.

Pause.

Clegg Serves him right.

Daly What do you know, boy?

Frank That's what we are, just cannon fodder.

Daly Maybe we are. But we need to win. Britain needs to win. What happens if we don't? You can't answer that, can you?

Pause.

Frank You can't win. Even if we win, you lose.

*The light fades. **Bannerman** appears and watches the men. Reluctantly, **Clegg** and **Daly** take the COs and bind them, hands stretched high above their heads, to the wooden stakes. More ropes bind their legs and torso.*

***Bannerman** shakes his head. **Clegg** looks down and doesn't move. **Daly** moves briskly over and yanks the ropes tighter. He winces as he pulls, as do the COs...*

16

The rail yard. The women from the factory have been brought in to help load trains, as the depleted railway staff struggle to supply munitions to the Front.

*The women work in pairs to lift the heavy boxes, but **Regina** is alone. She determinedly loads them anyway.*

Forewoman There's no need to do that. Go find us a brew instead.

Regina I'm fine.

Forewoman You'll break your back and then you'll be no good to anybody.

Regina I'm no good to anybody anyway.

Widow Leave her. About time she made some sacrifices.

June I can get the tea.

Widow You stay there, I'm not working with her.

Forewoman Would you give it a rest? She ain't seeing him any longer.

Widow Doesn't matter.

Regina What's the matter? Too heavy for you?

Widow You watch it. I'm old.

Regina Your talk is old.

Mrs Chapman You've no right to talk to her like that.

Regina I've every bloody right.

Widow I wonder how her fella's doing now that she's abandoned him.

June Oh don't, Sarah.

Regina *says nothing, but continues to load with increased aggression. The other women have all but stopped.*

Forewoman Enough gassin'. Put your backs into it.

Mrs Chapman This isn't what I signed up for, you know.

Forewoman Who did. Get on with it.

Widow Look at her go. Doing a fine job supporting the war effort.

June See? She's seen the error of her ways.

Widow All them bullets to kill all them Germans. You never know, some of 'em might be for her fella.

June He won't fight, though...

Widow Aye. They're not for his rifle. They're for him.

Regina *loads one more crate then stops.*

Forewoman Stop it. Now.

Widow See. She hasn't given up on him. She's lying. She's still pining for that coward.

Regina *looks at them, each in turn. She walks slowly up to the **Widow**.*

Mrs Chapman What are you doing?

Forewoman Gina.

Regina Don't call me Gina.

*She stops in front of the **Widow**.*

Regina That coward has more heart than any man in this god-forsaken country. That coward has more courage than any of us. More than you. More than me... (*beat*) more than your daft bastard of a dead husband.

Silence.

Forewoman You better go. I'll need to speak to the manager / about –

Regina Don't bother. I'm don't work here anymore.

She turns to leave.

Widow I'm glad you haven't changed.

Regina stops.

I'm glad. I want you to grieve for him. I want you to know what it's like.

*The light changes. As she walks away she passes **Gray**. After a brief glance, she continues past him. Men arrive and look to him for orders, among them **Stegman**.*

17

*Several wooden posts stand vertically in the ground. **Frank, Hardy** and another **Soldier** remain tied to them. Their bodies sag, exhausted, blood crusting around the ropes at their wrist. **Hardy** makes little moaning noises from the pain.*

Bannerman *appears from inside the jailhouse with a mug of tea in one hand and a riding crop tucked under his arm. He watches **Frank** being restrained.*

Bannerman That one's gone slack, Corporal Barnes.

Pause.

Corporal Yes, sir.

*He wrenches the rope tighter, causing **Frank** to wince.*

Bannerman Nice and tight. It's supposed to be field punishment. It's unpleasant but these men don't deserve your sympathy. Discipline, Barnes, discipline is key.

Corporal Yes, sir.

Bannerman How long left for these two?

Corporal I'm about to take them down, sir.

Bannerman Two hours already?

Corporal Yes, sir. I've a system, up and down every even hour.

Bannerman *looks at his watch.*

Bannerman I think you've made a mistake, Barnes.

Pause.

Take them down at zero seven hundred hours.

Pause.

You hear me, Barnes?

Corporal Yes, sir.

Bannerman *smiles.*

Bannerman See that, Wainwright? A soldier doing his duty. Following orders. Unquestioning. It's how we'll win the war. You may think that what you're doing is right but I assure the only way to end this war is to win it, and as fast as possible. Surely that is the road to least suffering?

Frank *doesn't respond.* **Bannerman** *approaches him.*

These men are soldiers, unlike you. They're brave men, for all I know. They've certainly fought in several large engagements. But even though they're better men than you, a hundred times better; they get the same punishment as you. Because they disobeyed a direct order.

It's not fair on them. They've done their duty many times over but unfortunately they must continue to do it. That is the nature of duty. You on the other hand would allow these men to do your duty also.

This is too good for you.

*He approaches the **Soldier** and lifts his head up, his crop under his chin.*

Bannerman Why are you here, Crook?

Soldier Orders, sir.

Bannerman What orders?

Soldier Missed guard duty, sir. Fell asleep.

Bannerman *lets his head drop.*

Bannerman Take him down. I think you were right about the time after all.

Corporal Yes, sir. What about the / others –

Bannerman What about them?

Corporal Nothing, sir.

Bannerman You're alright for a while yet, eh Hardy? With that strong constitution of yours. Faith is a wonderful thing.

Hardy *doesn't respond.* **Bannerman** *tries to lift his head with his crop.* **Hardy** *appears to be unconscious.*

Bannerman I think you better take him down, Barnes.

The Corporal scrambles to untie Hardy. He is limp and has to be lowered to the ground.

Frank William. Will!

Hardy *is dragged inside.*

Bannerman *approaches Frank again.*

Bannerman Perhaps he has been forsaken. How are you finding Field Punishment, Wainwright?

No response.

I must say you look ragged. And you've only been here ten days. Not even halfway through.

I don't think you're going to make it, Wainwright.

Not that it matters. If you do survive this you'll only disobey again and then it's a court martial for you. And you know what that means. I'd hate to see you fall here. It seems too obscure. You deserve to be shot in full sight.

He begins to leave but stops.

Oh... letter for you. This may boost your morale. Perhaps you'll make it to the firing squad yet.

Frank You've opened it.

Bannerman Shall I read it to you?

Frank No. It's mine.

Bannerman I'll read it to you. You deserve to hear it. Bit of stirring news, eh?

Frank Get off it.

Bannerman I have to be honest, there have been other letters from (*reads*) Regina Gray. You're not supposed to have them until your sentence is finished. I had to have them brought here. She writes incredibly well. She sounds incredibly bright. Well-educated. There was a photo in the first letter as well... very pretty. How did you manage to win a girl like her? You pig-thick little coward?

When this is over, Wainwright, don't say I never showed you mercy. I'm going to allow you one letter for your morale, to see you through. I didn't have to do this for you, you understand? Remember that.

Frank If you read that out I'll kill you.

Bannerman Dear Francis. I no longer wish to see you. I cannot abide your cowardice. Yours sincerely. Gina.

Frank *closes his eyes. He appears to be fighting back his emotional response to the letter.*

Oh dear. You don't seem pleased. I should have read that one first, shouldn't I? I had no idea.

I'm afraid I might have placed the final straw.

He pulls on the ropes as if to test them, causing Frank a considerable amount of pain. He wants his satisfaction, the outward display of Frank's desolation.

Unless... I could see to it that you see out the remainder of your sentence in relative comfort. No tying up and full rations. We'll get you some extra blankets and whatnot.

Of course I'd need proof of your sincerity.

I'll ask you a question, and you address me as 'sir'. I *order* you to address me as 'sir'.

Pause. Frank raises his head to look at Bannerman. He looks wretched, on the point of breaking, of giving it all up... his mouth moves into what could be the trembling lip of a man about to cry...

Would you like a mug of hot, strong, sweet tea, Private Wainwright? Some grilled bacon?

Frank *suddenly spits in Bannerman's face. His trembling lip cracks into a smile that is brimming with hatred and defiance.*

Frank I'd rather stick it up your wife, Bannerman.

Bannerman *slashes Frank across the face with his crop.*

Bannerman Coward!

He slashes again and again until the Corporal runs out and stays his hand.

What are you doing?!

Corporal We can't do that, sir.

Bannerman Have you lost your mind?

Corporal I follow orders. Sir.

Bannerman *storms off. Frank is feeling the sting of the crop, but shouts after him.*

Frank She hates Gina! You wrote that! She'd never call herself Gina! You'll never beat me, you hear? Never!

Corporal Good on you, pal.

*Fade out to **Frank's** shouts and cries. It's impossible to tell if he is laughing or crying, it is a primal release of all the pent up emotion, and perhaps the last of his strength spilling out into the cold air.*

18

A squad of **Soldiers** stands on parade. It consists of men and women, some in uniform and some not. They stand at ease. Among them are **Frank and Hardy** – they merely stand. A **Colonel** stands on a platform.

Orders are given by a **Sergeant**. The squad reacts instantly to commands, in unison. The COs don't move at all.

Sergeant Parade! Parade, 'tion!

The squad snaps to attention.

By the right! Quick! March!

The squad marches off as one. They jostle and bump into the COs, who remain stationary. They are left as lone stalks of wheat after a storm; randomly placed and ragged. They sag, in stark contrast to the strong, rod-straight soldiers. They are much changed by their experiences.

Parade! Halt!

The squad stops.

*The **Colonel** addresses the parade.*

Colonel As you know, this camp has been the holder of men from virtually every unit in the British Army at one point or another. Most of the men who pass through here go on to the Front, to our artillery bases or our forward echelons. Many men also come here travelling in the opposite direction, towards Britain. Some return home but briefly, some, those wounded, indefinitely. And a great many others return in body only – those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defending freedom and democracy from the threat of Prussianism. All of these men pass through here with honour.

There are a small number of men, however, who have passed through this camp but gone nowhere. Not to fight, or to support, or to care for the wounded and dying. Several of these men you see before you now – men who declare a conscientious objection to military service. These men refuse to assist in our war effort in any

capacity, not even as non-combatants. They have repeatedly refused orders and repeatedly received appropriate punishment under military law.

As you know, refusal to obey orders on active service in the severest instances carries a penalty of death. After numerous offences every indication is that they will continue to offend – I might add that many serving soldiers have received less patience and mercy than these men. They have now appeared before a court martial, whose judgement I will now deliver.

Private Thomas Wainwright. Make yourself known.

Frank *doesn't move. The Sergeant hurries over and pushes him forward.*

Private Thomas Wainwright. Of refusing to obey orders while on active service...

Pause.

You are hereby found guilty.

Long pause. Hardy looks like he might lose control. Frank shows no expression whatsoever. Members of the squad hang their heads in shame.

Private William Hardy.

Sergeant Step back, Wainwright. Hardy, forward.

Neither man moves. They look at each other.

Sergeant Back!

They stand their ground.

Colonel Hardy, come forward.

Sergeant Get bloody back, Wainwright.

Colonel Sergeant, get these men moving.

The Sergeant in desperation calls the other soldiers over to help. The COs grimace as they are manhandled into position by the men.

Hardy Get the hell off me! Get off!

Frank Don't lose your cool, Will.

Colonel Private William Hardy. Of refusing to obey orders while on active service... you are hereby found guilty.

Silence. The COs are still.

By order of the Prime Minister, these sentence to be commuted to ten years hard labour.

*Hanging heads are raised. The COs look at each other. The **Sergeant** silently motions for **Hardy** to be dragged back to where **Frank** stands.*

The two men stand shoulder to shoulder... straighter... almost soldier-like. Smiles.

Blackout.

19

York, October 1916. Frank, on a week's leave before reporting to Wakefield Work Centre to continue his sentence, is waiting outside Regina's house.

Gray *leaves the house for work.*

Frank Arthur.

Gray You still here?

Frank You've been inside all this time? Why didn't you answer the door?

Gray Don't be here when I get back.

Frank I've been knocking an hour.

Gray *walks away. Frank stands in his way. Gray looks him up and down.*

Frank Where is she?

Gray Them shoes have seen better days.

Frank What hasn't.

Gray You don't look so clever yourself.

Frank I've looked worse than this.

Gray She's not here.

Frank Should have seen me a few months back. In France. Wouldn't have recognised me. It's astonishing the difference clothes and a haircut make. And a bed. And food. Warmth.

Gray I've got nothing to say to you, Francis.

Frank There's one thing I can think of.

Gray You're wasting your time.

Frank Where is she?

Gray How should I know? She's a life of her own now. She doesn't need me.

Frank Where's she working?

Gray Out of my way.

He tries to pass, and once again he is stopped.

Frank You owe me. You gave me up to the bosses.

Gray You bloody liar! I never.

Frank You got me moved so I could get called up, and then you got yourself on the tribunal so you could finish the job. Just because me and Regina had something going.

Gray You're a daft sod. You're a troublemaker. I got rid of you for the good of the union, for the lads.

Frank *laughs.*

Gray Think what you want. They've let you off. Be happy you're not blown up or shot.

Frank Let off? I'm on a week's leave before I report to the work centre at Wakefield.

Gray Still landed on your feet, you ask me.

Frank Ten years hard labour, Arthur. That's what you've done to me. Now where is she?

Gray *pushes past.*

Frank You owe me. And you bloody know it.

Pause.

Gray She was working down the bomb shop last I heard.

Frank They said she quit. What do you mean, last you heard? When did you last see her?

Gray She's a grown woman. She can do what she likes.

Beat.

Frank I see. You thought you could sit it out, didn't you? You thought you could come out unscathed? Eh?

Gray *stalks off up the street.*

Serves you bloody right! I'll say hello for you, shall I?

Fade out.

20

A pub. Regina sits drinking with Marie and two Officers.

Grove sits alone at a nearby table. He is missing an arm and limps when he walks. Other groups of drinkers sit or stand around. The mood is subdued.

Frank enters, looking around for...

Frank Regina.

The group stops talking and looks at him.

Marie Who's this then?

Officer Skinny fellow. An infantryman, are you?

Frank No.

Officer Look at his hands, dirty. Miner, eh?

Frank Say something.

Regina cannot speak. She is on the verge of tears.

Marie Oh.

Officer Well, what are you then?

Frank None of your bloody business.

The Officers stand.

Officer Now look here!

Officer You're no officer I can see that much. How dare you speak to a commissioned officer like that?

Regina Leave him alone.

Officer What did you say?

Marie Come on, you can buy me a drink. Both of you.

The Officers eyeball Frank as Marie leads them away.

Pause.

Frank Bloody say something, then.

Regina Frank.

Frank Remember my name at least. Who were they?

Regina Nobody.

Pause.

Frank Well. I'll let you get back to your friends.

Regina Will you sit down?

Frank Depends. Why do I feel like you're not happy to see me?

Regina I am happy to see you. It's just a shock.

Frank I wrote you.

Regina I haven't had a letter from you for weeks.

Frank Right. I wrote you at your work. Your lodgings.

Regina I'm not there anymore.

Frank Where?

Regina Either. I've moved. I'm at the confectioners now, living with Marie.

Frank That's Marie, is it?

Regina She's my friend.

Frank That her husband?

Regina No, they just sat next to us.

Frank Where's her husband, then?

Regina Where do you think?

Frank And she's out drinking with a couple of blokes in smart uniforms. How do you think he'd feel about that?

Regina He wouldn't give a damn. They hate each other.

Frank Do you hate me?

Regina Why would I hate you? Sit down. Please.

Grove Stand. Stand because you can, you cowardly bastard.

Frank Grove.

Regina Ignore him. It's all he does these days.

Grove And why is that? Because I can't do anything else. Because I gave my body to this country.

Frank You didn't give it, as I recall. You were *told* to give it.

Grove Because I respect the laws of this country! How dare you mock me?

Frank Well you're hardly going to come and bash my head in, are you?

Grove I bloody will! Shirker!

Frank At least not at any great pace.

Grove *stands unsteadily. He takes a few slow steps. Other drinkers are watching the argument closely. A few shouts of disapproval directed at Frank.*

Grove You'll get what's coming to you, shirker.

Grove *exits.*

Regina Sit down, Frank.

He does so. She takes his hand. He slowly takes hers, and then both of them, their grips becoming firmer.

Frank I thought you'd be happy to see me.

Regina *casts her eyes down.*

Regina I'm glad you're safe.

Frank I've been dreaming about this moment for months. Ever since I left. It's not exactly how I imagined it.

Regina What is.

Frank What do you mean what is? What's up?

Regina Have you been released?

Frank Temporarily. Got a week's leave then I'll be at Wakefield work centre.

Pause. She releases his hands.

Frank Regina. I love you.

Regina Not here.

Frank Let's go somewhere more private.

Regina When you went away, I thought we were doing something wonderful. It was the ideas, Frank. I was smitten with the ideas. Now you're going to be in prison for ten years.

Frank They won't keep us that long.

Regina But how do you know? Do you really think this war is going to end any time soon? It just gets worse and worse, Frank. I can't stand it.

Frank Regina. It'll end. It will. I'll be home before you know it. I get leave, I can come and see you.

Regina And then what? Even if you're right this thing is going to follow us for the rest of our lives. You were only here two minutes before you're in a fight.

Frank He's a loudmouth, that's all.

Regina And if you're not right...

Frank If I'm not right?

Regina If you're not right... I don't know if I can do it, Frank. I don't know if I can wait for you for ten years.

Pause.

Frank I can't believe what I'm hearing.

Regina Ten years, Frank. We don't even know who we'll be in ten years. We'll be in our thirties and still barely twenty, trapped in the day you went away.

Frank So it's all been for nothing?

Regina Of course not. You believe in your ideas, I believe in *you*. But I can't follow you.

Frank Sod the ideas! It's not all about the ideas it's about you and me! We believed in this together. I wanted to go. You remember? I wanted to go and you stopped me.

Regina I know I did. I'm sorry.

Pause. He stands.

Frank Is this it, then?

Regina I don't know.

Frank May as well join up then, hadn't I?

Regina Don't say that.

Frank *touches her face. She eventually looks up at him.*

Grove *returns flanked by two **Soldiers** who are home on leave.*

Grove That's him.

*The **Soldiers** advance, grabbing **Frank** out of his seat. He and **Regina** never break eye contact throughout.*

Soldier What do you think you're doing?

Soldier You come in here abusing him. He's done his bit.

*They push **Frank** back. He doesn't resist, but keeps looking at **Regina**.*

Grove Nothing to say, Wainwright?

They push him back further.

Grove Nothing to say now, eh?

Soldier Well, chum. You gonna scrap or not?

Regina *stands.*

Blackout.

PhD in Theatre, Film and Television Portfolio

Items are listed chronologically. Those with supporting evidence are marked with * and are cross-referenced by date.

3rd October 2011*

On beginning my program, I have plays entered into two competitions: the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting 2011, and Theatre503's 503Five. The Bruntwood receives a staggering 2,188 entries; more than double the number of submissions than the previous Prize in 2008. 503Five receives 800 submissions.

4th October 2011*

I begin teaching 'The Drama of It All', a multi-media creative writing module for the Centre for Lifelong Learning. Teaching the course focuses my attention on the particular demands of dramatic writing for radio, stage and screen.

As a consequence of teaching the module I develop an interest in writing for television and start to look for a suitable story.

5th October 2011

The long list for the Bruntwood Prize is announced. I am disappointed not to have made the top one hundred entries (to which detailed feedback is given).

11th October 2011*

I begin teaching the playwriting module 'Writing and Structuring Stage Dialogue' to third year students on the BA Writing, Directing and Performance. Over the course of the term, the need to read widely and analyse established writers, in preparation for

and during seminars, helps to deepen my understanding of dramatic structure and style. It is necessary to reflect on my own writing process when responding to students' questions, to think critically about aspects of playwriting that are usually intuitive.

1st November 2011*

I send out copies of my plays to new writing theatres. My first play, *Bikini Black Special*, goes out to the Bolton Octagon, the Old Red Lion in London, Soho Theatre, and the Liverpool Everyman.

My second play *Red on Blue* goes out to the Bolton Octagon, Jonathan Church (AD of Cheltenham Festival Theatre), the Bush Theatre, Theatre Royal Stratford East, the Royal Court, the National Theatre and the Hampstead Theatre. It is also submitted to new writing company Paines Plough.

3rd November 2011

I talk with a close friend about his sister, a vulnerable but independent adult who suffers from Asperger's Syndrome. I express my interest in the story and we discuss my developing it for the BBC Future Talent Award 2012.

3rd December 2011*

I exchange emails with playwright Charles Wood, who has read and responded extremely positively to *Bikini Black Special* and *Red on Blue*. A former soldier, Charles, offers me advice on seeking production and asks if he can speak to director Barry Kyle about my work.

I visit my friend's family to discuss their experiences with their daughter and Asperger's Syndrome. I am privileged to be granted access to a journal kept documenting their experiences.

19th December 2011*

I receive notification that my 503Five entry has not been short listed.

23rd December 2012*

I receive an email from Paines Plough informing me that they are not interested in taking my play any further.

11th January 2012*

Suzanne Bell, Literary manager of Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, sends me a letter giving detailed feedback on *Bikini Black Special*. The feedback is encouraging but she declines to take the play any further and suggests that I should consider my position in the recent canon of war plays.

14th January 2012

I join Script Yorkshire, a writers' network for Yorkshire-based artists. I feel the lack of progress concerning the plays I have written needs to be balanced by involvement in local writing groups and activities to sustain my enthusiasm in the face of frequent rejections.

3rd February 2012*

I submit a pilot TV episode I have been working on, *Life in A Minor*, to the BBC Future Talent Award. The story concerns a young woman with Asperger's Syndrome, who is legally an independent adult but remains vulnerable to exploitation, and her family's efforts to protect her.

The experience of writing for a new medium has been insightful, particularly the fast pace of TV drama and the different approach to scenes and structure. Unlike plays, scenes in TV are often very short and far more numerous.

8th February 2012*

I receive email notice that *Life in A Minor* has not warranted a full read through, after readers at the BBC read the first ten pages during the 'script sift'.

13th February 2012*

I submit *Red on Blue* to the Finborough Theatre.

20 February 2012

I attend the Snowgoose writers' group in Bradford, where I meet organiser and playwright Jonathan Hall.

3rd March 2012*

Red on Blue is rejected by Finborough Theatre.

6th March 2012*

I attend the Activating Theatre Symposium at Leeds University. Keynote speakers include Rod Dixon, Artistic Director of Red Ladder, former members of CAST, and Pandemonium Theatre Collective. One of the key issues is how you go about producing work, particularly work of a challenging or political nature, within current funding frameworks. The event gives me good insights into how my own work might be produced without the support of a theatre or professional company.

23rd March 2012

I meet with my supervisor, Mary Luckhurst, to discuss difficulties that I am having writing *The Chain* and decide how I might take it forward. The task of staging a global story with a limited cast and set, as well as the intellectual density of the subject matter, are proving difficult to negotiate. Mary suggests a workshop with visiting director Tanya Gerstle, a hugely respected theatre practitioner with expertise in improvisation and devised performance.

27th March 2012

Max Stafford-Clark, Artistic Director of renowned new writing company Out of Joint, visits the Department and I manage to speak with him after his talk. I tell Max about my military career and we discuss the challenges of producing new work in times of austerity. Max takes a copy of *Red on Blue* and agrees to give me feedback on it.

31st March 2012*

I attend a Script Yorkshire event at West Yorkshire Playhouse, 'How to Get Work Produced', led by Associate Director of WYP Alex Chisholm and playwright Jonathan Hall. The prospect of new writing at WYP is bleak, and we are told quite bluntly that no new work by new writers will be produced for the foreseeable future unless it is a musical or a comedy.

During one discussion, Alex Chisholm dismisses 'plays about dead babies and soldiers with PTSD' as overdone and discusses why only the first ten minutes of submissions are read (initially). I challenge her on this point, and she cannot name any plays about soldiers with PTSD. She defends the necessity to read only a portion of a play before a decision is made on its quality. A lively discussion ensues but I am left feeling that perhaps the military subjects that I am writing about are unfashionable.

Jonathan Hall leads a workshop on the value of unproduced writing and the need to have a creative life not solely defined by production. I speak with Jonathan Hall and SY chair Sharon Oakes afterwards. Their advice and support is extremely encouraging after a difficult day.

3rd April 2012*

I meet Jonathan Hall to discuss *Red on Blue*. His feedback is extremely positive and valuable. Jonathan had sent the play to his agent, Nick Quinn at The Agency, who also appreciated the play. Jonathan encourages me to shorten *Red on Blue*, one of Nick Quinn's comments being that it was overly long, and resend to Nick.

April 2012

I edit and redraft *Red on Blue* in light of Nick Quinn's comments. The play is cut down from 105 pages to 85 pages in order to improve the pace of the first half.

4th April 2012

I invite Rod Dixon of Leeds-based Red Ladder to attend the workshop for *The Chain*. Red Ladder produce work committed to social justice and I hope to interest Rod in working with me in future.

10th April 2012*

I receive a reply from the Royal Court regarding my submission of *Red on Blue*. The feedback is extremely positive, but they decline to take the play any further and invite me to send them my next play.

14th April 2012

I attend the Schumacher North conference 2012 in Leeds. The group is a progressive forum interested in social justice, environmental sustainability and political innovation.

Ideas encountered in discussions and lectures on green capitalism, global food supply and alternatives to traditional finance inform my writing of *The Chain*.

26th April 2012*

I receive a letter from Hampstead Theatre regarding my submission of *Red on Blue*. They regret that as a theatre they no longer give feedback on submissions and wish me luck in the future.

27th April 2012

Snowgoose hold a new writing night at the Carrigeworks theatre, Leeds. Speaking with Jonathan Hall afterwards, we agree that the standard of new work presented by Script Yorkshire needs to be higher. Jonathan introduces me to Nigel Townsend, Artistic Director of Y Touring company. Nigel is interested in a recently published report UN report on Global Sustainability and we have a long talk about the issues surrounding it. I promise to send him a draft of *The Chain*.

28th April 2012*

I send Nigel Townsend a copy of *The Chain*. He invites me to attend a Y Touring workshop in London for a current Theatre of Debate project.

1st May 2012*

I send Nick Quinn the redrafted version of *Red on Blue*. He reiterates his interest in my work and asks me to send him the next thing that I write.

3rd May 2012*

Red on Blue is shortlisted for a mentoring opportunity as part of WYP's New Writing season.

8th May 2012*

Alex Chisholm informs me that I have not been selected for the mentorship scheme, but that WYP would like to establish a relationship with me. Alex offers three sessions to workshop my writing with actors and directors at WYP.

Due to work commitments, I cannot take the workshop opportunity during the New Writing week. I agree with Alex to postpone until the next suitable opportunity.

9th May 2012

I attend a production of Joe Penhall's *Blue/ Orange* at York Theatre Royal with Jonathan Hall. The dialectical nature of the play is interesting: managing to sustain a two-sided argument for a length of time is a problem I am facing in *The Chain*.

We discuss Jonathan's experience of self-producing his plays and I begin to consider this option as a way of getting my work staged.

21st May 2012

The workshop for *The Chain* is held at TFTV. The day brings together local actors and directors from within the Department and without, including Rod Dixon of Red Ladder and Dominique Poulter of Y Touring. Tanya Gerstle leads the sessions.

With Tanya's help I gain some insight into how an ethnically diverse global play might work with a small set and cast. The general feedback on the play's theoretical content and dramatic potential will become extremely useful going forward. I feel that the current draft is too dense and requires more of an emotional impact, and that the skill required to perform it with limited resources may be too high.

22nd May 2012*

I receive a letter from Soho Theatre regarding my submission of *Bikini Black Special*. The feedback is extremely positive, but they decline to take the play any further and invite me to send them my next play.

24th May 2012

I receive a letter from Max Stafford-Clark about *Red on Blue*. He responds warmly to the play and offers some constructive criticism about my characterisation. He informs me that Out of Joint cannot take the play forward, but has forwarded a copy to director Katie Posner at York-based Pilot Theatre.

15th June 2012

I meet with Paul Birch of York-based Riding Lights Youth Theatre and fellow writer Morven Hamilton to discuss an upcoming project involving the Armed Forces. I express my interest in writing a short play for the project, to be performed in early 2013.

18th June 2012*

Sam Potter, Literary Manager of Out of Joint, emails me with further feedback on *Red on Blue*.

20th June 2012*

I receive an email from the Bush Theatre informing me that although *Red on Blue* made it through to the second stage of their submissions process, they have decided not to take the play any further.

22 June 2012

I attend the Y Touring workshop, which features presentations by scientists and academics working on genetic engineering. I meet the writer for the project, Ben Musgrave (winner of Bruntwood 2005). Afterwards Nigel outlines his desire to focus the next Theatre of Debate production on global sustainability, but will need to convince the board.

9th August 2012

Charles Wood writes to say he has forwarded *Bikini Black Special* to Pippa Hill, Literary Manager of the RSC, but complains of the difficulty in getting people to read new work.

11th August 2012

The lecture-play *Ten Billion* at the Royal Court, with scientist Stephen Emmott, about the world with a population of ten billion. It is encouraging to see such a radical work at one of the new writing theatres that seemed to be playing it safe in recent times with a series of revivals of past hits.

The absence of hope in the play turns many audience members and reviewers off – with many dismissing the validity of the facts on offer without any evidence of their own. Such a grim prognosis seems to prevent, rather than inspire, action. It is a troubling realisation. The question of how to influence people and raise awareness is key to the success of *The Chain*.

3rd September 2012

Alex Chisholm invites me to the Bruntwood Roadshow along with other local writers on the WYP radar.

September 2012

I redraft *The Chain* and rename it *The Ends*. Due to concerns about cast, staging and performance style, the central plot strand of the original play is expanded and the global scenes cut altogether.

The play stands a better chance of being performed or self-produced, but is less ambitious stylistically and structurally.

13th September 2012

I observe a story-gathering session run for serving soldiers by Barrie Stephenson of Riding Lights as part of the Armed Forces Project. The material Barrie gathers will be used to inspire the stage play I will write for the project.

1st October 2012

I attend a meeting at WYP for artists intending to submit an entry to Northern Stage@St. Stephen's, an initiative to partially fund artists to take work to the Edinburgh Fringe.

4th October 2012*

I attend the Devoted and Disgruntled Roadshow at WYP, a day of open space discussions concerning the state of theatre in the UK attended by a wide array of theatre professionals from the area.

I propose a discussion on central funding and conservatism, generating lively debate. The material proves useful for the research component of my PhD.

17th October 2012

I begin teaching 'Writing and Structuring Stage Dialogue' in TFTV for the second time. I have made several changes to the previous year's course in light of experience and student feedback, such as getting students writing more in class.

19th October 2012

A friend and former coursemate, Ruby Clarke, discusses the idea of producing one of my plays for YTR's TakeOver Festival 2013. I suggest a project I've had in mind to mark the 10th anniversary of the Iraq War.

We visit Bar Lane Studios in York to view a possible venue, a large 60-seater basement, and agree it would be suitable.

23rd October 2012*

Ruby proposes my play, now titled *Quicksand*, to the TakeOver board and they approve it. She also secures funding to rent the space and publicity through YTR. The show will premiere on 20th March 2013, ten years to the day since the war in Iraq started.

We discuss further funding applications and the idea of a regional tour, by partnering up with my contacts in Bradford and Leeds. I also propose applying to Northern Stage@St. Stephen's with the project.

24th October 2012

I meet with Paul Birch and Morven Hamilton at Riding Lights Theatre to discuss the Armed Forces Project. It is agreed that we will each write an original short play to be performed by the youth theatre students in March 2013.

29th October 2012

Ruby and I submit a proposal to Northern Stage@St. Stephen's under the company name Tempting Fate.

2nd November 2012

I submit *The Chain*, now redrafted and renamed as *The Ends*, to the Hightide Festival 2013.

17th November 2012

I attend the Bruntwood Roadshow at WYP, led by previous winner Ben Musgrave. The session is an enjoyable but unenlightening experience probably better suited to less experienced writers.

19th November 2012

I receive notification that our Northern Stage@St. Stephen's proposal has not been shortlisted.

3rd December 2012*

Morven Hamilton and I submit first drafts of our Armed Forces Project plays to Paul Birch at Riding Lights. Mine is called *Oceans*.

7th December 2012

I submit a first draft of *Quicksand* to Ruby Clarke.

10th December 2012

'Writing and Structuring Stage Dialogue' finishes. I feel I am more fluent in applying the principles of playwriting than last year, and have taught the course better as a result (despite a less motivated and well prepared cohort than 2011).

Student feedback is an improvement on 2011.

17th December 2012

Riding Lights director Jon Boustead gives notes on *Oceans*. It is in good shape and suitable for the age and ability of the actors.

18th December 2012

Ruby Clarke provides notes on the first draft of *Quicksand*. The problem of linking 2003 and 2013 in the play is discussed as a major concern for the second draft.

31st December 2012

I submit a second draft of *Quicksand* to Ruby Clarke. The time shift problem has been approached through contrasting monologues and the change in character over time, as well as the choice of stage images that suggest conditions for young people in 2013.

2nd January 2013*

Ruby Clarke and I launch a crowdfunding campaign for *Quicksand*, which is now on sale through York Theatre Royal. Given the time frame, we settle on a limited budget of £800 which we hope to raise prior to rehearsals, as there is insufficient time to approach larger funding bodies.

Involvement in producing the show and working with Ruby is giving me a better awareness of what is required in staging a low-budget show, and I find I am adapting my writing accordingly.

8th January 2013

I submit *The Ends* to Manchester's 24:7 Festival.

13th January 2013

Quicksand production meeting with Ruby Clarke. Further amendments to script suggested, based on our limited budget.

16th January 2013

Doctoral Upgrade meeting with Mary Luckhurst and Simon van der Borgh.

21st January 2013

Meeting with Katie King @ Riding Lights, who will be directing *Oceans* for the Armed Forces Project.

Katie suggests the material is suitable for 11-14 year old performers, and we agree on changes to the script to accommodate the demographic and abilities of the company. I add two characters, Lou and Cheri, to add comic material and provide suitable parts for some of the performers.

23rd January 2013

Quicksand auditions at TFTV with director Ruby Clarke and producer Cat Smith. Several candidates for each of the four roles audition. After a long discussion we settle on a cast. I would have preferred a different actor in the role of Youngy, but saw Ruby's point that her preference would probably work better with the ensemble.

Another very useful insight into the process of bringing a play to performance.

25th January 2013

I submit *The Ends* to Tobacco Factory Theatre's Scriptspace competition.

3rd February 2013*

Our Kickstarter campaign for *Quicksand* is successful, raising £840 in total. Together with a £350 production allowance from TFTV as part of my doctoral program, the use of TFTV rehearsal space, sound and lighting equipment, and marketing support from TakeOver Festival, we have the resources to produce a high quality show on a low budget. York Theatre Royal also pays for the venue.

Although the experience of producing *Quicksand* is invaluable and a vital platform for my work at a time when no others were available, the political ramifications of using unpaid actors and crew while still paying 40% of our box office to York Theatre Royal would raise questions explored in my doctoral research.

11th February 2013

First rehearsal for *Quicksand*. Rehearsals run over the following six weeks up until the day before the first performance.

4 March 2013

Begin supervising four 3rd year Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance undergraduates for their Independent Project in playwriting.

15 March 2013*

Interview with the Northern Echo about *Quicksand* and my experiences in Iraq.

18th March 2013

Interview with York Press about *Quicksand* and my experiences in Iraq.

19th March 2013

Quicksand dress rehearsal.

20th March 2013

Quicksand begins its run as part of TakeOver Festival 2013. We get decent audiences, with full houses on the Friday and Saturday nights. The general response is positive, although several audience members disliked the directness of the play.

21st March 2013*

Charles Hutchinson at York Press publishes a review of *Quicksand*. In hindsight, I would say the review is generous: praising the performances and passionate writing, while avoiding criticism of 'the closing polemic of controlled anger'.

3rd April 2013

Attend workshop for Julia Pascal's new play *Nineveh*, which is in rehearsal with Theatre Temoin in London, to offer consultation on military aspects in the play.

10th April 2013*

The Ends is not selected for performance at 24:7 Festival, but made it onto the shortlist. Feedback will be sent from the panel.

24th April 2013

The Ends is shortlisted for Tobacco Factory's Scriptspace competition.

14th May 2013

Join an interdisciplinary reading group set-up by Dr Claire Westall from the Department of English and Related Literature, which focusses on neoliberalism. The group is a great opportunity to connect with other doctoral researchers working on neoliberalism and find out more about the subject from new angles, as well as presenting my ideas on neoliberalism in theatre.

The group will meet several times before the Neoliberalism, Crisis and the World System Conference held at the University of York from 2-3 July 2013.

16th May 2013

Feedback is given by the 24:7 Festival panel. It is encouraging, with few criticisms, but also frustrating; clearly the play is engaging and in good shape, but hasn't made the final cut.

24th May 2013

Give a paper at the TFTV Postgraduate Symposium 2013 entitled 'A New Gold(en) Age: Theatre, Neoliberalism and the Emerging Artist. The paper is a summary of my research to date which will eventually culminate in my doctoral dissertation. The event provides an opportunity to elicit critical responses to my ideas and debate the issues explored with academic staff and fellow researchers alike.

28th May 2013*

The Ends is not selected by Tobacco Factory for development, but feedback is given.

14th June 2013

Mark 3rd year Independent Projects in playwriting with Dr Lisa Peschel. The process pushes me to defend my knowledge and opinions of playwriting theory and craft with an experienced playwright and writing tutor.

9th October 2013

Begin teaching the 3rd year undergraduate module Writing and Structuring Stage Dialogue for the second time. Also begin teaching the 3rd year undergraduate module The One Person Show for the first time.

10th October 2013

Visit the Liddle Collection at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, to begin researching local conscientious objectors for my third PhD play.

See Slung Low and pilot Theatre's *Blood and Chocolate* at York Theatre Royal. The production is a key example of participation-driven theatre that provides ample material for my research.

15th January 2014

Begin teaching on the 1st year undergraduate module From Script to Performance 2.

3rd February 2014

Meeting with fellow playwright Helen Cadbury to discuss a playwriting event for the upcoming Festival of Ideas 2014. We agree that a presentation of work-in-progress accompanied by a talk and discussion on our World War I themes would be possible.

4th February 2014

Visit the Liddle Collection at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, to conduct further research on local conscientious objectors.

4th March 2014

I submit *The Ends* to Theatre503 Five.

6th March 2014*

Receive confirmation from Centre for Lifelong Learning that my event for the Festival of Ideas will be included in the program.

Attend a research seminar at Birkbeck, University of London, on the meaning of Excellence in the current Arts Council England funding criteria. A range of views and interests are presented and discussed. Particularly valuable is a chance to hear ACE representatives defend their criteria against criticisms from theatre-makers and theatre researchers.

12th March 2014

Begin supervising six 3rd year undergraduates for their Independent Project in playwriting. This represents a chance to continue developing my teaching skills and knowledge of playwriting theory on a one-to-one basis.

22nd March 2014

Attend Script Yorkshire workshop on funding, with former Arts Council funding officer Steve Dearden. The event provides a useful insight into the discourses around funding and the concerns of theatre artists in the Yorkshire region. I arrange to meet Steve at a later date to discuss my research in more depth.

25th March 2014

Meet Damian Cruden, Artistic Director of York Theatre Royal, to discuss the production of *Quicksand* and further opportunities at the theatre. Receive valuable notes on the production and an offer of R&D in the future, but Cruden makes it clear that there are no opportunities for further productions at this time.

8th April 2014*

Submission of redrafted version of *The Ends* to Liverpool Everyman and Newcastle Live Theatre, the only producing theatres in the North with a substantial commitment to new writing.

23 April 2014

Begin teaching Lifelong Learning module The Drama of It All for the second time.

7th May 2014

Meet Steve Dearden to interview him about the changes occurring in publicly subsidised theatre and discuss my research.

9th May 2014*

Complete first draft of new play, *The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins*.

Director Mark Smith agrees to prepare play extracts for the Festival of Ideas event.

15th May 2014

See Simon Stephens' new play, *Birdland*, at the Royal Court.

21st May 2014

I submit *The Ends* to the Liverpool Hope Playwriting Prize.

25th May 2014*

Red on Blue is rejected by 42nd Theatre Company. Feedback is provided, but offers few insights.

29th May 2014

Meet with Mary Luckhurst to discuss *Quicksand*, *The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins*, and my dissertation research.

2 June 2014

See Bruntwood Prize-winning play *Britannia Waves the Rules* at the Royal Exchange theatre. The play focusses on the experiences of a young soldier in Iraq and used first-hand accounts of serving soldiers.

3rd June 2014

Meet Alan Lane, Artistic Director of Slung Low, to talk about how the company negotiates the current funding system and how this affects the work they produce.

10th June 2014

The Ends is not selected for Theatre503 Five.

13th June 2014

Thesis Advisory Panel with Mary Luckhurst and Simon van der Borgh to discuss *The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins*. The meeting produces excellent feedback and identifies strengths and weaknesses in the play, preparing me for further drafts.

18th June 2014

Participate in the Festival of Ideas event 'Theatre of War' with playwright Helen Cadbury and director Mark Smith.

4th August 2014*

The Ends is rejected by Live Theatre.

8th-10th August 2014

Take part in a writers' weekend set-up by playwright Jonathan Hall at Whitestone Arts in Haworth. Three writers bring ideas to work on with professional directors and actors over the course of the weekend with the aim of developing the ideas into characters and scenes. I make good progress on the development of the central relationship in *The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins*.

19 August 2014

Meet playwright Jonathan Hall to discuss the second draft of *The Uncivilised Warfare of Zeppelins*.

9th October 2014

I meet with Jonathan Hall, and two actors from the Whitestone weekend, Keeley Lane and Richard Galloway, who are interested in developing *Zeppelins*.

12th December 2014

Hold a reading of *Zeppelins* with Jonathan Hall, Richard Galloway and Keeley Lane, together with other actors and directors from Leeds/ Bradford. The play is really taking shape and signifying well, and more useful development notes emerge.

Preparations for a production are halted, however, by the successful funding of Keeley and Richard's own project. As I am focussed on my research and will be for some time, we agree to come back to the play in the summer with a view to a 2016 production (the centenary of conscientious objection).

21st January 2015

I submit *Zeppelins* to the Northern Writers' Awards 2015, which receives 900 entries.

12th June 2015

Zeppelins is not selected for the Northern Writers' Awards 2015.

18th June 2015

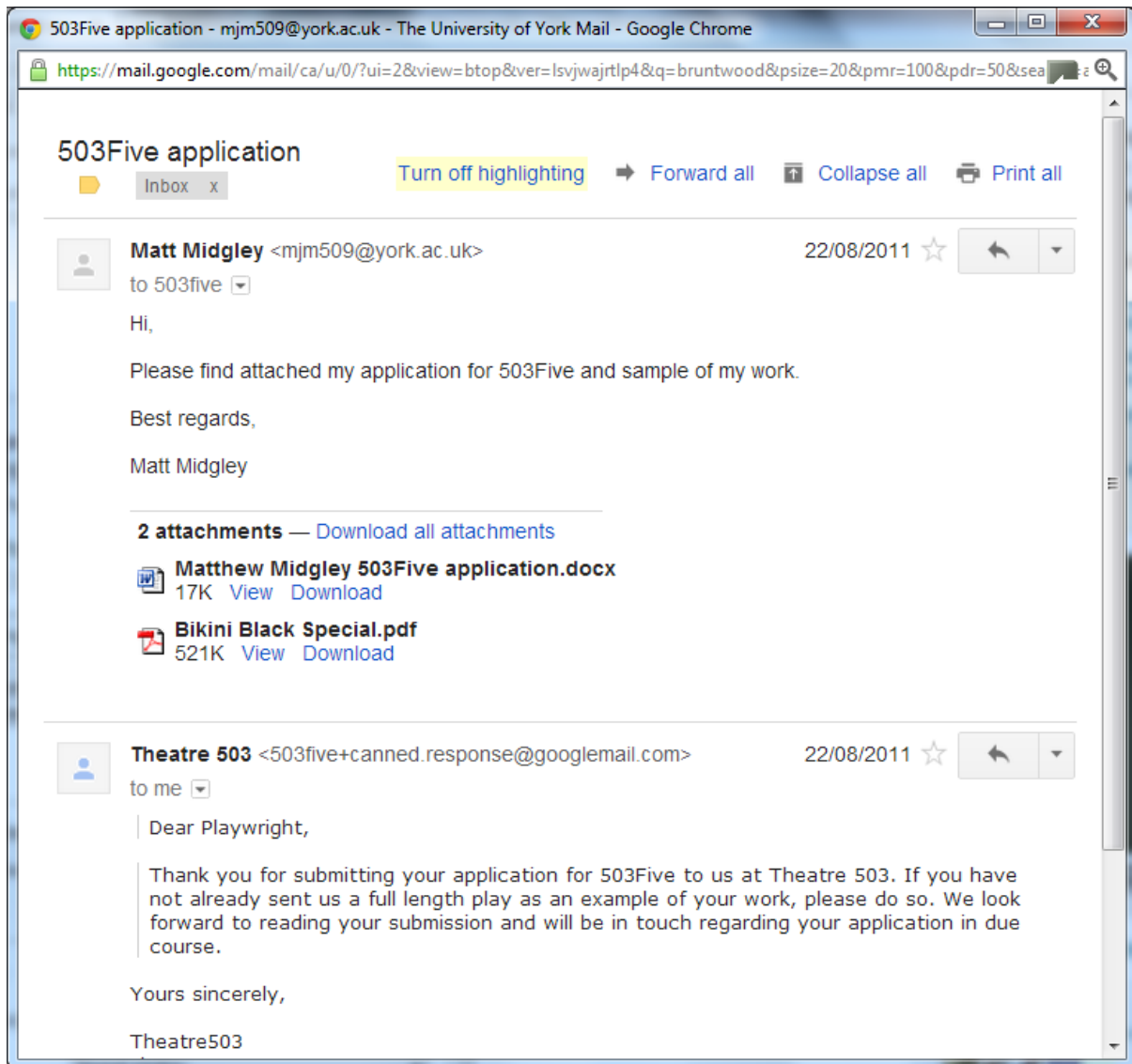
I submit *Zeppelins* to West Yorkshire Playhouse during their unsolicited script window.

28th July 2015

I meet with Jonathan Hall, who has read the latest draft of *Quicksand*. He was impressed with how it has improved from the production script. He asks permission to send it to West Yorkshire Playhouse's new literary manager, with whom he has a meeting.

Portfolio evidence

3rd October 2011



4th October 2011

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
Centre for Lifelong Learning

THE DRAMA OF IT ALL: WRITING FOR STAGE, SCREEN AND RADIO

Course leader: Matt Midgley (mjm509@york.ac.uk)

Credits: 10

Total Hours: 100

AIMS

Students will be led through the range of scriptwriting opportunities and taught the main characteristics required when writing for the areas of stage, screen and radio. In particular, the module aims at:

- Introducing students to the appropriate technical presentation and conventions for the various fields.
- Enhancing students' understanding of the need for clarity in writing scripts that others will perform.
- Develop students' awareness of the practicalities of staging, filming or recording.
- Offering opportunities for students to create their own pieces of sustained imaginative writing and through the processes of workshop critiquing share their work for the critical comments of others.
- Exploring elements of dramatic writing through reading, discussing and writing exercises that develop an understanding of:

- Monologue
- Dialogue
- Narrative
- Character
- Physical and vocal connections
- Introducing students to established writers in the field.
- Increasing students' awareness of the current opportunities for scriptwriters.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the module the student should:

- Have gained technical knowledge and insight into the world of scriptwriting.
- Know the differences between scripting conventions for the stage, the screen and the radio.
- Have produced a piece of sustained imaginative writing in the form of a script.
- Have explored and discussed published dramatic texts.
- Increased their critical judgment and their self-critical faculties with regard to the ongoing improvement of their writing through the critiquing workshops.

SYLLABUS

The module is organised around eleven workshops. We will begin by discussing the basics of dramatic writing, applicable to all formats and styles, before going on to spending two weeks discussing each format and its particular demands individually.

As writers are always keen readers, students will develop their own skills by reading work by other writers: each week there will be a recommended "anchor text" that will help guide the discussion. Students are urged to complete this reading wherever possible, but are very welcome to bring any of their own reading to bear on the conversation.

Throughout the module, students will be expected to produce ideas, notes, plans and short pieces of work that will be discussed through peer review. More information on writing assignments will be providing during the course. The aim is to spend half of each seminar on analysis of established writers and half on developing students' own work.

Week	Date	Workshop	Anchor Text
1	04/10	Basics of dramatic writing #1	Bennett, <i>40 Years On</i>
2	11/10	Basics of dramatic writing #2	Pinter, <i>Betrayal</i>
3	18/10	Stage #1	Stephens, <i>Pornography</i>
4	25/10	Stage #2	Mamet, <i>Oleanna</i>
5	01/11	Radio #1	Chappell, <i>This Isn't Romance</i>
6	08/11	Radio #2	Hare, <i>Murder in Samarkand</i>
7	15/11	Television #1	Armstrong, <i>The Thick of It</i>
8	22/11	Television #2	McGovern, <i>The Street</i>
9	29/11	Film #1	Ball, <i>American Beauty</i>
10	06/12	Film #2	Laverty, <i>My Name is Joe</i>
11	13/12	Towards Production	

Teaching Hours: 22

Private Study: 66

Assessment: 12

ASSESSMENT

All students will be required to submit, after the module has concluded, a script of 2000 words written for television, cinema, stage or radio. Students are encouraged to produce a short, complete script rather than an extract from a proposed longer piece. This is to ensure students engage with all stages of the writing process from beginning to end.

In addition, students will submit a critical commentary of 750 words that outlines the inspiration for the script, its imaginative development and some discussion of the stylistic models that have influenced it.

READING LIST

A broad and inquisitive reading mind will be very valuable throughout this module, and students are welcome to draw on any writers and novels they wish in order to explore their craft, hone their skills and communicate their ideas. Below are a list of the texts that will guide us through the workshops on a week-by-week basis, and a list of instructional books that students may find helpful.

Anchor Texts:

Note: some weeks we will be working with the result of a script—the film or television/radio programme—and some weeks we will be working with the script itself. Thus, you do not need to read every script for every film or programme we will discuss. Clearly this does not apply to plays, all of which will be studied through stageplays. Below is a list of all the texts you need to read, watch or listen to.

American Beauty. DVD. Directed by Sam Mendes. Universal City, CA: Dreamworks, 1999.

Ball, Alan. *American Beauty: Screenplay*. London: Channel 4 Books, 2000.

Stephens, Simon. *Pornography*. London: Methuen, 2008.

Pinter, Harold. *Betrayal*. In *Plays:Four*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.

Mamet, David. *Oleanna*. London: Methuen, 2001.

Bennett, Alan. *Forty Years On*. In *Plays:One*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.

My Name is Joe. DVD. FilmFour Video, 1998.

Laverty, Paul. *My Name is Joe*. Suffolk: Screenpress Books, 1998.

Armstrong, Jesse. *The Thick of It: The Scripts*. London: Hodder and Staughton, 2007.

The Thick of It: The Complete First Series. DVD. BBC, 2005.

The Street: Complete BBC 1 Series. DVD. ITV Home Studios Entertainment. 2006.

Recommended Reading:

Ayckbourn, Alan. *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

Bennett, Alan. *Talking Heads*. London: BBC Books, 1998.

Caulfield, Annie. *Writing for Radio: A Practical Guide*. Marlborough: Crowood, 2009.

Davis, Rib. *Writing Dialogue for Scripts*. London: A & C Black, 2003.

Singleton, John and Mary Luckhurst. *The Creative Writing Handbook*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook 2011. London: A and C Black, 2010.

Edgar, David. *How Plays Work*. London: Nick Hern, 2009.

Field, Syd. *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2005

11th October 2011

Writing and Structuring Stage Dialogue – Module Outline

Week One

No class, admin week.

Week Two

Texts: *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.

Teaching aims: Dramatic action

This session will introduce students to the concept of dramatic action and its fundamental importance to playwriting. What do we mean by this word action, with its multifarious meanings and uses? How does story differ from plot? The importance of contradiction or conflict in dramatic action will be explored through the barely tangible momentum of Beckett's masterpiece, in seeking to understand that there is much dramatic action in a play where seemingly not a lot happens. The aims will be achieved through analytical close reading exercises and group discussions.

Week Three

Texts: *Beautiful Burnout* by Bryony Lavery

Teaching aims: Dialogue and Style

This session will refer back to previous texts in comparison to Lavery's highly stylized piece. How does the style of a play or scene impact upon the words spoken by the characters? What influence does register, tone and subject have on the effectiveness of dialogue? Students should gain a sensitivity to different modes and styles before beginning to work on a 5 minute highly stylized scene to be presented in the following week.

Week Four

Texts: *Ashes to Ashes* by Harold Pinter

Teaching aims: Dialogue and function

The first half of the session will hear and feed back on a selection of 5 minute pieces. The second half will expand on elements of character motivation and dramatic structure explored in previous sessions, where the function of dialogue will be looked at closely. There is always a reason for characters to speak, but what else can the

playwright communicate in a line? Is the function of dialogue always apparent? Does it need to be? Practical writing exercises will begin developing a 5 minute poetic dialogue for presentation in the following week.

Week Five

Texts: *Gone Too Far!* By Bola Agbaje and *Crave* by Sarah Kane

Teaching aims: Dialogue and rhythm

The first half of the session will hear and feed back on a selection of 5 minute pieces. In the final session of textual analysis students will gain an understanding of the role of rhythm in stage dialogue, its potential and effect both textually and in performance. A performance exercise will allow the group to hear sections of *Crave* and attempt to engage with the rhythm in Kane's formally challenging dialogue. Students will begin thinking about the demands and possibilities of the 30 minute module assessment, in preparation for a workshop the following week where they will have the opportunity to present an early draft or ideas for scenes.

Week Six

Texts: *Some Explicit Polaroids* by Mark Ravenhill.

Teaching aims: Character

Exploration of the fundamentals of character. What are the principals that define dramatic character? How do we dissect and analyse a script looking for character clues? Close reading exercises will lead to practical writing exercises where students begin creating their own characters.

Submission of first draft of assessment piece by **Thursday at 4pm.**

Week Seven

Texts: *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter and *Far Away* by Caryl Churchill

Teaching aims: Dramatic structure

This session will provide students with an understanding of the mechanics of dramatic structure in order to help them construct stage dialogues. Textual analysis will focus on goals, obstacles and conflict within scenes and how they are used to build larger units of dramatic narrative such as scenes and acts. Practical writing exercises will encourage students to shape dialogues while also practicing skills learnt in previous weeks.

Tutorials will be arranged to give feedback on first drafts.

Week Eight

Texts: n/a

Teaching aims: Development and redrafting

The majority of the session will be devoted to students' own writing in preparation for the assessment piece. Students will have six or seven minutes each to present their ideas and receive feedback. They should aim to present their ideas in terms of character and play action, as discussed in Week One, clearly and quickly to enable everyone to have the opportunity to present. How would you summarise what the play is about in two sentences? Can you also do this for each character? Teaching will introduce tools for development and redrafting.

Week Nine

Texts: n/a

Teaching aims: redrafting

A greater focus on the redrafting process will help students to build upon the material they already have. Useful exercises and some analysis of the redrafting process of established writers will provide students with the tools they need to make their own process effective.

Week Ten

Texts: n/a

Teaching aims: workshop

The session will focus entirely on students' progress so far, allowing them to hear their work read aloud and gain some audience reaction to it before they begin working on the assessed piece in earnest over the Christmas break.

1st November 2011

Matthew Midgley
9 Cameron Grove
York
YO23 1LE

November 1, 2011

Bush Theatre
7 Uxbridge Road
London
W12 8LJ

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. My play achieved the highest mark ever awarded and Mary is encouraging me to send my work out, recommending the Bush as a place where new playwrights are given time and space to develop.

As for me, I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. The MA at the University of York was the first step and I am now employed there as a playwriting tutor on the undergraduate programs.

Red on Blue is my second play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and the recent abuse trials involving the British Army. It follows a severely disrupted double time-structure and ranges across a variety of dramatic modes.

I feel that our entire involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been wrong and feel sympathy toward the men and women who have served, and died, in those theatres. But I also find the current cult of heroism problematic: for many veterans, the reality is far from rose-tinted media stereotype and the violence that occurred in Iraq and continues to occur on our streets is merely the tip of the iceberg. Psychologically, the worst is yet to come for thousands of soldiers and inevitably it will impact negatively on our society.

The play seeks to explore some of these concerns from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it.

November 1, 2011

David Thacker
The Octagon Theatre
Howell Croft South
Bolton
BL1 1SB

Dear David,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutors, Professor Mary Luckhurst and Professor Mike Cordner. My play *Red on Blue* achieved the highest mark ever within the Department and they recommended you as a director who may be interested in my work.

I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. Having finished the MA and with two plays under my belt, I am now seeking production.

Bikini Black Special is my first play and is very closely informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq, following a linear structure with a small cast. My second play, *Red on Blue*, is also informed by my experiences but more so by the recent abuse trials involving men of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment. It is more ambitious following a severely disrupted double time-structure and ranging across a variety of dramatic modes.

I feel that our entire involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been wrong and feel sympathy toward the men and women who have served, and died, in those theatres.

But I also find the current cult of heroism problematic: for many veterans, the reality is far from rose-tinted media stereotype and the violence that occurred in Iraq and continues to occur on our streets is merely the tip of the iceberg. Psychologically, the worst is yet to come for thousands of soldiers and inevitably it will impact negatively on our society.

The plays seek to explore some of these concerns from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading them and would love to hear what you think.

November 1, 2011

Suzanne Bell
Literary Manager
Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse
13 Hope Street
Liverpool
L1 9BH

Dear Suzanne,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. Having held readings of my play, *Bikini Black Special*, at the University of York she believes my work is ready for production and recommended I begin seeking a home for it. I'll be coming to the Everyman festival next weekend and am impressed with the apparent dedication to new writing shown.

As for me, I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. The MA at the University of York was the first step and I am now employed there as a playwriting tutor on the undergraduate programs.

Bikini Black Special is my first play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and follows a soldier on guard duty at the gates of Saddam's former palace in Basra through the course of a day, where an encounter with a local boy, the impending birth of his son back in England, and a strange new interpreter combine to test the soldier's belief in his task.

The play seeks to explore the soldier's life from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it and that you see something in it worth pursuing further.

November 1, 2011

Will Mortimer
Literary Department
Hampstead Theatre
Etons Avenue, Swiss Cottage
London
NW3 3EU

Dear Will,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. She's had a close relationship with the Hampstead in the past and thinks I would be an excellent candidate for creative development. She was Nick Payne's tutor and believes I can go on to have similar success.

I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist.

Red on Blue is my second play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and the recent abuse trials involving the British Army. It follows a severely disrupted double time-structure and ranges across a variety of dramatic modes.

I feel that our entire involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been wrong and feel sympathy toward the men and women who have served, and died, in those theatres. But I also find the current cult of heroism problematic: for many veterans, the reality is far from rose-tinted media stereotype and the violence that occurred in Iraq and continues to occur on our streets is merely the tip of the iceberg. Psychologically, the worst is yet to come for thousands of soldiers and inevitably it will impact negatively on our society.

The play seeks to explore some of these concerns from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it.

November 1, 2011

Jonathan Church
Chichester Festival Theatre
Oaklands Park
Chichester, PO19 6AP

Dear Jonathan,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York. Recently my play *Red on Blue* achieved the highest mark ever within the Department and they recommended you as a director who may be interested in my work.

I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. Having finished the MA and with two plays under my belt, I am now seeking production.

Bikini Black Special is my first play and is very closely informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq, following a linear structure with a small cast. My second play, *Red on Blue*, is also informed by my experiences but more so by the recent abuse trials involving the British Army. It is more ambitious following a severely disrupted double time-structure and ranging across a variety of dramatic modes.

I feel Britain's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been wrong and feel sympathy toward the men and women who have served, and died, in those theatres. But I also find the current cult of heroism problematic: for many veterans, the reality is far from rose-tinted media stereotype and the violence that occurred in Iraq and continues to occur on our streets is merely the tip of the iceberg. Psychologically, the worst is yet to come for thousands of soldiers and inevitably it will impact negatively on our society.

The plays seek to explore some of these concerns from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading them and would love to hear what you think.

November 1, 2011

Sebastian Born
National Theatre
South Bank
London
SE1 9PX

Dear Sebastian,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. She met executives at NT last year and they encouraged her to recommend outstanding work. My play *Red on Blue* recently achieved the highest mark ever awarded and so here it is.

I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. After my MA I was employed as a playwriting tutor on our undergraduate program at the University of York.

Red on Blue is my second play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and the recent abuse trials involving the British Army. It follows a severely disrupted double time-structure and ranges across a variety of dramatic modes.

I feel that our entire involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been wrong and feel sympathy toward the men and women who have served, and died, in those theatres. But I also find the current cult of heroism problematic: for many veterans, the reality is far from rose-tinted media stereotype and the violence that occurred in Iraq and continues to occur on our streets is merely the tip of the iceberg. Psychologically, the worst is yet to come for thousands of soldiers and inevitably it will impact negatively on our society.

The play seeks to explore some of these concerns from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it.

November 1, 2011

Paul Stacey
Literary Office
Old Red Lion Theatre
418 St John Street
London
EC1V 4NJ

Dear Paul,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. Having held readings of my play, *Bikini Black Special*, at the University of York she believes my work is ready for production and recommended I begin seeking a home for it. She recommended the Old Red Lion as a good producer of new playwrights.

As for me, I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. The MA at the University of York was the first step and I am now employed there as a playwriting tutor on the undergraduate programs.

Bikini Black Special is my first play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and follows a soldier on guard duty at the gates of Saddam's former palace in Basra through the course of a day, where an encounter with a local boy, the impending birth of his son back in England, and a strange new interpreter combine to test the soldier's belief in his task.

The play seeks to explore the soldier's life from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it and that you see something in it worth pursuing further.

November 1, 2011

Christopher Campbell
Royal Court Theatre
Sloane Square
London

SW1 8AS

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. Mary spoke to Max Stafford-Clark about my work and he recommended I write to you. My play achieved the highest mark ever awarded and Mary is encouraging me to send my work out to theatres with an interest in new writing, of which the Royal Court is undoubtedly the most renowned.

I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist. I am currently employed as a playwriting tutor at the University of York.

Red on Blue is my second play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and the recent abuse trials involving the British Army. It follows a severely disrupted double time-structure and for this reason a detailed synopsis would be impossible.

What follows is the significant events of the play in chronological order, not as they unfold in the play. I have left out the ending so as not to dissipate the tension in the rest of the play. I hope you enjoy reading it.

November 1, 2011

Writers Centre Assistant
Soho Theatre
21 Dean Street
London
W1D 3NE

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have been encouraged to write to you by my former MA tutor, Professor Mary Luckhurst. Having held readings of my play, *Bikini Black Special*, at the University of York she believes my work is ready for production and recommended the Soho Theatre as a good home for new playwrights.

I spent seven years in the military and came to higher education late. I began writing plays two years ago and made the decision to do what was necessary to become a professional dramatist.

Bikini Black Special is my first play. It is informed by my experiences as a British soldier in Iraq and follows a soldier on guard duty at the gates of Saddam's former palace in Basra through the course of a day, where an encounter with a local boy, the impending birth of his son back in England, and a strange new interpreter combine to test the soldier's belief in his task.

The play seeks to explore the soldier's life from a human perspective, through the characters' experiences. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Dear Matt,

Thank you for sending us your play **Red On Blue**

Our core artistic team will read the play over the next few weeks and we'll get back to you shortly. Please be aware that as we are in a period of production it may take longer than four weeks, however we'll endeavour to reply to you as quickly as possible.

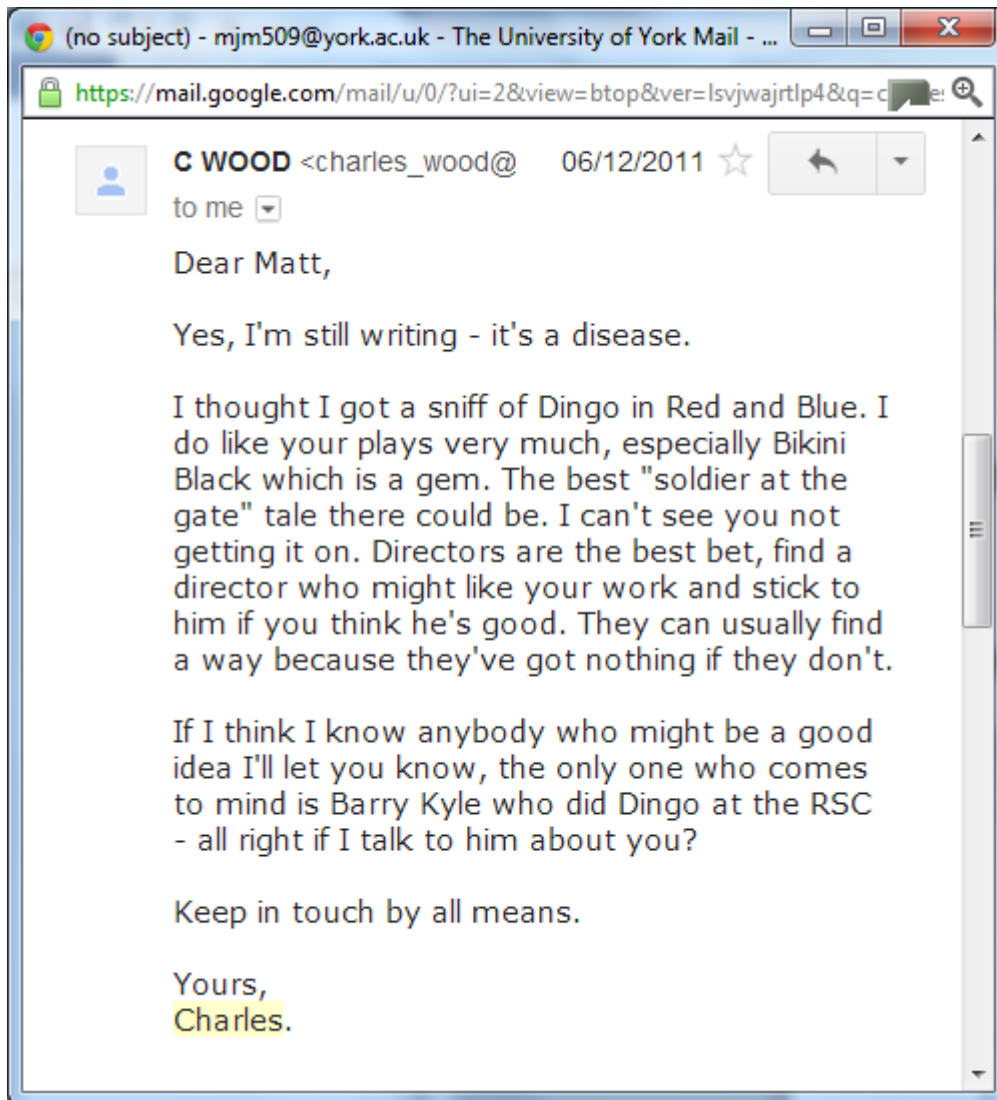
Please could you also fill in and email over an Equal Opportunities Form which can be found on our website here: <http://www.painesplough.com/about-us/get-involved>

Thank you and best wishes,

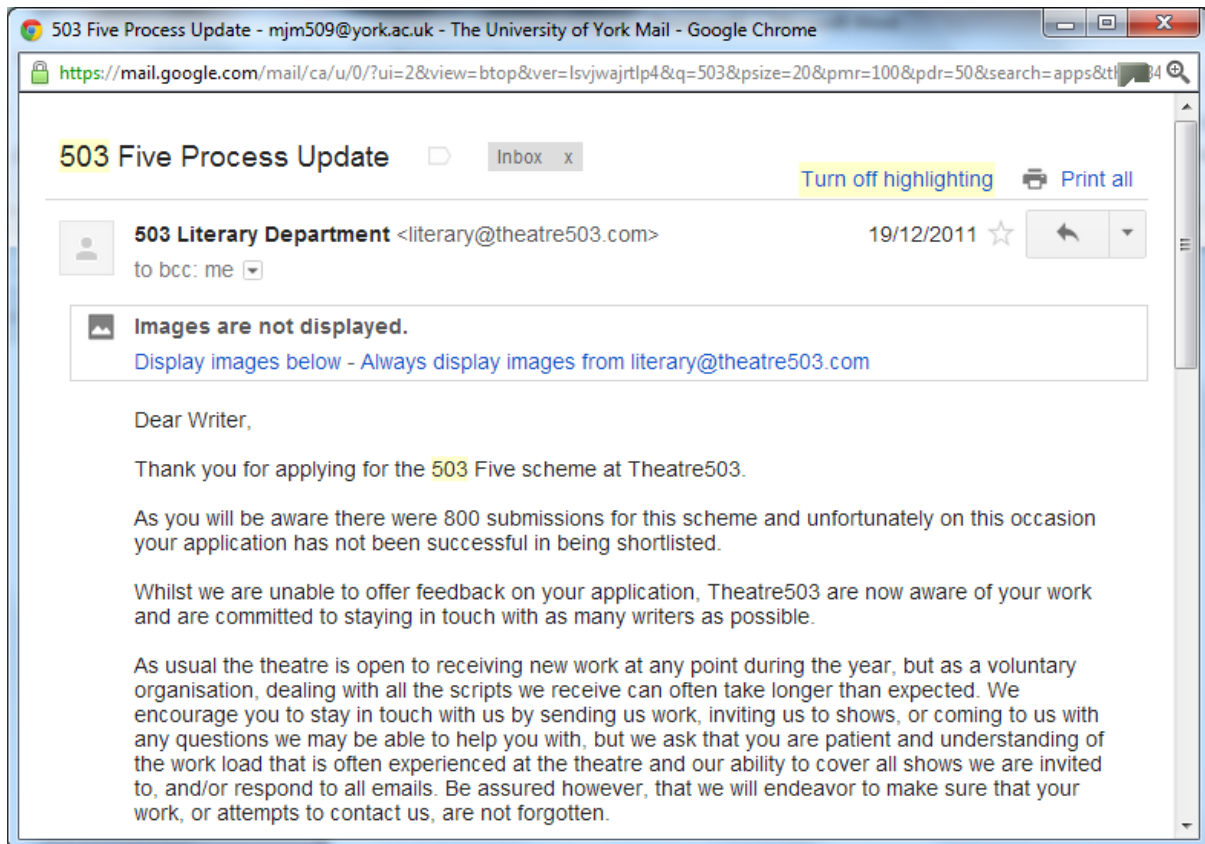
Sean

Sean Linnen
Administrative Intern
Paines Plough

3rd December 2011



19th December 2011



23rd December 2011

Dear Matt Midgley,

Thank you so much for sending us your play **Red On Blue**, and thank you for your interest in Paines Plough. Unfortunately, while we thoroughly enjoyed reading it, it is not one that we wish to pursue into a Paines Plough production at this time. However, we really appreciate you taking the time to send it to us, and wish you all the very best with finding a home for your play.

Best wishes,

Sean

Sean Linnen
Administrative Intern
Paines Plough

11th January 2012

11/01/12

Matthew Midgley
9 Cameron Grove
York YO23 1LE



13 Hope Street Liverpool L1 9BH

Administration

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www.everymanplayhouse.com

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Artistic Director Gemma Bodinetz

Executive Director Deborah Aydon

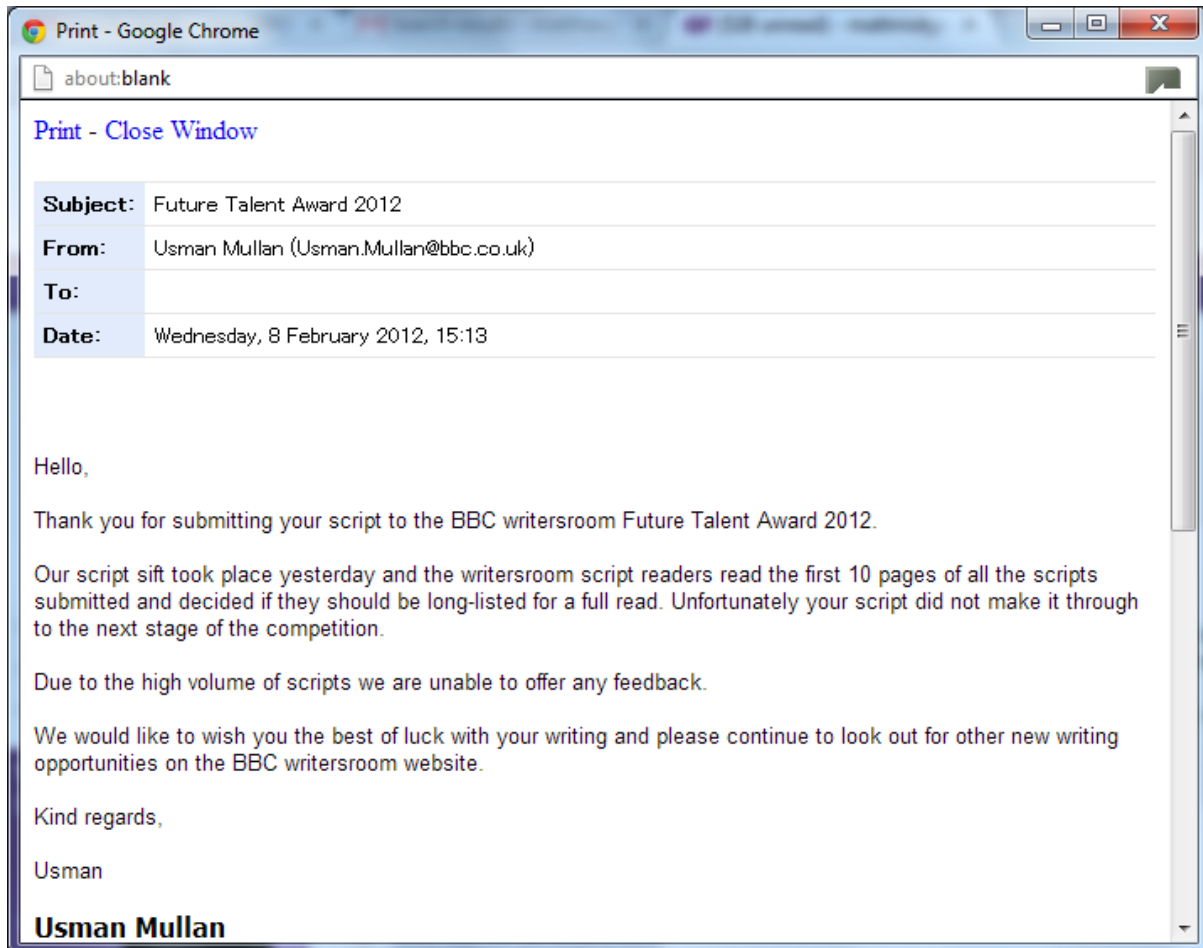
Dear Matthew

Bikini Black Special

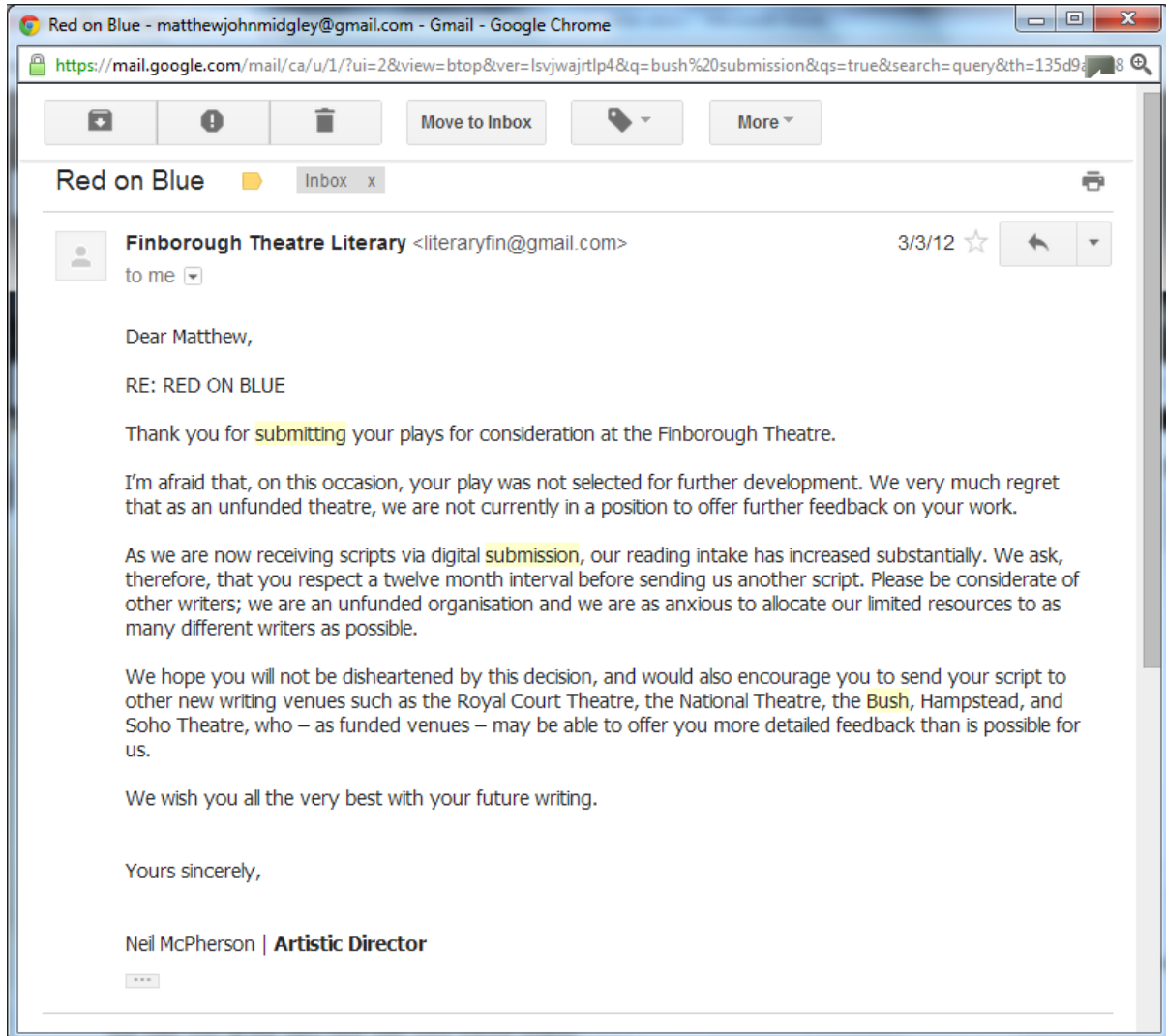
Thank you for sending the above script, which we read with interest. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding but we have been inundated with scripts and wished to give your work the dedicated time and attention it deserves. I hope you found the Soho Theatre & Writers' Centre workshop during the Everyword festival useful. The script is a powerful evocation of the nervousness, uncertainty, irritation and danger of military life and the characters are well-observed.

As I am sure you know, the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse are only able to produce a limited number of scripts each year and with the refurbishment of the Everyman Theatre scheduled to continue until end of 2013, we are currently programmed for the foreseeable future with a number of projects in development. While this doesn't mean that we aren't engaging with practitioners, I hope you don't mind me being honest about the practical situation we find ourselves in. While the piece is a searing exploration of the human aspect of trust and betrayal, we did question what you wanted to say about the broader elements of cultural trust and betrayal in terms of the British occupation of the area and what questions you wish to ask of the audience in terms of our relationship to the themes you explore in the piece. How is the Solider a symbol of the British occupation and what does Rafid's betrayal say about the complexity of the situation? I would suggest that there is more to discover in the characters of Foxy and Moff in terms of their distinctive characteristics – at present they risk becoming foils for the Soldier and therefore arguably superfluous. The scenes outside the barracks, while vivid and believable, did feel slightly filmic and once the excitability of the crowds, the uselessness of Golf One and the suspiciousness of the interpreters have been established, we did question how the scenes alter and shift our perception of the narrative.

8th February 2012



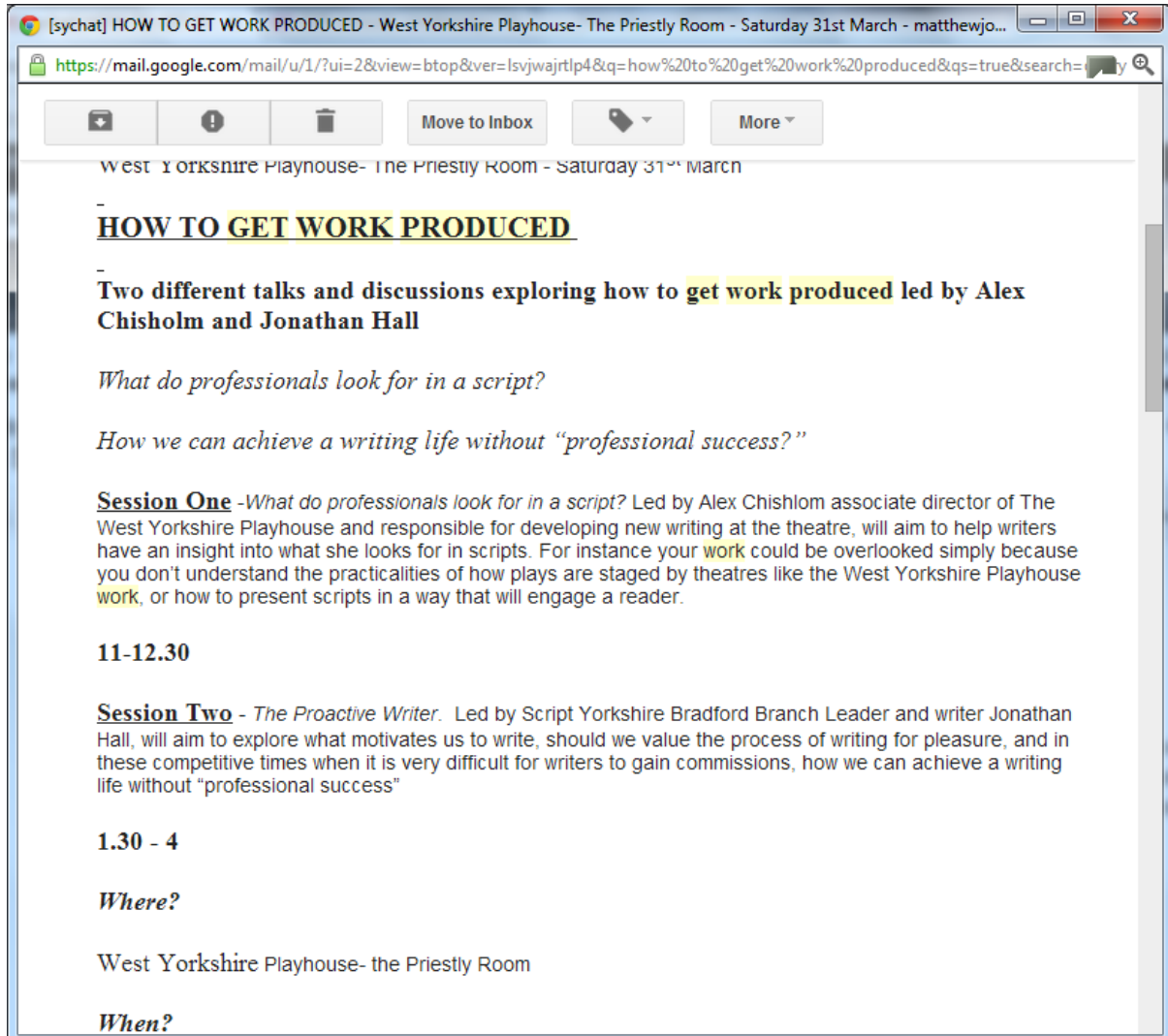
3rd March 2012



6th March 2012

<p style="text-align: center;">Activating Theatre: people participating, performing politics 6th March 2012, 9.00- 4.30, Stage@leeds building, University of Leeds Outline programme</p>		
09.00 – 09.30	Coffee and registration	
09.30 – 10.45	<p>Alec Clegg Studio</p> <p>09.30 Welcome - Susan Daniels, International Director for the Faculty of Performance, Visual Arts and Communications</p> <p>09.45 Introduction and discussion of key themes: <i>How theatre and performance work to change individuals and society; How the past can inform our present and future; Community witnessing and the reflective process of this meeting.</i></p> <p>Opening presentations from Rod Dixon of Red Ladder and Roland Muldoon of CAST, the Hackney Empire and New Variety.</p>	
10.45 – 11.45	Parallel sessions (presentations)	
	<p>Alec Clegg Studio</p> <p>Pandemonium Theatre Collective on politics and community theatre, with Damian Dawtry, Tim Dawtry and Karen Dennis.</p>	<p>Room G11 A</p> <p>Katie Beswick on the representation of council estates in contemporary theatre</p> <p>Sabina Shah on the Portrayal of the Muslim female (using puppetry, animation and film)</p>
		<p>Room G11 B</p> <p>Anna Seymour on Dramatherapy, theatre and politics</p> <p>Evette Hunkins-Hutchinson on drama in community health in the UK and Malawi.</p>
11.45 – 12.00	Break	
12.00 – 1.00	Parallel sessions (workshops)	
	<p>Alec Clegg Studio</p> <p>Beth Shaw on Domestic Theatre, participatory community drama</p>	<p>Room G11</p> <p>Delia Muir on the roles patients can play in dialogues in health research</p>
1.00 – 1.45	Lunch and exhibition in foyer	
1.45 – 2.45	<p>Alec Clegg Studio</p> <p>Performance and discussion with students from Leeds Open Theatre</p>	
2.45 – 3.00	Break	
3.00 – 4.15	<p>Alec Clegg Studio</p> <p>Plenary panel and workshop <i>Theatre, performance and change</i> community, practitioner and academic witnesses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Knight, Independent Artist Researcher, Associate Editor of Journal of Arts & Communities • Members of North West Spanner Theatre • Susan Daniels • Anna Seymour, British Association of Drama Therapists 	
4.15 – 4.30	Closing comments on the day and the future	

31st March 2012



[sychat] HOW TO GET WORK PRODUCED - West Yorkshire Playhouse- The Priestly Room - Saturday 31st March - matthewjo...

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ui=2&view=bt&ver=lsvjwajrtlp4&q=how%20to%20get%20work%20produced&q=1&search=>

West Yorkshire Playhouse- The Priestly Room - Saturday 31st March

HOW TO GET WORK PRODUCED

Two different talks and discussions exploring how to **get work produced** led by Alex Chisholm and Jonathan Hall

What do professionals look for in a script?

How we can achieve a writing life without “professional success?”

Session One - *What do professionals look for in a script?* Led by Alex Chisholm associate director of The West Yorkshire Playhouse and responsible for developing new writing at the theatre, will aim to help writers have an insight into what she looks for in scripts. For instance your **work** could be overlooked simply because you don't understand the practicalities of how plays are staged by theatres like the West Yorkshire Playhouse **work**, or how to present scripts in a way that will engage a reader.

11-12.30

Session Two - *The Proactive Writer*. Led by Script Yorkshire Bradford Branch Leader and writer Jonathan Hall, will aim to explore what motivates us to write, should we value the process of writing for pleasure, and in these competitive times when it is very difficult for writers to gain commissions, how we can achieve a writing life without “professional success”

1.30 - 4

Where?

West Yorkshire Playhouse- the Priestly Room

When?

3rd April 2012

From: nquinn@theagency.co.uk
To: hall_jonathan@hotmail.com
Date: Tue, 3 Apr 2012 09:16:52 +0100
Subject: RE: RED ON BLUE by Matt Midgley

Thanks if you let me him know I'd love to read the next thing he writes that would be great.
NX

From: Jonathan Hall [mailto:hall_jonathan@hotmail.com]
Sent: 03 April 2012 09:09
To: Nick Quinn
Subject: RE: RED ON BLUE by Matt Midgley
That's great Nick-

I'm meeting him today and will pass on this email to him and give him your contact details if that's okay

Jonathan

From: nquinn@theagency.co.uk
To: hall_jonathan@hotmail.com
Date: Tue, 3 Apr 2012 09:02:50 +0100
Subject: RED ON BLUE by Matt Midgley

Dear Jonathan

Thanks for letting me read this it's an extraordinary piece of work. The ear for dialogue and the dramatic tension are brilliantly handled. Thematically this is important writing and the themes themselves are treated with great skill. If I had any criticisms I'd say at points some of the speeches are overwritten (e.g. the courtroom scenes pg 36/37). The second half cracks along and the first half I think needs some judicious cuts to give it the pace of the second act. I'd certainly like to read a second draft or for that matter anything else this guy has written. He can write no doubt about it.

Nick

10th April 2012

ROYAL COURT

10 April 2012

Matthew Midgley
9 Cameron Grove
York
YO23 1LE

Dear Matthew

Red on Blue

Thank you for sending us your play *Red on Blue*, and apologies for the delay in responding. Unfortunately, we have a small backlog of submissions at present.

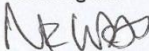
The bold and complex narrative is structured with confidence; we enjoyed reading the script. The thriller element brings an added layer of tension, and the dialogue is robust. Your knowledge of the world of the play is a great strength in the writing. The themes of the play (religion, race, violence) are ambitious and provocative, but we do feel that the ending risks being oblique; perhaps exploring these themes with as much boldness as is already shown in the structure might uncover even more forceful comment upon these themes. This is, of course, less a reflection on the quality of the writing than on the programming of the Royal Court, where we aim to investigate and analyse our present values.

We're very glad to have been introduced to your work, Matthew, but I'm afraid that after consideration we've decided not to take this particular play further. As I am sure you appreciate, only a fraction of the plays sent here can be produced. However, we offer you every encouragement with your writing in general, and we invite you to send us your next play, which we look forward to reading.

Also, we thought you may enjoy reading *Vera Vera Vera* by Hayley Squires, which shares some similar territory.

Thank you for thinking of us.

Kind regards



Nic Wass
Senior Reader

[Enc.]

Sloane Square
London SW1W 8AS

Telephone
020 7565 5050

Box Office
020 7565 5000

Fax
020 7565 5001

E-mail
info@royalcourttheatre.com

Web
www.royalcourttheatre.com

The Jerwood Theatres
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No. 539332 (London)

26th April 2012



Matthew Midgley
9 Cameron Grove
York
YO23 1LE

26 April 2012

Re. RED ON BLUE

Dear Matthew Midgley,

Thank you for sending us your play and also for your patience in awaiting a reply.

I am sorry to disappoint you but on this occasion we have decided not to take this play any further at Hampstead Theatre.

We have recently changed our policy on providing feedback on scripts that we receive at the theatre. We feel it is more beneficial to writers to only offer feedback on scripts we are committed to taking further and where we can be fully engaged with the writer and script in its future life. That said, however, we very much enjoyed reading your play and thought it showed great promise. We would be very happy for you to send us your next full length play and would look forward to reading it.

I am sorry we are unable to take this particular play forward at Hampstead theatre, but wish you good luck with its future life and with all your writing projects.

For information on our assessment process please look on our website at: www.hampsteadtheatre.com

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Mortimer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Will Mortimer
Literary Manager

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE
Eton Avenue
Swiss Cottage
London NW3 3EU

T 020 7449 4200
F 020 7449 4201
info@hampsteadtheatre.com

TICKETS & INFORMATION
020 7722 9301
hampsteadtheatre.com

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Edward Hall

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Greg Ripley-Duggan

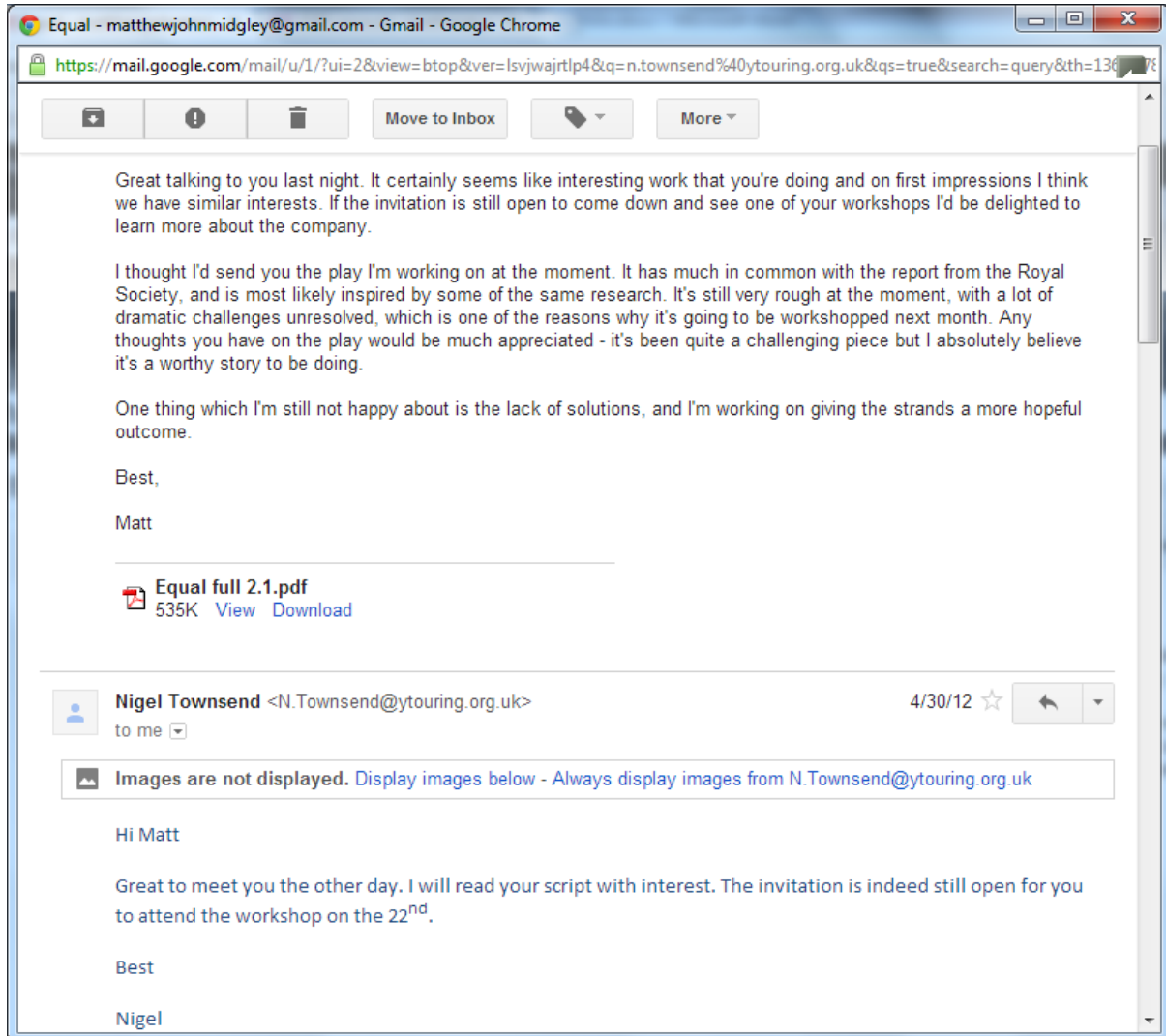
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(Chair)
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Larry Billett
Alex Graham
Paul Jenkins QC
Amanda Jones
Dan Marks
Tim Pigott-Smith
Jeremy Sandelson
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Michael Frayn
Sir Eddie Kullukundis OBE
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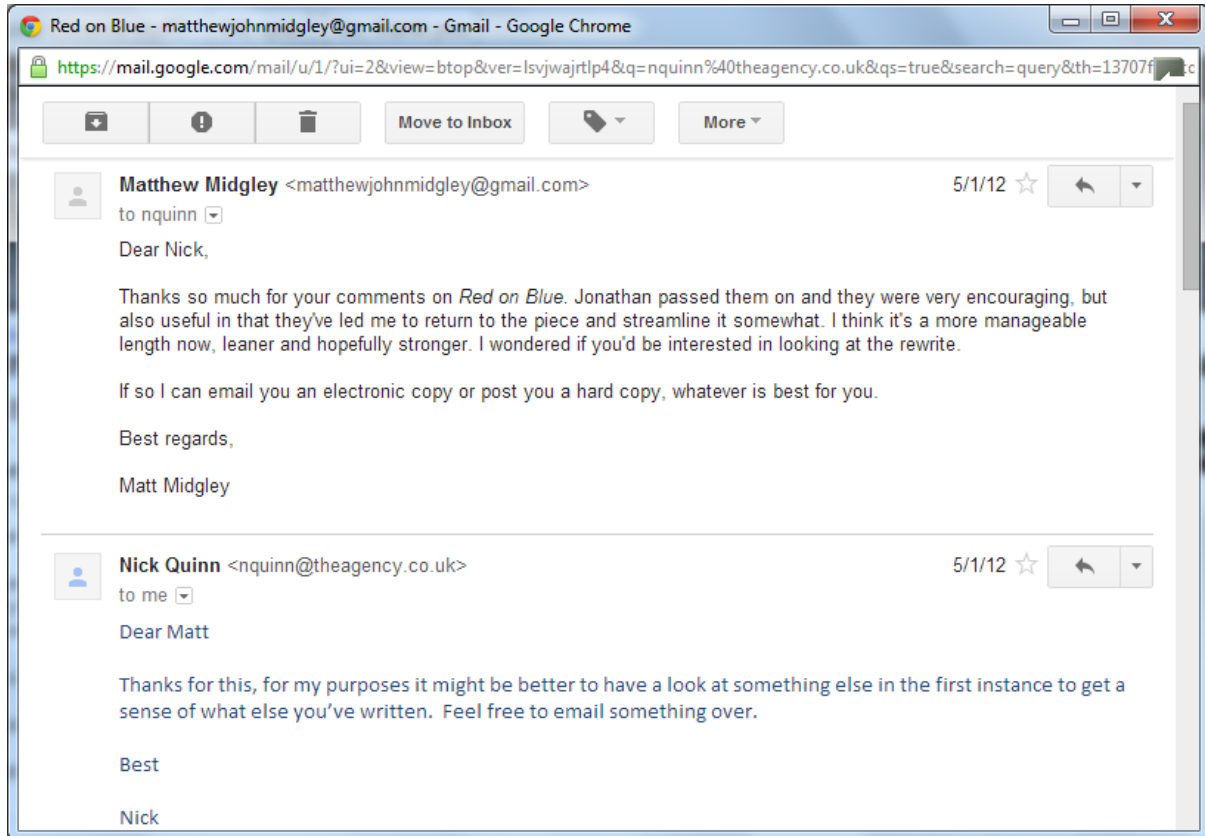
Hampstead Theatre Ltd
Registered in England
Eton Avenue
London NW3 3EU

Charity Registration No 218506
Company Registration No 00707180
VAT No 817 3927 65

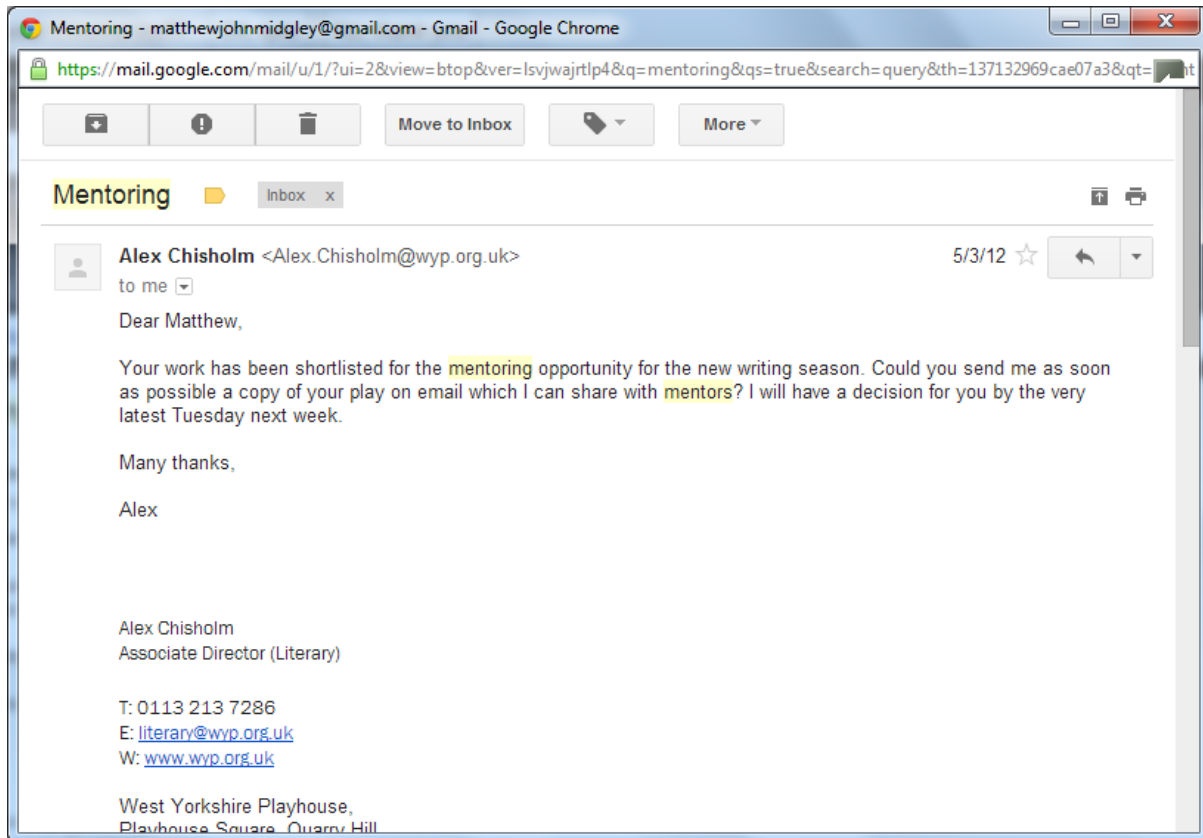
28th April 2012



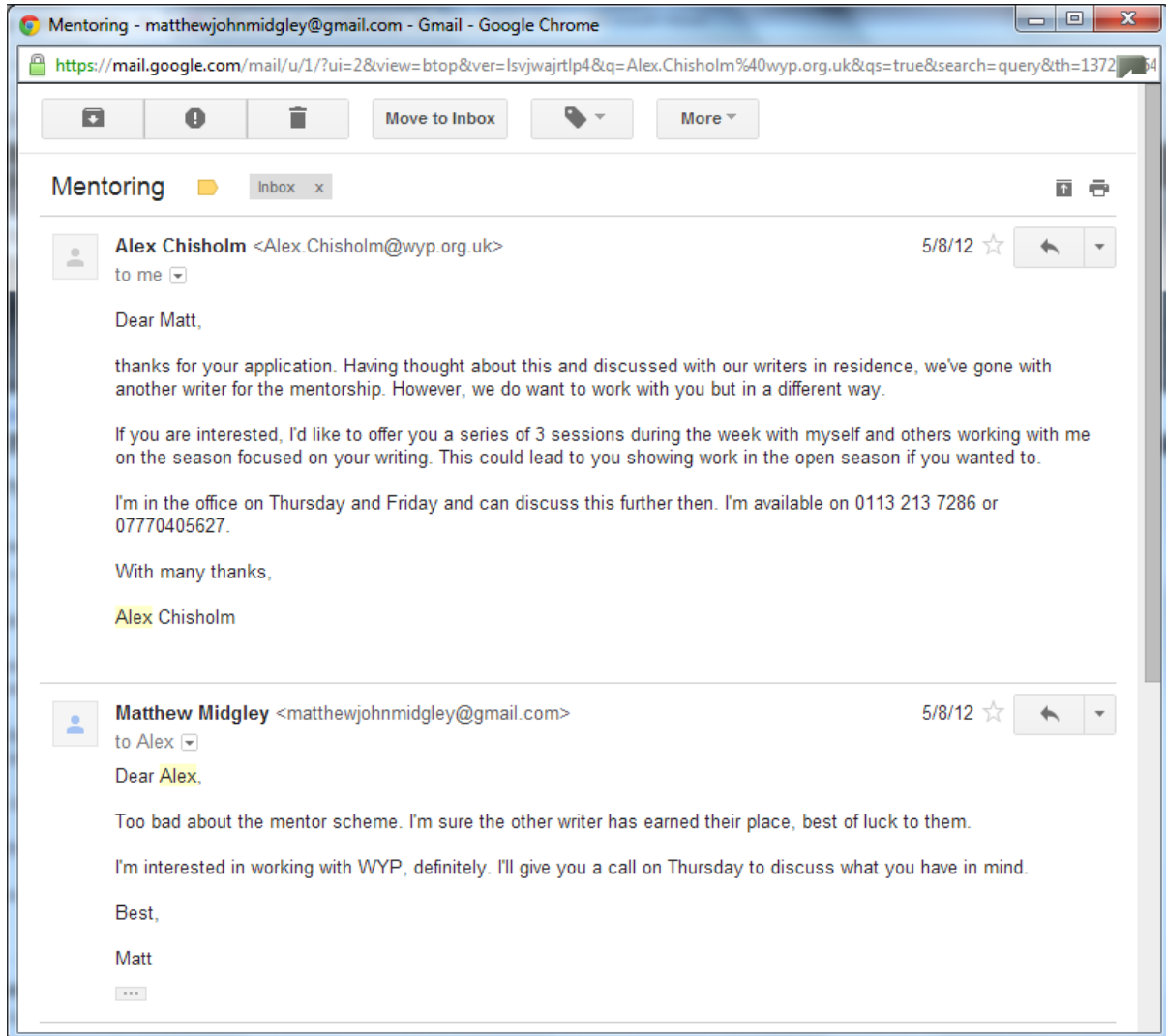
1st May 2012



3rd May 2012



8th May 2012



22nd May 2012

SOHO THEATRE

Matthew Midgley
9 Cameron Grove
York
YO23 1LE

22 May 2012

Dear Matthew,

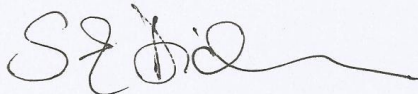
BIKINI BLACK SPECIAL

Thank you so much for sending your script through to us at the end of last year, and apologies for the length of time it has taken to get back to you on it.

We really enjoyed taking a look. You have a very nice economical style and craft your main characters deftly. The evocation of army life in Iraq is arrestingly detailed in its focus on the mundanity of war (rather than the explosive, filmic worlds we are used to). All in all it is a simple but beautifully executed exploration of what it means to be human when faced with inhuman decisions.

I am afraid that having considered it for production, it is not a play we're going to be able to take forward here. But we were struck by your writing and would love to read anything else you write going forward, so I hope that you will keep in touch.

With best wishes,

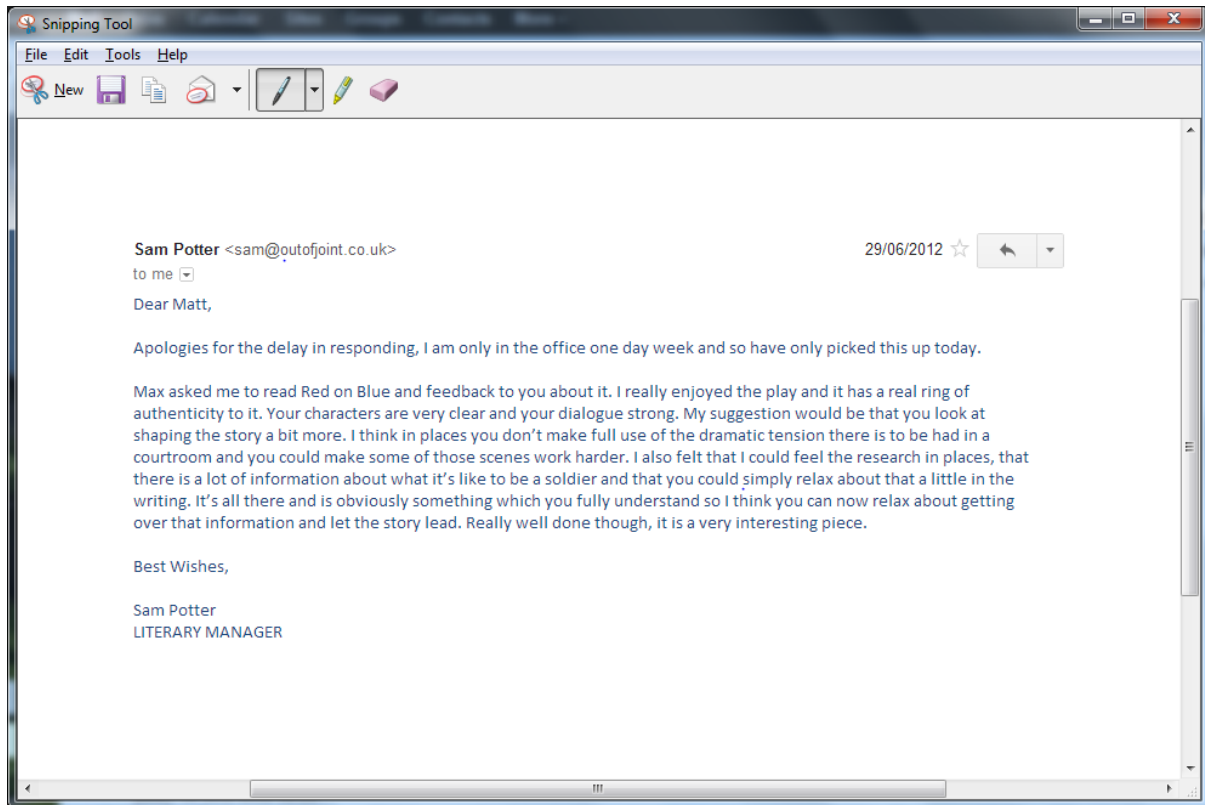


Sarah Dickenson
Senior Reader

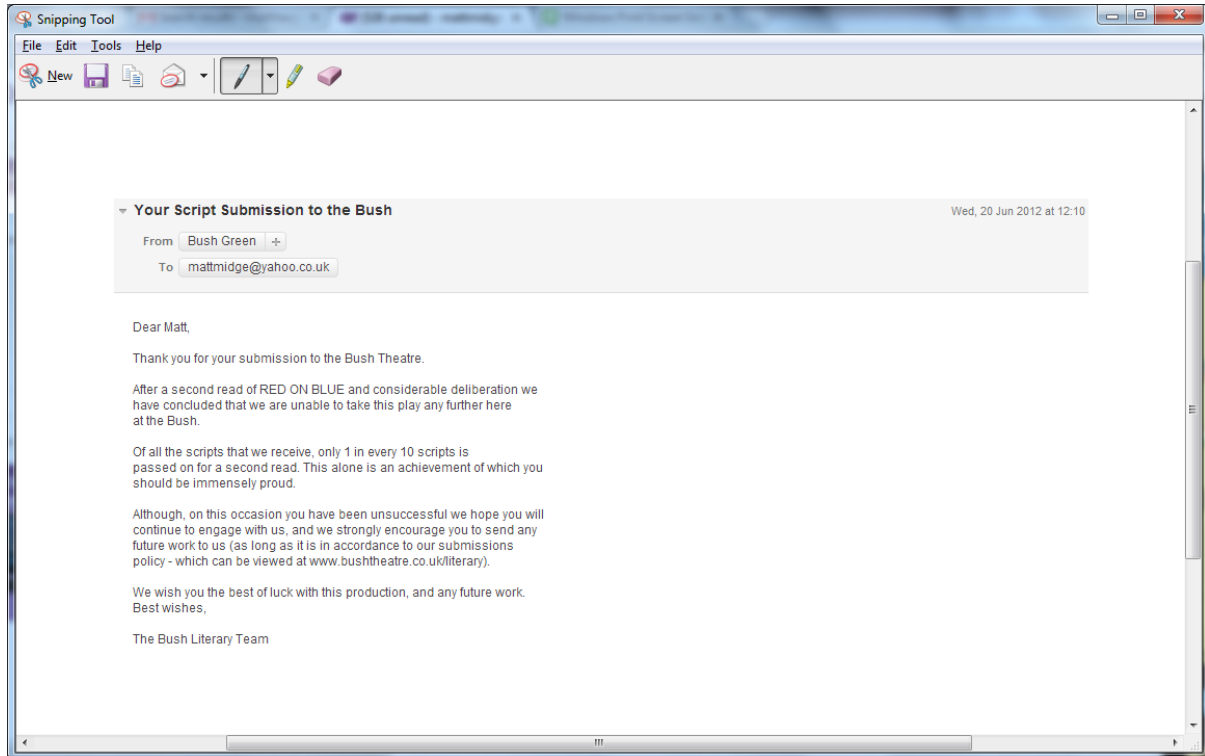
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Shappi Khorsandi, **Jeremy King**, **Lynne Kirwin**, **Neil Mendoza**,
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18th June 2012



20th June 2012



4th October 2012

Report

Does central funding create conservative theatre?

Matthew Midgley, 4 October 2012

In order to answer our question, we began with a question. While there may be an increased conservatism in contemporary British theatre, is central funding in fact the problem?

One response suggested yes. Small organisations are finding it harder to gain access to Arts Council funding at a time when the Arts Council themselves are having to make

even harsher judgements to decide who gets what. Risk was a key word throughout the session – in the case of small organisations, the experience of several of our participants was that without the right links to large institutions, without the right partnerships in place, they were perceived as too risky to fund.

One of the chief counter-arguments was that central funding provides stability, the soft platform on which it is possible to take risks without getting seriously hurt. Several good examples were given of large funded institutions dedicating some of their budget to facilitating new work, such as the Edinburgh Fringe schemes helping artists to attend the festival run by the Old Vic and Northern Stage. If such activities were stipulated as a condition of funding, then surely central funding can help stimulate and diversify the theatrical landscape?

There was a general consensus that theatre should enrich peoples' lives, challenge them and inspire them. But in order to do this, artists should be involved at the beginning of the funding process and not at the end. There were areas of agreement on both 'sides' of the argument – chiefly that more money in artists' hands was desirable and achievable. The relationship between artists and their audience is key and sometimes central funding engenders carelessness in this regard, it was argued. Peripheral questions of whether artists are owed a living and whether we had become too reliant on central funding came up and were vigorously debated.

The idea was floated that institutions have become too heavy administratively, that money that could be spent on making theatre is being spent on other things. An alternative suggestion was that conservative theatre is a product of conservatism in

theatre leaderships and the complex processes of large institutions. Again, the idea that once something becomes a job, a career, you're naturally disinclined to endanger your career by commissioning new work that probably won't sell.

Overall there seemed to be encouraging agreement in the key area of artist-led theatre – but like a large vessel that has been sailing in the wrong direction, it will take some time to turn things around.

Tags:

New work, Risk, Arts Council, arts council, Funding, funding, new work, Arts council, Risk

23rd October 2012

Tempting Fate presents

Quicksand

by Matthew Midgley

What is it?

Quicksand is a new play written by Matt Midgley for the 10th anniversary of the Iraq War. A former soldier, Matt was involved before, during and after the War, which lasted only forty days but which has had repercussions for thousands of people over the last decade and will do so for many years to come. Matt, as part of 7th Armoured Brigade, was deployed to Kuwait in December 2002.

The debate over whether or not to go to war was on going at the UN and in Parliament and would do so right up until the 'decision' to go to war was taken in March 2003. Before the scandal of the sexed-up dossier, the tragic death of Dr David Kelly, and the non-discovery of weapons of mass destruction condemned the Blair

government's decision to invade, was the simple, unequivocal truth that UK and US forces were ready to invade throughout this debate. The decision had already been taken, ignoring democratic process, at the very top tiers of government (exactly *whose* government made the decision is open to discussion).

The play itself is the comedic story of four soldiers stuck in the middle. The fictional drama is juxtaposed with verbatim material from the time to ask what happened to democracy in 2003. And, after a decade of unpopular conflict and economic catastrophe, what it might mean for our future. On an aesthetic and symbolic level, the privation and extreme pressure experienced by the characters as a result of questionable political actions mirrors the experiences of many in the UK today.

Who is it for?

The play will be of particular interest to those persons who have been affected by or who have an interest in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it also seeks to engage anyone who believes in democracy and fair, transparent governance.

Good drama is at the heart of the play. Its juxtaposition with the verbatim material seeks to heighten the play's significance, to give it a clear political purpose, without sacrificing a play's duty to entertain.

Why is it important?

We are living in a deeply uncertain time. Economic hardship is something that people, young adults perhaps disproportionately so, are more likely to face now and in years to come. There is a growing belief that our political system serves not the wellbeing of the majority, but the interests of the few; a belief affirmed by the current government's approach to restoring economic vitality, where inequality is growing rather than diminishing.

A lack of political engagement and popular political resistance is the result: too many believe change is unattainable. It is therefore extremely important to question democracy as we experience it. The political subterfuge in the build-up to the Iraq War seems to be the most significant contemporary example capable of uncovering the flaws in our democratic system. Why, when in London alone over a million people marched against the War to no avail, would we be encouraged that change *is* possible?

The company

Tempting Fate is a new company seeking exposure for the work it believes is important. We're interested in human behaviour under extreme circumstances, which is often humorous but at the same time challenges people to laugh at certain subjects (to tempt fate).

The company is based in York and is made up of developing professionals from across Yorkshire. Our ambition is to work with trained or experienced amateur theatre-makers and to create opportunities for them to make outstanding theatre. We run the company as a co-operative: if we can make the work to a professional standard without getting paid, we will. If we are granted additional funding, the show may be improved if necessary and the company will be paid an equal share (nobody is expecting to get rich!).

Ruby Clarke is Artistic Director. She has worked with York Theatre Royal as Assistant Associate Director on the *York Mystery Plays 2012* as well as directing *The Creation* and *Fields of Gold* as part of the 'Modern Mysteries' fringe event. She is the Artistic Director of YTR's TakeOver Festival 2013. Before completing her MA in Writing, Directing and Performance at the University of York in 2011 she worked as a youth theatre practitioner at Lancaster Dukes Theatre.

Matt Midgley is a playwright. He is currently writing a play for Riding Lights Youth Theatre for a project with Armed Forces families to be performed as part of the York 800 celebrations in 2013. He teaches playwriting to undergraduates in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York. *Quicksand* is his third play.

Why will it make a difference to us?

This will be our first show which we will stage initially on 20th March 2013 (the day war began) in York as part of York Theatre Royal's TakeOver Festival. But what we really need is to perform for as many people as possible to increase our profile and gain some positive publicity for the work and the company.

Our aim is to build partnerships with other artists and theatres around the region so the show can tour, with Edinburgh as the most significant date on that tour. Matt has already been offered development opportunities by West Yorkshire Playhouse, for example, which is a partner we hope to work with us on performances in Leeds. We see a Fringe run as a statement of intent that will attract partners and help us to build a regional tour.

But we aren't in a position to go to Edinburgh without Northern Stage's assistance. As ever, funding bodies and partners in general are encouraged by companies' networks and we consider this opportunity as the lynchpin of our plans for the year ahead.

What's the financial plan?

The costs of a Fringe run without Northern Stage's assistance we calculate to be **£9,800**. With your assistance we calculate it to be **£2,100**, which is a figure we can raise from current funds and crowd-funding sources. Accommodation has become the most significant cost at the Fringe for a company like ours. Should we be supported by Northern Stage, this is one of the key ways that our costs would become manageable.

We are applying for funding both from Arts Council England and sources such as wefund and indigogo. We are also looking for sponsorship and help from interested Yorkshire theatres. We have a performance programmed in 2013's TakeOver Festival for York Theatre Royal which we are planning to use as R and D, and which we feel has a strong chance of generating funds for the company.

So our strategy, based on our co-operative structure, is to make the show if we can (for £2,100 if at St. Stephen's). The show will be professional in every sense except that nobody will be paid. Depending on how successful our continued fundraising campaign is, we hope to be in the position come August to pay the company for their work.

We see this approach as a financially robust model that above all increases the chances of work being performed, but which also increases the chances of artists getting paid (something we believe wholeheartedly in). It is a case of necessity in lean times.

From Northern Stage we are looking for:

- **accommodation for five company members.**
- **A slot in the 50-seater space at St. Stephen's.**
- **PR assistance: venue program and promotion, press office.**
- **Tech.**

With this support we could reduce the risk to the company and make costs affordable.

Costs Breakdown

- Fringe programming costs (taken from 2012's example): £393.60 and £186.30 for the box office.
- Accommodation: £6000 (four actors and a stage manager).
- Venue: £1500
- Staging, set, props and costume we are trying to source for free (using Matt's military contacts) but could come to up to £1000.
- Rehearsal space: free, provided by University of York.
- Marketing costs: around £400, or £200 with NS support.
- Travel costs: £300.

3rd December 2012

Armed Forces Plays - mjm509@york.ac.uk - The University of York Mail - Google Chrome

https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/u/0/?ui=2&view=bt&ver=lsvjwajrtl4&q=education%40rtc.org&psize=20&pmr=100&pdr=50&search=

Armed Forces Plays Inbox x Turn off highlighting Print all

Paul Birch 10/12/2012 ☆ ↶ ⌵

to Morv, me, Kelvin, jon.boustead, Barrie ⌵

Dear All,

I am very pleased to enclose the first drafts of all three plays. As discussed there wasn't quite enough of the right kind of material to make 90 minutes of strong theatre also be verbatim but all three have been inspired by the stories initially uncovered through Barrie's work and our own drama workshops. We have (probably in order of performance)

- 1) 'Oceans' by Matt Midgley. This looks at the painful issue of a Female Solider as she prepares to leave her family behind before deployment.
- 2) 'WarGround' by Paul Birch. This play looks at the concerns children have in integrating in secondary school and their own concerns for their serving families. This play is different from the original proposal after conversations between the young people at Strensall with Director kelvin Goodspeed suggested this might be a more apt topic.
- 3) 'For Fierce Confusion, peace' by Morven Hamilton. The difficult issue of PTSD is addressed through the lens of a family adjusting to the return of a troubled soldier.

We will need to make sure the scripts have a level of flexibility in them. We won't know until next term as to the precise numbers for each cast. There may have to be gender swaps or cross gender casting.

We would also welcome specific comments from Jonty and Kelvin for their thoughts before a second draft. Please could we have these by Monday 17th Dec.

Most crucially we need to make sure that Lynette from the Army Welfare Service is happy with the scripts. Her job of looking after the young people and her relationship with current service personnel as well as her expertise may ask us to tone down, raise up certain elements within the scripts. She should also give her thoughts by the 17th.

Writers may also want to do their own re-writes and, perhaps, reference characters in the other two scripts. Please could we have Final drafts by Friday 11th January 1.00pm. Please send final drafts in word - I will resolve formatting issues.

Huge thanks to you all and particularly Matt and Morven for such great short plays.

Paul.

2nd January 2013

The screenshot shows the York Theatre Royal website interface. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with the logo 'yorktheatre royal' and links for 'What's On', 'Watch & Listen', 'Your Visit', 'Get Involved', and 'Occasions'. Below this is a 'Discover More' link and a phone number '01904 623568' with icons for 'Box Office', 'Home', 'Join Mailing List', and 'Become a Member'.

The main content area features a 'what's on' calendar for January 2013. The calendar shows dates from 6 to 31, with the 7th highlighted. To the right of the calendar is a large image of a desert scene with a military vehicle and soldiers, titled 'Quicksand'. Below the image, the play title 'Quicksand' is repeated in green text, followed by 'By Matthew Midgley' and 'Directed by Ruby Clarke'. A red 'BOOK ONLINE' button is positioned to the right of the play title.

Below the play title, there is a 'Tickets' section with a green header and a box containing the text: '£10, £8 concessions, £6 students and U25's'. At the bottom left, there is an 'Email this show to a friend' button. At the bottom right, there is a small paragraph of text: 'January 2003. Half the world is in uproar over the US's intention to declare war on Iraq. Tony Blair's UK government seems inclined to support the US amid a storm of negative media and popular sentiment. Meanwhile, in the Kuwaiti desert, Lance'.

3rd February 2013

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Kickstarter page for 'Quicksand' by Tempting Fate Theatre Co. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1308419817/quicksand/posts>. The page features a green banner at the top stating 'Funded! This project was successfully funded on February 3, 2013.' Below this, the project title 'Quicksand' is displayed, followed by 'by Tempting Fate Theatre Co'. The navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Updates 3', 'Backers 34', and 'Comments 0'. A location tag 'York, UK' and a category tag 'Theater' are also present. The main content area shows an update titled 'Update #3 - For backers only' dated Feb 1 2013. The update text reads: 'One day left! Comment For backers only. If you're a backer of this project, please log in to read this post.' To the right of the update, a statistics box shows '34 backers', '£840 pledged of £800 goal', and '0 seconds to go'. Below the update, another update titled 'Update #2' dated Jan 29 2013 is partially visible, with the title 'Auditions'. A small box on the right side of the page identifies the project as being by 'Tempting Fate Theatre Co' from 'York, UK'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications, including 'Riding Lights proj...', 'Quicksand by Te...', 'iTunes', 'Portfolio evidenc...', and 'Portfolio.docx - ...'. The system clock in the bottom right corner shows the time as 11:24 on 19/08/2014.


15th March 2013

The Northern Echo » Features » Leader »

LEADER

Oh, what an unlovely war

By Steve Pratt 10:13am Wednesday 20th March 2013 in Leader



IN THE THICK OF THINGS: Matthew Midgley on the front line in Iraq

Ten years ago, soldier Matthew Midgley found himself in the desert waiting to go to war. He tells Steve Pratt how the experience influenced him to write a play about soldiers in Iraq

WHEN he left school at 16 and joined the Army, Matthew Midgley was sure there wasn't going to be another war. "The Falklands were winding up and there didn't seem to be anything on the horizon.

Darlington
14.1°C
28% chance of rain weather forecast

FEATURED JOBS

- HGV Drivers Ripon
- Head of First Impressions Spennymoor
- Marketing Executive Richmond
- Farm Worker Leyburn
- Rural Surveyor Yorkshire and the Humber
- Experienced Car Valeters North East England

See 638 jobs in and around Darlington

MOST READ

- Poyet happy to go foreign as Sunderland consider move for Napoli man
- Friends and family of two young men killed in County Durham road accident continue to pay tributes at crash scene
- Police appeal after man tries to get 16-year-old girl into car
- Pat-II do nicely for Boro boss Karanka
- Darlington man arrested on suspicion of assault
- Woman trapped in car after accident in Bishop Auckland
- Armed robber called Hardman turned and fled, court told
- Drunk Darlington louts caused 'misery' on

Looking for (e.g. plumber)

21 March 2013

http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/10306430.Review__Quicksand__Tempting_Fate__York_Theatre_Royal_TakeOver_Festival_2013__Bar_Lane_Studios_Basement__Bar_Lane__York__until_March_23/

3rd April 2013

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface in a browser window. The address bar displays a Google Mail URL. The email header shows it is a forwarded message from Ailin Conant to Matthew Midgley, dated 26 March 2013. The body of the email contains the following text:

Hi Matt,

We'd be delighted to have you. There is a small budget for consulting ex-combattants, so if you can come for 2pm-6pm on the 3rd, you will receive a £41 consulting fee for the afternoon. Or if you just come just for the run through (4pm-6pm) you will have £20 for the 2 hours. Invoice can be made out to my producer Patrick (CCed), and will be sent out as soon as our funding comes in in early April.

Directions to the rehearsal hall are attached, if you get lost please contact me on my phone at 07961252306 (and no tthe number listed on the pdf).

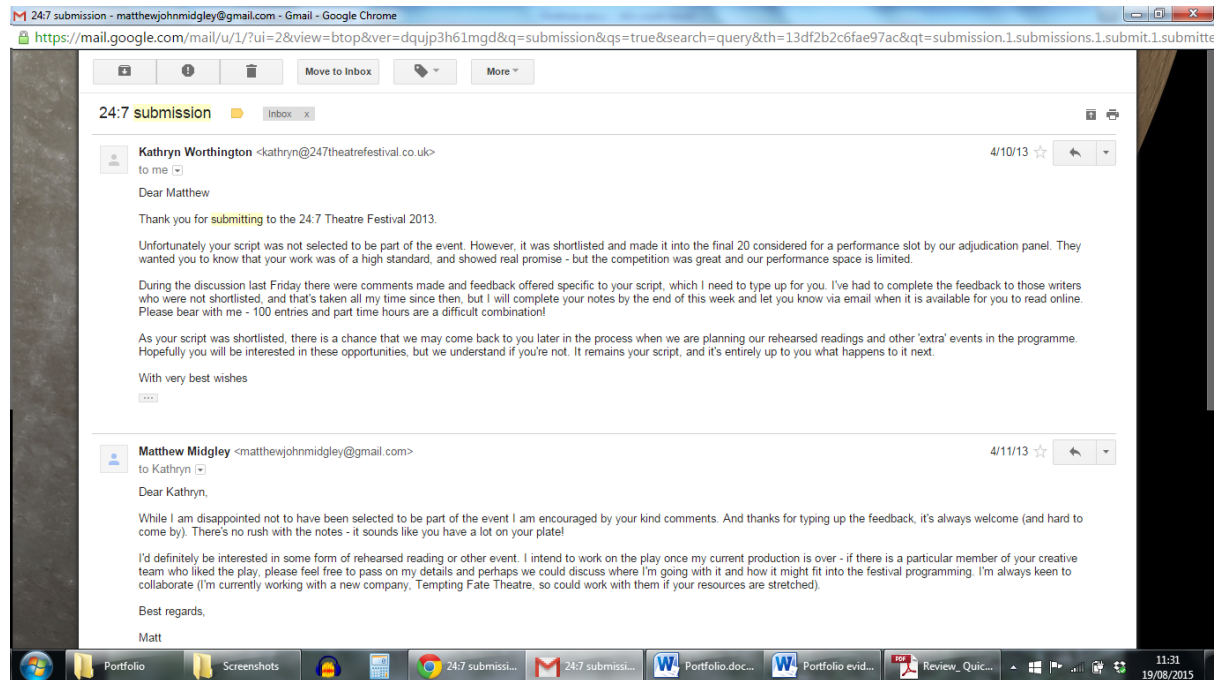
Looking forward!

Ailin
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

aya studio _ Directions.pdf
1168K

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with several open applications, including 'Riding Lights pro...', 'Screenshots', 'The University of...', 'iTunes', and 'Portfolio evidenc...'. The system tray on the right shows the time as 11:49 on 19/08/2014.

10th April 2013



16th May 2013



Here is your feedback on "The Ends":

Thank you for submitting your script to this year's 24:7 Theatre Festival.

Unfortunately your script was not selected for this year's event.

It was considered for a performance slot by our adjudication panel however. They wanted you to know that your work was of a high standard, and showed real promise - but the competition was great

and our performance space is limited.

Specifically they felt this piece needed work on the dialogue and political speeches. Given the nature of the characters, some grandstanding of ideologies is inevitable - but is it really engaging for an audience? Sometimes the characters' speeches feel like positions or comments of the playwright, rather than genuinely held beliefs of real people living out a drama before us. Those ideas/messages from the playwright are also clearly received very early on in the piece so we wanted more twists/turns - more genuine conflict and character exploration.

Although there's always a way round technical problems, the force feeding/vomiting would be difficult to stage, very hard on the actor, and brutal - possibly gratuitous? - for an audience. As a metaphor for the effects of growth capitalism it also seemed a little overdone.

Try not to let this rejection get you down. It's hard not to be patronising in letters like this, we know, but we admire writers and theatre-makers. That's why we produce a Festival dedicated to championing new work. We are on your side. Please keep at it: work on your craft; see or read as many plays as you can. Theatre needs writers.

During the adjudication process your script was read by several adjudicators, and their feedback is given below. Our intention in providing it is to support you, particularly if this is a play you want to continue to work on. You don't have to agree with it, but remember that none of the readers knew the names of the writers during the adjudication, so none of this is personal

Adjudication 1 comments:

The strong opening as two characters arrive home takes us immediately into the world of the play and although we feel curious about the couple's bickering regarding who left the radio on this fact only becomes significant some six pages later. The dialogue is funny, sharp and convincing and Helena and John believable and

engaging. There are subtle hints about the true state of their marriage and it's possible inner tensions and the appearance of the heightens this tension well. The remainder of the piece continues to hold us and there are some truly dark elements, particularly the disturbing "force feeding" of John to counter the effects of the insulin being administered to him via a drip.

It feels a little overlong, but I think this has potential.

Adjudication 2 comments:

The Ends is an interesting premise for a piece: a hostage situation motivated by a political cause.

In the next draft I would suggest you consider:

- What is the best way to make the political argument? There is a danger at the moment that the politics hijacks the play at the expense of narrative.
- The analogy of insulin poisoning with growth of the free market is a dramatically engaging way to bring the political arguments to life. However, is the analogy currently stretched too far: it is important to leave the audience space to draw their own conclusions.
- Should John and Helena put up more of a fight? They seem to resign themselves to their predicament quite quickly and with little resistance.
- Towards the end, a lot happens in a very short period of time. Could the drama pack more of a punch if the final series of events weren't so sudden and final?
- There are quite a few loose ends with regards to past relationships. How do these elements serve the story and how could they be resolved?

Adjudication 3 comments:

This is an intriguing premise for a play and potentially you have created a neat and compelling political thriller. The fact that it is improbable doesn't matter; most thrillers are. The metaphor for injections of insulin acting like 'growth' is darkly humorous - in a kind of grand guignol style - as is the constant feeding of the victim. It would make for quite horrific viewing but I guess that's part of the point. If we, the audience, start to feel uncomfortable at the spectacle of someone feeding himself to death then we the audience should be less complacent about the issues in the play. However, the violence of the situation makes us overlook the principles of the piece because the audience because will just want - from a humane point of view - someone to rip the tubes out of John and kick the shit out of Mark. Consequently it's almost as if the politics of the work get swamped by the violence of it.

The characters are reasonably well drawn although there is, I feel, considerably more exploration to be done on each of them. If we are supposed to believe in these people as three dimensional beings then I need to know more about Mark's journey from Marxist lothario (and frankly we were all at University with at least one of those) to killer. I also found the idea that Mark would not have told Fierce about his former relationship with Helena lacking in credibility.

My main difficulty with the piece as it stands, however, is the dialogue. Mark talks in almost essay type speeches while Helena emits the sort of ignorant stereotypical Tory responses we would expect from the Sun editorial rather than a reasonably erudite politician. The kind of polemic you're trying to explore, for me, doesn't work with the violent extremes of the play.

I get the impression that at times you're trying to create a piece of dark comedy - and if that's the case I'd make it funnier and go even wilder! Make the two Tories grotesque. Think about Dario Fo and Jarry and their depiction of political issues and the characters they create to deliver them. They're no less hard hitting for being farcical - in fact they're more hard hitting.

I think you still have more work to do here - make the dialogue lighter and more fluent and decide whether you want the

Writing Figures of Resistance for the British Stage

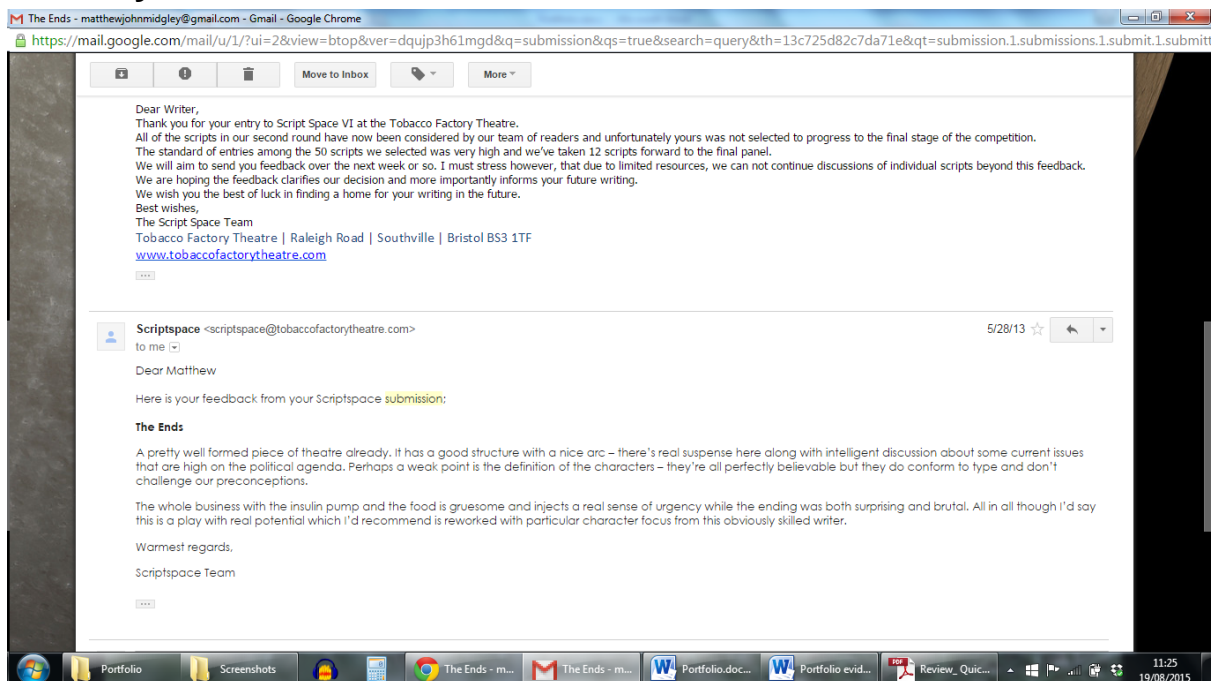
play to be a serious polemical thriller or an anarchic farce. It could work as either but not, I think, as both.

We take a serious interest in all the work submitted to 24:7, so please let us know if your play goes to production and we will do our best to attend.

With our very best wishes

David, Kathryn & the 24:7 team

28th May 2013



6th March 2014

UNIVERSITY of York
powered by Google™

Matthew Midgley <mjm509@york.ac.uk>

Festival of Ideas

Hannah Lyus <hannah.lyus@york.ac.uk> 6 March 2014 11:01
To: Matthew Midgley <mjm509@york.ac.uk>

Hi Matt,

Sorry it has taken so long for me to get back to you on this - I have just heard back from the festival team.

They would like to include yours and Helen's idea talk but have said that the Black Box in TFTV is already booked on 19th June - have you and Helen booked the space? I cant look at the booking as its not a centrally timetabled room, but you may well be able to view it.

I know when you submitted this you said you were also putting something in to the festival through TFTV - did you do this? I don't want the team to get the two events confused if they are two separate (but related) things.

If you could clarify and also let me know if it is you who has booked the space that would be great. If you have booked the space, does the time cover the event wit Helen which is being submitted via us?

I hope that makes sense - I have confused myself!

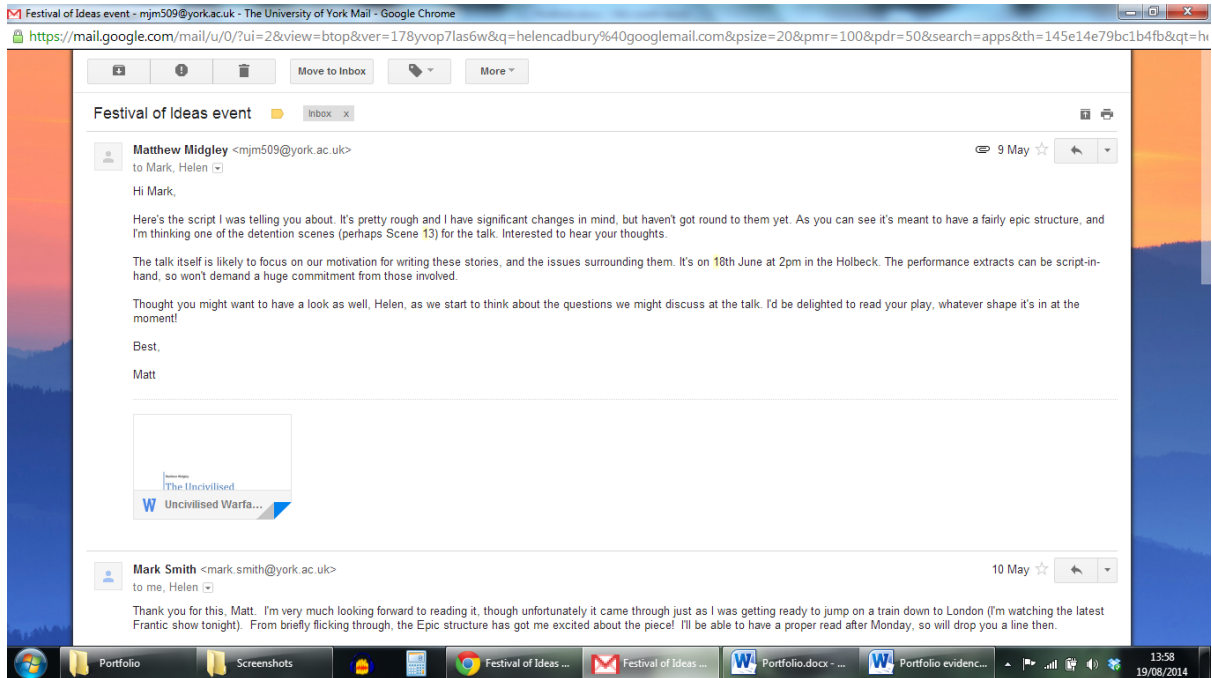
Kind regards
Hannah

Hannah Lyus
Centre for Lifelong Learning
Tel: 01904 328476
Email: hannah.lyus@york.ac.uk
<http://www.york.ac.uk/docs/disclaimer/email.htm>

*50 years of
changing the world*

Portfolio Screenshots The University of ... Portfolio.docx - ... 13:56 19/08/2014

9th May 2014



4th August 2014

