

Roy

No, Robert.

That's not the budget.

The project will have a separate budget.
That's your fee.

That's for you. To keep.

Daniel

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

Robert

Yes.

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

Roy

All The Mothers

*The present.**Hampstead Heath – Early morning. Birdsong.**Freya is sat by the pond.**A number of male swimmers are in the ponds, swimming. They have similar swimming hats and swimming costumes. One by one they come and stand in the fresh morning air. Birds fly past, a clear blue sky.**Freya watches them for a while.**One of the swimmers starts to play ukulele.**Freya starts singing along to 'Deep Water' by Portishead. The first swimmer is surprised, but interested. Three other swimmers stand in a line and act as backing singers.*

Freya

*I'm drifting in deep waters**Alone with my self-doubting again**I try not to struggle this time**For I will weather the storm**Sarah gets to her desk, piled with papers. It's first thing, but she's exhausted – she sits down and makes a start.*
*Jasmine sits on the end of the bed, waits, upset.**I gotta remember**(Gotta remember)**Don't fight it**(Don't fight it)**Even if I**(Even if I)**Don't like it**(Don't like it)**Somehow turn me around**(Somehow turn me around)**No matter how far I drift**Deep waters**(Deep waters)**Won't scare me tonight*

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

Tom appears, and Jasmine goes off with him. The swimmers go off. She answers.

Sarah I missed your call.

Freya Can we meet up? I've got something to ask you.

Sarah I can hear birds.

Freya I'm on the Heath.

Sarah Hampstead Heath?

Freya Yeah I packed a bag, left early.

Sarah You don't live anywhere near Hampstead Heath.

Freya Very early. Apparently there's a view where you can see the whole city.

Sarah Parliament Hill.

Freya I think I'm looking for that. Can we meet please?

Sarah I could do Thursday?

Freya No, today.

Sarah I'm busy Freya.

Freya You're always busy Freya, but Steve's not here and I couldn't get hold of Jasmine, / I need to talk.

Sarah Don't ask Jasmine, you called Jasmine? Talk about what?

Freya You have got time, I know you have.

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

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

Freya Perfect.

Sarah Right.

Sarah hangs up.

Freya follows the woman, off through the Heath

Mr Cranrock's house.

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

Mrs Andrews Are you not awake yet?

Steve wakes up.

How did you sleep?

How do you think?

Steve stands up in just his boxer shorts, woozy.

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

Mrs Andrews Mr Sullivan . . .

Steve What?

Mrs Andrews You're not at your best.

Steve Oh.

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

Isn't there a spare room?

Mrs Andrews There's my room.

Steve I'm sorry?

Mrs Andrews If you'd called ahead, we could've made arrangements.

Steve What do you mean?

Mrs Andrews When your wife visited, I stayed at my sister's.

Steve Oh – you . . . Freya called ahead?

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

Steve No.

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

Steve What am I supposed to do until then?

Mrs Andrews You'll have to occupy yourself I suppose.

Steve With what? You've got no television, I didn't bring my computer, there's no reception on my phone.

Mrs Andrews looks at him.

Mrs Andrews There's a radio.

Mrs Andrews goes.

Freya follows the woman with the pram. She stops when she sees an Old Woman laying flowers at a war memorial. The Old Woman wears a coat and headscarf.

Freya Excuse me?

Old Woman Yes dear?

Freya I like your flowers.

Old Woman Thank you dear.

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

Was it . . . your husband?

Old Woman Dunkirk.

Freya

And you still miss him?

Old Woman

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

Freya

Did you have children?

Old Woman

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

Freya

No I –

Old Woman

It had teacakes, cricket whites, cut grass. Yes? Suits and ties, string, handkerchiefs, Post Offices.

Freya

Okay. Yeah I suppose they're / all

Old Woman

Latin, real universities, short trousers, dinner jackets and tea dances,

Freya

I always wanted to go to a –

Old Woman

Cigars, billiards, tea you have to strain, you know, Devonshire cream, Coventry steel, coal mining, stamps, hats, the muffin man, the post man, the rag and bone man. Yes?

Freya

Old Woman

Freya

So –

Old Woman

Pen and ink, blotting paper,

Freya

/ Right

Old Woman

Cobblers, butchers, larders in the kitchen, fires in the living room, the damp smell of gravel in outdoor toilets. You don't know what I'm talking about.

Freya

No.

Old Woman

Of course not you're too young dear but that was England. All gone now of course. Things move so fast. The internet, the cars. Yes dear, I've got children, but I never see them. They've always got something better to do.

They look at the memorial.

Simon enters Sarah's office.

Sarah

Yes.

Simon

Your sister's at the front desk.

Sarah

Now?

Simon

Now.

Sarah

I said one o'clock. Have I got a moment?

Simon

You've got to get through the post by quarter past.

Sarah

Send her up, and get me a Starbucks.

Simon

Skinny?

Sarah

No. Fat. Really fucking . . . fat.

Simon goes. Freya is with the Old Woman

Freya

Sometimes I worry things are just getting worse and worse.

Old Woman

Yes, well, ash clouds, tsunamis, religious hatred, economic collapse . . . it's the perfect conditions.

Freya

I don't understand.

Old Woman

Is it a boy?

Freya

A girl.

Old Woman

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

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

Freya

What?

Old Woman

There's a gathering storm

He takes off her headscarf and she stands upright – a young couple from the 1940s.

Freya

How do you know?

Old Woman

Old people can predict the weather.

The man opens an umbrella and it starts to rain.

You see?

Freya

She can fight. I've felt her kicking. She hates it in there.

Old Woman

Haven't you got anyone to take you home?

Freya

No. He's . . .

Gone.

The Old Woman goes with her husband.

Jasmine enters Sarah's office with Tom.

Jasmine

I've got a problem.

Sarah

Where's Freya?

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

Sarah

Who's this?

Jasmine

He's the problem.

Sarah

Does he have a name?

Jasmine

Tom.

Tom

Hi.

Sarah takes them in for a second.

Sarah

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

Jasmine

Last night, I was at a party.

I want you to understand a few things Tom. Firstly this conversation is not being recorded by either of us and I've got a very bad memory so I can say pretty much what the fuck I want. Okay?

Secondly my sister's a student. She has sex. So what? You think the public are going to be interested? *I'm* not interested.

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

Tom *slams his papers on her desk.*

Tom It's a protest.

Sarah Good. There. You've protested. It's over. Now delete the photos, get out of my office, stop wasting my time.

Tom Are you going to read all this?

Sarah I'm certainly going to file it.

Tom You can't dismiss me.

Sarah This isn't the student union Tom. We're the fucking government.

Tom Only just.

Sarah Go away.

Tom *turns to go. Jasmine turns as well.*

Not you.

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

Jasmine I only came here for your sake.

Sarah You didn't want your arse in the Daily Mail.

Jasmine Wouldn't be the first time.

Sarah What?

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

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

Yeah, Colin said you're always here.

Jasmine It's public office Jasmine. It's the most important thing in my life, I can't –

He'll leave you.

Sarah What?

Colin. Surprised he hasn't already.

Sarah

Jasmine You have no idea.

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

Sarah Be careful Jasmine.

Jasmine He can't have been worse than you.

Sarah You've never met him.

Jasmine You've never let me.

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

Jasmine I'm not being –

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

Jasmine You're jealous.

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

Jasmine ...

Sarah You want to hear it?

Jasmine is upset, turns and leaves. Sarah picks up a letter, reads it. Simon enters with a coffee.

Simon One fat coffee.

Sarah Call John Carter. Tell him I've got the letter.

Sarah drinks the coffee, picks up the phone and dials a number.

Simon What letter?

Simon Just tell him I've got the letter, and I want to meet. This afternoon.

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

Freya Why's it called Parliament Hill?

Sarah I'm sorry?

Freya It's nowhere near Parliament.

Sarah Alright, look –

Freya Is it because you can see the whole of the city. Like a model or something. All the little people under your control. It's so . . . grey.

Sarah Okay, Freya, can you listen for a moment please? I've had to move things around, I can't do lunch anymore.

Freya You said you'd make time.

Sarah I know I said that but things change and you're alright aren't you? Out walking, fresh air.

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

Young Man Please! Please. Please. Please.

Sarah Everything's just gone a bit mad here.

Young Man My kid. My kid's in trouble.

Freya Yeah, everything's gone a bit mad here too.

Sarah Got to go. Speak soon.

She hangs up.

Young Man

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

Freya How old is he?

Young Man

What?

Freya Your kid.

Young Man Seven. He fell over at school I think, I –

Freya And you dropped everything and ran.

Young Man Yeah –

She reaches in her pocket – pulls out the fiver.

Freya It's all I've got.

She gives it to him.

Young Man Bless you love. Bless you.

The Young Man runs off, ecstatic. The sky gets darker.

Freya feels a sharp kick. Clutches her stomach.

Two mothers walk past with prams.

Freya Excuse me?

It's kicking all the time now.

Is that normal?

Freya follows them.

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

Jasmine It was basically rape.

Tom What?

Jasmine What you did. Bit like rape or something.

Tom No it wasn't, you had a good time. I didn't plan it like –

Jasmine So you took the pictures because –

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

Jasmine No / no no

Tom I realised I could do something.

Jasmine Have you ever even been there?

Tom What?

Jasmine To . . . You know.

Tom Eritrea.

Jasmine Yeah. You ever actually been there?

Tom I want to but I'd have to fly so –

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

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

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

Mrs Andrews is sorting through table cloths. Steve talks to her.

Mrs Andrews Did you have a good day?

Steve No.

Mrs Andrews Mr Crannock should be home soon.

Steve's in the way.

Excuse me.

Steve Sorry.

You were here when my wife visited.

Mrs Andrews In the day, yes.

Steve What was she like?

Mrs Andrews What was she like? I don't know. She was polite, she was like a young lady.

Steve They talked.

Mrs Andrews All night I believe, yes.

Steve What about?

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

Steve I could help if you like? With that?

Mrs Andrews Go and stand over there.

He does.

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

Mrs Andrews Aye.

Steve And?

Mrs Andrews *picks up a towel. Robert Crannock appears, walking towards the house wrapped up.*

Mrs Andrews Mr Sullivan, if you're sensible, and you might be, you might not be, I don't know, but if you are, you'll not cross him.

Steve Why not?

Mrs Andrews He's a force, an animal, a storm, the cleverest man. And while I'll admit you don't look stupid, whilst I'll concede you seem to have some kind of brain, even I can tell, Mr Sullivan, you're no genius.

Steve And he is?

Mrs Andrews Aye.

Steve A genius?

Mrs Andrews Yes.

Steve What does that even mean?

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

Robert A person of extraordinary intellect and talent. *He takes off his coat and gives it to Steve.*

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

He gives the turbine to Steve as well. Mrs Andrews shuts the door and gives him the towel on cue.

A wise man. A shaman. A prophet.

Mrs Andrews This is Mr Sullivan.

Steve Hi. I'm sorry to just -

Robert Shh.

Steve What?

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

Steve Football.

Robert Football. Ha! But that's been dropped. Your shirt's a bit tight round the sides, you've put on weight recently. You like things to be simple. Fish fingers and chips. Don't like posh food. You're that sort of man. Yes? Chicken nuggets and pizza. Ketchup. Beans. Children's food. You haven't cut your fingernails properly, tells me you're self-employed. Yes? Good.

So? Me?

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

You're lonely. But I knew that already.

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

Mrs Andrews

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

Steve Good.

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

Robert pours himself a drink.

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

Steve Not really.

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

Steve On the sofa.

Robert We don't have a spare bed do we Mrs A?

Mrs Andrews No.

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

Steve If we can just talk now I can get going. I don't –

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

Steve I've come all the way here –

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

Steve I'm here because of Freya.

Robert I know Steve, I *know* why you're here.

Steve She said this about you.

Robert What?

Steve That you get angry quickly.

Robert She told me about you too.

Steve Did she?

Robert About the problems.

Steve What problems?

Robert Exactly.

Have you made up your mind?

Steve What about?

Robert Are you a drinker of whisky?

Steve Alright.

Robert You are?

Steve Yeah, I'll have one.

Robert Good.

Steve Good boy. Better.

Robert Doing better.

He pours one. Gives it to Steve.

There.

They drink.

Steve It's good.

Robert Mine is. You've got the cheap stuff.

It is late and overcast now. Dark. Windy.

Jasmine arrives at a bar. A Barman comes over.

Jasmine I want the strongest drink.

Barman I'm sorry?

Jasmine The most alcoholic drink you sell.

Barman Look, it's only five.

Jasmine Are you a clock?

Barman What?

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

Barman Absinthe.

Jasmine Two please.

Barman One for you and one for ...

Jasmine The sheer hell of it. Come on ...

She reads his name badge.

Paul.

Paul! This is urgent.

I need to get off my face ...

Jasmine hits the bar suddenly.

Come on!

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

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

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

Carter Don't you have an umbrella?

Sarah Clearly not.

Carter This way.

They go off, her under his umbrella.

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

They sing and dance to 'Happiness' by Goldfrapp.

Freya watches them and tries to take part.

After a while she takes a headache out and speaks to them.

Freya Excuse me?

Mothers Yes?

Freya Can I join you?

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

Mothers Not being funny but –

Freya Okay.

Mothers Yeah.

Freya My baby's kicking.

Mothers How sweet!

Freya Not in a good way.

Mothers Ahhhh.

Freya Do you worry about the future?

Mothers Not really.

Freya What might happen?

Mothers No.

What might happen to your children?

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

He'll go into hedge funds

Or a surgeon.

Something like that.

Freya How was the birth?

Mothers Natural.

Freya How do you manage with it all?

Mothers Easily.

Freya None of you got down about it?

Mothers None of you felt your child was a . . .

Mothers A?

Freya A mistake?

Mothers No. God. No.

Freya And what about people who are poorer than you?

Mothers We do what we can.

Freya Yes but –

Mothers Charity work. Every Thursday. Primrose Hill. We carbon offset holidays.

You know.

Freya But that's not enough.

Aaaahhh!

She clutches her belly again.

This isn't good.

They look at her for a moment, more serious now, almost threatening.

They stand, wielding their children, almost like weapons.

Freya backs away, and puts the headphone back in.

The singing continues.

Then they slowly encircle her.

She is scared but has nowhere to go.

The women throw the babies up in the air; they explode into black powder, like soot or dust, that covers everyone, and is blown about by the wind.

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

End of Act Two