

Have I None was first presented by Big Brum on 2 November 2000 at Castle Vale Artsite, Birmingham. The cast was as follows:

Sara Amanda Finney
Jams Richard Holmes
Grit Bobby Colwill

Director Chris Cooper
Designer Ceri Townsend

Time
18 July 2007

Note

Have I None is the third play in the Big Brum trilogy written by Edward Bond for the Big Brum Theatre-in-Education Company, based in Birmingham. The two earlier plays are *At the Inland Sea* and *Eleven Vests*.

One

A room with a wall at the back. In it, a door leading to a street. A kitchen off to the left. A small narrow oblong table and two chairs – all matching, utilitarian, black wood. No other furniture or decoration.

Sara sits in one of the chairs. She listens intently.
Silence.

A knock at the door. It is insistent but not aggressive.
Sara does not move.

Silence.

Sara stands and goes to the door. She opens it. No one is there. She stands in the doorway and looks out. She turns back to the room and closes the door. She goes back to the same chair. Sits.

Silence.

Sara stands and goes to the door. She stops by it. Listens.
Pause.

Sara Go away! Go away! (Pause.) What d'you want?
(She bangs on the door.) You hear!

Silence.

Sara snatches at the handle – yanks the door open. No one is there. She closes the door and walks back into the room.
Short pause.

A knock.

Sara stands still.

Pause.

Sara goes to the table and sits in the same chair.

Silence.

The door opens. **Jams** comes in. He wears a simple black uniform.

Jams 'Lo.

He kisses the side of **Sara**'s cheek. He goes out into the kitchen.

Sara sits looking at the door.

Jams (off) Guess what happened on patrol.

Sara doesn't move.

Pause.

Jams comes back. *He has taken off his jacket and is hanging it on a wire coat hanger.*

Jams Guess what happened on patrol today. Things people get up to! We were in the old town. Part they cleared years ago. Bandits hide up there sometimes. We saw an old woman walking on the street ahead of us. Told the driver to slow down. Guess what she was carrying. You all right?

He goes out into the kitchen.

(Off) Carrying it under her arm. Picture!

Sara goes quietly to the door and opens it. *As Jams talks she looks out. Then she closes it and goes back to the same chair. Sits.*

Jams *(off)* Couldn't see what it was of. Had it hugged to her side. She kept getting lost. Stopped at the crossroads — looked round — then trotted off. She knew where she was heading. Didn't see us. Didn't look round once. The lads wanted to pick her up. I said no, wait — see what she's up to.

He comes in. He is wearing city trousers.

Big picture under her arm. Told the driver to close up. We were almost running her shadow down. She must've heard the engine if she wanted. She wasn't talking to herself — not loony that way. Lads were edgy. They can handle bandits. Not old ladies carrying a picture in the ruins. Uncanny. What if they're making it up in their heads? All of 'em? Possible. Mass hallucinations. Effect of ruins. Why you sitting there? We going to eat?

Jams sits in the chair facing Sara.

A knock.

Sara looks sideways down at the table.

Jams She turns off on this track. Side road once. Lepal Street — sign still up. She goes through a door. Told the driver to drive past. Looked through the holes in the wall. Vanished. Stopped the truck. Went back with Dinny. Crep' in the doorway. The old biddy's inside. Picture stood on the rubble by the wall. She's grubbing about in the dirt. What's she lost?

You listening to me? *(No reaction.)* A nail! She's looking for a nail.

Three knocks. Sara does not react.

Jams The other lads'd left the vehicle. Gawping through the holes. Didn't say so she'd hear: used me hands. Sent 'em back. Leaving the vehicle unattended! — could be a trap.

A knock.

The old biddy's found a table. Dragging it over the rubble — hard work I can tell you! — it's bucking about like a calf being dragged to the butchers! Coat and blouse hanging undone. Hate slovenliness! Catches her hem in her heel. Rip. What a mess!

A knock.

Jams The table's there — eventually. Climbs on. Bangs the nail in the wall with a brick. Brick breaks. Scrapes the skin off her fingers. Blood. Looks round for the picture. It's left on the pile by the wall. I go in. Hang the picture on the wall. See her close up. Long white eyebrows hanging in her eyes like dead spiders. She starts to pee herself. Trickles down on the table. Runs her hand through her hair. Leaves a red streak on the grey. Chriss she'll stink the cab out! I'm sitting up front with the driver! She never looked at the picture. Weren't even straight. Sea. Forest — mountains behind. The table's like a butcher's block: blood, piss. She's stood on the edge. Rocks — the leg's skewing off. Can't give her a hand, can't touch anything like that. She comes down — jumps or topples — skins her shins. Screeches like a nail skidding down a glass runway. Chriss I'm definitely sitting in front! — blood — piss — now hollering! She didn't though. Just gurgles with the snout up her snout. That dick Johansson's still in the gap. Stayed when I sent 'em back. I beckoned him with one finger — and point down to the bitch on the bricks. Not a dicky-bird — did it by pointing. That narked him. He had to drag her to the vehicle. We drove her to the centre. They won't feed her. Her age why prolong the misery? We played football with the picture. Kicked it under the rubble — where the CO can't see it if he

comes snooping. They cleared those houses since thirty years back. They weren't allowed to take their old stuff with them. Where's she hid a picture all them years? (*Shrugs.*) Probably weren't hers. Found it on a dump. Not her house. All look the same when they're knocked down. Not even her street. Could've been a — (*Violently smashes a fist on the table.*) What did I say?

Sara I —

Jams What? What? Tell me!

Sara I —

Jams You're not listening!

Sara Picture — a woman —

Jams (*bangs both fists on the table*) And? — And? —
You're not listening!

Jams *gets up and walks away.*

Sara I've got — I want to tell you about —

Jams I come home! Try to be sociable! Interest you in my work! (*Goes to the table. Bangs it.*) You can't even listen! Sit there! Nothing to eat!

Sara I — (*Stops.*)

Jams I? — I?

Sara Please listen. Someone knocks on the door.

Jams What? (*Looks at the door.*) I didn't hear it.

Sara They knock all the time.

Jams *goes to the door. Opens it. No one is there. He shuts the door and turns back to Sara.*

Jams What's going on?

Sara It keeps knocking all day.

Jams Kids.

Sara I'd've heard them laugh or run away.

Jams How long's it been going on?

Sara Weeks. I can't imagine it!

Jams (*slight pause*) Let me get this right. You hear a knock — open the door — no one's there?

Sara Yes.

Jams You're going potty.

He goes into the kitchen. Sara sits in silence. Jams comes back. He is taking his jacket off the hanger.

Weeks? Why didn't you tell me? The service expects us to keep to standards! Be respectable! Not get involved in this shite! There's enough shite outside! It's not coming in my house! (*He throws the coat hanger on the floor. He gets into his jacket.*) I'll eat at the canteen! Pick that up!

Jams *goes out. He shuts the door behind him. Sara picks up the coat hanger. She stands in the room and stares at the door. Silence. She goes out into the kitchen.*

Two

The room is empty.

A knock at the door.

Pause.

A knock at the door.

Jams *comes in from the kitchen. He wears civvies. He forks food from a plate he holds in his hand. He opens the door. Grit stands there. He wears an old faen mack and a battered broien trilby. He has a backpack on his back.*

Grit Hello. I got your number down the street. Is your wife in? — you must be her husband: they said she was — (*He stops.*)

Jams *watches Grit. He puts a forkful of food in his mouth.*

Jams What you want her for?

Grit Is she in?

Jams Might be.

Grit O it's nothing private. It's just – better if I tell her. Or you both together. Will she be long? I'll come back.

Jams *steps aside and motions Grit in with his fork.* **Grit** comes in.

Jams *pushes the door to with his foot. He cheers and reaches Grit.*

Jams She's out.

Grit Just take this off. Heavy.

He takes off the backpack and puts it on the floor. Jams forks food into his mouth.

Grit . . . If I'm interrupting I'll come back in . . .

Jams What you want her for?

Grit I'm her brother.

Jams Are you?

Grit I live – I lived – at the other end of the country. *(Gestures to pack.)* Walked down.

Jams Walked?

Grit No travel document.

Jams Why?

Grit Office wasn't functioning. Official came out and told the queue no more documents issued. The staff were throwing themselves off the roof. Couldn't use transport without a document.

Jams *(wags fork at Grit)* You've got a suicide outbreak.

Grit Nothing worked. No jobs. No electricity. Water comes out with lumps. On the way to work I had to cross a bridge. Crowd on it. Sitting and standing both sides on the parapets. Done up in overcoats. Looked like rows of pigeons – roosting or walking up and down looking for a place. Then one of them'd throw theirselves in the river. That started it. Splash – splash – splash. Five or six throw themselves in. Others climb up to fill the gaps they left. The ones in the river float off.

Their overcoats are blown out on top of the water like bladders or big blisters. When I got to work it had reached there – it was closed.

Jams *(sits at the table and eats)* The faces are the give-away. They all jumped? No one used a rope or anything fancy?

Grit No.

Jams They all do the same – whatever it is. One of the symptoms. Know Reading?

Grit No.

Jams Place down this end. Suburb before it was resettled. They had an outbreak. I was sent because of the job. They walked the streets carrying a knife in front of them – like this. *(He holds his fork at arm's length.)* Point up. Hundreds of 'em. Streets were chocker. Going up and down. Like sleepwalkers holding a candle out. Dead quiet. No one spoke. No one bumped into anyone. All of a sudden one of 'em'd stab theirselves. Stab stab stab. Hacking and ripping. Arms and legs. Chest. Neck. As if they wanted to stab themselves as many times as they could before the knife fell out of their hand. Never stabbed anyone else. Rest didn't turn round. Saw one on the pavement. Trying to reach the knife he'd dropped. Scrabbled round for it for half an hour. When he got it all he could do was scratch the pavement. Rest step over him. They all wore scarves – like yours wore overcoats. The symptoms are always the same. That's why I asked if you saw their faces. Blanks.

Grit Yes.

Jams If you'd been resettled it wouldn't've happened. Reading wasn't resettled either. No outbreaks after.

He stands and takes the plate and towel into the kitchen. Grit unfastens the backpack. He takes out an envelope and puts it in his inside pocket. He fastens the backpack. Jams comes from the kitchen drying the plate on a tea towel.

Jams You haven't been hanging round outside playing silly buggers with door knockers?

64 Have I None

Grit No.

Jams If you have I'll find out. (*No response.*) A long way to come. Why?

Grit When I got home my wife was gone. Didn't know if she'd killed herself. Could've been on the bridge when I crossed. Searched to see if she'd left a note. Didn't take long. Up there it's like here, by the looks of it: authority discourages furniture. I tried the drawer of our table. Never normally touch it, that was her responsibility. It was stuck. I yanked it out. The runner was loose. She'd propped it up with a bit of card. When I unrolled it it was a photo.

Jams Not allowed. All personal papers destroyed when they abolished the past.

Grit This got lost in the drawer.

A sound at the door.

Jams Her. Tidy this up.

Jams *takes the plate and tea towel out into the kitchen. The door opens.*

Sara *comes in carrying in front of her an issue box of food. She closes the door with her heel. She looks over the box at Grit.*

Grit He let me in.

Sara *goes towards the kitchen.*

Sara (*calls*) You there?

She turns to look at Grit. Jams comes from the kitchen.

Jams I'll take it. (*He takes the box.*) He says he's from the other end.

He takes the box out into the kitchen.

(*Off*) Walked. Your brother.

Sara (*calls*) What?

Jams (*off*) Brother.

Grit You don't remember me.

Sara I haven't got a brother. No one has. They did away with all that. What d'you want? (*Calls.*) Why did you let him in? – You can't walk in a house and say you're a brother. What are you after?

Jams *comes from the kitchen.*

Jams You still haven't said what you've come for.

Sara I don't care what he's come for! Get rid of him!

Grit *takes the envelope from his inside pocket. He takes a photo from the envelope. He holds it out to Sara.*

Grit Look.

Sara What is it?

Grit Photo. (*To Jams.*) From the drawer. (*To Sara.*) You years ago.

Sara *stares at Grit and then turns to Jams. No one moves.*

Grit I came to deliver it.

He puts the photo on the table.

I'd forgotten you. Couldn't have said your name if I had to. When I saw the photo – as I unrolled it – my mouth said it – out loud. It knew, I didn't. I said 'What?' It said it again: Sally.

Jams *goes to the table and picks up the photo. He looks at it. Tears it up.*

Jams She's Sara. Could be any two kids.

Sara What's he want?

Jams (*strugs*) Suicide outbreak up there.

Sara He doesn't know what he's doing! When there's an outbreak of suicide everyone imagines! Hallucinates! If he was my brother – that's a reason to get rid of him! (*Straightens a chair.*) Some of the packs were frozen. They have to go in the fridge. (*Turns to Grit.*) Don't stand there! Go away!

Grit Perhaps I was wrong when I said your name. It might've been shock because it was a photo – any photo. But

when I was walking I remembered other things. You do when you start. When that photo was taken you said your dress wasn't right. You went out to change it. I remember watching the door. You came back with a red ribbon in your hair. You made me wipe my shoes. You said when we looked at the photo years later we'd want it to be right. I was cross. You said smile. The camera was on a chair. You set the timer. Ran back and stood by me. It whirred and clicked. I remember it.

Jams They won't let you stay. No right to come without the document.

Grit They weren't being issued.

Jams If you didn't want to throw yourself off like the rest, you should've stayed to help with the mess. Not wander about.

Grit Not going yet. Tired. Rest. Go in the morning.

He sits at the table and rests his head on his arms.

When they jumped they were like shadows falling into the water.

He sleeps. Jams and Sara stare at him.

Jams He sat on the chair.

Sara You let him in.

Jams He's your brother!

Sara He's not my brother!

Jams He can see it's not his chair!

Sara He might've thought it was anyone's chair!

Jams Anyone's chair? — in somebody's house!

Sara Visitors! Visitors! Visitors have chairs!

They are screaming.

Jams I didn't know he'd sit in it!

Sara You could've put names on the chairs!

Jams Put names!

Sara Then people would know not to sit on —

Jams Why didn't you do it?

Sara It's not my job!

Jams It's not my job!

Sara You're in the service! You're trained for emergencies! Anyone could walk in that door and sit on —

Grit *wakes.*

Grit Is anything wrong?

Jams/Sara You sat in the chair!

Silence.

Jams Who?

Sara Who?

Jams Who!

Sara What who?

Jams You said anyone could walk in that door! Who?

Sara Who?

Jams Who!

Sara That's the point! *Anyone!*

Jams Who's anyone?

Sara God give me patience! *Anyone!*

Jams (to Grit) Why did you sit in the chair?

Sara (to Grit, pointing at the chairs) His! Mine! (To Jams.) Yours! Mine!

Jams I know whose chair's whose!

Sara Sometimes!

Jams Sometimes?

Sara Sometimes!

Jams Sometimes? What's that supposed to mean?

Sara Sometimes! I know what it means!

Jams Sometimes?

Grit I think she means sometimes it's --

Jams Shut up! I know what she means before she does!

Grit Then why did you ask her what --

Jams Shut up! Shut up!

Sara Sometimes! I keep a diary!

Jams That bloody diary!

Sara To prove what goes on! In this house you need a record! I know what happened on Friday the 22nd of June last year!

Jams Friday the 22nd of June?

Sara Friday the 22nd of June! And I know the time --

Jams Friday the 22nd of --

Sara You sat on --

Jams Liar!

Sara You sat on --

Jams Never!

Sara May I drop dead! You sat on *my* chair!

Jams (to Grit) Get out! Get out that chair!

Grit stands. Jams leans on the chair.

Jams Leant! Like this! (*Goes to Sara.*) That's what normal people call leant! Where was my backside? Not on the --

Grit has sat in the chair. Jams turns to him.

Jams (to Grit) To your mind is that leant? (*He notices that*

Grit is in the chair.) Get out of the chair! Get out!

Grit stands. Jams leans on the chair.

Sara Get off my chair!

Jams Where's my backside? Not on the seat! No way! It doesn't constitute sitting if your backside's in the air --!

Sara No because you heard me coming and --

Jams You don't like it when you're shown the truth!

Sara -- got up!

Grit sits in the other chair.

Jams Did you say -- did you stand in the doorway and say -- when you had every opportunity -- be honest for once! -- did you say: you're sitting in my chair?

Sara No!

Jams No you did not!

They are screaming and in tears.

Sara No! And you know why?

Jams Tell me!

Sara Shall I tell you?

Jams Tell me! Tell me! I asked you!

Sara I'll tell you why! For the same reason I keep quiet about all that goes on in this house!

Jams You couldn't keep quiet if you were dead!

Sara and Jams notice that Grit is sitting on the other chair.

Sara/Jams Get out of that chair!

Grit stands, picks up his pack and the pieces of photo. He puts the pack on the floor, sits on the pack and methodically tries to piece back the photo.

Sara I know you'd been sitting!

Jams Leant!

Sara I can prove it!

Jams Leant!

Sara I heard the leg scrape! It scraped when you got out of it! I know when a leg scrapes and when it doesn't!

Jams And I know when water runs from a tap!

Sara I knew we'd come to that!

Jams Water –

Sara Tap – tap – tap – tap – tap – tap!

Jams – is a public resource!

Sara One little slip! I left a tap on! You'd think I'd left Niagara Falls running in the bathroom!

Grit (*fiddling with the photo*) All this because I sat in a chair.

Jams Two chairs!

Sara Now start on him!

Jams You never hang your clothes up!

Sara You take the hangers!

Jams Of course I take the hangers!

Sara I've never known anyone as selfish as you with hangers!

Jams If I didn't take them they'd lie idle gathering dust!

Sara The whole street knows what I go through if you can't get your hands on a hanger the moment you come in!

Jams O God I pity anyone who brings a wound in this house. It'd never heal. You'd open it every night.

Sara Wounds? I live under surveillance.

Jams When do I ever say you –

Sara O you don't say. You're far too clever to say. Not saying is your speciality! You're so innocent if you went paddling the sea would curdle!

Jams What's that mean?

Silence.

Sara I know when a chair scrapes.

Jams And for another for-instance the time you left your shoes in the middle of the –

Sara Tap – tap – tap – tap – tap – tap.

Silence. Jams gets up and goes to Grit.

Jams Get up! (**Grit** looks at him.) Up!

He jerks Grit up by the collar. He throws the backpack aside and points at the spot where it was.

There! That's not the middle of the room! That's outer space!

Sara I'm not stupid! That's the middle of the room! It's where you kicked my shoes!

Jams I did not kick your shoes! You put –!

Sara Pardon me – it's in the diary – 14th September –

Jams Tripped!

Sara Kicked!

Jams Tripped!

Sara I left my shoes by the door because the 14th was wet (the meteorological office'll confirm it) and I didn't want –

Jams Put – the middle of the room –

Sara – to tread wet on the –

Jams – where anyone could trip and –

Sara – floor!

Jams – break their neck!

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Sara *slams the backpack down by the door.*

Sara There! — that's where my shoes were left!

Grit My pack —

Jams Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

Grit Give me my —

Jams They'd be crushed when the door's opened!

Sara Right. Other side.

Grit *is going to pick up the backpack. Sara moves it to the other side of the door.*

Sara I admit it. I'm not pedantic. I say when I'm wrong! The point is —

Jams *throws the backpack into the middle of the room.*

Jams The point is *there!*

Grit *picks up the pack.*

Jams Leave it!

Sara Put it back!

Jams and Grit *struggle for the backpack.*

Grit Let go!

Jams Let go!

Sara See what he's like! Grab grab —!

Grit Give me my —!

Jams *gets the pack from Grit. Grit goes to the table, picks up a chair and puts it by the door where the backpack was.*

Sara O my God.

Jams O my God.

Sara O my God.

Jams He's ruining the home!

Grit Now kick the chair!

Jams *sits on the chair by the door. He puts his head in his hands and groans.*

Jams ... It's terrible . . .

Grit He's not kicking my pack around!

Jams *(flaring up)* I didn't kick it!

Grit You would next! I know what was coming!

Jams *cries.*

Sara Don't feel sorry for him. He puts it on to get sympathy!

Grit All this because I sat in a chair!

Jams *Two chairs!*

Sara *turns her chair round with its back to the table.*

Sara In future my chair faces this way! I'll eat from a tray on my lap!

Jams *gets up and turns Sara's chair to face the table.*

Sara *(turns the chair round)* Leave it!

Jams *(turns the chair round)* I'll have a bit of discipline!

Grit *(examining the backpack)* He broke the snap!

Sara *(turns the chair round)* Freedom!

Grit *(holds out the backpack)* Look!

Jams *(turns the chair back)* Discipline!

Grit *picks up the other chair.*

Sara/Jams O my God.

Grit You're not getting this till I get a new pack! And my photo repaired!

Sara If you hadn't let him — encouraged him — to put the photo on the table this wouldn't have —

Jams Leave the table out of it! You're not having the table!

Jams grabs the table, takes it to the side and hugs it. **Sara** picks up her chair and hugs it. **Grit** hugs the other chair. They stare at each other.

Silence. **Grit** sees the backpack on the floor, rushes to it, picks it up and returns to his place. He hugs the chair and the backpack.

Silence.

Sara cries bitterly. She sets her chair down and sits on it.

Sara (crying) Scraped.

Sara hovers. **Jams** takes the chair back to its place. He fusses and adjusts its position by millimetres. **Grit** fiddles with the catch on the backpack.

Grit (fiddling) When they went under their breath came back in bubbles. (The catch.) Broke. — Your last breath in a bubble. Funny your last words floating in a bubble on the water.

Sara (weeping bitterly) Scraped. It could've been the lid sliding on my coffin.

Sara hovers in despair. She gets up and takes the chair to the door.

Jams adjusts the table. **Sara** opens the door. **Jams** looks up and sees **Sara** go through the door with the chair.

Jams Bring it back!

Jams reaches — lurches — spravels on the table and sends it flying. *Crash.*

Jams Sod it! Crucified on a table!

Grit If the fabric wasn't fortified it've torn.

Jams gets up and goes through the door. *Pause.* *Off.* **Sara** screams. *Pause.* **Jams** comes back with the chair.

Jams Not having her parade in the streets with a chair! If she wants to do that sort of thing she can live abroad. Shaming me to the neighbours! (He sees **Grit** hugging the other chair and the backpack. He points to the table.) *There!* — or I'll fold you up and put you inside your backpack!

Grit takes the chair to the table. **Jams** fiddles to get the table and chairs into their exact places. **Sara** comes through the door with a wooden crate. She sets it against the wall.

Sara (to **Grit**) Sit.

Grit Sit on my backpack — I sit on that he'll say it's his!

Sara Sit!

Grit picks up the crate and examines it.

Grit Full of splinters!

Sara Sit!

Grit sits on the crate. He hugs the backpack to his chest. **Sara** and

Jams sit in the chairs at the table.

Silence.

Jams (to **Grit**) Go and use the toilet.

Grit I don't want to use the toilet.

Jams Use the toilet! Not having you wet the floor! That'll be next. Come down from the other end. Walk. No documentation. Sit on the chairs. *Tico.* Wet the floor. There's no end to it.

Grit stands.

Jams (points to the kitchen) There.

Grit goes out with the backpack. *Pause.* A leg falls off the table. **Jams** stares at it.

Jams We'll have to kill him. He'd get out of a settlement. Look how he walked here. There's no stopping him. I can't see the future anymore, what's in it for us. Sometimes your shoelace is undone, you can't bother to stoop to tie it . . . it's easier to end it. I saw a warning at Reading. In broad daylight. People walking the streets holding a knife before them — as if they were holding a candle. He stands there breathing quietly — his breath's like a storm blowing the roof off the house.

Sara We'll give him poison. That's convenient. We'll use the best stuff. It's like thick water. You wouldn't know it's in the spoon if the light didn't shine on it. We'll invite him to a meal to celebrate the reunion. Put it in his food. I'll go to the chemist.

Jams Fetch my jacket. It's on the hanger.

Sara goes out. **Jams** repairs the table. **Sara** comes back with

Jams's jacket on a hanger. **Jams** takes a wallet from an inside pocket. He takes a plastic card from the wallet and gives it to **Sara**.

Jams Put it on my card.

Jams puts the wallet back in the jacket pocket. **Sara** goes out through the door. She closes it behind her. **Jams** works at the table a moment longer. He stands back — adjusts the place of a chair. He picks up the jacket on the hanger. He goes out to the kitchen.

Three

The room is empty. The table, chairs and crate are in their proper places.

Grit comes in from the kitchen. He wears his mack and trilby. He is tired and tense. He stands in the middle of the room.

Pause.

A knock at the door.

Grit does not move.

Pause.

Grit goes to the crate and sits.

Silence.

A knock.

Grit does not move.

A knock.

Silence.

A knock.

Grit stands. He goes to the door and opens it. No one is there. He goes back to the crate. He sits. He realises the door is still open. He stares at it.

Pause.

He gets up and goes to the door. He shuts it. He is halfway back to the crate.

A knock.

Grit dashes to the door. Yanks it open. No one is there. He closes the door. He walks into the room. He hesitates.

Silence.

The door opens quietly. **Sara** comes in. She wears a ground-length loose coat of stiff sky-blue silk. It is covered with metal spoons. They are stitched to the silk so they cannot swing loosely but can knock against each other when the coat moves.

Grit Where have you been? He wouldn't let me look for you. He said the service mustn't know I'm here. No one's seen you on the streets. Four days! He's out looking for you now.

Sara We played in the house when we were children. That was before they blocked the windows. I couldn't reach up to see out of them. Once you were ill. Our parents were worried. It made them hard. As if they'd been cut out of tin. The doctor wore a long black coat. I never saw his front. I thought he had two backs. That made him a doctor.

Grit Where did you get your coat? There are no carnivals now.

Sara In the night I came to the room where they put you. You were in a coma. I held my hand over your head. I felt the ice. There were drops all over your face. I thought that was fever: your skin cried. I knew the doctor with two backs would kill you. So I pulled back the blanket — you smelt like a stable on a frosty night — and dragged you to the window so you could see. I had to climb on a chair. Pulled you up by the shoulders. Turned your head to the window. There was nothing to see. No lights in the street. It was dark. The glass was black. I saw your face in it. It was white. Your face was talking to you. I couldn't hear it. You put out your hand. You tapped the glass. I thought you'd broken it — that was the power of fever. I nearly dropped you in fright. You'd fall on the glass. The splinters would tear off your face. The spikes would stab out your eyes. The glass wasn't cracked. What I saw was the pain in your face: your face had splintered. Your face in the glass had told you: you're dead. You slithered out of my hands. Mother ran in. I said I'd heard you moving —

found you under the window. They said yes that's the delirium. All next day I was terrified they'd find out you were dead. Blame me! — I'd dragged you. I was frightened in the way only a child can be . . . No one found out. The doctor didn't notice you were dead.

Grit Can I sleep now you're here? I walked for months. All that time I didn't have five hours of rest. I slept like a dog — with an eye open.

Grit *lies on the floor.*

Sara Put this under your head.

Sara *puts the backpack under his head for a pillow.*

Grit You are my sister. I remember my face in the window.

Grit *sleeps. Slowly Sara takes off the coat, turns it inside out and puts it on again. The inside is black and covered with bones. Each bone is seen at one end so that it hangs loose and rattles as the coat moves.*

Jams *comes through the door. He closes it behind him. He sees Grit on the floor. He kicks him.*

Jams Up! (He kicks **Grit** again.) Up — you rubbish dump!

Grit (stirs in his sleep) . . . what? . . .

Jams Chriss — another burden. (Calls to the kitchen.) Hello! (Waits a moment.) No sign of her. No one's seen her. We lifted the manhole covers. Shouted down . . . I had to tell the service something. If her body had turned up and hadn't been reported absent — I'd be censured. If I can't find her or tell a good story: chop.

Sara *has sat on the crate. Jams notices that Grit is still asleep. He looks round, stares at the chairs. He puts his hands under Grit's armpits and drags him to the table. He sits upright in a chair. Grit sleeps — Jams watches him in silence for a moment.*

Jams I asked you to watch — for a little while. No you slept. How can I know if the service came and searched while I was out?

Jams *goes out to the kitchen. He comes back with a rope. He ties Grit to the chair. He sits at the other end of the table and watches him. Sara stands. She goes out through the door and shuts it behind her. Jams rams the table into Grit's stomach. Grit jerks awake.*

Grit Auntie me.

Jams Authority was right to abolish the past. Get shot of it. Videos — tapes — discos — dressing up — raves — dot com dot — junk. People were sick with it. It was a hobby to buy a new car, drive away from the salesroom and crash it into a wall. What do people do when they've got everything? One day they beg you to take it away. They want peace instead. That's why they grab at resettlement — why it's easy to forget. Everyone with the same walls — same issue furniture — same issue clothes — same issue food. It takes time — but we must. I saw the faces at Reading and pitied them. Your photo's an instance. If it had been destroyed my wife wouldn't be lost — you wouldn't be tied in the chair — I wouldn't be chopped. The suffering will end. There's still the odd lunatic. The old women with pictures in their heads. The stray kids. I'm not immune to it — some days I feel like the footprint in the land where no man has trod. But still it gets less. The suffering goes.

Grit Auntie me.

Jams I'm not being chopped for you.

Grit I won't be a bother.

Jams No I must see this through.

Grit I'll go far away.

Jams No. A labour-gang was digging foundations for a new settlement. They dug into an old plague pit. They had to wear masks. There might've still been bacilli in the pit. You're a ghost in this house. A sick ghost with a disease.

The door opens. Sara comes in. She wears her ordinary clothes and carries a small packet.

Jams Where've you been?

80 Have I None

Sara Lost.

Jams For four days?

Sara I couldn't find the way out of the ruins.

Jams The ruins?

Sara I wanted to see them for myself.

Jams You were told not to go there!

Sara I wanted to see.

Jams For four days? I don't believe you.

Sara *sits on the crate.*

Sara Sorry. It was like walking on a path inside a whirlwind. Round in a circle. The smaller it got the more space there was.

Jams We sent out patrols! I made a service report!

Sara There are so many bricks. Broken walls. Why are bricks red? I saw the tyre marks made by the trucks. I saw the footprints of people who'd lived there. They were in the houses. Turning to stone in the dust. Even the footprints of mice who'd stolen their scraps. They were in the cupboards. They'd been there for sixty generations of mice. But the generations weren't born. They were fumigated away. The time in the cupboards is mice generation 'o'.

Jams What happened to you?

Sara Why is he tied up?

Jams To stop him getting lost.

Pause. Sara stands and goes to the door.

Jams Where are you going?

Sara I want to go to —

Jams No! — You stay!

Silence.

Sara (*sharp*) Why is he tied in my chair?

Jams To stop him getting —

Sara Why didn't you tie him in your chair?

Jams He wasn't sitting in my chair!

Sara You could have moved him to your chair!

Jams I wouldn't have had to tie him in any chair if you —

Sara Always an excuse!

Jams Excuse?

Sara Excuse!

Jams It's you who needs an excuse! Four days in the —

Grit Could you loosen this knot?

Sara I know why you tied him in my chair!

Jams This'll be brilliant! She had four days to work on it!

Grit It's stopping the blood.

Sara So he couldn't get out of it!

Jams So he couldn't get — ! I don't believe it! Did I hear right? (*To Grit.*) Did you hear her say so he couldn't get out of it?

Grit You needn't undo it — just loosen the — so I —

Sara Yes so he couldn't get out of it.

Jams She said it again! (*Howls with laughter. Pounds the table in hysterics.*) So he — ! (*Slaps his thighs.*) So he couldn't get out of it!

Sara Yes and you know why?

Jams Tell me! Tell me! So he couldn't —

Sara I know why!

Jams Yes?

Sara Yes!

82 Have I None

Jams Tell me!

Sara I'll tell you when I'm ready!

Jams So he couldn't get out of it!

Sara So he couldn't get out of it — and get into *your* chair.

Jams Now I've heard everything!

Sara (*to Grit*) Didn't he tell you to sit in my chair?

Grit I woke up in it —

Sara Woke up in it! Chriss I've got two bloody lunatics in the house!

Jams That's right insult your brother!

Sara He's not my brother!

Grit (*struggling*) If you could slack it — the blood could —

Sara O I know your diabolical mind! He tied you up so when I came through the door I'd be confronted with you in my chair having a sleep!

Jams I didn't know you'd come through that door — ever!

Sara Hoped!

Jams Hoped?

Grit My nose itches —

Sara You don't get rid of me so easy! I've got my rights —

Jams Then why did you run off to —

Sara I wish I'd never come back —

Grit Could you scratch it for me?

Jams All the thanks I get! I had the manhole covers up! I was worried to —

Sara Worried you'd lose your job!

Grit (*bends his head to the side*) It's this side — just by the nostril —

Jams Next time don't try to come back —

Grit O dear.

Jams (*to Grit*) What is it mate? You got a problem?

Grit My nose —

Jams How can I help?

Grit — itches!

Jams (*to Sara*) — the door'll be locked!

Sara That's your idea of humanity.

Jams (*scratching Grit's nose*) Don't teach me about humanity!

Grit Ow!

Jams Shut up!

Grit Ouch!

Jams Shut up! (*To Sara.*) I know how to treat my fellow man!

Grit Ow!

Sara Yes — scratching his eyes out!

Grit Ah! Other side!

Jams What?

Sara Other side!

Jams (*to Grit*) Why didn't you say —

Grit I couldn't get a word in edgeways!

Jams Point! You could've pointed!

Grit I can't! You tied me up!

Sara He scratched the wrong side on purpose! Tied him up — tortured him —

Jams At least I never sat on his crate!

Sara His crate?

Jams His crate!

Sara Whese crate?

Grit I don't mind who sits on my crate —

Sara (to Grit) Your crate! You thieving little —!

Jams Now start on your brother!

Sara He's not my brother!

Jams She sat on his crate while the poor lad's tied up and —

Grit I thought you gave me the crate so I —

Sara Shut up!

Grit I give it back to you. Take it!

Jams (to Grit) Shut up! (To Sara.) You gave him the crate — now you're going to steal it —

Sara I know the sound a chair makes when it's scraped!

Jams The shoes were in the middle of —

Sara Tap — tap — tap — tap — tap.

Silence.

Grit The other side itches.

Silence.

Sara Scraped.

Silence.

Jams I could walk in the dark. Trip. Break my neck.

Silence.

Grit sneezes.

Silence.

Jams You went to the chemist?

Sara Yes.

Jams That the packet?

Sara Yes.

Jams It's gift-wrapped.

Sara To avoid suspicion. He values my custom.

Jams takes the packet out to the kitchen.

Grit Untie me.

Sara There'd be a row. He has to do it.

Grit Were you lost?

Sara An old woman hung a picture in the ruins. I came to her place. Ended up there. Not really chance. I was looking. Saw the street sign. Hung down crooked. Lepal Street. I found the picture — its leftovers in the rubble. Splinters of wood and shreds of paper. He said it was the sea. I hammered a nail in. Hung it back on the wall. Sat there for a time. Then the top of the wall lurched sideways. Where I'd hammered the nail. Hung there for ages. Then it all came down in a rush. The bricks fell on the ground like teeth. I rested and stayed there three days. The old woman's dead. I've never seen the sea. Did you see it on your way down?

Grit No.

Sara It's shrunk. Only puddles are left. Where the sea was the sand moves as if it's still there. They say the sea's ghost walks on the shore.

Jams comes from the kitchen with three spoons. He lays them at three places on the table.

Jams Couple of minutes. Used dehydrated.

He goes out into the kitchen.

Grit You remember when I was ill? You came in my room one night. Sat me up in bed to make me better. You told me stories.

Sara (*bent on the table*) I can't – get there on my – you don't need to take me far to – leave me at the corner –

Jams Be seen in the street walking a dying woman on my arm? I won't! I can't! It's conduct unbefitting! I'd be court-martialled! Chopped! And she's my wife!

Sara starts to *sway* across the room.

Sara . . . they'll just have to see me staggering to the . . .

Jams goes to the table, snatches the bread-knife and slashes **Grit** free.

Grit doesn't move. He stares at **Sara**.

Jams Help her! She'll be dead before you've –! You're free! Take her out! Scratch your nose! (*Stops.*) O my God it's a joke! That's the poison! You swapped them.

Jams grabs the bowl and tries to poke spoonfuls of soup into **Grit**.

Jams (to **Grit**) Drink it! Drink it!

Grit stares at **Sara**. She crashes onto the crate.

Sara Help me. Don't make me stay – and have time to be sorry. Take me out. It's quicker if I walk – there won't be time to be sorry. (*Confused laughter.*) At Reading – in the street – in broad daylight – they carried daggers before them – as if they were –

Grit stands. He helps **Sara** to her feet.

Grit Why? Why did you do it?

Sara Don't talk . . . Outside . . . talk to me there . . .

Jams (teaching **Grit** help **Sara** to the door) O my God. O my God. O my God.

Grit and **Sara** go through the door. **Jams** stands uncertain. He goes to the door and shouts in the street.

Jams Keep her upright! You can't trust him to do – (*Tells.*) Don't let her stagger! O God get her round the corner before

anyone –! (*Whines.*) They're opening their doors! (*Shuts the door.*) I can't look!

He goes to the table. Sits. Drags the soup bowl towards him. Eats.

Chopped! That Johansson'll get my seat in the truck! Twisted little bed-wetter! (*Sobs.*) She brings crates into the house – then as if that's not enough – (*Shakes salt on the soup.*) – she kills herself! (*Eats. Spatters. Spits.*) O God what if she switched them round! . . . (*Collapses across the table. Weeps. Bangs the table with his fist.*) It's her revenge because I sat in her chair!

He gets up. Still howling he goes to the door, opens it and shouts into the street.

Leant! Leant – you bitch!

He groans at what he sees. Slams the door. He goes towards the kitchen, still howling.

Jams O God it's worse than Reading.

Howling, he staggers towards the kitchen. There is a knock at the door. He turns and shouts to it.

Jams Bugger off!

He goes off to the kitchen howling.