SIMON STEPHENS

PLAYS:

BLUEBIRD - CHRISTMAS HERONS - PORT

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introduced by the author
Herons was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, London, on 18 May 2001. The cast was as follows:

**Billy Lee Russell**
Billy Seymour

**Scott Cooper**
Robert Boulet

**Aaron Riley**
Stuart Morris

**Darren Madden**
Ryan Winsley

**Adele Kent**
Lia Saville

**Charlie Russell**
Nicolas Tennant

**Michelle Russell**
Jane Hazlegrove

**Characters**

**Billy Lee Russell**  Fourteen years old. A dirty, scruffy mop of hair. Wears a thin and old Adidas jacket and a Nike Air baseball cap. He speaks in the manner of somebody with a desperate eagerness to please, to satisfy, to explain, to charm others. This eagerness manifests itself also in the way that he moves.

**Charlie Russell**  Thirty-four years old. Billy’s father. A hulking damaged man. He wears a blue jacket over a white T-shirt and jeans and he smokes roll-up cigarettes with remarkable constancy. His skill at rolling these cigarettes betrays surprising subtlety and dexterity. Charlie trips over his words when he talks, as though he can’t possibly explain everything that he needs to. This struggle results in inarticulacy. And occasional accidental poetry. He is a man who has watched bewildered as almost everything that he once loved has been taken away from him.

**Michelle Russell**  Thirty-two years old. Billy’s mother. Separated from Charlie. She has a confident energy that she struggles to contain when she speaks to Billy, almost out of fear of frightening him. She takes great care over her appearance but there is something about her clothes, particularly about the coat she wears, which is somehow awkward. It is as though she is trying too hard. She can look, at times, monumentally tired.

**Adele Kent**  Thirteen years old. She is a year below Billy in school. She wears her school uniform still. She wears it unruly. She has a disarming directness. She has bleached blonde hair and dark eyes. She has something of a reputation around and outside of the school — not for being feared, but she is respected. She is a friend of Scott Cooper’s. Scott does not know she has taken to visiting Billy. At first she makes Billy nervous.

**Scott Cooper**  Fifteen years old. He is big for his age and handsome. He is deeply damaged. He has a vulnerability which manifests itself in cruelty. He moves and speaks with a calmness that is disarming. Sometimes he appears slow-witted. He isn’t.
Scott: Fucking get ourselves fucking sorted, eh?

He moves to them. The others follow him. And then he stops. He turns to Adele.

You coming or what?

Beat.

I said. Are you coming with me or fucking what?

Adele: Yeah. Yeah, I'm coming.

She follows Aaron and Darren out. As she passes Scott he strokes her back.

Scott: Good girl.

They exit. The lights dimly.

A moment. The sound of the water.

Billy enters. There is an urgency about him. An eagerness. He has with him a battered school bag, and a thin bag for carrying a fishing rod. He checks that nobody is watching him and then he opens his school bag and takes out some fishing accessories. Bait, tackle, a small box of hooks, a net, etc. The final object that he removes from his bag is a black, small, well-kept book. A log or a diary of some sort. He opens it and peruses down the correct page. He also opens up the case for his rod and fixes the two halves together. Attaches the tackle to the rod and finally some bait. This whole process should be done quickly, with obsessive care and attention to detail. When he has finished Billy becomes completely calm. We stay with him for a short time. He makes a few notes in his book. He hums the melody from "Can I Pass?" by the Rebel.

Scott enters and stands downstream to Billy's right. Leaning under the oak tree grinning, and drinking from a bottle of Stella Artois with remarkable speed and thirst, Scott waits for some time before he speaks. He watches Billy who doesn't know that he's there.

Scott: I thought you'd be here.

There is a pause. Billy keeps calm, maybe smiles to greet Scott.

Scott moves, slowly, upstream towards him.

Billy: Scott.

Scott: What are you doing?

Billy: I'm fishing.

Scott: Fishing?

Billy: For tench.

Scott (arriving close, examining Billy's equipment): What are tench, Billy?

Billy: They're really small fish.

Scott: What do you do with them, Billy? When you've caught 'em?

Billy: I normally throw them back in.

Scott: What's the point of that?

Billy: It's kind of like a sport.

Scott: What's the point of throwing them back in, Billy? Waste of time, eh?

Billy: It's all to do with —

Scott (cuts him off, about his beer): You want some?

Billy: No thank you.

Scott paces around the space behind Billy. Billy remains fishing, but is always aware of where Scott has moved to.

Scott (finishing his bottle, pointing offstage): Did you see them little lads just up Goresbrook just now?

Billy (enthusiastically): Yeah.

Scott (putting his empty bottle in his pocket): I was just coming down here. I'd just been with the boys all afternoon. And I was coming down here. I was looking for you. I had something that I needed to tell you. And I saw them. They were young, eh?

Billy: Their legs are shorter.
Scott What?
Billy I was thinking about what it was about kids, when they're young like that, that makes them look strange. It's their legs. In comparison to the size of their heads.
Scott Did you see what they were doing?
Billy No.
Scott I think they were doing bad stuff.
Billy Oh.
Scott (pulls out a packet of B&H) Sex stuff.
Billy What?
Scott (offers a cigarette to Billy, half knowing that he doesn't smoke) Seriously.
Billy No thank you.
Scott How old do you think they were?
Billy Twelve. Thirteen.
Scott (lights it) At the oldest.
Billy They come round here most days.
Scott That makes me sick. Seeing that.
Billy Are you sure that's what they were doing?
Scott I should fucking know, Billy, eh. What do you think I am? Don't tell me you think I'm a liar, mate.
Billy I wouldn't. I'm not. It's just. That's horrible.
Scott Horrible?
Billy Yeah.
Scott (after a moment) Do you hear what I say?
Billy No.
Scott No. Me neither. If I see them round here again I think that I'll tell them to fucking just go away.
BILLY  They're here all the time.
SCOTT  Are they?
BILLY  (starts preparing a second hook)  Normally they just throw
stones at each other. Swear. Call each other fucking cunts.
They draw graffiti on the walls. Write their names. Draw
dicks and tits and that.
SCOTT  (throws his cigarette into the water)  Good idea.
BILLY  (looks up at him)  I think they look odd. I think they
look out of place. I think they look like they're shaped all
wrong.
SCOTT  Do you?
BILLY  Yeah.
SCOTT  (picking up and examining BILLY's fish-bait)  You think
some pretty fucked-up stuff, you, eh? Don't you though,
BILLY? You do, eh?
From here BILLY starts to avoid eye contact with SCOTT. Concentrates
more on his fishing.
BILLY  What was it that you wanted to tell me?
SCOTT  These fish, these tench. How often do you catch
them? Say, every day?
BILLY  I normally catch two or three a day. At least.
Sometimes much more.
SCOTT  Nice feeling?
BILLY  When they come out of the water. They flash.
They're all silvery. They look just magnificent. That's the
best feeling.
The two boys take to staring out over the water. SCOTT moves closer to
BILLY.
SCOTT  Two or three a day isn't many though, Billy, is it?
BILLY  It's all right.
Billy Where have you been, Dad? I've been looking for you for ages.

Charlie (grins) Just resting. Just there, like. Sitting. Beautiful, it was. It had those white feathers. And you look closely you can see those feathers just getting touched by the wind. Gorgeous black eyes it had. And still like nothing you'd ever see. I come down here. Watched it. And you wait two seconds and the cunt just swoops. Drops like a lead ball. The weight just chill. Plunges down. Comes up in a second with a carp in its beak, Billy. Honestly. It was one of the most breathtaking sights that I ever saw.

Billy How long have you been here?

Charlie So I come back. Two days later. Bring a gun with me, don't I? Want to shoot the bastard. I was going to shoot it. Blow its head off and stick it on the wall at home. Buy one of those little wooden plaques. One of those things. Just glue it up there. Wanting two days. Cunt's fucked off 'a'it? Never comes back.

Billy How long have you been here, Dad?

Charlie Not long, Billy, don't worry.

Billy moves to sit with his father. He speaks while his father speaks.

Charlie I remember when I bought the bastard. Lewis Matthews. Geezer who sold it to us. Told him that I wanted it to shoot the herons that were eating my fish and also for protection from robbers and that and he says to me, he said, 'Charlie,' he said, 'Don't ever leave it around unloaded.' Which surprised me. At the time. He said, 'Cause one day you're going to fucking want to shoot the cunt. You'll fucking wake up and some cunt'll be fucking robbing you. So always put a fucking bullet in it. Four chambers round the barrel and it's one two three four BANG!' (Pause.) Sometimes I just take it out. Think about all the people I could shoot. Y'know what I mean?

Billy Dad, I've got to tell you something.
Adele enters. She stands some distance away from Billy and from where he is packing and writing. Upstage. She waits. She spends some moments staring out over the terrace before she turns to watch Billy. When she speaks he stops his packing for a short time. But only for a short time.

Adele You're Billy. Billy Russell. You go to our school. (No response.) You're in Mr Webster's form. 4D. I hate him. (No response.) You live on the Cotall Street Estate. Up Limehouse. Opposite Stainsby Road, your flat is.

Billy I've seen you. Not only at school and that. I live just near you. I'm not being a funny cow. Honestly. I've just noticed you. I'm Adele.

Billy I know.

Adele What you doing?

Billy (continuing to pack up) I was fishing.

Adele (approaches him) You're always fishing, aren't you? Heh? Every day I come here you're here fishing. With your dad normally. Where's your dad today, Billy? (No response. He continues to pack.) Don't you want to talk to us? It's all right. I'm not going to bite you or nothing. It's a bit weird though. Don't you think, Billy?

Billy No.

Billy, packed up, carrying only his book separately, goes to leave.

Adele Where are you going?

Billy (stops) Home.

Adele (raising voice) Oh, Mr Webster. Who's your new flatmate?

Billy What are you doing? I'm packing up.

Adele That's what I heard. Did you see her too?

Billy No.
Adèle: What was it like?
Billy: Don't know. Billy had to go to bed. Arent you Scott Cooper's girlfriend?
Adèle: No.
Billy: That's not what I heard.
Adèle: I'm not.
Billy: I can't be 6 feet off the ground.
Adèle: That's not Scott Cooper's needlepoint. You know what I mean? He needs to move around here talking to me.
Billy: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved? Adèle: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Billy: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Adèle: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Billy: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Adèle: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Billy: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
Adèle: He's not his girlfriend. How come you moved?
And I’m trying to be dead friendly. And you just ignore us.

**Billy (explaining)** I was leaving school one time last week. There was a lad waiting outside the school. An older lad.

About eighteen. I watch him waiting at the bus stop. And he’s waiting for a kid in Year Ten.

He turns to confront her with his justification. She doesn’t break eye contact with him.

As I’m coming out of the gates the kid in Year Ten is walking ahead of me and this lad gets him. This eighteen-year-old. Gets him. Cuts him by his coat. And he pulls his head down and smacks it against a lamp-post. Four times. Back and down against the metal bit on the lamp-post.

**Adele** So?

**Billy** I’ve seen teachers talk to kids as though they are worthless scabby shit. Bully them. Humiliate them. Never think about stopping and asking if they need help but instead, they just, instead they just say stupid cruel things.

And the reason they do it is because so many of the kids, not all of them, but so fucking many are so fucking stupid and dick around and act like losers. They think it’s funny. It’s not. It’s shitty. And it ruins things.

**Adele** What the fuck has that got to do with anything?

**Billy** I come down here. Adele Kent, and there is litter, pissey fucked litter everywhere. And it’s kids that have left it.

**Adele** Billy.

**Billy** Even here. Even the surface of the water. This place looks like it’s fucking ripped up. People don’t care. Do they? Even about trees and that? People just, why do they, just fucking, the way people treat trees around here is despicable!

**Adele** What has that got to do with anything?

**Billy** (concluding) It’s not just me.

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**Adele** That’s not an excuse.

**Billy** What do you want?

**Adele** How did you know my surname?

**Billy** I found it out. I asked somebody. What do you want?

**Adele** Why did you ask him?

**Billy** He just stuck around. What do you want from me, Adele?

**Adele** I found out about your dad. And I thought it was interesting. I wanted to meet you.

**Billy** It isn’t.

**Adele** What?

**Billy** Interesting.

**Adele** (preparing to leave) When I was fifteen, I got put into mental hospital because she tried to kill herself. I only found that out just this year. My dad’s psychic. He’s got psychic powers. He can see people’s souls. What they look like. I don’t know if I Like him or not. Parents are always interesting.

**Billy** That’s not true.

**Adele** Parents are always interesting. Because they’re always fucked but they’re very close to how you are yourself.

You do things and it’s just the same as them.

**Billy** I’m nothing like my dad.

**Adele** (ignoring him) So when I heard about Charlie I thought that the easiest way to find out about what happened, about him, was to find out about you.

**Billy** I’m nothing like my dad.

**Adele** (shaking her head) I used to know Berg Kempton. My mum used to work in their pub up Ilford. She
used to be a cleaner. They used to come down Cotall Street. I saw him once get a baseball bat and smack this kid's arm up. The kid was, what, fifteen. How long's he gone down for?

Billy Ten years.

Adele When he comes out do you think he's going to look for your dad?

Billy I don't know.

Pause.

Adele It was this time last year, wasn't it? (No response.)

Billy It was a year ago on Friday. You remember? (No response.) It was horrible, Billy, wasn't it?

Billy Yeah.

Adele There was six of them, I heard, wasn't there?

Billy Yeah.

Adele What do you think she thought? When she saw them?

Billy I don’t know.

Adele You wanna know something?

Billy What?

Adele I mean seven different types of medication.

Billy You what?

Adele I take two different types of pills for epilepsy. I've had fits. Two fits. Not for years.

Billy So what do you want me to do about it?

Adele And I have nightmares.

Billy What?

Adele I think it's almost funny sometimes. I've seen people, people I know, take speed, pills, drugs, gas, booze, chaff, glue, smack. I've seen people smoking smack outside my house. Billy, on our estate. Right in front of the Old Bill.

Billy So what are you telling me this for?

Adele (moving towards him) Sometimes at night I still get frightened. On the streets near where I live. Of the gangs there. The jumbers. The scumfuckers. The scuzzbags. The perverts.

Billy What are you going on about, you?

Adele I just wanted to meet somebody. To talk to somebody. Somebody who knew her. I wanted to meet you, Billy. To see if you were all right. Billy, I think about her all the time.

Long pause. They should be quite close now.

Billy You know who frightens me?

Adele Who?

Scott has entered with Aaron and Darren. The three boys drink beer. Smoke cigarettes. They surround Billy and Adele, but remain around the peripheries of the stage for now, allowing them to continue uninterrupted.

Billy All the winos and that. The lookers. When you walk past them, you never know if they're going to smash out or what.

Scott Ha, ha, ha.

Billy I have this theory about what happens to you when you're dead.

Adele Oh yeah?

Billy I think when you're dead you go up to heaven and you meet God and He asks you if you think that, after the things that you have done in your lifetime, you deserve to go to heaven or to hell. And you have to answer. And the answer decides where you go but you have to be completely absolutely honest about it. And there's nothing worse than
lyning in this test. Because, by the way, you left a few things loose.

Adele (beseeched) That’s about the stupidest idea I’ve ever heard.

Billy Where do you think you’ll go?

Adele (still beseeched) Jesus.

Billy Where do you think Rachel will be?

Adele (serious) I don’t believe in heaven. Or hell.

There is a slight moment. Adele and the boys ignore each other when
Scott starts to speak.

Scott We was just thinking about you.

Billy What?

Scott removes a cigarette from his packet. Leaves it unlit for now, occasionally dangling it between his teeth.

Scott We were having a conversation. About Bergie. Ross. And that. And the conversation kind of came around to you.

Billy Right.

Scott Which might surprise you. But might not. I was gonna ask you a question.

Adele touches Billy’s face. Leaves. Takes a swig from Scott’s bottle as she goes. Nobody, however, pays any attention as she leaves. The lights fall darker to night-time.

Billy Go on.

Scott You moved schools, yeah?

Billy Yeah.

Scott We couldn’t remember. We couldn’t figure it out.

Aaron Remember, I think, is fairer, Scott.

Scott Yeah. Fair enough. We couldn’t remember. Why did you move schools, Billy?

Billy Moved house.

Darren Makes sense.

Aaron Although it is a little evasive.

Scott Yes. You moved house. Why?

Billy What?

Scott Why did you move house?

Billy I went to live with me dad.

Scott (moves in) What was wrong with your mum?

Billy Nothing.

Aaron (moves in) Well, if there was nothing wrong with her, Billy, then how come you f*cked off and left her, boy?

Billy Just did, that’s all.

Scott And your brother and your sister?

Billy I haven’t got a brother and a sister.

Scott (strikers a match) Liar.

Billy What?

Scott (lights his cigarette) Isn’t he, lads? He’s a f*cking liar.

Darren (moves in, with a big swig from his bottle) He’s a f*cking dick.

Aaron (stuffs a big joint in his mouth) Yeah.

殉道, Billy? Or were there others?

Darren What's... What’s going on, then?

Scott (loosens his tie) Adjustable.

Aaron (downing a swig) Oi, what’s going on, then?
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Darren What?
Scott Billy's mum. Have you seen her?
Darren Nah.
Scott Straight up, man, she is fucking tight.
Darren Right.
Scott It ain't it, Billy. Don't you think, I mean, I know you're not meant to think stuff like this but your mum, Billy, even you can see that she is one straight up fucking sweet bit of pussy, yeah?
Billy Why are you talking as though you're American?
Some time. See another mission. Scott's cigarette close up to Billy's unmoving face.
Scott Billy.
Billy What?
Scott Billy.
Billy What?
Scott Billy.
Billy What?
Scott Shut your mouth or I'll cut your eyes out.
Darren (finishes his beer in celebration) Damn straight, Scott.
Scott Billy's mum's got a sweet little pussy though, Billy, ain't it?
Darren What are her titties like, Scott?
Scott Fucking I never saw her titties, man.
Darren Nah?
Scott Nah, I fucking her with my eyes closed.
Darren Sweet.

Scott Tight little cunt but, tell you the truth, Billy, ch? Her face is a mushy pile of shit.
Darren You know what I heard about his mum, Scott? I heard his mum works hard.
Scott Damn hard.
Darren Work all night sometimes.
Aaron I saw her, but I spent my money elsewhere. Because I figured she was fucking filthy cunt. With rice. Crabs. All manner of venereal disease.
Darren (nips from Aaron's bottle) Aids.
Scott Billy, has your mum got Aids?
Aaron (wipes bottle neck) Did she get it from fucking monkeys, Billy, 'cause I heard she's hungry for monkey cock? Although that's an unsubstantiated rumour.
Darren Billy's mum's got Aids big time.
Aaron (lights a cigarette) Billy, do you ever think about what it would be like to fuck your mum? Do you ever think about that? 'Cause if you ever do, just ask Scott, and I'm sure he'll tell you. (Hacking cough/laugh.)

Billy Shut up.
Darren (claps/rubs his hands) Oooooohhhhh!
Aaron (in a fake scientist's voice) I do believe that this peculiar worm is turning, Scott.
Scott (threatening, quiet) I can see. (Beat.) Boys. (Another Release.) Lay off, eh? We're just joking, Billy. Just pissing you about. No offence, eh? Billy? No offence? Is it? Boys? Billy? You're not offended, are you, Billy? We're sorry, aren't we boys?
Aaron Yeah. Right.
Scott (perhaps ruffles his hair)  Billy. You need to chill, man. I'm not saying anything but you're a bit of a pain. You know, you're just Billy, sometimes. You need to learn how to control your temper a bit.

Billy  What?

Scott  Have you got any money for us?

Billy  I've got one quid fifty.

Scott  That's fine, Billy.

Billy  What?

Scott  Just give us your one quid fifty then, if that's all you've got.

Billy  I need it.

Scott  I'm sorry?

Billy  It's my bus fare.

Darren  You need it?

Billy  I...

Aaron  I'm a little surprised by that comment, frankly.

Billy  I need the money to get home.

Scott (just menacing)  Just give it to us, Billy, would ya? Stop confusing the issue with irrelevant fucking horseshit.

Billy  Hands over the money. He starts to move away from them.

Billy  I won't be able to get home now.

Scott  I'm sorry?

Aaron  Billy, you can steal a walk, man, can't you?

Scott  How's your dad, Billy?

Billy  Stops.

Darren  I was speaking to Bergsie's brother.

Aaron  He is certainly not happy.

Scott  Year ago this week, innit?

Aaron  Friday.

Darren  Apparently Bergsie's had to tell his brother not to go near your dad or nothing because he wants to cut him himself when he comes out.

Scott  What?

Darren  That's what he said.  END OF SCENE

Scott  Won't be long now, will it? Good behaviour and that. Couple of years maybe.

Darren  In that.

Aaron  Billy, I heard something about your dad.

Darren  I heard lots of things about his dad.

Aaron  Is it true that your dad likes a nice pull.

Darren  A nice what?

Aaron  A nice pull. A nice wank. A nice little shuffle.

Scott  Don't we all, Riley, eh? That's not a crime.

Darren  Fucking hopeless.

Aaron  Yeah. But a nice quiet pull when he's fishing.

Scott  What?

Aaron  Gets it out in public.

Scott  No?

Aaron  No shit. My sister saw him.

Darren  Fuck off!

Aaron  He grinned at her and everything.

Darren  Just where Racheal was and that.
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Charlie Why?

Billy What?

Charlie Why do you want to know?

Billy Because I think about it all the time.

Charlie It was a long time ago, Billy.

Billy Dad, it was a year ago. It's not that long.

Charlie I don't remember much about it, Billy. I try not to think about it.

Charlie rooks in his nose, removes the bait from the hook.

Billy Dad, did you see them get her? Ross and Bergie?

Did you see them?

No response.

Ross's brother reckons you saw them and that you phoned the police. Is that true?

No response.

Dave, are you scared about what's going to happen when Bergie gets out? Because I am. I think we should think about going, Dad.

Charlie Billy, I've told you. I'm waiting.

Billy I don't think it makes any sense to stay, Dad.

Charlie Billy.

Billy Dad, Ross's brother reckons that when Bergie gets out that he's going to try and stab you. And I believe him, Dad. I honestly do.

Charlie removes his line and packs up his rod. Stands to leave.

Adele enters quietly and lies down staring at the sky.

Charlie He won't.

Billy Dad, I really think that he's going to try.

Charlie He won't. He won't be out for ten years, Billy. We won't be here then.

Adele When it gets as hot as this I can't even think.

Charlie leaves. Billy watches him go. He opens his book and writes. He continues to write while Adele talks to him. The lights should brighten and become warmer throughout this scene.

Billy I like it.

Adele I feel like I'm trapped in a cupboard. They shouldn't make us go to school when it's as hot as this. They shouldn't make us do anything. Nothing.

Billy I watch all of the people who come down here. On their way somewhere.

Adele Has he, Billy?

Billy No. Nobody ever stops.

Adele 'Cause he told me he was going to.

Billy Well, he hasn't.

Adele Good. I was worried that he would find you.

Billy Do you remember when you were little how acroplanes sounded?

Adele (propping herself up) What?

Billy Did you ever lie on your back and look up at the sky and watch the aeroplanes fly over your head and listen to the sound that they made?

Adele All the time.
Billy  As they get older, people just don’t notice things like that.

Adele  They don’t get time.

Pause. Billy gets up, starts to reel in his line and remove the bait and the hook.

Adele (considered) Sometimes I wish I could still be in primary school. I used to love it there.

Billy  There’s no point wasting time thinking about things that have finished, Adele. You have to, I have to, I look forward to stuff all the time.

Adele  What do you look forward to?

Billy  Going away. We’re going away. Me and our dad. We’re going to leave here and go down and live by the sea.

Adele  When?

Billy  Soon.

Adele  I’d like to meet your dad.

Billy  You said.

Billy (stops packing, sitting) Sometimes. Mostly. He’s been all right. My mum’s a bit of a fuck-up and he’s looked after me and that. Sometimes he’s gets angry. Sometimes he don’t say nothing. For days. Just sits there staring at his toe or something. Sometimes I think he wants to fucking kill me. When he gets angry it gets quite bad. A lot of the time he just warns me about stuff and then never does anything.

Adele  Did you ask him about Racheal?

Billy (resumes packing) No.

Adele  Right.
Adela (coming to join him) Do you know what worries me?

Billy What?

Adela It worries me that I've not got anything to look forward to.

Billy That's not true.

Adela Sometimes I think it is.

Billy Isn't there something you've always wanted to have? Or always wanted to be.

Adela See, that's the thing, I don't think there is any more.

Billy That's bad.

Adela Sometimes I get so angry about stuff.

Billy You shouldn't.

Adela I get frustrated.

Billy What about?

Adela About all kinds of things. About how stupid boys our age are. I prefer twenty-year-olds, they know what you want. And about how petty and stupid and bitchy the girls are. I end up clenching my fists up, sometimes, when I'm angry. Pull at my hair. Hit my face with my hand, hard. But that's not the same, is it? As having ambition, Billy?

Billy Bergsie was twenty, Adela.

Adela (walking away) I know.

Billy And Ross.

Adela I know that.

Billy (to Adela) They were twenty, did you know that?

Adela (to Billy) I heard that she wouldn't drown.

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Adela What?

Billy That's what I heard. That's what the police said. That there were signs of a struggle. That she fought and kicked. So in order to keep her down under they threw rocks at her. To knock her out. And to weigh her down.

Adela She must have realised what was happening.

Billy She must have done.

Adela She must have known that she was going to die.

Billy I know.

Adela Can you imagine?

Billy No.

Adela She was thirteen, Billy.

Billy They must have been very scared.

Adela Who?

Billy Bergsie. Ross. The rest of them. They must have been frightened. (Pause) I keep finding things. Little things. Numbers on. Photographs. Porno mags. And graffiti. And everything that I find seems to lead back to what happened to Rachel and how much she must have known.

Adela That's bullshit.

Billy — and what they were feeling when they realised that she was going to die. There are so many things that I find. That I come across. I don't know what to do with them all. I don't know how to make them all make sense. I end up just writing them down.

Adela You what?

Billy I write them down. I've got a book.

Adela (quietly, angry) That's fucking weird.

Billy No. It's not though.
Adele  Billy. (Beat) Do you know what I was asking about Scott for?

Billy  No.

Adele  He's found out about me coming here. To see you and that. So he's just been acting, like, like just a wank.

Billy  I see.

Adele  I've been off this week for three days because I've been ill. And while I've been off he's told everybody in my class that I was pregnant. Which was why I was off.

Billy  Dick.

Adele  I came into the form room this morning. And he was in there. He went into my bag when I wasn't looking and he got a tampon out of my bag and stuck it on the board. In front of everybody. He was just laughing and that. Teacher saw him and he didn't even do anything.

Billy  He's just a d**k.

Adele  No. It's more than that. He keeps boasting about what happened. And joking about it being a year ago. He's a d**k. He makes people feel crippled. And people let him get away with it because they're scared of what he might do. It's just not, it's not fair, Billy. It's cruel, is what it is. And it's not enough, Billy, to just, just, just write it down, Billy. It's not enough.

Billy  What is it that you want me to do, Adele?

Adele  I don't know.

Billy  Tell me what it is that you want me to do and I'll do it. I'll honestly do anything that you ask me.

Adele  Billy.
Billy I know that.
Aaron I rape it.
Billy You said.
Aaron I laugh at it. I piss on it. I think it's fucking funny.
Darren It makes him chuckle. Giggle.
Aaron And I think you and your dad are fucked in the head.
Darren But we like ya.
Aaron We do.
Darren (offers Billy a blast on the joint, Billy ignores him)
'Cause you're a funny boy.
Aaron Nature boy!
Darren It's lovely.
Aaron And we like your dad.
Darren In our own little way.
Aaron He's all right.
Darren (treading the joint out) He is.
Aaron For a pervert.
Billy Aaron.
Aaron Billy.
Billy I hope you fucking choke on your ecstasy tablets the next time you take them. I hope they stick in your throat and tear up your insides and burn up the sides of your rectum when you use it. You little (...)ex.

Billy goes to collect his bag, tries to leave.

Scott (still in the peripherics) Did you tell your dad, Billy?

Billy (freezes) What?
Scott Did you tell him that Ross was asking after him.
Billy (turns to face him) Yeah.
Scott And that Bergie is set on him.
Billy Yes. I did.
Scott What did he say?
Billy He's not worried.
Scott He should be.
Aaron Damn straight he should be.
Billy He's not. He said it doesn't matter.
Darren Did he?
Scott I would say it mattered a lot.
Darren (throws his beer bottle away, it smashes) He's a prick, man.
Scott I would say it mattered a hell of a lot, Billy.
Billy He said it didn't matter because they're not going to be out for ten years.
Scott They'll be out before then, Billy.
Billy He said they'll not be out for ten years and that we're not going to be around when they get out.
Scott You're not going to be around?
Billy We're going away.
Scott Where are you going? (No response. He moves in on him.) Billy?
Billy Southend, maybe.
Scott What?
Billy Or Portsmouth. Or Brighton, or Cornwall or somewhere, anywhere, somewhere by the sea. Somewhere where there’s water.

Scott (up very close) Is that what he said?
Billy (not turning away) That’s where we’re going.
Scott He said this, did he?
Billy It’s true.
Scott When are you going there, Billy?
Billy Soon.
Scott Soon? Soon? Soon? When is soon, Billy? (unanswerable)

Scott moves away from Billy to enjoy the whole space.

Aaron He tell this to you?
Billy Yeah.

Aaron You believed him, Billy, did you? Did you really?
Scott When’s soon, Billy?
Billy In a few months. After I’ve finished school.

Scott (picks up Billy’s bag, feels the weight) He told you this, Billy. And, Billy, tell me. How is he going to afford to move you somewhere close by to the sea, Billy? How is he going to actually afford to do that exactly?

Billy He’ll get a job.

Scott Will he? Will he really? (Lowers his bag down.)

Aaron and Darren have become very still, watchful.

Billy (calmly, placing up courage) Scott.
Scott What?
Billy Scott.
Scott What?
Billy Scott.
Scott What?
Billy I heard what you did.
Scott What?

Billy I heard what you did to Adele, Scott. And I think you're an animal for it, Scott. I think you're a coward. And I hope that your brother gets raped up the arse when he's in prison. Until it bleeds and fucking everything. Because he's a nonce, Scott. And everybody knows that he's a nonce. And everybody hates him and you and your whole family become of it. I hope you realise that. And I hope that you are haunted until the day you die, by the, the ghost of Rachael King. And that you never forget her or what your brother did to her. And that you never, not for one second, ever know what it is to hope. I hope that happens to you, Scott. Because that is what you fucking deserve.

Billy you're a wanker.

Scott Billy.

Billy You're a wanker, Scott, and your brother's a nonce and everybody knows it and everybody has always known it.

Scott Dick.

Billy He pocks his head towards him. He holds the neck of his T-shirt and head butts him twice on the face. Billy crumples and Scott pushes him to the ground. He kicks him in the side. Billy is whimpering.

Scott (to Billy) Shut the fuck up. (To Aaron and Darren) Fucking hold him down.

Darren What?

Scott You hear me, hold him fucking down.

The two boys do and Scott starts to pull Billy's trousers down.

Aaron (giggling) What you doing, Scott?

Scott Give me your bottle.

Aaron You joking?

Scott begins to beat up Billy.
approach. He sits staring out front. Adele stands behind him
watching him with great caution. She speaks with great gentleness and
concern. He is even, detached.

Adele Are you all right?
Billy Yes.
Adele Are you sure?
Billy I'm fine.
Adele I heard what they did. Aaron told me. I think you
should think about phoning the police.
Billy ...

Adele But, I want you.
Billy You know what happened when my dad phoned the
car to the police.
Adele Did they hurt you, Billy?
Billy Yes.
Adele Maybe you should go to the hospital.
Billy I'll be all right.
Adele Maybe it will be easier when you leave.
Pause.
Billy Maybe.
Adele moves closer.

Adele (softly, as if watching closely. She's not really watching him)
I used to watch him with Steph, his little sister. She's nine years old now, Billy. She's a sweet
little girl. He used to punch her in the face with the ball of
his hand to get her to do what he wanted her to do. And the
stupid thing is that Ross was just the same with him. And he
used to have it. And his dad. You know some people can
turn rooms terrible? They can twist the atmosphere of a
room without actually doing anything. Scott's dad's like
that. (She sits with him, still looking at him.) Billy, I'm so sorry.
Billy It wasn't your fault.

Pause.
Adele Did he say anything about me?
Billy No.
Adele Sometimes he lies about me.
Billy He didn't this time.
Adele He tells people all kinds of shit.
Billy He didn't even mention your name.
Adele He tells people that we slept together. Which isn't
true. We never did. I've never slept with anybody, Billy. I
haven't. Honestly.

Billy (apologetic) Oh, I'm telling it again.

Adele Billy, talk to me.
Billy What do you want to talk about, Adele?
Adele I want to make sure that you're all right. I feel
guilty, I feel that it was in some way my fault what
happened to you.
Billy You want to feel better about it all?
Adele Billy, don't. (Beat.) I just want to talk to you.
Pause.
Billy, what are you going to do?

Long pause.

Billy You should have been here earlier. There was a
heron. Just sat on the other side of the canal. Down by
Gorebrook House. It was magical. Sat still as stone.
Dropped into the water. Like a lead ball. Came up with a carp in between its teeth.

**Adele** *(turning away from him)*  I hate it when you go like this.

**Billy**  Like what, Adele?

**Adele**  I hate it when this happens.

**Billy**  When what happens?

**Adele**  I feel sick. Nervous. I feel like I'm waiting for something terrible.

**Billy**  Nothing terrible's going to happen, Adele.

**Billy** *(to Adele)*  I've been suspended from my primary school. Because I took a kitchen knife into my class. And I warned people not to go near me. Because I was feeling sick and I was worried and I didn't know what I was worried about so I panicked about everybody. It felt exactly like this. It makes me feel that I'm too fat. That I'm ugly. That my skin is horrible. That my clothes are ugly. It's how I feel, Billy, when I'm going to have one of my fits.

**Long pause.** **Billy**  Looks at her for a short time. Looks away again.

**Adele** *(turning to him)*  Billy. Can I see your book?

**Billy** *(to her)*  Why?

**Adele**  I want to know what is that you write.

**Billy**  Why?

**Adele**  I want to understand how it helps.

**He passes it to her. Looks back out. She opens at the beginning. Reads a page. Flicks forward a chunk. And back. Reading random pages with great care.**

What are these numbers at the end of each day?
No he doesn't.

Michelle (standing the collar of his jacket up) Billy, love, I'm not going to lie to you.

Billy He doesn't.

Michelle (very gently, perhaps stroking his face) He does. He speaks to Danny and Leanne. He talks to me for hours. He told me that he wanted to see me again. He won't leave, Billy; he just won't.

Billy (backing off but not turning away) Fuck off.

Michelle Billy.

Billy Just fuck off. You liar. You fucking lying cunt.

Michelle Billy,

His movements become slightly hysterical. Perhaps he hits himself as he backs off.

Billy He wouldn't do that to me, after everything you did to me? No way would he do that. No way would he do that. You fucking lying cunt.

Michelle Billy, don't go.

Billy moves across upstairs. Michelle watches as he grabs his diary, opens it, and grasps his pen in the fist of his hand while deep in tears. She leaves gently. Her eyes are blurred by tears. He is exhausted, as though his breath is his only remaining support. He speaks hurriedly. He has to recover his breath at points. His voice occasionally breaking. Perhaps best over as though suffering from a stitch.

Billy This is the final entry into this journal. It is Friday. Today the sky is more purely blue than I can remember seeing it before. It seems terrible and huge and gigantic. This is everything.

He begins to change from writing into scribbling. Vicious sharp lines that almost tear the pages. And, shaking, he starts to tear up the pages of his book.
done and which Aaron and Darren have done to try to impress you.

Scott  Billy, please.
Billy  And the things which you’ve said about my dad.
And the things which you’ve said about my mum. And my
brother and my sister.

Scott (becoming more frightened)  Oh! Fucking fuck.
Billy  And the things which you did to Adelle.
Scott  No. No. No.
Billy  And what you did to me. Scott. What you did to
me. You need to apologise to me for these things. Because
it’s just not fair. It’s just not right, Scott.

Scott  I wasn’t –
Billy  You need to apologise, Scott.
Scott  I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I wasn’t
me.
Billy  How do you know about my brother and sister,
Scott?
Scott  What?
Billy  You heard me.
Scott  My sister knows them. My sister knows your
Leanne. They’re in the same class together. At primary
school.

Billy takes this in for a while. Might he backing off and then . . .
Billy (closing in)  What did you mean it wasn’t you, Scott?

Scott (terrified now)  I mean, I, I don’t know. I mean. Shit.
Please don’t kill me.
Billy (tighter)  What did you mean it wasn’t you?
Billy  I've nothing left to lose, Scott.
Scott  Please, Billy.

Billy  (standing almost over him, like an executioner)  I've nothing left to lose any more. You took it all away from me, Scott. You and your brother. And what you did to my dad. And my mum. And this place. And all of this.

Scott  I'm only fifteen, Billy.

Billy  I'm fourteen, Scott, you idiot.

Scott  Please. Billy, Billy, Billy, please. I don't want to die, Billy. I want to live, Billy.

Billy  What for, Scott?

Scott  I don't want to die, Billy.

There's nothing left for us now, Scott, is there?

Billy  (looking away)  (looking to Adele)  Why?

Adele  Just so you can sleep and that.

Billy  (looking away)  I'd be a fish, I reckon.

Adele  Why would you be a fish?

Billy  Because they have no memory. They just swim around. If you have no memory you're never frightened about stuff.

Adele  (looking to Billy)  What are you frightened about, Billy?

Billy  Everything that I can remember.

Adele  Everything?

Billy  Cats eat fish.

Adele  Everything, Billy?

Billy  But then cats are scared of water so I'd be able to swim away. (Looking to Adele.) Are you all right?
he came from or anything but I always had the impression that it was horrible.

Billy How?

Adele Just the way he moved and stuff. He always looked frightened that anything could happen.

Adele (Looking at Billy.) Some time. Billy. (Pause.) Did you kill Scott?

Billy You answer my question now. (Pause.) Billy. (Pause.) Some time. Billy looks away out to the audience. Adele watches him.

Billy No. Of course I didn't.

Adele Thank God, Billy.

Billy Why?

Adele Just thank God, is all.

Billy It was funny.

Adele What?

Billy He wanted so badly to live, Adele.

Adele What?

Billy He was crying. Like a little baby and everything.

Adele Billy . . .

Billy I thought there must be a reason for him wanting to stay alive so badly.

Adele He was scared you were going to shoot him in the head.

Billy I was thinking about Korea, I don't think it was scared. I think that they thought I was going to kill them. I saw...