

Parliament Square



How far would you go for what you believe in?

Kat gets up one morning, leaves her family behind and travels to London to carry out an act that will change her life and, she hopes, everyone else's.

Raw, disturbing and compassionate, James Fritz's searingly powerful play forces a confrontation with some of the most urgent questions we face. What can one individual do to effect change? And where do we draw the line between absolute commitment and dangerous obsession?

Parliament Square won the Judges' Award in the 2015 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting. It premiered at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, in 2017, before transferring to the Bush Theatre, London.

James Fritz's other plays include *The Fall*, *Comment Is Free*, *Start Swimming*, *Ross & Rachel* and *Four Minutes Twelve Seconds* (runner-up for the Verity Bargate Award, and nominated for the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre).

'Shockingly good... a virtuosic piece of writing, playful, postmodern and devastatingly serious, all at once' *Time Out* on *Ross & Rachel*

PLAYS

£9.99 IN UK ONLY



Bush Theatre

the bruntwood
prize for playwriting 2015

in partnership with the Royal Exchange Theatre

Winner

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PARLIAMENT SQUARE

James Fritz



Characters

KAT
TOMMY
TAXI DRIVER
TICKET WOMAN
COLLEAGUE
MUM
DOCTOR
CATHERINE
PHYSIO
FRIEND
FRIEND 2
JO

ONE

FIFTEEN SECONDS

Note on Text

The two columns of text in Fifteen Seconds are both part of Kat. How you interpret and stage that is totally up to you.

A line with no full stop at the end indicates an unfinished thought.

A dash at the end of a line indicates an interruption. A dash at the beginning indicates someone halfway through a sentence.

This text went to press before the end of rehearsals and so may differ slightly from the play as performed.

A lump.

Fifteen seconds.

Fifteen seconds.

That's all I have to get through and then -

Get out of bed.

This is the -

Don't think like that get out of bed.

Love these pillows.

They're very soft get out of bed.

This bed.

It's very nice get out of bed.

One more minute.

Now.

Just one more.

I am not fucking about.

One -

Get up! Get up! Get up! Get up! Get up!

GEEEEEEET UUUUUUP!

I'm up. I'm up.

Great job.

God.

We're on the way.

On the way.

Can you feel it?

I can feel it. My stomach.

You can feel it and it feels

He's fast asleep.

Kat.

Get up.

Kat.

GET UP.

The alarm.

Turn off the alarm.

Before he wakes.

Why - ?
Oh.

Today.

Today is THE day.

You slept so well.

Didn't think you would but

Don't wake him.

He's a log.

Need to get up.

Nothing wakes him.

Good.

Look at him.

That face.

Want to wake him.

Come on.

Say hello.

Don't be thick.

I'm not thick.

The drawer.

You're thick.

Softly.

Top. Jeans.

Those ones.

They'll do.

They're fine.

Except. Maybe?

No.

I mean they're not very –

No.

I know what you're doing.

What?

Delaying.

I'm not.

Delaying the moment you have to –

I just think this top isn't very –

Just take the fucking clothes.

Okay.

Well done.

Now. Out the room.

Okay.

But.

Maybe I should just wake him.

No.

Say something.

Can't just leave him without –

You have to.

He looks so lovely.

Tommy.

My lovely husband.

He's drooling.

He is! He's drooling in his sleep!

On his chin.

Done that since he was a teenager oh bless him.

Look at him.

He's so

disgusting.

Beautiful.

Such a beautifully disgusting man.

I love him so much.

Do you?

Yeah I do yeah I really do.

Okay.

God. I'm gonna miss him. I'm gonna miss you Tommy.

Oh.

You won't.

I will.

You won't.

Our own little world.

That's what we're like. That's what
Mum always says.

She says a lot of things.

She does yeah.

Come on.

You think hanging around is gonna
make it easier to go through with this?

Should say goodbye.

Don't be thick.

Stop saying that.

He'll know something's wrong.

How will he –

He can sense these things on you.

I'm a good liar.

You're a shit liar.

I'm a shit liar.

Stick to the plan.

I want to speak to him.

Stick to the fucking
plan you idiot.

If he gets even a sniff of what
you're planning he'll lock you up
before he lets you leave the house.

Maybe I need that.

No.

You got that will-I-won't-I shit out your
system weeks ago and now
you're ready aren't you?

Wait. He's moving.

Oh shit.

Oh my god he's waking up.

What do I –

TOMMY. *Kai? What time is it?*

I got to go in early today.

Hold it together.

TOMMY. *Why?*

Hold it together.

Team meeting.

He believes you.

TOMMY. *That's shit innit?*

Didn't mean to wake you. Go back to sleep.

Well done.

Can I give him a

Yeah. Okay.

Kiss him.

TOMMY. *Have a nice day.*

I'll see you later.

Say it back.

See you later.

Good.

TOMMY. *Love you.*

Love you too.

Say it.

He's closed his eyes.

Take a moment.

You're okay. You're strong enough.
You can take this.

Am I?

You're doing so well.

Oh. Oh.

Fifteen seconds.

That's all you have to get through.

I can do that.

Course you can because you're
a fucking amazing woman.

Am I?

You are.

Am I yeah I am.

Thank you.

You're fucking welcome.

Downstairs.

Downstairs. I'm doing this.

You're doing this.

Although -

Wait.

No.

Wait I can't just.

No no.

Jo.

Don't do this to me.

Jo Jo. I can't just go without
saying goodbye to her.

You decided against this.

I know.

Decided it was too hard.

I know I did but

It's torture.

I'll be alright. I promise.

Oh you promise?

I won't wake her up.

So long as you promise.

I'll just. Look at her.

It's a bad idea.

I'm doing it.

It's an awful idea.

I'll be fine. Bedroom. I'll be fine.

Careful.

There she is.

Don't wake her up.

Jo. Hiya Jo.

Quietly.

Ohhh I love her.

She's dreaming.

I'm leaving her.

She's gonna hate me.

I can't.

I'm a terrible person.

I can't.

What if I take her with me?

I could though couldn't I?
I could take her with me.

I could take her with me or
maybe I could I could I could

Oh god.

Goodbye.

Owww.

Owwwwwwwww.

Oh shut up.

Just shut the fuck up please.

I need a minute.

IF I SAY I WANT A MINUTE
I CAN TAKE A MINUTE.

...

I'm gonna be sick.

Okay. Okay.

I can't.

This house all that time the
things that have happened
the day we moved in the parties
the evenings on the sofa the sex
on the stairs my birthday in the
kitchen pizza and telly in bed

That was hard.

I know that was hard.

But time is ticking.

You haven't got a minute.

Alright.

That's probably enough now.

Time to get going.

No you're not.

You're ready.

Out the front door.

It's not gonna get any easier.

Say goodbye.

Please.

Well done.

Stop.

The day we came home with her from the hospital.

Leave.

Bye.

Well done.

Forward. That's it.

Garden path. Front gate.

Down the street.

What will the neighbours say tomorrow? Imagine.

Jesus. I'm doing this

Yeah you are!

I'm doing this.

You're doing this.

I'M DOING THIS!

YOU'RE A SUPERSTAR!

I'M A SUPERSTAR!

Taxi.

There!

Hiya. Station please.

Relax.

My stomach.

TAXI DRIVER. *Want the radio on?*

Answer him.

Okay.

He knows something.

Ridiculous.

He can tell something's wrong the way he's looking at me.

Calm down.

He knows he knows what I've got in my bag.

How could he?

TAXI DRIVER. *What time's your train?*

I. I don't know.

Keep calm keep quiet.

I should've walked.

You're fine. Look out the window.

Should've got the bus he knows he knows I can tell he's gonna stop me gonna tell someone this is taking too long I don't know this route it's too hot in here I need to get out get him to pull over -

TAXI DRIVER. *Here we are.*

That's eight pound forty.

Keep the change.

Deep breath.

The station.

The last time we were here. Holiday. All these people.

Nobody's looking.

Police.

What if they ask to look in my bag?

Why would they?

Don't worry.

I'm not worried.

Alright.

I'm not worried.

Ticket office.

Hi. Could I get a ticket to

TICKET WOMAN. *One way or return?*

One way please.

TICKET WOMAN. *One hundred and thirty-five pounds please.*

Is she fucking joking?

That sounds like a lot.

Have a heart attack. Have a stroke.

TICKET WOMAN. *It's the price of a peak ticket.*

If you want to wait until 9 a.m....

So smug I hate her.

Stand your ground! Tell her there's no way you're paying that!

Should I?!

No we've got somewhere to be.

TICKET WOMAN. *Do you want the ticket or not?*

Just pay it.

It's not just my money it's Tommy's money it's -

Grit your teeth.

Yes please.

That's right. You give her an angry stare. That'll show her.

Think about tomorrow.

When she sees the news in a few hours she's gonna feel so guilty. She'll be eating her lunch and she'll recognise you the girl who came to her counter and she'll realise what you were on your way to do and she'll feel guilty she didn't give you the off-peak fare.

She'll spend the rest of her life telling people that she served you on the day that it happened and she'll be grateful she'll be so grateful that she served you.

She served you on the day that you -

TICKET WOMAN. *Excuse me. There's a queue behind you.*

Take your ticket.

Thank you.

Fuck you.

TICKET WOMAN. *Platform number eight.*

Here we go.

Take a breath. That's it. Take your time.

Just a normal woman. A normal woman walking through the station normally.

Seat to myself.

Relax.

We're moving.

You're hungry.

No.

Eat something.

I wonder if they're awake yet.

Wonder how long it will take him to realise I'm not at work?

Probably not.

Might be a while. He can be a bit slow.

COLLEAGUE. *Kat?*

Shit.

COLLEAGUE. *Kat!*

Ignore her. Look the other way.

COLLEAGUE. *Thought that was you.*

What you doing on here?

Oh hiya. Didn't see you.

COLLEAGUE. *I was waving right at you, you were in your own little world.*

Not working today then? Me neither I'm not in all week now, lucky for us eh, that place 'll fall apart without us there you watch, although can't get much worse can it?

Brian never said you were having time off, where d'you say you were off to?

I didn't. Visiting family.

COLLEAGUE. *That's nice.*

Be specific.

My aunt's sixty-seventh birthday.

The fuck did that come from?

COLLEAGUE. *Ohhh how nice.*

You don't even have an aunt.

COLLEAGUE. *Tommy not coming?*

No. No he's staying behind. Looking after Jo. I should –

COLLEAGUE. *Awww. How's she doing little angel?*

She's.

Fine. Yeah.

COLLEAGUE. *Bet you're gonna miss her. Always hard leaving them behind at that age.*

I. Yeah.

It's alright.

COLLEAGUE. *Remember it well. Didn't want to be away from my Peter for a second when he was two. You feel it don't you? Instinct kicks in. Course now he's fifteen I can't wait to get away from him.*

Hey. Look at you. You're shaking.

I'm sorry.

COLLEAGUE. *She'll be fine.*

You're not away long are you?

No. Sorry. Not feeling well.

COLLEAGUE. *Here this'll cheer you up.*

Oh no.

COLLEAGUE. *I've told you that we're getting a conservatory put in.*

Only every bloody day.

COLLEAGUE. *They finished work this week that's what it looks like.*

Very nice.

COLLEAGUE. *Well it's not much but we love it. Somewhere to sit and read the paper.*

What's in the bag?

Sorry?

COLLEAGUE. *In the bag? A present for your auntee?*

Tell her.

That's right.

Tell her what it is.
See what she says.

It's a. A.

Well if you're not gonna tell the truth at least say something.

A.

Been a very long silence now.

A toolbox.

Toolbox? For your auntee's birthday?

COLLEAGUE. *Oh. Right. Bit of a DIY nur is she?*

Yes. She is.

COLLEAGUE. *Toolbox wouldn't be much use to my Bill. He wouldn't know one end of a hammer from the other.*

I can't do this.

Breathe.

She's so

I know.

Never shuts up. At work.
Always poking her nose in to everyone's business always blathering away about nothing in particular did you see have you heard so-and-so said my son Peter

And her conservatory.

And her conservatory you'd think it was the Sistine fucking Chapel the way she goes on about it on and on she goes just blathering chattering away 'Oooh I know isn't it awful.' As if that's enough. Every day every fucking day. We go in and we work and we talk shit and we all go home and sit on our sofas and watch it all happen because it's nothing to do with

It's nothing to do with us.

Maybe I should tell her what I'm gonna do.

You could.

I could, couldn't I?

Imagine her face.

She wouldn't believe you.

She might.

She'd have a heart attack.

Might be impressed.

Might want to do it too.

COLLEAGUE. *Want a biscuit Kai?*

Ooh a biscuit.

COLLEAGUE. *They're a bit melted but they taste alright.*

No thanks.

I want a biscuit!

COLLEAGUE. *I'm going to go to the coffee man. Would you like anything?*

You're thirsty.

No thank you.

Ask for some water.

I'm fine.

COLLEAGUE. *Okay, if you're sure.*

Thank you.

You know what?
She's actually pretty nice.

Yeah.

She is.

I feel a bit bad now.

You should feel bad.
What's that?

It's Tommy.

Oh shit.

What do I do?

You knew he was going to call.

What do I do?

Turn the phone off.

Decline.

He'll keep trying.

A voicemail.

Don't listen.

TOMMY. *Kat? It's me.*

Or just ignore me.

TOMMY. *Work rang and they said
you've not come in. So. Just
wondering where you've got to.
Give me a call back when you get this.
Love you bye.*

That's it. That's all he said.

Fifteen seconds.

She's coming back.

Close your eyes.

Pretend to be asleep.

That's -

COLLEAGUE. *Kat?*

Kat we're here.

What?

COLLEAGUE. *Didn't want to wake you
you looked so peaceful.*

Oh you actually fell asleep.

COLLEAGUE. *You slept the whole way!*

Sorry.

COLLEAGUE. *Don't you apologise.*

*I know what it's like when they're young.
I'll see you back at work next week I spose?*

Yeah. Next week.

Careful.

COLLEAGUE. *Enjoy your family do.*

I'm not

What you doing?

I'm not going to a family do.

Oh my -

COLLEAGUE. *I don't understand.*

I lied before.

COLLEAGUE. *Oh. Right.*

She looks so sad.

I'm going to Parliament Square.

Come on.

COLLEAGUE. *Okay.*

I'm gonna stand in the square,
stand in front of that building and

Don't do this.

and take a photo.

COLLEAGUE. *Right.*

Well.

Have a nice time.

What was that about?

Sorry.

Get off the train.

Not been here for years.

I don't remember any of this.

Underground.

So many people.

**You're gonna make things
better for all of them.**

So many.

**So many people and they're all gonna
know your name tomorrow that's—**

*I'm sorry ladies and gentlemen
we're going to be held here due
to a passenger incident on the
tracks up ahead.*

Passenger incident?

Look at their faces.

Person under a train he means.

Late for their meetings.

All those people on that platform
and no one could stop them doing it.
It's so hot in here.

A body under a train. Imagine that.
Imagine seeing that.

Don't think about it.

Imagine being that person.
Would it hurt? Would you feel
it happening?

I said don't think about it.

Or would it just go black would
everything just go black oh god
I'm hot I'm so hot —

Calm down.

I can't breathe.

I'm gonna be sick I've got
to get off.

This isn't our stop?

I've got to get off I've got to
get off now.

Alright go.

Oh god I'm gonna be

Quickly find a

Hoooooah

Lovely.

Oh.

Right on the platform.

You alright mate?

Get above ground.

I'm okay. I need air.

Don't forget your bag!

Fresh air. Breathe. What's that?

Mum.

Don't answer it.
Don't answer it I'm warning you.

Hi Mum.

Dunno why I bother.

MUM. *Hi love. Won't keep you, I've just got a quick question about the weekend.*

The weekend.

She doesn't know you're gone.

MUM. *Wondered if you lot wouldn't mind coming a bit early,*

Hasn't spoken to him.

MUM. *at about two-ish so that Tommy can help me get the barbecue going.*

The barbecue.

MUM. *Yes love you know I hate doing it and he did such a good job last time and I want it nice and hot by the time everyone arrives. I know we said later but two would really help me out.*

So two then, on Saturday? I've bought far too much food.

Two. That's fine.

MUM. *Lovely. Everything else okay with you?*

Yes. Mum, it's –

MUM. *Okay love got to go. See you Saturday. Bye.*

Bye. Mum.

Sit down.

I –
You should sit down.
Breathe.

She –

She'll know soon enough.

I'm tired.

We should keep going.

I'm really tired now.

I know.

One foot in front of the other
that's all you need to do now
one foot in front of the –

No. No. No.

TOMMY. *Kat. Did you get my last message? You're still not at work. Getting a bit worried now. Give me a ring back.*

Kat what the hell do you think you're doing? You can't just get up and go and not say anything.

Stop.

TOMMY. *Please Kat, call back. I'll keep trying.*

Stop listening to them.

TOMMY. *Jesus Kat where... where are you. I'm starting to really worry now.*

Kat, I love you. Please just call me. I don't care where you are or what you're doing I just want you to call me. Please. Jo and me, we're worried about you.

Jo. My little Jo. I wonder if she knows?

When she grows up

How could she?

Don't think about it
what are you doing?

When she grows up I wonder
who'll she'll be?

You fucking idiot.

I wonder who her new mum will be?

Shut up shut up I won't
let you do this.

What am I doing?

Oh god what am I doing?

Things are good for me. Got a job.
Got a husband who loves me.
A beautiful little girl. Got enough
money to eat, to heat my home.

Got a barbecue at my mum's on Saturday.

So what?

Why me? Why do I have to do it?

Why not? There's a reason why
you haven't been able to stop –

There are other people.

Other ways.

They tried with their anger
their marches their speeches you saw
them thousands on the streets and
then what happened? What?

I could do something else.

There's nothing else.

I could say something give a speech.

Yes.

A speech? From you?

Okay.

I could write a good speech.

Sure thing. I'm sure everybody
would be queuing up to hear that one.

Who's gonna listen to what you've
got to say? You're no one.

I'm not no one.

I'm a woman.

A woman? What kind of answer is that?

A mum.

Everyone's a fucking mum.
What else you got?

Fuck you.

Fuck you.

You might as well have not been born.

No.

That's not true.

You're absolutely right.

And you know why?

Because you're gonna do this.

Do something that lasts.

Yes. Okay.

You want to change things.

I do I really do.

Then come on!

Come on!

Come on!

COME ON!

Feel that?

I feel it!

Feel that inside?

Yeah I do I fucking do.

Focus on that focus on that anger with what's happening that's what will drive you that's what's gonna get you over the line.

Yes!

Do this and the whole world will listen they will realise that they can't just stand by any more. Your face is gonna go around the world.

It'll be a beacon of hope on every screen and everyone will be talking about it.

Your name will ring out.

IT WILL RING OUT.

It will mean something.

Because.

Because.

I'm going through with it.

Yes.

Again.

I'm going through with it.

Louder.

I'M GOING THROUGH WITH IT
I'M GOING THROUGH WITH IT
I'M GOING THROUGH WITH IT!

It's nice right?

How calm you feel now?

I do. I do feel calm.

Look at the map.

I can walk from here.

One foot in front of the other.

Look.

There.

A post box.

Oh. I almost forgot.

Take out the letter.

Maybe I should check it over?

Make sure it's okay.

You've read it a hundred times.

It's perfect. Post it.

It will work. Won't it?

Of course it will.

It explains everything.

Yes. It does.

Post it. Quick. Before -

It's gone.

Well done.

That's the last thing.

Almost.

It's starting to rain.

Oh my god it's really coming down.

Keep going.

Didn't bring a jacket why didn't I bring a jacket I'm drenched I'm —

It doesn't matter.

Ugh!

Almost there.

MUM. *Kat, love, it's your num.*

I just spoke to Tommy. Just give us a call back to let us know where you are. We're all a bit worried.

Up ahead.

I can barely see it through the rain.

Keep going. Here.

You're here.

I don't remember it looking like this.

Did it always look like this?

Cross the road.

There's not many people. So many cars.

Oh. Where do I do it?

By the statues?

In the middle of the square?

I don't know.

I don't know.

You really should've thought about this before.

It's Tommy again.

Don't answer.

Don't do it I'm warning you don't you dare don't you dare answer that fucking phone.

Hi Tommy.

TOMMY. *Jesus Christ, Kat. Thank God you're alright. Where are you? I've been so worried.*

Parliament Square.

TOMMY. *What? What the hell are you doing there? What's that noise?*

It's raining.

TOMMY. *Listen. It doesn't matter.*

Just get back on a train and come home, eh?

I'm. I'm sorry but. I can't.

TOMMY. *Okay just find somewhere safe and I'll come and get you.*

No.

TOMMY. *Kat please. I'm coming to get you.*

No don't. I'm not coming home so

TOMMY. *What's going on Kat? You're really scaring me now.*

I'm sorry.

TOMMY. *We love you. I love you.*

I love you too.

TOMMY. *Then come home eh? Get on a train and come back here where it's warm and dry and we can talk about it, talk through whatever's bothering you.*

I'm so sorry. I have to.

TOMMY. *Kat —*

Come back home to me and Jo.

That's enough now.

I'm. Bye Tommy.

Throw the phone away.

Okay.

Well done.

Owwwwww.

Owwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww.

I know.

You should get started.

Go into your bag.

Take it out.

The petrol.

Fifteen seconds.

Fifteen seconds until the fire burns through the nerve endings and then you don't feel anything.

You can count it in your head.

I'm scared.

I'm scared.

I'm really scared.

I'm really scared.

It's gonna hurt.

Fifteen seconds.

It's gonna hurt so much.

Fifteen seconds and then imagine. Don't you want to know what it feels like? What it looks like.

The fire the flames. Your last experience your most exciting.

I don't.

I don't.

I don't want to die.

I don't want to die.

You could just not.

I could.

You could put down the petrol can and walk away.

I could.

Go home. Kiss him. Watch telly.

Have a bath. Have sex. Eat a lasagne.

Go to your daughter's school. Go to your daughter's wedding.

My daughter's -

Jo. Jo.

Yes. I could. I could couldn't I -

But you're not going to.

No. I'm not going to.

Say the words.

I'm going through with this.

The hard part's over.

I'm excited. I'm so excited!

The hard part?

Fifteen seconds.

Look around you.

Take it all in.

Road. Grass. Parliament. Cars. Rain on my face.

Oh my god.

I just. A memory. Came here as a kid with Mum. We stood right over there and she took a photo.

Breathe.

Got an ice cream and took the boat down the river.

Breathe.

Take it all in.

Rain. Wind. Concrete. Suits. Cars. Traffic lights. A fence. A Tesco. I can see a fucking Tesco!

Of course a fucking Tesco's one of the last things that I'll see.

What else?

Statues. Oh god. Police. Flagpoles. Jo. Her face.

What else?

Clouds. Oh god.

What else?

People. Tommy's face. Jo's fingers. Jo's eyes her smell. People on the street.

Looking?

They're huddled from the rain they're looking down they're rushing by.

Okay.

Ready?

Think it's time.

One. More. Second.

One more.

Now or never.

Wind. My face.

Get it over with.

Okay. Okay.

Petrol can.

My hands.

Lid.

Smell.

Tip it.

It stinks!

All over.

Stings.

That's enough.

Deep breath.

Deep breath.

You're a hero.

Where is it?

The lighter.

Can't find my lighter -

Top pocket.

Take it out.

The last thing you'll ever touch.

How does it feel in your hand?

It -

I mean it feels like a fucking lighter.

I'm fine.

You're alright.

Doing great.

You are so brave.

Everyone -

Everyone watching everyone who sees this is going to be changed and they're going to see that when we don't like what's going on we can get up out of our chairs and do something about it. They'll look at the pictures they'll read about what happened and they'll think if that woman can do that I can do something to stop the rot I can do something I can do something.

Everyone watching everyone who sees this is going to be changed and they're going to see that when we don't like what's going on we can get up out of our chairs and do something about it. They'll look at the pictures they'll read about what happened and they'll think if that woman can do that I can do something to stop the rot I can do something to stop the rot I can do something I can do something I can do something.

The first fifteen seconds. That's all.

Count to fifteen and it will be just like

Going to sleep.

You. Are. Everything.

Ready?

Yes.

1
2
3
go.

She's on fire.

Fifteen seconds.

My eyes!

One.

Two.

Three

Four.

Hold. On.

Jo.

Five.

Hold on.

Six.

Don't.

Seven.

Scream.

Eight.

She screams.

It is the worst scream we've ever heard.

TWO

FIFTEEN STEPS

THREE

FIFTEEN YEARS

TOMMY and KAT arrive home.

It's still difficult for KAT to walk.

TOMMY. Welcome home Kat.

KAT. Tommy.

Let's shut out all the rest of it.

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY applies lotion to KAT's burns.

TOMMY. Every day that's what he said.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. It hurts, Tommy.

TOMMY. I'm here.

KAT. Jo.

TOMMY. She's fine.

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. We don't have to see them if you don't —

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. I was cooking on the hob and the robe just went up.

FRIEND. Awful. Just awful.

KAT. Tommy saved me. Put me out. Didn't you?

TOMMY. Yeah.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. Tommy. Wake up. I'm hot. I'm so —

TOMMY. Wait there —

KAT. Water I need —

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY applies lotion to KAT's burns.

KAT. Thank you. That feels —

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY and KAT. Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. She doesn't want to be around me.

TOMMY. Hey. Of course she does.

KAT. The way she looks at me it's.

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. More money.

KAT. You always said –

TOMMY. I know. But it's more money. I might enjoy it.

– *The world gets worse.* –

TOMMY. You're shivering.

KAT. I'm fine.

TOMMY. I'm calling the doctor

KAT. I'm fine –

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. I was cooking. On the hob.

FRIEND 2. And Tommy –

TOMMY. I was in the other room and I ran in and put out the fire.

KAT. That's right.

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. I can't fight with you any more Mum.

MUM. Okay. Well I'm glad.

KAT. I just want to forget about all of it. Like you said. Is that okay?

MUM. Okay.

Just be happy love. That's all I want for you.

It's good to have you home.

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. How was it?

TOMMY. Good. Yeah. Far as first days go.

Bit boring but –

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. How was work?

TOMMY. How you feeling?

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. – you doing I told you not to come home.

TOMMY. I'm taking you to the hospital. No argu–

– *The world gets worse.* –

MUM. – being paranoid.

TOMMY. All due respect but she's not your daughter.

MUM. Tell him he's being paranoid –

KAT. I agree with –

– *The world gets worse.* –

FRIEND. – looking great. Isn't she?

TOMMY. She is.

FRIEND. You thought about what I said?

Thank god you were there Tommy but the robe you were wearing should've been flame retardant.

Get a lawyer. Go to the press.

TOMMY. You might be right.

FRIEND. What if it happens to someone else? A little kiddo whoosh.

Flame retardant I'm —

— *The world gets worse.* —

COLLEAGUE. Kat. It's so good to see you.

When I heard about what happened —

TOMMY. Her robe. On the hob.

COLLEAGUE. I heard. Awful. The last time I saw you it was on the train.

KAT. It happened a few days later.

COLLEAGUE. Right.

KAT. Tommy put me out.

TOMMY. I put her out.

COLLEAGUE. Is that right?

Well. You're a bit of a hero aren't you. Thank god you were there.

It's good to see you up and about.

Are you thinking of coming back into work? We all miss you.

TOMMY. No.

KAT. Maybe.

COLLEAGUE. Right.

TOMMY. We're going to talk about it.

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. How was work?

KAT. Great. Really great.

TOMMY. You're not too —

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. — don't see what the big deal is.

KAT. I don't want the news on around her.

MUM. She doesn't understand.

KAT. The images. The things they —

— *The world gets worse.* —

COLLEAGUE. Isn't it awful? Those poor kids. I'm putting the kettle on you want something?

Makes you realise how lucky we are when you see footage like that. My son Peter —

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. I like working.

TOMMY. I just don't see why we should jeopardise your health when we don't need the money.

I'm doing great, everyone says so. Few more years like this and –

– *The world gets worse.* –

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o! Happy birthday to –

– *The world gets worse.* –

TOMMY. – in the other room watching telly and I heard this awful scream. I'll never forget that sound for as long as I live. Shouting my name weren't you? Of course instantly I knew what had happened don't know how sometimes you just know don't you? And I ran faster than I've ever run before and I just acted. You know? I grabbed this picnic blanket we had lying around from the weekend thank god it was there and I wrapped it round her until the flames were out and I just held her. Doctors said even a moment longer –

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. I'll get some ice.

TOMMY. Group of lads jumped him.

KAT. God.

TOMMY. Second time this month.

– *The world gets worse.* –

COLLEAGUE. Isn't it awful?

KAT. Yeah.

COLLEAGUE. I've given some money.

KAT. That's good.

COLLEAGUE. Well you've got to do something don't you?

KAT. Yeah. You do.

– *The world gets worse.* –

TOMMY *rubs lotion into KAT's burns.*

– *The world gets worse.* –

TOMMY. – a takeaway? Or we could –

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. Hurts a bit when –

– *The world gets worse.* –

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o! Happy birthday to –

– *The world gets worse.* –

CATHERINE. You got somewhere we could talk?

KAT. How did you find me?

CATHERINE. Your name's on the company website. I've been waiting for hours.

You look well.

Can we go inside.

KAT. No.

CATHERINE. The last time I saw you –

KAT. I wasn't well.

CATHERINE. No that's okay.

I needed to come to see you. To say sorry. I should never have put you out. It wasn't my place.

KAT. There's no need.

CATHERINE. Please.

I can't stop. Picturing it. You on the grass. On fire. Orange on green.

When I got home from the hospital that night I was so shook up. You were so angry and I couldn't work out why. Because it's a good thing what I did it's supposed to be a good thing. Saving someone's life.

And I started to think. What it was for? Why was she doing it? I tried to imagine what it could have been. Looking for reasons. And the more I looked the more reasons I found.

I can't stop watching the news. Reading everything I can. I need to know.

What was it made you do it?

Like, what was the reason?

Was there a reason?

What made you do it?

Why did you do it Kat? Please. I just want to know. I could tell people maybe tell your story talk about what happened –

KAT. No. Nobody knows what happened that day. We've told everyone it was an accident. Please don't tell anyone.

Forget about it. We have. I have to go.

CATHERINE. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

KAT. Don't ever contact me again.

– *The world gets worse.* –

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

– *The world gets worse.* –

FRIEND. This area's really gone downhill. We've started looking for a new place.

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. Jo! Dinner's ready!

– *The world gets worse.* –

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o! Happy birthday to you!

– *The world gets worse.* –

KAT. Jo! I think Santa's been...

– *The world gets worse.* –

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. Jo you get down here *right* now.

KAT *and* TOMMY. JO!

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear —

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. Jo! Jo! Jo!

JO. Oh my god Mum? You okay?

KAT. I'm fine love. Just a bit. Give me a hand.

JO. Sit down.

Shall I get you some water?

KAT. Thank you. Yes.

JO. I'm calling the doctor.

KAT. No. I'll be alright in a minute. Go and get on with your homework.

JO. Here.

KAT. Thank you. You're a good girl.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. What did they say?

JO. Doesn't matter.

KAT. Were they making fun?

JO. They won't do it again.

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. Were you even listening to me?

KAT. Sorry Mum?

TOMMY. Sorry what?

MUM. You two. You're in your own —

— *The world gets worse.* —

FRIEND. I know they're all angry but the more they behave like that the less people are going to listen to what they have to say.

TOMMY. You're right. I was saying that exact same thing to —

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. — won't stop long I just wanted to see if you two were free for the barbecue on Sunday.

KAT. You want Tommy to —

— *The world gets worse.* —

JO. This is really good Mum.

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. — snatched it right out of my hand the animal. Luckily there was a policeman nearby and they were able to catch the guy. Bag was long gone though.

TOMMY. This area. Haven't I been telling you?

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. I got it!

KAT. Oh Tommy that's wonderful! Congratulations!

TOMMY. This is gonna make such a difference to us, you watch.

— *The world gets worse.* —

JO. I hate you! It's not fair!

KAT. Well, the world's not fair.

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. They were out there again last night. We've got to move.

JO. I'm not moving.

TOMMY. We can afford better now.

KAT. You really think

JO. I'm not fucking moving.

KAT and TOMMY. Hey!

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. — it's very nice. Those exposed beams.

TOMMY. Gate out front. Guard's there twenty-four hours.

KAT. Closer to my new doctor.

TOMMY. See that alarm system? State of the art. Can be here in fifteen minutes —

— *The world gets worse.* —

COLLEAGUE. Cut him down right in the street. Couldn't believe it.

How's your new place?

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Dear Jo-o!

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. Jo!

JO. I'm coming. Jesus.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. You come straight home once it's finished. And don't talk to anyone. Let me give you some money for a taxi.

JO. Mum. I'll be fine.

KAT. Do not get the bus under any —

— *The world gets worse.* —

MUM. Hundreds of them. Suffocated.

KAT. Mum —

JO. I don't mind.

MUM. She needs to know.

KAT. I don't want her hearing those stories.

JO. I'm fine.

MUM. She's gonna find out about it one way or another.

TOMMY. We think it's best if —

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-oooo!

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. Kettle's on.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. — say that nobody above the thirteenth floor made it out.

TOMMY. I'm amazed it hasn't happened before.

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. — there's no excuse for that sort of behaviour. They look like a bunch of bloody animals. A lot of those windows belonged to local businesses. It's not the local businesses' fault. I'm sorry but —

— *The world gets worse.* —

EVERYONE. Happy birthday dear Jo-o! Happy birthday to you!

MUM. Give your nana a kiss then.

JO. Aw Nan. Get off.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT. Thank you for seeing me.

CATHERINE. Okay.

KAT. I wanted to talk to you.

I was horrible to you and I've regretted that ever since. I owe you everything Catherine. I never thanked you for that.

CATHERINE. No.

KAT. So thank you. Deeply.

You don't look. Are you alright?

CATHERINE. Things are difficult. Everything is very difficult.

KAT. Do you need money?

CATHERINE. No. That's not. What are you doing here?

KAT. My daughter still doesn't know. She thinks I had an accident.

CATHERINE. You should tell her. She should know who her mum is.

KAT. I can't have her knowing. You understand?

CATHERINE. I should've let you burrr.

KAT. Don't say that.

I've seen my daughter grow up. Shared happiness with my husband. I'm living a good life and it's all thanks to you and I'm sorry I haven't said that before.

Stopping me was the right thing to do.

CATHERINE. For you maybe. But for the rest of us?

I live that day over and over. What you looked like. Smelt like. What made you do it.

You saw all this coming and tried to do something about it. And I stopped you. And every day when I see whatever shitty thing has happened that morning I'm reminded of it.

If I hadn't been there you might have changed everything. Stopped the rot before it set in.

KAT. I wasn't well.

CATHERINE. You don't actually believe that do you?

You weren't mad. You were just ahead of the curve. You thought things were bad then. Look at them now. It's a wonder people aren't burning themselves every day.

Fifteen years on and everything's just got worse and worse and we still haven't hit the bottom. We just keep on burrowing into the shit.

But it's alright.

Because I'm -

- *The world gets worse.* -

KAT. This is our house.

You can't just go letting homeless men in our kitchen.

JO. He was hungry. It's called being a human.

KAT. We could have been robbed. You could have been killed.

JO. Don't be so dramatic.

KAT. If you ever do something like that again.

JO. Just because you don't give a shit about the rest of the world doesn't mean the rest of us can't -

KAT *slaps* JO.

KAT. I'm sorry.

I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have done that.

JO. I thought I was doing a good thing.

KAT. I know.

You were.

Of course you were.

- *The world gets worse.* -

KAT. Thank you for coming, we really appreciate you all giving up your evenings.

I'll try and keep this short, because I know you all want pudding. God, I don't know where to start. Tommy always makes these things look easy.

There was a time when I never thought I'd see a day like today. If you told me I'd be standing here giving a toast to my husband I'd never have believed you in a million years. Any of you who knew Tommy at fifteen will understand.

When we first got together my mum would hate it. She'd be talking at us, asking us to do something. Take the bins out or do the washing up. And we just wouldn't hear her would we Mum? 'You're in your own little world you two.' That's what she always used to say. And she was right.

Because when I was with Tommy, nothing else mattered. And then we had Jo. And she mattered even more to us than we did to each other. If that was possible.

It hasn't always been easy. I haven't always been easy. But he has always taken care of me and he's given me a wonderful life and –

Happy anniversary.

Enjoy yourselves. And please, keep eating. There's far too much food.

To Tommy.

And to our little world.

– *The world gets worse.* –

MUM. The doctors have all been wonderful. Don't have to tell you about that.

I keep thinking, I wish I believed in an afterlife.

That'd be nice. That any day now it's going to be all blue sky and frozen margaritas. Instead of just...

KAT. Oh Mum.

MUM. Don't worry about me.

Maybe it's the right time to go eh? Everything's falling apart out there. My body sympathises.

Here.

I've got something for you.

MUM takes out the letter KAT sent her.

I know I said I destroyed it but. Well. There you go.

Passes it over.

KAT. You kept it? Why?

MUM. I'm sorry I ignored it. I'm sorry that I told you to lie about why you did. What you did. For so long.

I should never have done that.

KAT. No, Mum. You were right to. What good would it have done, anyone knowing?

MUM. I was so angry when I read that. I hated you for doing that to yourself. To your family. To me.

But despite that. Despite the anger and fear and sorrow that came into our lives that awful day. There was still a part of me that couldn't help feeling it was. Brave.

I mean it was fucking stupid. And selfish. So selfish. And I've wished every day from that one to this that you hadn't done it.

But. Brave.

I thought you should know that I always thought that.

KAT. Mum. Why did you keep this?

MUM. That's my daughter in those pages.

It's late.

I'm tired. Aren't you tired?

— *The world gets worse.* —

TOMMY. Hey. How you doing?

KAT. Okay.

TOMMY. What have you got there?

KAT. It's.

It's nothing. A letter I wrote to Mum, a long time ago.

I found it clearing out her bedroom.

TOMMY. I want you to know. Whatever you're feeling, whatever's going on in that head. You're not alone.

KAT. I know that.

TOMMY. And if you need to talk about your mum. Or. Anything.

I just want to make sure you're not thinking of. Or feeling —

KAT. Tommy. I'm okay.

TOMMY. Okay. Good.

What does the letter say?

KAT. I can't bring myself to read it yet.

Hey.

Come here.

Thank you. Thank you so much for everything.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT *alone.* *With the letter.*

She stares at it.

She screws it up without opening it.

A moment.

She changes her mind. Unfolds the screwed-up ball. Opens the letter.

She sits down and reads every word.

Finishes.

Something happens.

— *The world gets worse.* —

KAT *and* JO.

JO. Why didn't you tell me before?

KAT. I am so sorry.

JO. You should have told me.

KAT. I know.

Are you okay?

JO. Dad knows?

KAT. He knows it wasn't an accident. Where it happened. He doesn't know why I.

JO. Why?

KAT. He never wanted me to tell him.

JO. No. Why did you do it?

You wanted to kill yourself?

KAT. I don't know.

JO. Mum.

KAT. Yes. I did.

JO. Why?

You were depressed?

KAT. No.

JO. Sick?

KAT. No. It's hard to explain.

JO. Try.

KAT. The world was getting worse and I wanted.

Needed. To.

Do something.

I wanted you to have a world that wasn't—

JO. I'm fine. The world is fine.

KAT. I know. I know you are.

Here.

She takes out the letter. Passes it to JO.

I wrote that to your nan on the day that I did it. Explaining.

Your dad's never seen it. Doesn't know it exists. I want you to read it.

You should know who your mum was. Is.

But when you read it I want you to remember.

Someone put out the fire. They saved my life. And not a day goes by when I'm not thankful that they did.

— *The world gets worse.* —

Parliament Square.

KAT arrives.

The bells chime.

It starts to rain. She sees CATHERINE. She is holding a can of petrol.

KAT. Catherine.

Why don't you put down the petrol?

CATHERINE. What are you doing here?

Didn't tell you to come. That's not why I told you.

KAT. I know that.

CATHERINE. You really shouldn't be here. I've made up my mind.

This is the spot right? Where you did it?

KAT. Close enough.

CATHERINE. You been back here since?

KAT. No.

CATHERINE. Must be strange.

CATHERINE opens the petrol can.

KAT. Wait —

Please.

CATHERINE pours petrol all over herself. It sinks.

CATHERINE. Stay back.

KAT. If you're doing this for me —

CATHERINE. I'm not.

KAT. Okay. Okay.

Why did you tell me?

CATHERINE. What?

KAT. You contacted me. You told me what you were going to do today.

CATHERINE. I wanted you to know.

KAT. You wanted me to stop you.

CATHERINE. No.

KAT. You wouldn't have told anyone if you didn't think they might stop you.

CATHERINE. I wanted you to know that what you did. All those years ago. It wasn't for nothing. That's all.

KAT. Of course it was. No one noticed.

CATHERINE. They'll notice his time. Everyone's gonna be talking about it.

Look at all these people. Soon as I go up they'll be filming every second.

No one's gonna miss me doing this.

KAT. Even if that's true.

It won't change anything

You want to know what it feels like?

Agony. The worst pain. You can't imagine.

CATHERINE. That's not gonna work.

KAT. No one wants you to do this.

CATHERINE. Are you joking? Look around you. The world is crying out for someone to do this.

She raises the lighter.

KAT. Wait! Your family.

The people who care about you.

Think how they'll feel.

You don't -

CATHERINE. I don't.

KAT. You don't want to die.

Fight it.

It's not too late.

Put the lighter down. Go home. Have a bath. Eat a lasagne.

What I did.

I had my reasons.

I'd almost forgotten. But I had some really good reasons.

And they haven't gone away.

But god. It wasn't worth it. There is no cause in the world that is worth doing this Catherine, I promise you.

CATHERINE. You don't really believe that, do you?

KAT. Look at me. Years I've lived in pain. Can't breathe properly. Can't move properly. Skin too tight. It wasn't worth it. I didn't change a thing that day.

CATHERINE. That's not true.

You changed me. Seeing you do that. It changed me.

KAT. One person.

One person by themselves is -

CATHERINE. Maybe that's all it takes.

Because I'm here now doing this and maybe me doing this is the thing that will change the world.

Or maybe I'll just change one of those people watching.

Change that girl, that man, that woman and maybe they'll be the ones who change the world.

Maybe if I do this my face will go around my name will ring out and people will see that if they don't like what's going on they can get up out of their chairs and do something about it. They'll see me on fire and think to themselves 'if that woman can do that then I can do something to stop the rot. I can do something to stop the rot.'

Maybe a hundred more will set themselves on fire, person after person after person going up in flames until the world gets better until the world gets better. Imagine that.

Or maybe not.

But I've got to try, right? Because we've tried everything else.

KAT. You can still go home.

CATHERINE. Is that what you want?

KAT. Of course.

CATHERINE. If I do this. What you did. All those years of pain. It could mean something. Don't you want that?

It's alright Kat. I'm ready.

It's nice. How calm I feel.

She raises the lighter.

KAT. There's a lot of good in this world.

CATHERINE. You're right. There is.
That's why we've got to fight for it.
What do you think? Should I do it?

9

10

11

KAT. I

12

CATHERINE. Should I do it?

13

It's alright. Don't worry. I'm okay.

14

Just say yes.

15

Ages.

— *The world gets...* —

And then.

KAT. Yes.

CATHERINE *smiles as she flicks the lighter.*

She's on fire.

So bright.

KAT *shields her eyes from the light.*

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8