

'Drugs and alcohol have never let me down. They have always loved me. There are substances I can put into my bloodstream that make the world perfect. That is the only absolute truth in the universe. I'm being difficult because you want to take it away from me.'

Emma was having the time of her life.
Now she's in rehab.

Her first step is to admit that she has a problem. But the problem isn't with Emma, it's with everything else. She needs to tell the truth. But she's smart enough to know that there's no such thing. When intoxication feels like the only way to survive the modern world, how can she ever sober up?

'The writing is exquisitely painful. At times it feels like Macmillan has taken one of those little spoons, the ones with the serrated edge, for grapefruit, and scooped something out of you. Extraordinary.' *The Stage* ★★★★★

'Wonderfully well-crafted, often very funny.'
The Sunday Times ★★★★★

'Powerful. Provocative. Thrilling.' *Time Out* ★★★★★

'A triumph. Emotionally shattering.'
The Evening Standard ★★★★★

'One of the most powerful and painfully funny plays I've ever seen.' *New York Times*

Duncan Macmillan's other plays include: *Every Brilliant Thing* (Paines Plough/Pentabus/Barrow Street New York), *Lungs* (Studio Theatre Washington DC/Paines Plough), 1984 (with Robert Icke, Headlong/Almeida/West End), 2071 (with Chris Rapley, Royal Court Theatre/Hamburg Schauspielhaus), *The Forbidden Zone* (Salzburg Festival/Schaubühne Berlin), *Wunschloses Unglück* (Burgtheater Vienna), *Reise durch die Nacht* (Schauspielhaus Köln/Theatertreffen/Festival d'Avignon), *Monster* (Royal Exchange Manchester).

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OBERON MODERN PLAYS



ional
aire

Headlong

PEOPLES, PLACES & THINGS

WRITTEN BY
DUNCAN MACMILLAN



OBERON MODERN PLAYS

ACT ONE

As the lights fade, the sounds of a theatre auditorium increase. Mobile phones, coughing, chattering and general sounds of anticipation. It builds to a cacophony.

Darkness. Chaos.

*Suddenly the lights snap up and the sounds cease. We are in the same theatre, but at a different time. A play is in progress, the final act of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. A Naturalistic, period set of a study which was once a drawing-room. Doors left and right. A French window opens onto a terrace. It is raining.*

Evening. One shaded lamp is alight. It is dark. Trees rustle outside and wind howls softly in the chimneys.

EMMA is playing Nina Zarechny. Her hair is wet. She has been crying. She sits on an ottoman in the centre of the stage next to KONSTANTIN GAVRILOVICH TREPLEV. The lights snap up mid-sentence.

KONSTANTIN: for ninety years on this earth. My youth robbed from me.

EMMA looks around the stage and out into the auditorium. It is as if she's just come-to and is trying to establish where she is.

I've cursed you Nina. Ripped up your photographs and letters. But it's no use. I see your face everywhere. I say your name. I kiss the ground you walk on. I'm bound to you forever. And now you're *here*.

He waits for EMMA to speak. After a while he decides that she's not going to say her line, so continues.

I'm sad. Lonely. Utterly alone and cold as if I've been imprisoned underground. And everything I write is so bleak.

KONSTANTIN takes EMMA's hand.

Nina. Stay here. I beg you. Stay here or let me go with you.

For a moment, EMMA looks into KONSTANTIN'S eyes. She looks down at their interlocked hands.

Nina?

Suddenly, EMMA stands and quickly prepares to leave, grabbing her coat and putting it on.

Nina, for God's sake, Nina.

EMMA: My carriage is waiting. Don't walk me out. Can I have some water?

KONSTANTIN: Where will you go?

He pours some water.

EMMA: Is Irina Arkadin here?

KONSTANTIN: Yes. Uncle was taken ill and we telegraphed / for her.

EMMA advances to KONSTANTIN angrily, interrupting him.

EMMA: Why did you say you worship the ground I walk on? Death. Death is what I deserve.

EMMA doubles-over. KONSTANTIN doesn't know what to do. He stands still, holding the water. He looks off into the wings.

I'm so tired. I need to sleep. I'm a seagull. No that's not right. I'm an actress.

Laughter in the wings. EMMA looks up.

He's here too isn't he?

EMMA laughs.

Of course. It doesn't matter.

She walks to KONSTANTIN and takes the water from him.

He didn't believe in the stage. He laughed at me. I don't believe in it either. Not now.

As EMMA talks her acting becomes more genuine. She is talking less in character and more as herself. She is sincere, vivid, compelling. She doesn't slur her words.

Not now that I've had real problems. Real things have happened. My heart is broken. I don't know what to do with my hands when I'm onstage. I'm not real. I'm a seagull. No, that's wrong.

The lamp flickers. EMMA notices it. KONSTANTIN doesn't.

You shot a seagull. Do you remember? Earlier in the play?

EMMA laughs.

I mean the *story*, I mean long ago you shot a

that's wrong too. Not you. What was I saying?

I was talking about the *theatre*. I love acting.

I'm a real actress. I was a real actress. Will you

come and see me when I'm a real actress?

I'm different now. And I feel better and better

every day. You don't need to worry about me

anymore. I have

faith.

EMMA hears something. She is twitchy.

KONSTANTIN: Nina,

EMMA:

things don't hurt me so much anymore. I'm not afraid. I'm

The lights fade around her slightly. The Naturalistic sounds fade and for a moment there's something more ominous and subjective. A low rumble. A whine of tinnitus.

I'm a

EMMA looks up as if she's been daydreaming and just coming-to. The sounds have returned to normal.

She looks around, seemingly unaware of where she is.

KONSTANTIN:

Nina?

EMMA's physicality changes. She drops the water without realising it.

Nina?

Er...

EMMA looks into the auditorium. She walks towards the edge of the stage and peers into the darkness at the audience. She moves out of her light. She pulls her wig off. She has very different hair underneath.

Nina?

The lights flicker. Her nose starts bleeding, heavily. She touches the blood and looks at it, fascinated.

Emma?

Emma?

EMMA is about to step off the edge of the stage. A STAGE MANAGER hurries on from the wings and takes EMMA

by the arm. Sounds offstage. The scenery starts moving, revealing CREW MEMBERS, props tables, cables and the back wall of the theatre. Costumed CAST MEMBERS of The Seagull watch what's happening, including an UNDERSTUDY dressed exactly like EMMA. EMMA looks at her, not sure what she's seeing. A DRESSER wipes the blood from EMMA's face. Another helps her into a jacket. EMMA is uncooperative. The furniture is taken off into the wings. The lights scroll through various colours. Naturalistic sounds, including a gunshot, play then begin to repeat rhythmically. EMMA can see a man in the distance, dancing under a flashing light. She thinks she's in a nightclub, but she knows that can't be possible. MEN suddenly surround her. A pill is put onto her tongue. She takes someone's drink and downs it. She snatches a phone from someone. She takes someone's cigarette. She pushes the MEN away, violently. They leave. She is alone, holding the phone to her ear and trying to light the cigarette. She is in the reception of a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. The dance music continues faintly, coming from a radio on the reception desk. There's a row of plastic chairs in front of a window next to which sit EMMA's bags.

EMMA:

Just this one thing can you please do this one thing for me please I'm just asking for

EMMA looks around at her new surroundings, a little surprised to find herself there. She listens to the voice on the phone and remembers what she's doing.

listen to me listen to me okay alright please this is important to me I'm trying to do something for once in my life do something for myself and

don't be like that why do you have to be like that no, listen please for a second because right now you're being a complete cunt.

Well I'm sorry you hate that word, that's really unfortunate because in one syllable it so perfectly describes your entire personality.

She throws the lighter down and searches in her bag for another.

Look, obviously I called the wrong person. Obviously you're unable to help me, you can't give me half an hour to do something that could save my life.

She stops searching.

Yes it is that serious.

I'm not being dramatic. That's such a cunt thing to say.

I'll stop calling you a cunt when you stop being a cunt.

Listen,

Mum.

Mum, please, listen to me for a second.

You're already in my flat, just

She starts searching again.

there's a large, clear-plastic box in the hallway on the

like a big, plastic

box

it's see-through, it's

I don't know how else to describe it.

Yeah, that's just unread post. Tip it out. I don't know, the floor. It's bills. Mum. I'll deal with it when I get home.

Okay now fill the box with anything that looks you know,

medical or

yes, any alcohol, of course yes, and anything that looks like drugs or

She finds a small clear plastic bag of powder. She looks around.

okay.

Aware of her surroundings, she quickly pours out the powder onto the seat of a chair and makes a few lines with a fingernail.

On the coffee table in the living room, there's a wooden box. You see it? That's the one. Don't look inside, just chuck it.

Yes it's the one Dad got me. I know that but that's not what I've used it for.

She holds the phone away from her and smorts the powder.

For a moment, the lights in the room glow brighter, the music on the radio slows down and all other sounds cease, then everything speeds up to catch up to reality.

She puts the phone back to her ear.

Just

will you please just chuck it out?

She turns up the radio a little and moves slightly to the music.

Okay, and in the kitchen,
you found all that? Great.

Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep. Yep.

She cracks her knuckles and rolls her head around her shoulders. She stretches the muscles in her face.

And the cupboard under the sink? No on the left of

okay good.

She rummages in her bag again.

And the oven?

Okay open the oven.

Because I don't use it for

Mum, I don't cook.

She finds her lighter.

Put it in the box with the rest of it.

A loud crash nearby. Shouting. EMMA looks in the direction of the sound but can't see anything. She lights the cigarette.

And then the bathroom, but, Mum, listen

I want you to just

don't be shocked okay?

EMMA sits down on one of the plastic chairs. She listens to her mother.

She puts the phone on the seat next to her and rubs her eyes with both hands.

She listens to the rain. She twists around in the seat and looks out of the window.

She looks at one of her hands, checking for tremors. She makes a fist then relaxes it again.

She stretches out her legs. She moves her jaw.

She picks the phone up and continues to listen.

That's why I'm here Mum.

I am.

I am.

I'm trying to get myself well.

She rubs her nostrils and takes another drag on her cigarette.

No I'm not smoking.

Mum, I really need you to

Another crash. A light begins to flash above reception. A tone sounds each time it alights.

please.

More sounds, things being overturned. Shouting.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay.

Mum, / thank you.

The doors to the clinic burst open and a man, PAUL, rushes into the room. He is shirtless. He has the words 'THE END' written on his torso. His eyes are wide. One of his hands is bleeding heavily, dripping blood. He speaks directly to EMMA. EMMA stays still.

PAUL: They're trying to take it all out from us drain our blood and use it for gold this is gold and they're scared of its power and they're right they're right they're right they should be scared. They should be TERRIFIED.

EMMA: I've got to go Mum.

NURSES from the clinic rush in and approach PAUL.

NURSE 1: Mr Waverley.

NURSE 2: Mr Waverley let's go back inside alright?

PAUL: WE ARE LOVE WE ARE GOD WE ARE POWER AND LIFE AND WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER!

FOSTER has entered. He has long hair and wears a bandana. He wears a different uniform to the NURSES. There is blood on FOSTER's shirt.

FOSTER: (To EMMA.) You can't smoke in here.

EMMA: Oh. What?

FOSTER: You can't smoke in here.

NURSE 2: (To PAUL.) Mr Waverley,

NURSE 1: Paul, will you please

PAUL climbs up onto the reception desk and throws and kicks whatever is in his path onto the floor. He throws pens at the NURSES. PAUL continues to shout as FOSTER talks to EMMA. NURSES try to persuade PAUL to climb down from the desk.

PAUL: THESE PEOPLE ARE SHADOWS, THEY'RE SKELETONS AND THEY'RE SUCKING OUR BLOOD. I HAVE LOCKED EYES WITH GOD I HAVE TOUCHED THE EYES OF GOD I HAVE LICKED GOD'S EYEBALLS.

FOSTER: it's a medical building, this is a medical

EMMA: yes of course.

FOSTER: you can smoke outside.

EMMA: It's raining.

FOSTER: I don't know what to tell you, it's a medical building, this is part of a medical / building, you can't

EMMA: yes, I know, I understand that, it's just

FOSTER: you can take it outside or put it out, those are your options.

Members of the GROUP have entered the room to watch the chaos. One of the NURSES talks into a handset.

NURSE 1: Doctor please come to reception. Doctor to reception please.

PAUL: Listen. I'm sharing a truth with you. This is an act of LOVE, don't you understand? The world has to change and it can start here it can start this minute! With us! I can see what we need to do.

EMMA: Do you have an ashtray?

FOSTER: There isn't an ashtray no, it's a medical building so right.

EMMA: I'm not being petty.

FOSTER: No.

EMMA: There have to be rules or things descend into chaos.

The DOCTOR enters hurriedly. She has been eating lunch. She prepares a needle. PAUL walks towards EMMA, looking directly at her.

PAUL: You can see it too. Can't you? It should all be torn to pieces.

The walls are losing definition. Everyone in the room seems to be moving in slow motion. PAUL and EMMA are the only people moving at normal speed. PAUL speaks to EMMA with a surprisingly conversational matter-of-factness.

Things need to change but they won't. There'll be so much death, one after another and then many at once. It'll be such a loud party.

The DOCTOR administers an injection. PAUL stays staring at EMMA and smiles. The room catches up to normal speed and PAUL loses a little of his clarity.

They're going to ask for everything but you've got nothing to begin with. Nothing.

NURSES support him as he slumps back into a waiting wheelchair.

Never
surrender.

He loses consciousness.

DOCTOR: EVERYONE BACK INSIDE PLEASE.

NURSES usher GROUP members back into the clinic.

FOSTER: Checking in or picking up?

PAUL is taken back into the clinic. FOSTER stops the alarm.

EMMA: Is he okay?

FOSTER: Are you checking in?

FOSTER changes the radio station. Choral music plays.

EMMA: I'm

FOSTER: if you'd like to finish your cigarette outside I'll check you in once you've

EMMA: oh, sorry.

FOSTER: Do you have anyone with you?

EMMA shakes her head. The word 'EXIT' lights up above the front door. EMMA looks at it.

EMMA: Actually, sorry. I think. Yeah. I'm going to just go outside for a second.

EMMA gathers all her belongings.

FOSTER: You can leave your bags.

EMMA: Yeah, no I'll just I'm going to just

FOSTER: how about we check you in first and / then you can

EMMA: is there a lot to do?

FOSTER holds up a clipboard.

FOSTER: Just a few questions.

EMMA: Like

FOSTER: like what's your name?

The questions do get harder so you may want to

EMMA: I'd like to

FOSTER: anonymity.

EMMA: Something like that.

FOSTER: The privacy policy is all on the back of the form, it's important that you read and sign that too. But your recovery depends on you being completely truthful while you're here. Do you understand that?

So what name shall I put on the form?

EMMA: Nina.

FOSTER: Right. Nice to meet you Nina.

The forms are all quite self-explanatory. I'll need a bunch of signatures. And I'll need your phone and if you've got a laptop, iPad, any electronic devices, you'll have to hand / those in.

EMMA: I need my phone.

FOSTER: Yeah, no. It's policy. It's like the policy about smoking.

EMMA looks at the cigarette in her hand.

EMMA: I thought I put that out.

FOSTER: You didn't.

EMMA: Right. Sorry.

The thing is that this is my last cigarette and once it's out I'm

FOSTER takes the cigarette from EMMA and drops it into a cup of coffee.

FOSTER: we'll keep your devices safe for you and once you've / finished your

EMMA: I'm waiting to hear about this thing, I need my phone because there's a thing / I'm

FOSTER: tell me Nina, when did you last use?

EMMA: I

FOSTER: blunt, I know, but

EMMA: er

FOSTER: more than a week or less?

The 'EXIT' light stickers.

In the last 72 hours?

The last 24?

Are you high right now?

EMMA studies him. FOSTER appears to be a different person than he was a moment ago. EMMA can't be sure, the clothes and bandana are the same.

Can you tell me what you've taken?

- EMMA: I just needed something to get me here.
- FOSTER: It's important to be accurate so we know how to treat you. And it won't help you to lie. You're going to have a full medical and history taken so you may as well start being honest now.
- EMMA: I drank a bit and smoked some weed.
- FOSTER: What alcohol did you drink and how much?
- EMMA: Some wine. Red wine. Rioja. Quite an expensive one.
- FOSTER: Okay.
- EMMA: And gin. I was anxious about coming here so I just wanted to take the edge off.
- FOSTER: Nina, I'm not judging. I just need to get as accurate as /
- EMMA: I took a couple of beta-blockers and some ibuprofen too.
- FOSTER is writing all of this down. EMMA tries to read what's being written.*
- FOSTER: Right.
- EMMA: And some speed just to balance me out. Get me motivated.

FOSTER: And how long ago did you take the speed?

EMMA: Oh, I don't know.

She is chewing her lips.

Ages.

FOSTER: Is that everything from the last 24 hours?

Nina?

EMMA: Like a half a gram of coke.

And a multivitamin.

FOSTER: Any prescriptions?

EMMA: For anxiety. Valium. Benzos and Ativan.

FOSTER: And you smoke.

EMMA: Until just now.

FOSTER: Right.

EMMA: Is that important?

FOSTER: There's a checklist, I'm just trying to fill your bingo card.

FOSTER: Right. *(Not smiling.)* That's funny.

EMMA: How did you get here today Nina?
I drove.

FOSTER looks at EMMA.

It's fine. I'm a really good driver.

And I'm okay really. Overall. It's not a problem, my using. I just want to get a tune up. I'm not completely in control of it anymore. I've had some problems at work because of it and some blackouts and I think I tried to kill myself so I'm just a bit

FOSTER: blackouts?

EMMA: Yeah.

FOSTER makes some notes. He continues to write without looking up.

I'm actually quite healthy. I know I'm not giving that impression. I go to the gym. Sometimes.

FOSTER appears to be a different person again, perhaps a woman.

FOSTER: Is there a contact I can have, a partner or

EMMA: no.

FOSTER: Family member or

we won't contact them unless there's an emergency.

Work colleague?

EMMA: Mum.

My Mum.

The lights flicker again. Only EMMA seems to notice it.

FOSTER: Just pop her details on the form. Then I'll take you through for your medical.

FOSTER hands EMMA the form.

EMMA: You won't contact her / unless

FOSTER: unless there's an emergency.

EMMA looks at the form. FOSTER takes her bags.

I'll let them know you're ready.

FOSTER pauses at the door and looks back at EMMA.

Don't go anywhere.

FOSTER leaves.

EMMA considers writing on the form but doesn't.

She sighs.

She talks to herself.

EMMA: Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

EMMA looks at the door to the outside world. The EXIT light seems to have grown impossibly large.

She approaches the doorway. Lights in the room start to fade. She is lit by the light from outside. The choral music from the radio seems to be coming from all around her.

NURSES approach EMMA and take the form, her phone, her coat. They take her shoes and help her into a pale blue medical gown. They attach a blood-pressure cuff to EMMA's arm. One shines a torch in EMMA's eyes and mouth.

FOSTER returns, takes EMMA's coat, bags and mobile phone, then closes the door to the outside world. The choral music ceases. Electric lights snap on.

DOCTOR: Nina?

EMMA doesn't look up.

Nina?

Still no response.

Excuse me, hello.

EMMA looks around. She is in the DOCTOR's consultation room.

EMMA: Sorry. Yes, that's / me.

Well the good news is that this looks perfectly normal.

The DOCTOR is looking at the contents of a small, clear plastic box.

EMMA: What is that?

DOCTOR: Your stool sample.

EMMA: Not mine.

DOCTOR: Oh. Really?

The DOCTOR looks at the contents, picks it up, sniffs it, then takes a bite of it. EMMA stares.

The DOCTOR looks up.

Falafel. It's falafel.

EMMA remains very still.

I'm making a joke. I didn't finish lunch.

The DOCTOR takes the form from one of the NURSES and reads it. She makes a couple of notes. EMMA watches her.

Seriously though, you may have to do a stool sample. Has she done a UDA?

EMMA: What's that?

DOCTOR: Urine.

NURSE: Not yet Doctor.

EMMA: Could I have some / water?

DOCTOR: Your name is 'Nina.'

EMMA: Yes. Why are you saying / it like

DOCTOR: and you're an alcoholic and drug addict.

EMMA: Fucking hell.

DOCTOR: Aren't you?

EMMA: I'm

why else would you be here?

NURSE: *(To DOCTOR.)* 160 over 110.

DOCTOR: Your recovery can't start until you admit you have a problem.

EMMA: This was a mistake.

- DOCTOR: You're *not* an alcoholic and drug addict?
- EMMA: I'm not saying I'm anything, I just need a I don't know.
- I just want to get clean, get my certificate and go back to / work.
- DOCTOR: Certificate?
- EMMA: A piece of paper or a signed whatever, something that says I can work. That I'm not a risk.
- DOCTOR: Once you complete the programme / we can how long will that take?
- EMMA: It varies. First I'll need to see your results and take a history and / psychological examination.
- EMMA: Isn't there a way we could just speed this along?

The DOCTOR is consulting the form.

- DOCTOR: Benzodiazepine, Lorazepam.
- EMMA: Valium, yeah. For anxiety. It's a prescription.
- DOCTOR: And do you use beyond your prescription?
- EMMA: I have a few GPs. And I get some online and from a few people / I know.
- DOCTOR: Has your use of pills impacted on you and those around you? Work? Relationships? Family?

EMMA: I was

- I was at work and I
- I was confused about where I was. Who I was.
- DOCTOR: Dissociation.
- EMMA: I guess so. You look like my mother.
- DOCTOR: That's projection. Assigning familial attributes onto an authority figure.
- EMMA: No, you really fucking look like her.
- The DOCTOR has taken EMMA's hands and is holding them out, looking for tremors.*
- DOCTOR: Detoxing from benzos takes about ten days.
- EMMA: Ten / days?
- DOCTOR: You'll start tonight, and tomorrow morning you can begin with Group.
- EMMA: I don't need that, I just need the first thing.
- DOCTOR: Nina, the Group is the programme. The truth is that it doesn't take long to get everything out of your body. It's the behaviour, the psychology that is the important thing to address. We can't do that until we've dealt with the physical symptoms. Then it's twenty-eight days of therapy. Ideally it'll be closer to ninety.
- EMMA: Ninety? No, that's not possible.
- DOCTOR: Tell me Nina, how do you think this story ends?
- EMMA: What story?
- DOCTOR: You. Your life. How does it play out, do you think, if you don't prioritise getting well?
- EMMA: I'm not ill, I'm

The DOCTOR consults the form.

DOCTOR: blackouts.

EMMA: A few, yeah.

A NURSE checks EMMA's pulse.

DOCTOR: Memory loss?

EMMA: Sometimes I think. It's like time travel or a skipping CD. One minute I'll be talking to someone, the next I'll be walking in the road. Could I have some water please?

NURSE: You have water.

EMMA: No I

EMMA sees that she's holding a plastic cup of water. It wasn't there a moment ago.

oh.

She drinks the water.

NURSE: (To DOCTOR.) 130.

The DOCTOR stands very close to EMMA. EMMA is unnerved by this but tries not to show it. A NURSE prepares to take a blood test.

DOCTOR: Look at me.

She does.

I know you don't!

EMMA avoids eye-contact.

EMMA: I've just got one of those faces.

DOCTOR: What's your occupation?

EMMA: Is that one of the questions?

DOCTOR: It is.

EMMA: Is it important?

DOCTOR: Is it a secret?

How are you with needles?

EMMA: Excuse m - ouch.

A NURSE has put a needle into EMMA's arm and begins to take blood. EMMA winces.

A hiss of blood in EMMA's head. Lights begin to fade. The DOCTOR shines a torch into one of EMMA's eyes.

DOCTOR: Do you often pass out?

The lights in the room flicker.

EMMA: I suppose so. I wake up places.

DOCTOR: Do you feel like you might pass out now?

EMMA: A little, yes.

The room is losing detail somehow, the walls are moving further away or dissolving into a pixelated fuzz.

DOCTOR: It says here 'suicide attempt'.

EMMA: Not a successful one.

DOCTOR: Evidently.

EMMA: That's me. Never seeing anything through. Violin lessons. Diets. Suicide attempts. I never finish what I start.

DOCTOR: If you're trying to be funny can you let me know because it's not immediately obvious.

NURSE: Hold this.

The NURSE places EMMA's thumb so that she's holding a small ball of cotton wool where the needle was. EMMA

looks at her blood in the tube. The DOCTOR's voice increasingly sounds like it's underwater.

DOCTOR: Memory loss?

EMMA: Didn't you just ask me that?

DOCTOR: Nina, I'd like to hear you say that you need my help. I feel uncomfortable giving you help if you haven't asked for it.

EMMA: I've been managing just fine.

DOCTOR: When I look at your blood results am I going to see that you're just fine or am I going to see something else?

If you don't want help then why are you here?

EMMA: I'm not sure if I am.

DOCTOR: I'm sorry?

A sense of things falling.

EMMA: I said I don't know if I am.

Here.

The lights blackout. Chaotic sounds, like a thousand television channels playing simultaneously, all rising in pitch.

After barely a second the lights snap up again and the sounds stop.

EMMA is surprised and scared to find herself on the floor, surrounded by NURSES.

DOCTOR: (To NURSES.) Give her some space please.

EMMA: Get off me.

DOCTOR: Stand back.

EMMA: GET THE FUCK OFF ME.

EMMA pushes the NURSES away.

DOCTOR: Leave us please. It's okay.

The NURSES leave the room. The DOCTOR refills EMMA's water cup. Her voice no longer sounds like it's underwater. The detail of the room has returned. EMMA concentrates on controlling her breath. The drawers of a filing cabinet breathe in and out with her. Gradually this will stop and the room will stabilise.

Do you know where you are Nina?

EMMA: Who's Nina?

DOCTOR: Do you need to be sick?

It might help.

EMMA: I shouldn't be here.

DOCTOR: It's pretty obvious that you should.

You came here for a reason. That was a good impulse.

EMMA looks at her hands. She's shaking.

The DOCTOR refills EMMA's water.

Your addiction will fight any progress. It's a parasite and it will fight for its own survival until you're dead. But progress is possible. I just need to hear you say that you are willing and motivated to make changes.

EMMA: 'I cast you out, unclean spirit!'

You know. From The Exorcist.
Your mother sucks cocks in hell!

DOCTOR:

I haven't seen it.

EMMA:

Oh. Really?

DOCTOR:

Are you willing and / motivated to

EMMA:

you've never seen The Exorcist?

DOCTOR:

I can't help you unless / you

EMMA:

my Mum has gone to my flat and she's boxed up everything. Bottles. Pills. Everything.

DOCTOR:

That's good. That's a very clear commitment to getting well.

EMMA:

There was blood on the bathroom walls. She'll have seen that. Not my blood. Not all of it anyway. Needles aren't my thing. Lucky for me.

She's probably still there now, some marigolds on, scrubbing away.

I know that the next time I drink or use

That'll be the end. I'll be dead.

I'm not sure if I knew that until now, until I just literally just said it. But it's true.

It's going to kill me.

She rubs her eyes.

Yes.

I need help.

Please help me.

The DOCTOR speaks into a handset.

DOCTOR:

Could Foster come to medical please? Foster to medical please.

The DOCTOR writes on a prescription pad.

Withdrawal from benzodiazepines can be physically and emotionally very tough. You'll likely hallucinate and your body will be put under a lot of stress.

The DOCTOR places some pills into a small paper cup. EMMA hears the rattle.

I'm going to give you some medication that will stabilise you and reduce your risk of seizure, and some benzodiazepine at a reduced dosage. Now, I understand that you've come here to get off drugs, not to take more so you may be reluctant to

The DOCTOR places the pills on the table. EMMA immediately takes them, throwing them back and swigging down the water.

right. Good. Okay.

FOSTER enters.

FOSTER:

Hi, did you

DOCTOR:

wait a moment please Foster.

(To EMMA.) We'll be monitoring you, checking in regularly. You'll have, in your room, there are cords and buzzers for when you need help.

Don't be afraid to ask for it.

The DOCTOR nods to FOSTER.

FOSTER:

Come with me.

Lights fade around them.

EMMA walks to the window and watches as the sun sets. FOSTER turns on a bedside lamp. They are in a bedroom. There is a bathroom and a single bed. FOSTER puts EMMA'S bags on the bed and EMMA takes out some clothes.

You're lucky. Everyone else is sharing but EMMA changes out of the medical robe and into comfortable clothes. FOSTER turns his back to her.

you're an odd number.

FOSTER looks out of the window.

Snowing.

If you want to ask me anything let me know. I'm an old hand at this.

Hat? Is it old hat or old hand?

It smells like disinfectant.

If madam would prefer a room which smells of vomit and diarrhoea I'm sure she that can / be accommodated.

I'm just saying that / it's

this is a medical building, it's not / a hotel.

This will be fine.

Did the Doctor ask about your suicide attempt?

Excuse me?

It's one of the psych questions. If you're thinking of or planning to kill yourself. You said you'd tried to

right.

FOSTER:

This bit can get pretty tough. I don't want to come in and find you bled out in the bathroom or something. That sort of clean up. The paper work. It's just a massive headache for me that I don't need.

Nah, you'll be fine.

Best thing about detox is, once you've been through it once you'd do anything to not have to go through it again. Here.

FOSTER gives EMMA a big book.

Some reading material you may find useful.

Not a fucking Bible.

Not exactly.

And you didn't fill out the form. You were going to give me that contact info.

For your Mum.

Yeah. Right. I will.

Tomorrow.

FOSTER: Make sure you do.

FOSTER turns to leave. EMMA looks at the book.

EMMA: Foster, is it?

He stops.

FOSTER: Yeah.

EMMA: I'm

I'm a little bit

FOSTER:

scared?

EMMA nods.

Do you want to see a picture of my dog?

EMMA doesn't respond. FOSTER takes a mobile phone from his pocket and loads up a photo.

She's a mongrel. Mostly English Mastiff. Refuge dog. Used for fighting and left for dead. She, look, her ear isn't all there and she's blind in her right eye. The kennel was going to put her down, so I took her home with me. She's impossible to house train. Destroyed almost everything I own. She's bitten my right ankle, both my calves, my knee, my elbow, my hand here here and here and my shoulder. Her name's Eleanor. I love that dog.

EMMA:

How come you're allowed a phone?

FOSTER:

I work here.

EMMA:

Can I borrow it?

FOSTER puts the phone away.

FOSTER:

There's a buzzer next to the bed and a cord in the bathroom. We'll check in on you and make sure you don't choke on your own vomit or hit your head if you start fitting.

Did you take the meds?

She nods.

It's much better with the meds.

Hang in there.

This is the easy part.

FOSTER leaves.

EMMA looks around. She itches her arms.

She sits on the bed. She opens the book and starts reading.

She looks up and watches the snow outside.

She watches another EMMA get out of the bed and start to unplug, clutching her stomach as it cramps. EMMA watches as another EMMA gets out of the bed and starts to pace around the room, itching her arms. She sees another EMMA get out of the bed and fill a glass of water from the sink in the bathroom then drink it quickly. She is shaking and smashes the glass in the sink.

A rumble, increasing in volume and pitch.

Another EMMA appears and vomits into the toilet. Another EMMA sits on the floor, holding her legs to her body. She reaches up to the light switch and turns it on and off rhythmically. EMMA walks around the room, looking at the other EMMAs who do not notice her or each other.

The pacing EMMA is sweating and breathing heavily. Another EMMA is shivering with cold.

Time is passing, the sun rising and falling, faster and faster, days turning to night, nights turning to day. The sounds of the outside world increase, the hush of late night traffic in the darkness, the chaos of the busy city in the daylight. The rumble is getting louder and louder.

FOSTER enters the room, bringing food on a tray.

FOSTER: Good morning. It's time to meet the Group.

EMMA: I'm not ready.

A NURSE comes in to take the food tray away. Another brings in more food and FOSTER takes it away.

EMMA sits on the bed. Snow falls onto her. The EMMAs continue to move around the room, each one privately struggling with the physical effects of withdrawal.

A THERAPIST enters. The THERAPIST is played by the same actress who plays the DOCTOR.

THERAPIST: Hello I'm Lydia. I'm one of the therapists here.

EMMA: No, you're the Doctor, you look like my Mum.

One of the EMMAs starts to have a seizure. STAFF rush in to attend to her.

THERAPIST: I understand you don't feel ready to join the Group.

In the bathroom, a NURSE helps to clean another EMMA after she's wet herself.

Isolation is the first step towards relapse.

Another EMMA enters the room and drags the desk chair to below the light fitting. She ties a belt around her neck and stands on the chair. NURSES rush in and help her down.

The work is done in Group, by the Group.

EMMA: Mum,

EMMA approaches the THERAPIST but she's vanished. She watches her UNDERSTUDY, in costume, walk across

the room holding a dead seagull, then climb out of the window.

FOSTER enters.

FOSTER: you have to take part in the Group. I'm afraid we're pretty strict about this. You can't just pick and choose what to take part in. You have to do everything.

PAUL is in the darkness.

PAUL: They want everything but you've got nothing to begin with.

The room is now full of EMMAs all dressed identically. Both PAUL and FOSTER have disappeared. The DOCTOR is there.

DOCTOR: I'm going to ask you a few questions to get a sense of historical context for your using.

EMMA: It doesn't work. It doesn't work like that.

The movements of the EMMAs have become faster and faster, all except EMMA who has slowly moved back to the bed and started to read the book. She rips pages out of it, one after the other. FOSTER appears again.

FOSTER: Please understand that if you refuse to take part in the Group you will be required to leave treatment. We're going to send you home. I'll have to call your mother. Alright?

EMMA: No.

EMMA gets into bed. Her eyes are wide open.

No.

It begins to snow across the whole room.

No.

Time continues to pass, night turning to day turning to night so fast it becomes a strobe.

One EMMA is laughing. Another is screaming.

The sound is deafening.

The sounds suddenly stop. Birdsong. Traffic.

Morning. EMMA wakes. She looks around. She is alone.

FOSTER enters. He looks different. Perhaps he's grown a beard or maybe he's just wearing a different bandana. Days have passed. FOSTER opens the curtains. Sunlight fills the room.

EMMA's head hurts. The light is too bright. The sounds are too loud.

FOSTER: Good morning. Well, afternoon. Technically.

She pulls back the covers. She puts her feet on the floor. There is something fundamentally different about her appearance, as if another actress is now playing her.

EMMA: What day is it?

She stands. She holds the big book.

FOSTER: How are you feeling?

EMMA: Like the worst is over.

FOSTER laughs. He gives her a cup of coffee then tidies the room with the brisk confidence of someone who does this a lot.

FOSTER: Well, what will it be? Will you speak to the therapist and join the Group or am I going to have Security throw you out into the street?

EMMA has taken out some make up and is applying some to her face.

What are you doing?

EMMA: Nothing. I'm getting ready.

FOSTER: You don't have to do that here. I mean, you can, but

EMMA is self-conscious. She continues to apply the make up.

three things:

One: Over the next few days you're going to cry at things you wouldn't ordinarily cry at and it won't be easy to stop. This is normal.

Two: From this moment on, you're going to drink more coffee than you should. You won't even notice you're doing it. You'll just always have a cup in your hand. You have to watch that because it messes with sleep and you're going to need to sleep more than before.

Three:

FOSTER turns his attention to EMMA.

You have to be completely truthful or the process won't work. There's no judgement in here. Every one of us is here for the same reason and we're all very good at lying. We're also good at spotting liars.

EMMA: This is great coffee.

FOSTER: Prime example. It's terrible coffee.

Are you ready to begin?

No.

DOCTOR:

Let's start with your name shall we?

EMMA is in the DOCTOR'S consultation room.

Your real name.

,

EMMA looks at FOSTER.

EMMA: Emma.

DOCTOR: Emma. Good.

How are you feeling?

EMMA: Like my insides have been scrubbed with bleach.

DOCTOR: Right.

Vivid.

EMMA: Emma, before you join the Group I need to get some historical context for your using.

DOCTOR: That A led to B and therefore C.

EMMA: Exactly.

DOCTOR: Beginning, middle, end.

EMMA: Isn't that how life works?

DOCTOR: No.

EMMA: How does life work?

,

EMMA: You have a lot of certificates. It's impressive. I've not got that.

DOCTOR: You didn't go to university?

EMMA: I went to loads. Just not for long. Never got that scroll.

DOCTOR: I can't give you a letter for work Emma. Not until you've completed the programme.

EMMA: The twenty-eight days.

DOCTOR: At least.

EMMA: Thing is, I came here to get everything out of my system and now I have, nearly, and I really feel like I'm ready to get back out into / the real world.

DOCTOR: You've addressed the chemical hooks but not the central cause of your addiction.

EMMA: Which is

DOCTOR: trauma.

EMMA: You've done the first stage, you / may as well

DOCTOR: I can leave when I want, right?

EMMA: Absolutely, / but

DOCTOR: great, thanks. This has been fun. I've changed. I'll never use again, Brownie's honour. Bye.

FOSTER: Emma you really / should

DOCTOR: you can leave us now thanks Foster.

,

FOSTER leaves.

Sit down.

EMMA: You even *sound* like my mother.

EMMA drops the heavy book onto the desk.

I don't know if that's your copy or Foster's but I've made some corrections.

DOCTOR: Corrections?

The DOCTOR opens the book. It is full of scribbled notes, pages turned-down and torn out, asterisks in the margins etc.

EMMA: Amendments. Notes and things. Have you actually read this thing?

DOCTOR: Emma, the programme works for a lot of / people.

EMMA: Except you don't know that. Nobody does. It's all anonymous, there's nothing evidence-based it's just / anecdotal, so

DOCTOR: Emma, you asked for my / help.

EMMA: If it's vital to my recovery that I come to believe in a power / greater than me

DOCTOR: Emma, if you let me

EMMA: to turn my will and my life over to God and have Him remove my defects of character,

DOCTOR: will you let me just

EMMA: if this all depends on me having a spiritual awakening then we might all just be wasting our time.

DOCTOR: We're not.

EMMA: I think we might be.

DOCTOR: You're worried about the steps.

EMMA: I'm worried that a trained medical professional with this many certificates can also wear a crucifix.

DOCTOR: I don't believe the scientific method disproves the / existence of

EMMA: such a boring conversation of course it does of course it fucking does I really need you to be cleverer than this. I really need you to at least match me intellectually because otherwise I'm going to leave and if I leave I don't know if

I'm not powerless. I'm not helpless. I don't believe addiction is a disease and I'm scared and angered by the suggestion that from now on it's either eternal abstinence or binge to death. I can't surrender to a higher power because there isn't one. There just isn't. And you, as someone who lives in the twenty-first century should know that.

Emma,

I wake up in wet sheets. In places I don't recognise. With bruises I can't account for. Men I don't know. I've stolen from people. I've slept on the streets. I'm in trouble. I know that. But this book, this *process* can't help me. You can't help me.

DOCTOR: I see a lot of clever people in here. People who drink and use because they just can't stop their big brains from thinking thinking thinking. Does that sound / familiar?

EMMA: You want me to conceptualise a universe in which I am the sole agent of my destiny and at the same time acknowledge my absolute powerlessness. It's a fatal contradiction and I won't start building foundations on a flawed premise.

DOCTOR: That's not a fair / characterisation of

EMMA: there is no *meaning* to anything. There are no beginnings, middles and ends.

DOCTOR:

Emma,

EMMA: I am not the product of the decisions I've made or the things that have happened to me. I will not be reduced to that.

DOCTOR:

I'm not / suggesting

EMMA: my brother had a brain haemorrhage while reading Pinocchio to a group of five year olds. Mark. He was two years younger than me and never touched drugs or alcohol. He ran fucking *marathons*. For *charity*. I should have died a thousand times but it was him who

if I tell you I was sexually abused or the child of alcoholics, if I tell you I returned from back-to-back tours of Iraq and started to self-medicate wouldn't that all just be a massive simplification of the complexity of just being a human fucking person?

DOCTOR:

Were you?

EMMA:

Was I what?

DOCTOR:

Sexually abused.

EMMA:

That's / not

DOCTOR:

because we'll also have to do a full sexual / history.

EMMA:

You're not listening to what I'm

EMMA sighs.

I first got drunk with my brother when I was eleven and he was ten. I stole three bottles of Communion wine and when I vomited it looked like blood. Is this the kind of thing you want to hear?

DOCTOR:

Is it the truth?

EMMA:

No. I never had a brother.

And he didn't die in front of children. He died in his car. Or he was stillborn maybe. Or he grew up and died of old age.

The DOCTOR clicks her pen closed and puts it down on the form.

DOCTOR:

Do you lie to protect yourself or your addiction?

EMMA:

It's not lying. It's admitting there's no truth to begin with. Have you read Foucault?

DOCTOR:

Not lately.

EMMA:

Or Derrida? Baudrillard? Barthes?

DOCTOR:

You're an addict because of Post-Modernism?

EMMA:

I can't base my survival on slogans and abstractions and vagueness. I'm not someone who can do Pilates on a beach and mistake relaxation for spirituality. I spent a year in the Far East but I didn't find enlightenment, I found slums and sex tourism.

I chose this place because it's ugly and grey and in the middle of a car park and I can look out on traffic and homeless people and remind myself that the world is just purposeless chaos. I need something *definitive*. I need to be fixed.

DOCTOR:

It doesn't work like that. It's a long-term, / daily

EMMA: I don't do long-term.

DOCTOR: You're going to learn. Because the strategies you've been using just aren't working. I hear all your concerns about the programme. I've heard them all before. But right now it's the best we've got. You think you've worked it all out, great, you're still dying. Intellectually inferior as I may be, I'm trying to save your life. Now, sit down.

EMMA sits.

The Twelve Steps outline the process of recovery as experienced by its earliest members and, yes, they were about accepting God. But here we use a modified version with religiously neutral wording.

Have you heard the expression 'powerless over nouns'?

EMMA: Nouns? As in

DOCTOR: people, places and things.

EMMA: You mean like *Facebook*?

DOCTOR: Excuse me?

EMMA: On Facebook the search box / says

DOCTOR: I'm not on Facebook.

EMMA: No.

No nor am I really. I have a profile but I hardly ever

DOCTOR: it's a rewrite of Step One of Twelve. Instead of declaring ourselves powerless over alcohol

or drugs we admit that we are powerless over people, places and things. People who make us want to relapse, places we associate with using and things that reactivate old behaviour. Does this make sense to you?

EMMA: Yes.

DOCTOR: When you're in recovery, back in the real world.

EMMA: You'll need to find a way to handle being in those places. With those people.

DOCTOR: And those things.

I find reality pretty difficult.

I find the business of getting out of bed and getting on with the day really *hard* I find picking up my phone to be a mammoth fucking struggle. The number on my inbox. The friends who won't see me anymore. The food pictures and porn videos, the bombings and beheadings, the moral ambivalence you have to have to just be able to carry on with your day. I find the knowledge that we're all just atoms and one day we'll stop and be dirt in the ground, I find that overwhelmingly disappointing.

And I wish I could feel otherwise. I wish I could be like you. Or my mother. To feel that some things are predetermined and meaningful and that we're somewhere on a track between the start and finish lines. But I can't because I care about what's true, what's actually, verifiably *true*. You're able to forfeit rationality

for a comforting untruth so how are you supposed to help me? You're looking at the world through such a tight filter you're barely living in it. You're barely alive.

- DOCTOR: You talk about your mother a lot.
- EMMA: Drugs and alcohol have *never* let me down. They have always *loved* me. There are substances I can put into my bloodstream that make the world *perfect*. That is the only absolute truth in the universe.
- I'm being difficult because you want to take it away from me. So sorry.
- DOCTOR: If we don't bond with people, particularly parents, we seek a connection elsewhere. Drugs. Alcohol.
- EMMA: God.
- Mark, my brother, he believed in God. He wasn't as bright as me. He didn't really stretch himself. He once told me that he believed the entire universe was happening in his imagination and that when he died everything would be snuffed out. But then he died and everything carried on, so that's that hypothesis disproved.
- DOCTOR: I can't force you to stay. I can't force you to be truthful. I can just tell you that the process only works if you are honest. With yourself, with me and with others. Denial. Denial is what kills you.
- EMMA: I'm not good in groups.
- DOCTOR: I can believe that.

You've already come so far Emma. Don't let that be for nothing.

The DOCTOR stands by the door.

I'd like you to see how the programme works in practise. Meet the Group and my colleague, Lydia.

EMMA: Who's Lydia?

A GROUP of people sit down in a circle of chairs. The DOCTOR exits. EMMA is in the Group Therapy room. The THERAPIST enters and holds out her hand for EMMA to shake. It is the same actress who played the DOCTOR but her clothing and appearance is different. Perhaps she is barefoot and has let her hair down.

THERAPIST: Hi. I'm Lydia, I'm one of the therapists here.

EMMA: God, you all look like my mother.

THERAPIST: Why don't you introduce yourself?

EMMA stands at the edge of the room. She looks at the room full of people. The GROUP looks at her.

EMMA: Er, okay. Hello everyone. I'm

She looks at the THERAPIST.

Emma.

GROUP: Hello Emma.

THERAPIST: Take a seat.

EMMA: I'm alright here.

THERAPIST: Emma, we're all in recovery. You can say whatever you like here.

EMMA: You're not in recovery.

She points at FOSTER.

He's not in recovery.

FOSTER: Seven years.

THERAPIST: Twenty-one.

A little smattering of applause from the GROUP.

EMMA: You're kidding.

THERAPIST: We're all here for the same reason.

EMMA looks around the room.

EMMA: Look, no offense to anyone or to the process but I'm sort of private.

THERAPIST: Gotcha.

EMMA: Just want to keep my head down and do my time.

THERAPIST: You're a lone wolf.

EMMA: Exactly.

THERAPIST: Who else here is a lone wolf?

Everyone in the GROUP puts their hands up.

Take a seat Emma.

,

EMMA sits with the GROUP.

Why don't you tell us about yourself?

EMMA: Seriously? I have to just jump straight in?

THERAPIST: This is a safe space. Tell us your story.

The reception bell sounds. FOSTER exits.

EMMA: Alright, fine, fuck it. Where should I start?

,

I suppose it all started when I was much younger and met this guy. I bet that's how a few of these stories start, right ladies?

She's trying to be funny but is failing.

Anyway. I was in a relationship with this guy. Norwegian guy. Older. Writer. He was really talented but never really lived up to it because, well, he was an alcoholic.

Some nods of recognition and sounds of encouragement from the GROUP.

Anyway. That ended. Predictably. And I met someone else. A much more solid, reliable, nice guy. George. An academic. I now know, I think I knew at the time really, that I wasn't in love with him. We got married.

She is absent-mindedly playing with her ring finger. There is no ring.

Anyway. We had some money troubles. George went for a professorship at

MARK, a member of the GROUP, has his hand up.

MARK: excuse me, sorry,

THERAPIST: let her talk, Mark.

MARK: Okay but

THERAPIST: Mark.

EMMA: Anyway, things were sort of fine, in a way, but, small world, an old school friend, Thea, started seeing my ex. The writer.

MARK: Okay, sorry, but this is

THERAPIST: please, / Mark.

EMMA: Is he allowed to just interrupt like / that?

THERAPIST: Go ahead Emma.

EMMA: Well, So, things came to a head when the manuscript of my ex's new work just went missing.

MARK stands.

MARK: Alright, enough, / this is stupid, this is

A frisson of activity in the GROUP.

THERAPIST: Mark, sit down and / let her speak.

EMMA: Yeah, sit down and let me finish *Mark*.

Suddenly, the door opens and PAUL enters, urgently. He is much less wild than before. He is followed by FOSTER.

PAUL: I'd like to say something to the / Group please.

FOSTER: Paul, don't do this, come on.

Everyone stays still and looks at PAUL.

PAUL: I'd just like to speak briefly to the Group / if I may.

THERAPIST: I'm sorry Paul, but you have to leave / now.

PAUL: I will I promise, but, please, please let me just / say a few words.

PAUL takes a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolds it.

THERAPIST: Your treatment has been terminated, you can't / be in here.

PAUL reads from the paper.

PAUL: I want to apologise to you all with my whole heart.

FOSTER puts his hand on PAUL's arm.

FOSTER: Paul, please.

THERAPIST: It's okay.

Go ahead Paul.

PAUL clears his throat and prepares himself.

PAUL: I know that my behaviour here was stupid and dangerous. Not only to myself but, also, as a trigger for others' relapse. I smuggled in some substances. Ketamine. It was a breach of my agreement and resulted in my ejection. But

He lowers the paper.

I don't like begging. I was making progress here. I was doing well. Please.

He kneels down.

THERAPIST: Paul.

PAUL: Please give me a second chance.

THERAPIST: Paul,

He reads from the paper again.

PAUL: I believe I have extenuating circumstances. I wouldn't have used if what happened if what happened hadn't happened. I just really wanted it all to stop.

EMMA turns to the person next to her.

EMMA: What happened?

The person ignores her.

EMMA puts her hand in the air.

EMMA: who here thinks he should stay?

THERAPIST: Emma, this isn't a democracy, / you can't just

EMMA: you wanted me to join the Group well I have, I'm in the sacred circle of truth and this guy seems like one of our people. Now who thinks he should stay and get well and who thinks he should be sent to his death?

FOSTER: That's unfair / wording.

EMMA: That's the reality of the fucking situation. Put your hands up if you want him gone.

Some hands go up.

And who wants to save his life?

More hands go up. A majority.

EMMA turns triumphantly to the THERAPIST.

THERAPIST: Emma, I'm sorry but that's simply not how / we work.

PAUL walks towards EMMA.

EMMA: It's ridiculous, he's

PAUL spits in EMMA's face.

MARK: no!

MARK gets between PAUL and EMMA. The GROUP move out of their seats, either away or towards the fracas. FOSTER radios for SECURITY.

THERAPIST: Emma it's best that we don't talk amongst ourselves, if you have a question you can / ask the

EMMA: what circumstances? What happened?

An awkward silence. A couple of people look around the room or stiff in their seats.

PAUL: Robert.
My partner,

fiancé
of eighteen years.

Dead.
Heroin.

We didn't do needles. I don't know where he got it.

I can't go home again. It's not real. I don't want to die. I want it all to stop. I've got these voices and they're scaring me. I just want it to

stop.

You should stay.

Emma.

He should.

Emma there are strict rules / about
fuck that. He'll die. Or kill someone.

I don't / think I'd

this has to be a drug-free / environment,

Paul can come back / once he has

EMMA:

THERAPIST:

EMMA:

THERAPIST:

EMMA:

PAUL:

THERAPIST:

FOSTER:

PAUL: This isn't safari.
It's not character building. Don't scabble in the dirt with us poor cunts then put on smart shoes.

FOSTER: Security please come to Group. Security to Group, thank you.

MARK: You're talking shit mate.

THERAPIST: Thank you Mark, / if everyone could little princess fuck off to Goa. Fuck off up a yoga mountain with magic / crystals.

PAUL: You don't / know me.

EMMA: Fuck off to paradise you / prim prig.

THERAPIST: Okay that's it. Enough.

EMMA: No, he's alright. What else do you want to say Paul?

THERAPIST: Emma.

PAUL: I don't owe you. I'm not in your debt.

EMMA: Thank you for making that clear. I don't want to be your friend. I just want to get well and go home. Yes, I could have gone somewhere else but I chose not to. I don't think I'm better than anyone. I think we're all the same. I'm sorry your fiancé died. My brother died too. The week before I came here. Pills. I found him in the stairwell of our building curled into a ball. He'd cried blood. I wish I'd died instead. I wish I'd died without having to see him dead. We're all the same.

THERAPIST: Paul, you understand you can't simply re-join the Group.

PAUL looks around.

PAUL: Fuck this. Fuck all of this. It's all bullshit.

PAUL laughs.

It's all just bullshit. None of this is real. When you're sitting here tonight being all serious, think of me out there. I'll be having the night of my life.

PAUL leaves the room.

FOSTER follows him.

The GROUP talk amongst themselves. The THERAPIST attempts an upbeat tone.

THERAPIST: Alright, let's all take five for some tea and biscuits shall we?

The GROUP leaves the room. The THERAPIST speaks to EMMA.

EMMA: I have every right and inclination to eject you from treatment. First you refuse to join Group, then you attempt to / demolish it from within.

THERAPIST: He attacked me!

EMMA: Believe me when I tell you I've seen it all before. I can't be shocked and I won't be undermined.

THERAPIST: Then eject me. I'm happy to go, just give me / my letter.

EMMA: You're not going anywhere. You're going to sit there, calm down and when the Group

returns you're going to apologise, then you're going to sit, listen and learn something.

The THERAPIST leaves the room.

This has all been witnessed by MARK, who begins clapping, sarcastically.

EMMA looks up to see him sitting opposite her in the circle of chairs. It's just the two of them in the room.

MARK:

Bravo.

Quite a performance.

EMMA is wiping her face.

EMMA:

You know, it's rude to interrupt people when they're telling their life story.

MARK:

I do know that, yes. But that wasn't your life story. It's the plot of Hedda Gabler.

How far were you going to go with it? I mean, she fucking dies in the end.

EMMA:

Don't we all.

MARK:

Not me. I'm immortal. I've taken hits that would kill an elephant.

MARK offers EMMA a cigarette without getting up.

EMMA:

I quit.

MARK:

First time huh? Yeah, I quit everything my first time. But you got to take it easy.

EMMA sits down opposite MARK.

First couple of times I went through treatment the *guilt* I felt. The *weight* of it. Came out thinking 'I've failed so badly at life.' Went straight to my dealer both times. Took enough to snuff it. First time, I chickened out and called an ambulance. Second time I went down by the canal. Stupid. Some good fucking Samaritan jogged by and happened to be medically fucking trained for fuck's sake.

EMMA:

What was the high like?

MARK laughs.

MARK:

Yeah, that's the question. Take enough to kill you must be a great high. You *are* in trouble.

EMMA:

Was it?

.

MARK lights a cigarette.

You can't smoke in here it's a / medical building.

MARK:

Medical building yeah.

He smokes.

Did Foster warn you about the coffee? You'll find you'll need much more coffee and then you won't sleep and that's dangerous because you shouldn't get too tired. Or hungry. Angry. Lonely. Horny. Too anything, really. Keep the right size is what they say. *We* say. Keep perspective. *We're addicts because we have a toxic combination of low self-esteem and grandiosity.*

EMMA:

If I need advice on how to fail at recovery I'll come to you.

MARK:

You're mean.

EMMA stands, walks across the circle and takes a cigarette. MARK lights it for her. MARK remains seated. EMMA stands above him. They both smoke.

EMMA exhales and watches the smoke in the air. She looks at the cigarette between her fingers.

EMMA: People who aren't addicted to anything are really missing out, you know? To have something that can make you feel complete and loved and satisfied and to be able to actually get it. It's not unrequited, it loves you back

So the therapist's an addict too?

MARK: It's so smart to get a job here. I'm thinking of applying for one. I'd never have to leave.

EMMA: Do you want to come to my room later?

MARK laughs.

EMMA laughs too.

MARK: You're a nightmare.

The Group doesn't work unless we all contribute. Everyone is vulnerable. If you mess around in here you jeopardise everyone's recovery. Right now you're a human hand grenade. Tell the truth about who you are or I will.

You're a mean woman.

I'm trying to change.

You're in the right place.

Although no major changes in the first year is what they say. Don't move house. Don't change jobs. Don't start new relationships.

So you're an actress?

No.

Really.

Really. I'm not an actress. I'm a seagull.

Right. Yeah. I don't know that reference.

When I first came here I thought this place would be full of actresses and singers. But it's just, you know,

normal people. You done any telly?

Can we not talk about it actually? This is supposed to be a bubble away from reality.

Right.

I agree with you.

Although you're completely wrong.

This is as real as it gets.

MARK holds out the packet to her again.

Go on. Treat yourself.

EMMA: I told you the truth. I'm a seagull.

The GROUP re-enter the room, with polystyrene cups of tea and coffee. EMMA and MARK stub out their cigarettes.

THERAPIST: Alright. Good.

The GROUP return to their seats.

We were hearing from Emma.

EMMA: I'm done.

THERAPIST: Was there nothing you wanted to add?

EMMA: Yes.

I'm very very sorry.

For undermining the process just now. This is all very new to me.

THERAPIST: Would anyone like to comment on what happened?

No? Okay. Would anyone like to practise?

EMMA: Practise what?

FOSTER: One of the ways we prepare for life in recovery is to practise certain interactions, important conversations,

EMMA: what, like, *role-play*?

THERAPIST: Would you like to practise Emma?

EMMA: God no.

MARK stands, very eager.

MARK: I will.

THERAPIST: Alright. Where are we?

MARK: In my boss's office. Couple of months from now. If all goes well.

THERAPIST: What time is it?

MARK: First thing, 7 A.M.

He points at EMMA.

You're my boss.

EMMA: What?

THERAPIST: Go on Emma.

EMMA: I have to pretend to be his boss?

THERAPIST: It's an exercise.

MARK: Chester. He's fat and bald.

EMMA: Then get *him* to do it.

EMMA points at someone in the GROUP who matches the description.

MARK: I just feel you'll be good at this sort of thing.

EMMA: I'd rather not.

THERAPIST: You don't have to look like the person.

FOSTER: Go on Emma.

She stands.

MARK: Ask me what Chester is like.

EMMA: Why?

THERAPIST: It's how we play the game.

EMMA: *(Through gritted-teeth.)* What's Chester like?

MARK: He's a fucking idiot.

FOSTER: Feelings are not facts Mark.

MARK: Has someone been smoking in here?

MARK: He lies. He deludes himself and thinks he can get away with it.

EMMA: Is that right?

THERAPIST: How about some observations that are less judgemental?

MARK: He's got twin girls in their thirties. A grandchild I think. Scottish. Glasgow maybe.

EMMA: You want me to do an accent?

MARK/THERAPIST/FOSTER: No.

MARK: He values loyalty. Hard work. He smokes cigars. He shakes your hand too hard. He makes eye contact. He goes to strip clubs. He will die in this office. I've let him down a lot and he's always looked out for me.

THERAPIST: And you're going to practise your first day back. Okay?

MARK: Yes.

THERAPIST: Emma?

EMMA: Yes.

THERAPIST: Alright, in three, two, one,

The lights suddenly change. It's a different day. MARK is sitting, another member of the GROUP, MEREDITH, is standing on the other side of the circle.

MEREDITH: hello, I'm Meredith and I'm a heroin addict.

GROUP: Hello Meredith.

The GROUP look at EMMA who remains standing in the middle of the circle, confused by the change of time.

THERAPIST: Would you like to say something Emma?

EMMA: *EMMA looks around at the GROUP, bewildered and a little scared.* No.

EMMA moves to sit down.

MEREDITH: Will you help me practise?

EMMA: No. Sorry.

FOSTER: Emma, if someone / asks you to

EMMA: I'm just feeling a bit spaced-out / and I

MEREDITH: I was just like you.

EMMA: That sounds like projection.

THERAPIST: Emma.

EMMA returns to the middle.

EMMA: Go on then, Ghost of Junky Future, let's do this.

MEREDITH: Last year I fell onto a glass table and /

EMMA smirks.

EMMA: you sound like an insurance advert.

MEREDITH: Do you know what diamorphine is?

EMMA: Sorry, what's the role play here?

MEREDITH: It's the medical name for heroin. Did you know doctors give you heroin? Because I didn't.

EMMA: This is on the NHS, yeah?

MEREDITH: Twenty years clean, being a new person, driving my husband's kids to school, making packed lunches, and the whole time it was just *waiting* for me. That feeling. It loved me.

THERAPIST: What would you like to practise Meredith?

MEREDITH: (To EMMA.) You're my stepdaughter. You're fourteen. You're very brave and very angry. You took a needle out of my arm and hid it from your dad, cleaned me up before the ambulance arrived. Put the sheets in the washing machine. I need to practise how to have a normal conversation with you now.

EMMA: What do I say?

FOSTER: Just listen.

MEREDITH nods at the THERAPIST.

THERAPIST: Three,
two,
one,

Another light change. It's evening. The weather is different. LAURA is standing. MEREDITH is seated, EMMA is still standing in the centre of the circle.

LAURA: I'm Laura. I'm an alcoholic.

GROUP: Hello Laura.

LAURA: (To EMMA.) You're my sister.

EMMA: No.

FOSTER: Emma, the exercise is / about active listening.

EMMA: Pick someone else.

SHAUN: / So disrespectful.

JODI: Just stand / there and listen.

THERAPIST: It's alright, everyone's at different stages, let's allow Emma to / find her own

LAURA: we're in your kitchen. You'll have your back to me, doing the washing up. I'll offer to dry but you'll say 'leave that'. You had a kid three years ago and I still haven't met him. This will be the first time. Assuming you'll ever see me again.

EMMA: What did you do?

THERAPIST: Emma, you don't directly / ask what

LAURA: I stole from you and I got high at your wedding.

EMMA: You sound fun.

LAURA: You started me drinking, then cut me out when you got your life together.

EMMA: Okay. 'Sorry'. Are we done?

THERAPIST/
FOSTER:

No.

LAURA:

I think about everything that's happened I just want to die. Then I have days where I think *look how far you've come*. I'm alive. It's a miracle. I'm a fucking miracle.

Some support from the GROUP.

I want to tell you that we're the same. That you're a miracle too.

Another day. LAURA is sitting and SHAUN is standing.

SHAUN:

Yes, hi, hello. I'm Shaun.

GROUP:

Hello Shaun.

EMMA is looking at LAURA, disoriented.

SHAUN:

I'm a cocaine addict. Mostly.

EMMA looks at SHAUN who speaks to her.

We've never met face-to-face, but it's important because I ruined your life.

FOSTER:

Emma, are you alright?

EMMA:

Where are we?

SHAUN:

Somewhere public. Neutral. A Starbucks or something.

FOSTER:

Emma, you don't / have to who am I?

EMMA:

You're the CEO of the company I bankrupted.

EMMA:

Right. Then you should pay for the coffees.

SHAUN:

I want you to *see* me. To be people in a room, not names on a screen. And I need to say

that everything you believe in is wrong and will kill you. I thought I was in control. Pills and powders to keep me awake. To help me exercise. Have sex. Sleep. I'd look at trading charts and see the inner workings of the universe. Patterns everywhere. Lottery numbers. Registration plates. Flocking birds. None of it's real. You're not a God. There are no patterns. No meaning. There's just chaos.

A different day. SHAUN is sitting, JODI is standing in front of her chair. EMMA stays in the centre of the circle.

JODI:

Hi, Jodi. Alcoholic.

GROUP:

Hello Jodi.

JODI:

Addict too. Prescription pills.

EMMA:

Come on then, let's practise.

JODI:

Excuse me?

EMMA:

You were going to choose me, right? Where are we? Who do you want me to be?

FOSTER:

Jodi, you don't have / to

JODI:

(*To EMMA*) you're my husband. You're impatient. You don't listen. You think you know everything.

EMMA:

Got it.

JODI:

I need to tell you we can't be together anymore. That I never really drank until I got pregnant. That I stockpile. Painkillers. Sleeping pills. Go without and then

I don't want to die. I don't think that's what I'm trying to do. But everything's gone so wrong. I want to be all brand new but look at me.

Either I lose my son, my home, my family, my life even,

or I stop drinking. To most people that sounds like an easy choice. But it's not.

JODI is fending this difficult. EMMA is too.

Sorry.

THERAPIST: You don't have to apologise. Not to us.

FOSTER: Where are we Jodi?

JODI: Not face-to-face. On the phone I think.

EMMA: Should I mime or

not on the phone Jodi. These important, immediate conversations should all happen here. With support from us.

JODI: Right.

Okay. So, we're here.

(*To EMMA.*) You're my husband and you're standing there. And

FOSTER puts his hand up.

Foster's Foster. And he's there.

And here we go.

Another day.

T: Yeah, hi everyone. T. Like the letter. Addict.

GROUP: Hello T.

T: Addicted to pretty much anything, honestly. What you got?

Quiet laughter from some of the GROUP.

Born an addict. Addict in the womb. Methadone. I'm not blaming Mum,

it's alright T, it's context.

EMMA: Don't make me your mother for God's sake.

T: I weren't gonna.

EMMA: Thank fuck.

T: You're Marcus, my care worker.

EMMA: Pick someone else. / Please.

T: I ain't seen you since I was fifteen. I stabbed you in the hand with a broken bottle.

EMMA: Let me just sit this / one out, yeah?

T: There's a lot to fill you in on. Did the 'rent' thing. Robbed some people. Climbed in windows. Cash in hand, straight on gear. I thought I was alright but I was just *surviving*. Dog without an owner. I found out recently, I sort of want to tell you because I haven't told anyone in my life outside, I found out I'm HIV positive.

FOSTER: Where are we T?

T: Playground near Thorpe Road, my first placement. I'm wearing an ironed shirt. Want it to feel official somehow. Want to show you that I'm good. That you don't have to worry, if you have been.

EMMA: What am I like?

T: You used to pull this face like you were listening to me.

I think maybe, right now I'm realising, I think that maybe you *actually were listening to me*. That you did do care what happens to me. I think maybe I don't need to say nothing. I can just

be there. Alive. Clean. Not so angry or that I'll all mean something without me having to say.

You looked at me like I'm a real person and I wouldn't still be here, wouldn't have made the effort if it weren't for that, so

I'm sorry for what I done to your hand.

(*To THERAPIST*.) Is that okay?

THERAPIST: Would you like to say something Emma?

EMMA *shakes her head*.

Is there anything else you'd like to say T?

T: Uh
yeah there is.
I made a list.

He takes out a piece of paper.

Pubs. Clubs.

All the places I can't go no more.

Gigs. Festivals.

Parks.

JODI:

T: Funnairs.

MEREDITH: Restaurants. Beaches.

JODI: Birthdays. Christmas.

T: Brick Lane. Soho. Hoxton. Camberwell.

JODI: Chemists. Asda.

SHAUN: Stamford Bridge. Terminal 5.

LAURA: New Year.

MEREDITH: Weddings.

SHAUN: Stag dos. Christmas parties.

LAURA: The Wellington. The Printworks.

T: Friday nights. / Saturday nights.

SHAUN: Saturday nights.

JODI: / Sundays.

LAURA: Sundays.

MEREDITH: Monday mornings.

JODI: Winter.

MEREDITH: Summer.

T: My boys.

JODI: My friends.

SHAUN: Colleagues.

LAURA: My sister's house.

T: If I'm around these people, if I walk in these places, that's me a dead body.

(*Laughing.*) Where are we supposed to go? What am I supposed to do?

JODI:

T: I'll be under house arrest. How am I supposed to be in my house, *sober*? Watching daytime TV, *sober*?

LAURA: Going on a date *sober*. Having sex with someone for the first time *while sober*. How does anyone do that? At what point do I tell them the *truth*? Anyone sensible would run a mile. I would. I'd run. I can't be around people like me. (*To GROUP*) No offence.

But if you haven't been through it how can you possibly understand?

THERAPIST: Do you want to say something today Emma?

EMMA: No.

LAURA: Life is just so boring. I've got to find a way to enjoy that.

Another day. MARK is standing. EMMA is still in the centre of the room.

MARK: (*To EMMA*) You're my sister. You could be any woman in my life, really. It's the same thing I need to say.

Amends. That's the hardest and most rewarding part of this whole thing. You put it out there with no hope of getting anything back. Like a prayer I guess. I mean, *Amends*. The word has got 'Amen' in it.

I used to have a temper. Still do, it's just different now.

MARK can't look at EMMA while he says the following.

You'd poured a bottle of Smirnoff down the sink. Vodka to me was like spinach to Popeye. I broke your jaw and stamped on your leg, broke your ankle.

You forgave me. Let me stay that Christmas. I stole your kid's new bike from under the tree. Flogged it Christmas Eve. My Gran. She raised me.

He's finding this hard, but finds it cathartic to speak directly to EMMA.

Cancer.

He takes a breath in and lets it out, trying to keep his composure.

I took her pain relief. I'd hear her calling out. Trying to scream. And I'd be like 'sorry Nan. There's nothing left. They must have made a mistake again.' Now she's dead so how do I amend for that?

I didn't really plan what to say. Sorry. I just felt like sharing so I stood up and started talking. I used to go days without talking to anyone. But this. Here. Now. Listening and being listened to. Being *seen*. It's saving my life I think.

He looks at EMMA.

You're this girl I went home with one time. Beautiful. Really wasted. You didn't know what planet you were on. I should have put you in a taxi. Been a gentleman. You had little scars all over her legs and arms. You were barely awake during. I didn't learn your name until after when the police said it. Joanna. When I woke up you were cold. Blue lips. I'm going to Hell for that. For not being a good person when you needed one. For being the opposite. I heard this expression in a meeting: *I was a scream in search of a mouth*. I don't know what it means exactly but that's me, before. A scream in search of a mouth. In prison they get you to make your bed every day. Like here. Anyway,

I made my bed this morning. Without having to remember to do it. I just got up and did it. I never used to do that. Take care of myself. And now I'm doing things without thinking. Good things. I don't know. It's little but I thought it was worth mentioning.

He sits down. EMMA remains the only person standing.

THERAPIST: Thank you Mark.

Emma.

Anything you'd like to share with the Group today?

EMMA looks around the GROUP. She is drained from listening to everyone's stories.

She sits down in her chair and looks at the floor.

Still nothing?

This is your fifth week with us.

FOSTER: We're only as sick as our secrets Emma.

EMMA: Fuck off Foster.

THERAPIST: Alright. Well, anything pressing for anyone before we finish?

MARK: Yes.

Emma's refusal to engage with the process is compromising everyone's recovery.

EMMA: Fuck off Mark.

MARK: I'm helping you Emma.

EMMA gestures 'fuck off.'

We recover as a Group. We need this to be a safe place to share and she's just sitting there looking at us like we're material.

EMMA: Fuck. Off.

SHAUN: Material for what?

EMMA: Shut up Mark.

THERAPIST: Alright, well, thank you Mark. Is anyone else frustrated by Emma's lack of engagement?

Everyone in the GROUP puts their hands up.

EMMA: Fuck this.

The GROUP disperses.

EMMA is in her room, angrily packing her things into a bag. MARK appears.

MARK: Knock knock.

EMMA: Fuck off.

She continues to pack.

MARK: I really am trying to help.

If you can't say it then you can't get well.

Hello. I'm Emma and I'm an alcoholic and drug addict.

EMMA: Look, I've served my time, I'm out.

MARK: Time?

EMMA: Doctor said a minimum twenty-eight days.

MARK: So you waited out the clock?

She continues to pack.

If your progress here can be jeopardised by me being a cunt then you truly are a lost cause.

She continues to pack.

Hello, I'm Emma. I'm an alcoholic and drug addict.

Hi, how you doing? I'm an alchdy and a pill head.

You're right. You're a cunt.

I might also be your best friend in the world.

You don't know anything about me.

I've seen you.

It took me a while to work it out but

I saw you in that Shakespeare where you got your hands cut off.

She stops packing.

I spent a lot of time in theatres above pubs. It's less suspicious to drink alone if you're in an audience.

EMMA: Yeah. I used to think that too.

She sits.

With a play you get instructions. Stage directions. Dialogue. Someone clothes you. Tells you where to be and when. You get to live the most intense moments of a life over

and over again, with all the boring bits left out. And you get to *practise* For weeks. And you're *applauded*. Then you get changed. Leave through stage door. Bus home. Back to real life. All the boring stuff left in. Waiting. Temping. Answering phones and serving canapés.

Nothing permanent. Can't plan. Can't get a mortgage or pay for a car. Audition comes in. Try to look right. Sit in a room surrounded by people who look just like you, all after the same part. Never hear back. Or if you get the part it'll be sitting around in rehearsal and backstage making less than you did temping. Make these friendships with people, a little family, fall in love onstage and off and then it's over and you don't see them again. You try not to take it personally when people who aren't as good as you get the parts. When you go from being the sexy ingénue to the tired mother of three.

But you keep going because sometimes, if you're really lucky, you get to be onstage and say things that are absolutely true, even if they're made-up. You get to do things that feel more real to you, more authentic, more *meaningful* than anything in your own life. You get to speak *poetry*, words you would never think to say but which become yours as you speak them.

*When he shall die
take him and cut him out in little stars,
and he will make the face of heaven so fine
that all the world will be in love with night,
and pay no worship to the garish sun.*

It feels like Lydia wants me to acknowledge some buried trauma but there isn't any. I played Antigone and every night my heart

broke about her dead brother. Then my own brother died and I didn't feel anything. I missed the funeral because I had a maitnee. I'm not avoiding talking to the Group because I've got something to hide. It's the opposite. If I'm not in character I'm not sure I'm really there. I'm already dead. I'm nothing. I want live a hundred lives and be everywhere and fight against the infinitesimal time we have on this planet.

Acting gives me the same thing I get from drugs and alcohol. Good parts are just harder to come by.

I really

I really miss my brother.

'Piece of my Heart' by Janis Joplin can be heard from another room.

Is that music?

MARK: My graduation party.

EMMA: You're leaving?

MARK: Tomorrow, first thing.

EMMA: Good.

MARK: Orange squash and karaoke.

EMMA: You're kidding.

MARK: Can I ask you something?

Is your name really Emma?

I'm leaving so you may as well tell me.

EMMA: Emma is my stage name. There was already someone with my real name.

My real name is Sarah.

MARK: Sarah.

EMMA: This isn't even my real voice. I lost my accent at drama school. I naturally talk

EMMA speaks with an accent.

like this.

Don't tell anyone.

Please.

MARK stands. He's disappointed. Angry.

What? What did I say?

MARK: Is your brother dead?

Did you even have a brother?

EMMA: Mark,

MARK: did you?

If you come to the party I won't stop you. But if you try to sing I will.

EMMA laughs. MARK isn't joking.

It may be stupid but it's important. A lot of people here are trying really hard to make themselves well. They're being honest to a group of strangers. They're taking risks. They're turning themselves inside out and not sitting on the side-lines. You don't get to do karaoke unless you're part of the Group. You want to join the party, join the party.

EMMA: Are you fucking serious?

MARK stands in the doorway.

MARK: Hello, I'm Sarah. I'm Sarah and I'm an alcoholic and drug addict. I'm a liar and I'm going to fuck this up and break all your hearts by dropping dead on a bathroom floor because I'm too fucking interested in staring into the blank void of my own personality. I'm Sarah. Possibly. Who really knows? I'm Sarah and I'm brilliant at being other people and totally useless at being myself. I'm Sarah.

He leaves. EMMA listens to the music. It gets louder.

A small stage has been constructed.

FOSTER is singing.

The song finishes, polite applause and hugs for FOSTER. General chatter as the DOCTOR taps the microphone.

DOCTOR: Thank you Foster.

EMMA watches from the edge of the room.

The song list is going around, if you'd like to get up here and sing then put your name on the sheet.

Someone hands EMMA a cup of orange squash.

Tonight we say goodbye and good luck to a valued member of the Group. Mark.

General sounds of support and pats on the back for MARK. The DOCTOR gives MARK a scroll, tied with a ribbon.

I'd like to raise a non-alcoholic toast.

The GROUP put their cups in the air. All except EMMA.

This isn't your first graduation. I hope it's your last. Please understand what I mean when I say I hope I never see you again.

FOSTER: Don't come back.

The GROUP cheer and drink their squash.

EMMA takes the microphone.

EMMA: Janis Joplin died of a heroin overdose.

Quite an ironic choice of song there Foster.

God, is this what parties are like without alcohol?

She's trying to be funny but it's not working.

No, but seriously, I want to say a few things.

DOCTOR: Emma, this isn't / the best

EMMA talks into the microphone.

EMMA: it's Sarah actually. My name is Sarah. I'm sorry I've not been honest with you about that. Or anything, really. Truth is difficult when you lie for a living. But here goes.

Hello I'm Sarah.

The GROUP give her their attention. For a moment, she doesn't know what she's going to say next.

I'm not going to say that I'm an addict and an alcoholic.

I'm not going to say I'm powerless or surrender.

Surrender isn't / defeat, it's

I won't join your tribe. I don't belong to you. I can't surround myself with people who think the same as me because that's / madness.

FOSTER:

EMMA:

MEREDITH:

This isn't / the time or place.

EMMA:

I'm sharing a *truth* with you. You all talk as if *you're* the problem but the problem isn't you, the problem is EVERYTHING ELSE. Self-medicating is the only way to survive in a world / that is *broken*.

SHAUN:

Someone pull the plug.

LAURA:

Fuck you / 'Sarah'.

LAURA leaves the room.

EMMA:

It took my brother eight hours to die. Where's the meaning in that? If there's a higher power then strike me down. / *Come ye spirits that tend on mortal thoughts.*

The DOCTOR takes the microphone.

DOCTOR:

Okay Sarah, that's enough.

T:

Let her / speak.

JODI:

This isn't about you. This is about Mark.

MARK:

It's okay Jodi, / she needs to do this.

Some of the GROUP have left the room. EMMA calls after them.

EMMA:

I'd like to believe that my problems are meaningful. But they're not. There are people dying of *thirst*. People living in war zones and here we are thinking about *ourselves*. As if we can solve everything by confronting our own defects. We're not *défective*. It's the world that's fucked. Shouldn't we *feel good* for all those who can't? Don't we owe it to them to say *fuck this, let's drink*?

MARK:

Sarah,

EMMA:

if I deny myself *choice* then what am I? I want to *live*. I want to live *vividly* and make huge, spectacular, heroic mistakes.

Some of the GROUP are vocalising their agreement with EMMA.

Because what else is there? This? Shame and boredom and orange fucking squash? Let's have a *real* drink.

One drink just to know that the world won't end.

FOSTER throws a cup of squash in EMMA's face. She continues undeterred.

Don't you remember how *good* it feels? Can't you just taste it? The weight of it all just melting away?

FOSTER exits. MARK and the THERAPIST look back towards EMMA as they leave. She continues, alone.

The whole universe in one room. Your body hot with joy and certainty and love love love love love.

Pounding music. Lights flash. EMMA is confused to find herself in a nightclub. The EMMAs dance around her. One of them puts a pill on her tongue. EMMA takes someone's drink and downs it.

YOUNG WOMAN: You're so gorgeous.

EMMA: Thanks, I'm just trying to say a few things.

YOUNG WOMAN: Amazing! I love everything you do.

EMMA: That's so nice! I'm having such a great time!

The room is moving, warping, tilting with the thumping bass. The lights of the club flash red and blue, the emergency light from an ambulance. DRESSERS dress EMMA as Marie Antoinette. The sound of a truck approaching, sounding its horn. The spotlight is the light from the truck's headlights. It glares into EMMA's eyes.

Am I driving right now?

The screech of brakes. A moment of impact. Sparks, or perhaps golden ticker tape, fall from the ceiling. EMMA is given a bouquet of flowers. A WOMAN holds out a clipboard.

WOMAN: Will you sign this?

EMMA: What I'm trying to say is what I need to say is

PARAMEDICS cut EMMA out of her clothes and dress her in a hospital gown. A NURSE takes the flowers.

NURSE: you need to get back in bed. It's dangerous for you to be walking around, do you understand?

EMMA: But I'm in the middle of something.

PARAMEDICS put an oxygen mask on EMMA's face. She fights them off.

PARAMEDIC 1: Can you hear me?

PARAMEDIC 2: We're going to have to pump your stomach. Okay?

DOCTORS and NURSES surround her, attaching monitoring apparatus. EMMA pulls off the oxygen mask.

EMMA: Thank you. Thank you so much!

MEDICAL STAFF rush around the room.

What I'm trying to say is

The music and all other sounds increase. This is all happening very fast. The EMMAs continue to dance. EMMA's nose begins to bleed heavily. The music is euphoric. Everyone except EMMA leaves the stage. She pulls off the hospital gown.

all I'm trying to say is

Lights flicker on and the music stops abruptly. Horrible artificial light, the light that ends the party, that makes skin look grey and eyes look bloodshot. She looks to where the GROUP had been standing but she is alone.

is that there's a bar right outside.

She looks around. She can see us, sitting, watching her.

We could just go for one drink. Yes?

Now. Together.

EMMA looks around.

Let's all just have a drink. Yes?

Yes?

The lights cut out. Silence.

The music begins again. Lights up on the audience.

Interval.

ACT TWO

The music from the end of ACT ONE has been playing in the auditorium and the foyer throughout the interval. It rises in volume as the lights fade, then cuts out as:

Electric lights flicker on. The reception at the rehabilitation centre. Night. The music continues playing, faintly from the radio. MARK has just turned on the lights. He is dressed in the same uniform FOSTER wore in ACT ONE. EMMA is lying across the chairs in reception. The hood of her jacket covers her face.

MARK: Can I help you?

,

MARK approaches EMMA.

Checking in or picking up?

*

Hello?

EMMA sits up. She mumbles.

EMMA: I need help.

MARK: What did you say?

She takes off her hood. She is very badly bruised.

EMMA: I said I need help.

MARK recognises her.

MARK: Holy shit.

EMMA: Will you please / help me?

MARK speaks into a handset.

MARK: Doctor to reception please, Doctor to reception.

The DOCTOR'S consultation room. Night. A desk lamp is on. The DOCTOR sits behind her desk. EMMA sits opposite. She looks very tired. She is bruised and bleeding.

MARK is with them, standing by the door with EMMA'S bags.

EMMA: You changed your hair.

My name is Sarah. My name is Sarah and I'm an alcoholic and drug addict. My life is unmanageable. I am willing and motivated to change. I need help. I surrender. I surrender. I surrender.

DOCTOR: Sarah, do you know what went wrong last time?

You tried to control everything. Every part of the process. That didn't work so you hit the self-destruct button. Addicts control everything. They fear chaos. They think they're the broken centre of the universe.

You have to have faith that things aren't going to fall apart. Trust the process Sarah. Let go.

EMMA: How?

How do I do that?

I'm not being difficult or controlling, I really want to know.

I want to try.

The DOCTOR writes on a prescription pad and puts some pills in a little paper cup.

No.

DOCTOR: Take them.

EMMA: I came here to get off drugs, not to / take more.

DOCTOR: I understand that. But

EMMA: I don't want medication. I want to feel it. I need it to be *irrevocable*.

DOCTOR: It's completely natural to want to have the most vivid experience because that's what you're used to, that's what you feel you deserve and that's what will make you feel more connected with your recovery. I get that. But going cold turkey is dangerous. It can kill you. There'll be time for guilt and punishment and connection later.

This is the easy part. Don't be stupid.

Take the pills.

The DOCTOR gives EMMA the cup of pills.

Go to your room.

EMMA:

You really do sound like my mother.

The room.

EMMA looks at the meds. She goes into the bathroom. She drops the pills into the toilet. She flushes the drain.

MARK puts EMMA'S bags on the bed.

MARK: You know the drill right? Need me to go over anything?

EMMA: I can't believe you actually got a job here.

MARK smiles.

MARK: Living the dream.

EMMA: What happened to Foster?

MARK: Oh, yeah, shit, you don't know.

Stupid bastard. His um
his dog died. Went under a motorbike. And Foster just

he took it badly.

EMMA: Relapsed?

MARK: He was really low and they changed his antidepressants. The new meds sort of knocked him off balance.

We don't know if he meant to do it.

EMMA: Dead?

Shit.

MARK: Yeah.

Oh, listen, I need you to complete the forms. Next of kin. Your Mum? And we'll need to arrange for her to visit. Both your parents.

EMMA: No.

MARK: It's important those conversations take place here and are mediated / by a

EMMA: I don't want them here. I need them to see me back home. Not as a patient.

I know you'll think that's a bad idea.

MARK: It is a bad idea. Sarah listen,

A knock on the door. PAUL enters. He looks very different to how he did in ACT ONE.

PAUL: I heard you were here.

He enters the room and walks quickly over to EMMA. She steps back and braces herself. He is going to embrace her but senses that this might be inappropriate.

Welcome back.

I'm sorry I wronged you.

It was the bleakest, darkest time in my life. But out of that darkness came a great light and the love of Jesus Christ. He came to me when I most needed him and he spoke to me and told me what I had to do.

MARK: Tell her what Jesus told you to do.

PAUL: He told me to drink. He told me to drink until I drowned. He told me to put heroin in my veins and join him in heaven. That Robert and I would be together. That it would be blissful. That he would turn the poison into love in my veins.

EMMA: Okay.

PAUL: And I listened. And I followed him. And he brought me into his church. And I felt something break. And I felt his love. And I know the poison is love and that he is testing me. And I can overcome it.

He smiles at MARK.

We can all overcome it.

He holds EMMA's and MARK's hands in his.

He sent you here. Bless you for your kindness. And bless you Lord. We are three sinners. You watch our paths. You author them. You have given us the gift of desperation.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

PAUL/MARK: Amen.

PAUL looks at EMMA.

PAUL: You have to say Amen.

EMMA: Why?

MARK: It's like pressing 'Send' on an email.

EMMA: Amen.

PAUL grins at them, then leaves.

So I see Paul's back.

MARK: Yeah.

They smile at each other. They become aware of being alone together.

Right, then. I'll leave you / to it.

Mark,

you're going to be alright. We'll be / monitoring you.

My first acting job was a corporate / for this London-based

I'm not supposed to be alone with you in here. The rules are / pretty strict about

I feel like I owe you. Like I owe you

I don't know,

a true story.

MARK: What's a 'corporate'?

EMMA: Like a tradeshow thing. Not a play / or a right.

EMMA: Advertising, basically. A hall full of little stages. Repeating a terrible monologue to a handful of bored businessmen.

She delivers a bit of the speech, mockingly.

Why bring the past into the present? We stand resolutely in the present, arms wide, looking towards the future!

MARK laughs with her.

I am now!
You are now!
We are now!

What a thing it is to be alive! What

She watches as, unseen by MARK, an identically-dressed EMMA enters slowly, places a chair down and stands behind it.

MARK: are you okay?

EMMA tries to ignore the EMMA.

EMMA: I had to stand in a spotlight and make this horrible, generic speech sound *meaningful*.

Another EMMA enters the room, places a chair down and stands behind it. There is an ominous rumble, gradually increasing in volume and pitch.

I got a hundred pounds for the day and thought I'd hit the big time. Mark, my brother, helped me learn my lines.

Another EMMA. EMMA is trying to concentrate. She grips the edge of the bed.

MARK: Sarah,

EMMA: *in a world that sets limits, that says you shouldn't try, that says you'll fail...in a world that says 'no', 'Quixotic' says 'yes'.*

Another EMMA. Gradually, a circle of chairs is being formed.

MARK: Quixotic?

EMMA: Like Don Quixote.

MARK: What, Road Runner?

EMMA: That's Wile E Coyote.

MARK: That's the company name?

EMMA: It means romantic, chivalrous. Visionary. Are all your references cartoons? Seriously, read a book.

Another EMMA.

At 'Quixotic' we don't believe in boundaries or limitations.

We believe in the pioneer.

We believe in
in the

The room continues to fill with EMMAs.

MARK: Sarah,

EMMA: sometimes, when you audition, they ask for a classical or a modern speech. And I'd use it as my modern.

EMMA winces. Simultaneously, all the EMMAs stop moving and wince in pain.

My thinking was that if I could make this bullshit marketing speak work, if I can make this list of abstract nouns sound *meaningful* then they'd see how good an actress I am.

EMMA is struggling through, clearly in pain. She is surrounded by a circle of EMMAs.

MARK: Sarah, you don't / owe me

EMMA: Mark learned it before I did. I had to repeat and repeat and repeat. He'd quote it to me. I have a text from him on my phone saying: *what a thing it is to be alive. What a thing it is to swim in the sea. To look up at the*

She winces again. All the EMMAs wince then, one-by-one, start to fall down.

and it's gone. He's gone. I can't get remember it. I can't get through it on my own. I can't. I can't. I can't.

The low, rumbling sound is starting to shake the walls. EMMA cries out in pain and collapses.

MARK: Sarah,

did you take your medication?

One by one, the EMMAs begin to stand.

Sarah can you hear me?

The lights are changing. MARK's voice sounds increasingly like it's under water. He moves to where she just was and addresses one of the other EMMAs, who has collapsed and has lost consciousness.

Sarah?

Sarah?

EMMA watches MARK tend to the unconscious EMMA, she has stepped outside herself.

Look at me.

Sarah?

He leaves the room.

EMMA walks around, looking at the other EMMAs. She is no longer in the bedroom. The light is eerie, unreal. The sound has ceased. Her movements around the room echo as if in a dream.

She sees that there is an unoccupied chair. She crosses the room and stands in front of it, completing the circle.

A moment. Then the EMMAs leave.

The sun rises. EMMA looks around. She's in the Group Therapy room before anyone else. MARK enters.

MARK: You're early.

EMMA: I'd like to practise.

The GROUP enter the room and take their seats. EMMA speaks to the THERAPIST.

I'd like to practise.

THERAPIST: Go ahead Sarah.

EMMA stands in the centre, looking around the room at the members of the GROUP.

EMMA: You're my father.

She takes PAUL's hands, stands him and leads him across the room.

You're hovering in the doorway. Which is sort of

here.

She places him.

THERAPIST: Where are we?

EMMA: This is my old bedroom at my parent's house. It's like a museum to my childhood self. The bed is here.

She pulls some chairs in a line to make the bed.

The door is there. There's all this stuff piled up everywhere because they use it for storage now.

She looks at MARK.

You're my brother.

THERAPIST: Sarah, we're practising for the future, not re-enacting

EMMA: you're my brother. You're Mark. You died almost two years ago. Your bedroom is next to this one. When we were kids you used to hear me crying sometimes and you'd come in and we'd sit on the bed in silence and you'd hold my hand until I stopped and then you'd go back to your room and I'll always love you for that even though you're gone, even when I'm gone those moments were, are, will be *meaningful*.

All I need you to do is sit with me and hold my hand without speaking okay?

MARK nods and takes her hand.

She looks at the THERAPIST.

You're my mother.

THERAPIST: I don't participate in / the

EMMA: you won't have to do much. Trust me.

THERAPIST: Sarah, really, it doesn't

The GROUP encourage her, cheerfully.

okay fine but

EMMA: you're standing over there.

EMMA points and the THERAPIST moves to the spot.

I've called you in. You hate being in here. You want to be watching your programmes.

PAUL: What am I like?

EMMA:

You're uncomfortable being in here. You hate any kind of confrontation or emotional display. You feel you never really got to know me because I had different interests to you and that made no sense. You're insecure about your intellect because you know that your wife and daughter are cleverer than you are. You loved Mark because you understood him. You've been unable to help me, and you're angry that what you hoped my life would be like is not at all what it has been. You've been downstairs using the kitchen table for your genealogy charts. You've been doing this for at least ten years. We've not eaten at that table for a decade. You don't want to talk about my problems and you don't want to talk about Mark's death.

She looks at the THERAPIST.

Mum, you're frustrated with me. You had hardship in your life and you never abused drugs and alcohol. You can drink wine and re-cork the bottle for another day. You don't know why I can't do the same. Your father died when you were five, your mother when you were eleven. You were moved around a lot and you triumphed in spite of everything. You have a doctorate. Lots of framed qualifications. You created an international fund to provide support for children in times of crisis. You used to play piano but you haven't for years. You think acting is a fun hobby and isn't worthy of your child. You've never approved of a single boyfriend or career choice and you've never said anything to stop me.

I've just got home.

She and MARK sit on the bed.

Okay. Yeah, okay.

THERAPIST:

Three,

two,

one,

,

EMMA:

Mum, Dad, this shouldn't take long. I want to talk you through what has been happening with me, to let you know where I'm at now and to apologise for my behaviour.

But I don't want to do it in that order. I want to apologise first.

She looks at the THERAPIST to see if that's okay. The THERAPIST nods.

I've been a pretty terrible daughter over the years.

I've been unhappy and self-destructive. I've self-medicated with drugs and alcohol which has made me more insular and self-absorbed. I've made some terrible decisions and I've taken you for granted. I've broken promises. Many many times. I've stolen from you. I've said some

I've said things that I regret and that I wish I could take back. Someone would've interrupted me by now.

THERAPIST:

To say what?

EMMA:

To disagree with me. To get defensive or

THERAPIST:

don't pre-empt. You may be surprised how people react when you give them absolute honesty. They may welcome it.

EMMA:

I'd be really fucking surprised.

I wasn't there for either of you when Mark when Mark died. I disappeared and it must have put even more stress on you and that was selfish and unthinking. I'm not asking for forgiveness. I'm acknowledging that I was wrong and that I wish I could take it back. I miss him.

She's finding it very difficult, but cathartic.

I miss him.

I know you do too.

,

I know that over the years I've scared you. Disappointed you.

Wow this is really hard.

PAUL wants to go to her but doesn't. MARK takes EMMA's hand in both of his and rests his forehead on her shoulder.

,

I want you to know that I've worked really hard at getting better. And I'm starting to find peace. And it's an on-going process. Because I've scared myself. I've disappointed myself. And the hardest part is taking myself seriously enough to do it. Feeling that my happiness is worth fighting for. My life. And I'm doing it for you two as much as anything. And for Mark.

And it should have been me. Not him. I know that. Everyone's been waiting for it. It's not fair. And I can't forgive myself / for it.

PAUL: It's not your fault.

EMMA: I'm not

PAUL: Mark's death was not your fault.

EMMA: It's not fair.

PAUL: We love you. We always love you. We'll do anything you need.

EMMA is trying not to cry.

EMMA: Thank you.

He'd never say that.

But thank you.

PAUL: It's alright darling.

EMMA: He wouldn't say that either.

PAUL: Oh.

EMMA: He'd say 'uh huh. Well'.

Like that.

PAUL: Uh huh.

Well.

THERAPIST: And what would your mother say?

EMMA: Who the fuck knows?

THERAPIST: How do you feel?

EMMA looks at the THERAPIST.

EMMA: Who are you being?

THERAPIST: Me.

EMMA: I feel like

I feel like I spent my life surrounded by people trying to make me miserable. And I'm slowly realising that every last one of them was probably just trying to help me. They probably

just loved me.

THERAPIST: You're doing great Sarah.

EMMA looks up at the THERAPIST.

EMMA: Thank you.

The GROUP take their chairs away.

The room.

MARK is there, holding a piece of paper.

At 'Quixotic' we don't believe in boundaries or limitations.

We believe in the pioneer.

We believe in the

,

yes?

MARK: Visionary.

EMMA: Visionary visionary visionary.

However impulsive or impractical.

We say 'yes' We say that life is

MARK: for the living.

EMMA: Don't help me.

MARK hands the paper back to EMMA. He knows it word-for-word.

MARK: We look at the world with joy.

With love.

We look at the world with wonder.

,

EMMA: It's so totally meaningless isn't it?

MARK: Not to me. I'm a sucker for a vague slogan. Adverts. Politicians. AA.

Wage a war on an abstract noun, I'm right behind you.

And not to be all Dalai Lama or John Lennon about it but that's what it's all about. *Love*. It sounds dumb,

EMMA: yep.

MARK: But it's true. You said it yourself. The hardest thing is to love yourself. To be kind to yourself. After everything.

EMMA: *Quixotic Limited*. They're probably the only people who'll hire me now.

MARK: What? Go back to doing tradeshows?

EMMA: Why do you think I'm trying to learn it?

Do you have any cigarettes?

MARK: You can't smoke in here.

EMMA laughs.

EMMA: Right.

Wait, are you serious?

MARK: It's a medical building so

EMMA: right, of course, yeah.

MARK: You had it yet?

EMMA: What?

MARK: Your spiritual awakening.

You can't leave without having your spiritual awakening. It's, like, in the rules.

EMMA: I don't think that'll happen for me.

MARK: Don't be so sure. If God's going to appear anywhere it'll be here. He may be coming

for someone else, but I'll get in on it. One day I'll be mopping up after a messy stomach pump and there he'll be. Smiling down. And he'll say: 'well done, that's it. Go out into the world and don't harm yourself or others. Go visit Sarah. She's doing a play above a pub.'

EMMA: God watches my plays?

MARK: He prefers the more fringy stuff.

EMMA: I thought you were an atheist.

MARK: I'm open to possibilities. I'd welcome fucking Poseidon if that's who shows up.

They smile.

EMMA: I already have my higher power. And she very much exists.

MARK: Don't bank your recovery on other people.

EMMA: Last time I spoke to her she was clearing out my flat. Putting everything bad into a big plastic box. All the bottles and bags of powder. Pots of pills. My stash of weed. All piled in this box.

MARK: Sounds like a great box.

EMMA: I can't stop thinking about it.

MARK: I've got nobody to do that for me.

It's wonderful.

EMMA: She'd be the one getting the phone call. The police at the door. 3 A.M.

MARK: That'd be my ex-wife.

EMMA: Do they wake you up do you think or do they wait for morning?

Did Foster have anyone?

MARK: Just his dog I think.

And us.

MARK and EMMA look at each other.

EMMA: I need to hear her say that she's proud of me. I know that sounds stupid.

MARK: It is stupid.

EMMA: Or not even proud. I just want her to see that I've changed. If I hear it from *her*

then I think I'll be able to put things to an end. surrendered.

EMMA: I don't know. Maybe.

No.

I came to a realisation. Paul said it once.

This is all bullshit. None of it's real.

When I'm on stage I know it's all pretend. I'm not the person I'm pretending to be. Everyone else knows that. But somehow it doesn't matter. We all just sort of

decide

that it's real.

It's the same with the programme. With everything, really. Language. Politics. Money. Religion. Law. At some level we all know it's all bullshit. A magical group delusion.

MARK: Right, yeah, no you've lost me.

EMMA: While E Coyote only ever falls when he looks down. He runs off the cliff and just keeps running in mid-air. It's only when he looks down and sees that he should be falling that gravity kicks in.

That's my spiritual awakening.

Don't look down.

MARK: Don't look down.

EMMA: I'm not ready.

MARK: None of us are.

EMMA: But you get to stay.

MARK: Maybe. Funding's always a bit

EMMA: yeah, of course.

MARK moves to leave but then stops in the doorway.

MARK: I hope he does show up tonight.

EMMA: Who?

MARK: God.

He flicks the light off. EMMA is lit by the bedside lamp and the streetlight coming through the window.

Slowly, EMMA looks up at the ceiling.

She kneels.

EMMA: Come on then.

Show yourself.

I'm ready if you are.

Silence. Stillness.

Yeah. That's what I thought.

Morning breaks. The Group Therapy room. EMMA begins to stack the chairs.

DOCTOR: Here.

The DOCTOR hands EMMA a book.

EMMA: What's this?

DOCTOR: Foucault.

I made a few corrections.

It's all very interesting but I'm not sure if it's particularly applicable to life.

And I watched The Exorcist.

'Your mother sucks cocks in hell!'

EMMA laughs. She opens the book and finds an envelope inside.

EMMA: What's this?

DOCTOR: A letter from me saying that, in my opinion, you're not a risk to future employers.

EMMA: What am I going to do?
 DOCTOR: Go to meetings. Ninety meetings / in ninety
 in ninety days. I will. But I mean

EMMA looks at the paper.

what am I supposed to do now? With my
 life. How do I go back to normal? How do I
 walk out on stage after this? If I ever go into
 an audition again it'll be like climbing fucking
 Everest.

I thought I might train as a therapist. Like
 Lydia. Then I thought: maybe I just want to
play the part of a therapist.

First day of rehearsal is always the same. You
 sit in a circle of chairs, just like in Group. You
 introduce yourself one by one, just like in
 Group. You say, *hello I'm whoever and I'm playing
 the role of whatever*. There's something about
 that situation I can't quite

I just can't separate the two circles of chairs. If
 you see what I mean.

DOCTOR: Don't overthink it.

EMMA: I want to continue to be honest.

DOCTOR: Do I still look like your mother?

EMMA smiles at the DOCTOR. She smiles back.

Happy graduation.

EMMA: Thank you.

*The GROUP assemble in the room. The DOCTOR is now
 the THERAPIST.*

THERAPIST: Today we say goodbye to someone who has
 been a challenging, inspiring and important
 member of the Group.

Sarah, we're proud of you. I'm proud of you.
 Of the work you've done here. I want you to
 be proud of that work too and to understand
 that it doesn't stop here. But you only have to
 do one day at a time.

General sounds of support from the GROUP.

We wish you success, happiness and peace.
 And please understand what I mean when I
 say I hope I never see you again.

PAUL: Don't come back.

Don't come back

EMMA smiles and embraces PAUL.

*The GROUP gathers around EMMA and begin to chant. She
 shakes hands with some and embraces others.*

GROUP: Don't come back.

Don't come back.

Don't come back.

Don't come back.

Don't come back.

EMMA is handed her coat which she puts on.

*EMMA picks up her bags. She stands in the doorway and
 looks back at the GROUP.*

She shakes hands with the THERAPIST.

MARK hugs her as the GROUP disperses. He gives her a scroll, tied with a ribbon.

MARK: Don't look down.

He leaves.

EMMA stands alone with in the doorway of her childhood room. It has been preserved as she left it as a teenager. Different times and tastes collide. There are fluffy toys and teddy bears, piles of books and stacks of cassette tapes. There is a Nirvana poster. The room has also been used for storage, it is cluttered with boxes of photographs, books etc.

There is something more 'real' about this room, more detail somehow.

Her DAD enters, carrying her bags.

DAD: This it?

EMMA: Sorry?

DAD: Everything? This everything?

EMMA: Yes.

DAD: Travelling light.

EMMA: Yes.

DAD: Uh huh. Well.

EMMA: Would you get Mum?

DAD: Get her?

EMMA: Would you bring her up here?

DAD: Now?

EMMA: Yes.

DAD: Um,

uh huh, okay.

He smiles at her.

Glad you're home.

She smiles back, sadly. He leaves.

EMMA looks around. She picks up a copy of today's newspaper from her pillow. She looks at the front page.

She mutters to herself.

EMMA: In a world that sets limits, that says you shouldn't try, that you will fail, in a world that says 'no', 'Quixotic' says 'yes'.

She puts down the paper. She picks up a cuddly toy.

Her DAD returns.

DAD: She's just coming.

EMMA: I can't believe you kept all these things Dad.

She looks at the toy in her hands.

I probably won't have kids now. Probably for the best. With Mark dead that's the end of the line isn't it? That story's done. You'll be able to finish your family tree.

The end of history.

DAD: Uh huh.

EMMA: Dad, shit, sorry that I didn't mean it to sound like

EMMA'S MUM enters. It is the same actress who played the DOCTOR/THERAPIST. Her DAD continues to loiter by the door.

MUM: you wanted me?

EMMA: Yes. Right. Okay.
So,

EMMA sits down on the bed.

this shouldn't take long. I want to I wanted to talk with you both and

MUM: here it comes.

EMMA: It's not please, I just want the chance

MUM: don't say we haven't given you / chances.

EMMA: I'm not I'm

MUM: you steal from us, you go missing, we thought / you were dead.

DAD: Let her speak.

MUM: I will not be made the villain in this.

EMMA: I know I've been a pretty terrible daughter / over the years.

MUM: Have we ever said that? I've never said that.

EMMA: Will you please this is hard for I'd just

I've been unhappy and self-destructive. I've self-medicated with drugs and alcohol which has made me more insular and self-absorbed. I've made some terrible decisions and I've taken you for granted. I've said things that I regret and that I wish I could take back. I wasn't there for either of you when

I wasn't there when Mark died.

I was wrong and I wish I could take it back.

I want you to know I've worked really hard at getting better. And I'm starting to find peace. And it's an on-going process. Because I've scared myself. I've disappointed myself. And I'm doing it for you two as much as anything. And for Mark. And it should have been / me.

DAD: Alright enough.

He speaks calmly.

Look, whatever you're into now,

all of this is just words. You're saying you'll be less selfish and then talking about yourself even more. I can't listen to it. The number of times we've tried to help you. Tried to save your life. The energy it's taken. The sleeplessness. The money. Every time the phone rang or the doorbell we thought it would be the police. We neglected Mark. He should still be here. You're right. It should be you. It should be you that we buried. At least we'd know you were out of trouble.

We grieved for you long ago. So, thank you for your little speech but it doesn't mean anything. We've heard it before. The damage in this family is not going to be fixed by a pretty story.

Get a job. Keep the job. Call us once in a while. Just to chat. Not to borrow money or to ask for help. Because you're interested in us. Get out of yourself.

I'm sorry. There's a lot been unsaid for a long time.

EMMA: I love you Dad. Thank you.

DAD: I love you too darling. It's just really hard.

EMMA: I'm going to try to make it easier.

DAD: I've got

I'm in the middle of something.

I'll order us a take out later yes?

EMMA: Yeah.

DAD: Uh huh. Right.

Well.

He leaves.

EMMA clenches her fist, as if squeezing an invisible hand.

She looks at her MUM.

EMMA: He's right.

MUM: Yes, he is.

You staying the night?

EMMA: I was thinking I'd stay for a while actually.

MUM: It's your home.

EMMA feels a sudden wave of emotion and tries hard not to show it.

EMMA: I've worked really hard Mum.

I've taken myself apart and put myself back together.

If you could see what I went through

I think you'd be proud of me.

EMMA doesn't get the response she wants. She smiles to herself, sadly and takes a deep breath in and out.

They tell you, in rehab they tell you: avoid people who make you want to relapse. Places you associate with using and objects that might be a trigger.

People, places and things. That's basically, you know,

everything.

As long as you steer clear of people, places and things you'll be fine.

Some places, some people, are more dangerous to be around than others.

MUM: And you want to hibernate here until you feel safe to face them.

EMMA: No, no that's not

EMMA looks to her MUM.

this is the place Mum. This is the most dangerous place I can be. This town. This house. All this stuff.

You.

You are the biggest threat to me relapsing.

If I can be with you, here, at a time when I'm defenceless and vulnerable, if I can get through this then I'll know, *definitely*, that I'm okay. Forever.

Are you going to say something Mum?

Dad obviously needed to.

I'm saying some pretty horrible things.

Why are you smiling?

MUM: Who are you being?

Her MUM is unemotional, matter-of-fact.

EMMA: What?

MUM: I know you sweetheart. You think I can't see when you're lying.

EMMA: I'm not lying.

MUM: That time I caught you smoking and you sat right there and / swore blind, tears rolling down your cheeks

EMMA: I was a kid! I was just a *kid* Mum.

MUM: And you only smoked to pretend you were interesting. Because, unlike Mark, you never had a personality of your own.

EMMA: Don't say that.

MUM: You think you're this chameleon, living hundreds of lives but you're always just you. Full of certainty when you discover something but you never see it through and this will be no different.

EMMA: That's not true.

MUM: We've still got your violin somewhere.

EMMA: I can't believe / you'd still hold that against me.

MUM: Insisted on having a good one and then quit lessons within half a year. Tennis gear the same. Pets. Moved school three times. Quit university four times. Evening classes. Fad diets. Exercise crazes. Just once I would like to have seen you graduate.

EMMA: I did.

MUM: You'll just have to excuse us if we / see this latest lifestyle decision within the context of a thousand abandoned projects.

EMMA: I do excuse you. Lifestyle decision?

MUM: It doesn't suit you darling. The self-righteous, pleasure-denying role. It's boring. If you want honesty, real, no bullshit, gloves-off

truthfulness sweetheart, drink and drugs were the only things that made you any fun.

And now you want closure or whatever they call it in this new cult of yours, you want to say sorry and for that to heal wounds and make us a happy clappy family and that's just not going to happen. The family is broken. Forever.

EMMA: I'm trying my best Mum.

I really am.

MUM: Okay good. Just don't expect a fucking trophy for trying your best. That's the bare minimum you should be doing.

EMMA takes her MUM's hand. Her MUM doesn't resist.

Approaching forty and back living with your parents.

EMMA: I'm not approaching forty.

MUM: Sweetheart, the one person you can't fool about your age is the person whose body you came out of.

EMMA smiles. Her MUM lets go of EMMA's hand, and walks to the door.

I changed the bedding.

EMMA: Thank you.

MUM: Towels are in / the

EMMA: yeah.

MUM: I brought the things over from your flat.

EMMA: What things?

MUM: I picked up the things you asked me to.

Boxed it all up and brought it here.

EMMA: It's here?

MUM: Yes.

EMMA: Where?

MUM: Under the bed.

EMMA reaches under the bed and pulls out a large clear plastic box full of pills, bottles of alcohol and various drug paraphernalia.

EMMA: Holy shit.

MUM: Look what you were doing to yourself.

EMMA pushes the box across the floor away from her. She stares at it.

EMMA: Why would you bring this here?

MUM: What was I supposed to do? Every time I've tried to intervene you've punished me. You broke my fingers when I flushed those pills.

EMMA: I broke your fingers?

MUM: Why do you think I don't play piano anymore?

EMMA: Mum,

MUM: you want to get rid of this stuff go ahead. If you want to use it then take it and go. But

don't come back to us if you do. We've had too much Lucy.

Her MUM stops in the doorway and turns back.

It's a new Chinese take-away that's opened on the corner. He's been waiting for a reason to try it out.

EMMA: Mum, please don't leave me with

Her MUM leaves.

EMMA walks to the door.

She closes the door.

She leans against it and looks at the box on the floor.

She rubs her face, runs her fingers through her hair.

She walks back to the box and takes the lid off it. She is breathing heavily.

She takes her phone out and calls a number.

hi yes hello

I was given your number by

yes hi, that's me.

I was hoping there might be a meeting this evening and maybe

great, yes I've got a pen.

She finds a pen, a fluffy-ended child's pen, and writes an address on her hand.

Thank you. Thank you.

She hangs up the phone. She tries to steady her breath.

She puts a jacket on. She heads for the door but stops.

She slowly turns back to the box.

She mutters her lines to herself.

Why choose 'Quixotic'?

In a world that sets limits, that says you shouldn't try, that you will fail, in a world that says 'no', we say 'yes'.

We say 'yes'.

She approaches the box.

We don't believe in 'no'.

'No'. 'No'. 'No'. 'No'.

EMMA kneels down by the box.

Why choose 'Quixotic'?

why why why why?

She tries not to cry. She stretches her face and tries to grin.

In a world that sets limits, that says you shouldn't try, that you will fail, in a world that says 'no', we say 'yes'.

We don't believe in 'no'.

She speaks with more volume, more confidence.

We don't believe in boundaries or limitations.

We believe in the pioneer.
 We believe in the visionary.
 However impulsive or impractical.

We say 'yes'.

Gradually, the lights in the room are falling and a spotlight is emerging on EMMA.

We say that life is for the living.
 We look at the world with joy.

With love.

We look at the world with wonder.

EMMA gradually speaks more naturally, more sincerely. She really means what she says.

Why bring the past into the present?
 We stand resolutely in the present,
 arms wide,
 looking towards the future.

I am now.

You are now.

We are now.

EMMA stands up into the tight, bright spotlight. The rest of the stage is in darkness. She is compelling, moving, in her element.

What a thing it is to be alive.

What a thing it is to swim in the sea.

To look up at the wide clear sky.

To feel the sun on your skin.

To climb a mountain or just a flight of stairs.

To eat a donut.

To love and be loved.

What a thing it is.

I am now.

You are now.

We are now.

This is the beginning.

She squints into the darkness.

Was that okay? I could go again on that if you'd like. I can do better.

Hello?

A man's VOICE from the darkness, amplified.

VOICE: Thank you.

EMMA: Right.

She looks around. She is no longer in her bedroom, she is now standing on a bare stage. At the back of the stage is a queue of ACTRESSES, all the same age and demographic as EMMA. Some of them are stretching their facial muscles or shaking their limbs loose, some of them hold pieces of paper and silently practise their lines.

Yes, okay.

She smiles into the darkness.

Thank you for seeing me.

EMMA leaves the spotlight, passing the ACTRESSES as she goes. She leaves the stage.

Another ACTRESS, perhaps the UNDERSTUDY, enters the spotlight. She steadies her breath and begins.

ACTRESS: Why

Blackout, cutting the ACTRESS off mid-sentence.

END