

# Port

Written by [Simon Stephens](#)

## Characters

- RACHEAL KEATS *eleven-twenty-four*
- BILLY KEATS *six-ten/nineteen*
- DANNY MILLER *fifteen/twenty-four*
- CHRISTINE KEATS *twenty-nine*
- ANNE DICKINSON *seventy-four*
- JONATHAN KEATS *thirty-four*
- KEVIN BRAKE *twenty-eight*
- LUCY MOORE *fifteen*
- CHRIS BENNETT *fifteen*
- RONALD ABBEY *fifty*
- JAKE MORAN *forty-eight*
- MAN IN HOME *seventy-three*

## Scene 1

*1988. A parked Vauxhall Cavalier in the carpark of the flats on Lancashire Hill in Stockport. We should see the exposed interior of the car towards one edge of the stage. A real Vauxhall Cavalier should be used. The top of the car should be sawn off.*

*Isolating light on the car.*

**Racheal Keats**, eleven years old, sits in the passenger seat eating a bar of Dairy Milk. **Billy Keats**, six years old, sits slumped on the back seat. She wears a blue Adidas tracksuit top over her school uniform. He wears a huge battered Kappa coat over his. **Christine Keats**, their mother, twenty-nine years old, sits in the driver's seat.

*It is midnight.*

**Christine Keats** stares fixedly up at the fifth-floor flat where she lives with her children. Her husband, their father, **Jonathan**, is in there.

*The children are lively, excited. Throughout the scene the children's activity should be uninhibited, exploratory.*

**Christine** is desperately trying to ignore her children. This is her only means of tolerating their excitement.

**Billy** kicks the back of **Racheal's** seat repeatedly. We should see his kicking. Maybe he sits raised up on the back seat. Maybe he even stands.

**Racheal** Billy.

*He continues.*

Billy, stop it.

*He doesn't.*

Billy, stop kicking me. God!

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** Mum. Tell him.

**Billy** I'm not doing anything.

**Racheal** Mum, will you tell him? He keeps kicking the back of my chair.

**Billy** I don't. It's her.

**Christine** (*without turning*) Billy, stop it. Now.

**Billy** God. I'm not doing anything. Always sticking up for her. She's always lying about me. Always saying I'm doing stuff when I'm never. 'S so not fair.

**Christine** (*with a glare*) Billy, one more word. I'm warning yer.

**Billy** *slumps back in his chair. Gives her the finger behind her back.*

*Pause.*

*He kneels up on the back seat and looks out of the side and back windows of the car.*

**Billy** Mum.

**Christine** What?

**Billy** Mum.

**Christine** What?

**Billy** Mum.

**Christine** What, Billy, for fuck's sake?

**Billy** When are we going to Disney World Florida?

**Christine** Oh, Jesus fucking Christ, Billy, would you shut your gob for one second, would yer? For fuck's sake.

*He slumps back on the car seat. Huffs. Glares daggers into her back. Brief time.*

**Racheal** Mum. You know what Billy told me? You know what he told me? He told me. He goes. You know that path up our school, Mum?

**Billy** (*sitting up, urgent*) I never.

*He pushes his head between the front two seats.*

**Racheal** (*grinning*) He goes, if you walk off that path. If you go off the side of it and hop up and down three times —

**Billy** (*trying to thump her*) I never. Liar.

**Racheal** (*chuckling, ignoring the thumps*) You did, Billy. Stop lying. He goes, if you do that, he goes, you go to a magic place.

**Billy** (*slumping back, pissed off*) I never said that.

**Racheal** (*with a big bite of chocolate*) He's a dickhead.

**Billy** I hate you.

**Racheal** Int he, Mum? Int he a dickhead?

**Billy** Shut it.

**Racheal** No.

**Billy** I'm gonna kill you.

**Racheal** (*with delighted mock horror*) Mum. You hear that? You hear what he says? Mum heard that! You're going to go to Borstal now.

**Billy** Fuck off.

**Christine** Billy, shut it.

**Christine** *turns in her seat and smacks Billy in the face. Billy sits back in his chair. Holds his head down. Tries not to sob. Christine glares back at the window. Racheal sits still.*

**Racheal** He should be asleep. Shouldn't he? Mum? Shouldn't he be asleep? Tell him, Mum. Tell him to go to sleep. He'll be knackered tomorrow. Falling asleep on his desk and that. Dribbling on his books. Proper gypsy. Should see him. I've seen him in assembly. Snoring. He's a right tramp.

**Billy** (*through his teeth*) Am not.

**Racheal** I saw Mrs Greenside with him. She was dead mad. Should have seen her. She gets him. Right in front of everyone. In her class and that. In juniors. And she gets him to the front of the class and she pulls his pants down and smacks his bum. Bare and everything. He was crying. Weren't yer?

**Billy** (*after a pause*) No.

**Racheal** (*finishing the chocolate*) You were, Billy. I saw you.

**Billy** I weren't, right?

**Christine** (*still staring up at window*) Go to sleep, Billy.

*Pause. Billy lies down on back seat.*

**Billy** Can't.

**Christine** You're not trying. Close yer eyes.

*Some time. Billy is still.*

**Racheal** (*quietly*) Mum.

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** Why's our Billy always getting run over?

**Christine** I don't know.

**Racheal** Three times now, int it? Normal people don't get run over three times. Do they, Mum?

**Christine** I don't know.

**Racheal** I hate Mrs Greenside. She's got really bony wrists.

*Silence.*

He's going to sleep now. (*Singing, gently.*) 'Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top. When the wind the wind blows the cradle will rock —'

**Christine** Shut it, Rachel. Fucking going on.

**Racheal** I were only singing.

**Christine** Well, don't.

**Racheal** I was trying to get him to sleep.

**Christine** Well, leave him.

*Pause.*

**Racheal** (*with a big shrug*) Mum.

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** You remember when I got my hand caught int' mangle?

**Christine** You what?

**Racheal** Did that hurt?

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** Did it hurt when I got my hand caught int' mangle and that?

**Christine** I don't know, do I? It were your hand.

**Racheal** I don't remember it. Probably blanked it out of my memory, an't I? What's the first thing you can remember?

**Christine** (*still watching window*) I don't know.

**Racheal** You know what first thing I can remember is?

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** I remember finding that dead sparrow. In our yard. You remember that? When I did that. Picked it up. Put it in a paper tissue. You remember? Bring it to you? All the bones and that. Dead tiny. You went crackers.

*No response. Some time.*

*She thinks aloud, counting aloud, proving something that she learned at school to her mum.*

Next it'll be next year. And then it'll be two years and that'll be the new decade and that'll be the nineties and then it'll be ten years and that'll be the new century. We did that at school.

*No response. Christine watches the window. Some time.*

I'll be twenty-three. God!

*No response. Some time.*

You know summit?

**Christine** *(still at window, but conceding gently)*What?

**Racheal** Sometimes, when you fart, it smells quite nice. You ever notice that? Yer own farts and that.

**Christine** *(turns to her)*Racheal!

**Racheal** It's true.

**Christine** You're disgusting.

**Racheal** You know summit else I think?

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** I think this is nice.

*Beat. Christine looks at her. Then back at the window.*

**Christine** It's not.

**Racheal** I think it is. I think it's all right. I do. I like it. You know what it's like? You remember when I was little. In the morning sometimes. You used to get us. Put us in your bed. To keep you warm. Always said I was like your hot-water bottle. Didn't you? You remember that? Mum? Do you? It's like that, I reckon.

**Christine** *looks at her briefly. Lights a cigarette and then looks back up at the window. Racheal opens another bar of Dairy Milk.*

**Racheal** Shouldn't smoke. Not with our Billy asleep and that. Wind window down.

**Christine** It's freezing.

*Beat.*

**Racheal** You know when I grow up?

**Christine** Yeah.

**Racheal** You know who I want to be like?

**Christine** Who?

**Racheal** Leanne's mum.

**Christine** *(turning to her)*You what?!?

**Racheal** I think she's beautiful, I do.

**Christine** You do not.

**Racheal** I do. I think she's dead glamorous and everything.

**Christine** Racheal, she's a fucking whore.

**Racheal** So! That's what I want to be then!

**Christine** Racheal!

**Racheal** I do! I think she's beautiful. You should dress like her, Mum. You should. All the make-up and that.

**Christine** (*away again*) You don't know what you're talking about.

*Pause. Racheal scans the windows of the car. Kneels up in her passenger seat to look around her. Perhaps sits on the top of the passenger door.*

**Racheal** I like it here.

**Christine** Do you?

**Racheal** I like the park. Me and Leanne go up park sometimes. Did you know that?

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** We do.

**Christine** You should watch it.

**Racheal** Come and look for men.

**Christine** For what?

**Racheal** Men come up park sometimes. Get their willies out. We look for 'em. Scream at 'em. Peg it. It's dead funny.

**Christine** *laughs despite herself.* **Racheal** *puffs up with pride.*

**Christine** You wanna watch that. All the perverts and that. Racheal, honestly.

**Racheal** Ronald Abbey. He's a pervert. (*Beat.*) Can see the river from here. It's good down there. Stinks. But there's good stuff.

**Christine** What sort of stuff?

**Racheal** Just stuff that people leave. I like the water.

**Christine** (*serious*) Racheal, it's filthy.

**Racheal** I still like it.

**Christine** (*firmly*) You better not go swimming in it.

**Racheal** You what?

**Christine** That water's filthy. You better not go swimming in it.

**Racheal** Course not. I'm not thick, am I? Look, Mum. Can see clock tower in Merseyway. It's massive. It's a skyscraper that is, int it? Mum?

**Christine** Is it fuck a skyscraper.

**Racheal** I think it is. *(Long silence. She yawns. Looks up to her mother)* Smells of tarmac.

**Christine** What does?

**Racheal** Here. In summer.

**Christine** I don't know what you're going on about half the time.

*Pause.* **Racheal** *kneels up to look over into the back seat.*

**Racheal** Billy's asleep.

**Christine** Good.

**Racheal** He looks right peaceful. He looks dead little when he's asleep, doesn't he?

**Christine** Who?

**Racheal** Billy. I wish he'd stop getting, you know, stop getting run over. He keeps going on about Disney World Florida and that.

**Christine** I know.

**Racheal** You gonna take him?

**Christine** I don't know.

**Racheal** Mum.

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** Why's he done this?

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** Dad. Why's he done this?

**Christine** I don't know, love.

**Racheal** It's mental. As if you do this! As if you do though!

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** *turns back, sits up on her heels.*

**Racheal** It is though, int it? Mental and that. You reckon he's in there?

**Christine** Course he is.

**Racheal** Lights off. Door locked. Sitting in there?

**Christine** I could hear him.

**Racheal** I hate it when he goes like this.

**Christine** So do I.

**Racheal** Why does he go like this, Mum? Mum? Why does he? Why does he go like dead mental and that?

**Christine** I don't know.

**Racheal** You're his wife.

**Christine** So?

**Racheal** You must know.

**Christine** Would you shut up?

**Racheal** You must though, mustn't you? There must be a reason.

**Christine** Rachel, I'll fucking thump yer.

**Racheal** You wouldn't.

**Christine** You wanna try me?

*Beat*

**Racheal** I'm frightened of him.

**Christine** You are not.

**Racheal** I am. He's weird, he is.

**Christine** He's your dad. He's not weird.

**Racheal** Way he looks at us sometimes.

**Christine** He's never weird.

**Racheal** I think he hates us.

**Christine** Don't be daft.

**Racheal** Must though. Mustn't he? Big fat fucking bastard.

*Silence.*

This doesn't happen to most people, you know. Most normal people.

**Christine** How do you know?

**Racheal** It doesn't.

*Pause. Racheal stares at her mother who has taken to staring out of her side window.*

**Racheal** Mum.

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** What you thinking? Mum? Mum, what are you thinking? Tell us.

**Christine** Has he put a light on?

**Racheal** You gonna tell us or what?

**Christine** Has he, Rache? Is that our flat?

**Racheal** I don't know. I can't tell.



*They crane their necks to look. And then settle back. Christine lights another cigarette.*

**Christine** You shouldn't say that he's weird. All right?

**Racheal** Why shouldn't I? He is. He shouldn't lock us out of the flat, should he? Dickhead.

**Christine** Racheal. Don't.

**Racheal** (*a little upset*) Do you like him?

**Christine** Course I do.

**Racheal** Do you really?

**Christine** You should go to sleep.

*Pause. Racheal settles down. Nestles her head against her seat belt.*

**Racheal** (*looking into wing mirror*) You know Sarah Briard?

**Christine** Who?

**Racheal** (*back to Christine*) Sarah Briard. Out of our class.

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** She's dead.

**Christine** You what?

**Racheal** She got smacked by a car. She was ten. Imagine that. Imagine being ten and you're dead. That's dead sad that is, int it? All the stuff she wanted to do, all that stuff. She's never, ever going to do that now. Not none of it. Wanted to play for Man U and everything. Fucking thick cow. As if you play for Man U and you're a girl. I never liked her. She was fat.

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** Are you going to tell me what you were thinking?

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** Are you?

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** You know what I think you were thinking.

**Christine** Racheal, for fuck's sake.

**Racheal** I think you were thinking all about Dad and all about this and about how mental it is and about us and about how you want to kill him and about how much you love him, and about whether you're going to leave him and about whether you're going to leave us and about how old Billy is and about how old I am and about whether you're going to go and I think that you think that you're going to. That's what I think. Am I right?

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** What were you thinking then?

**Christine** I'm not going to tell you.

**Racheal** Liar. I can always tell when you're lying.

**Billy** *cries out, half asleep. He remains lying down.*

**Billy** I want to go in that car. I want to go in that car. Mum. I want to go in that car.

**Christine** Billy? Billy? Billy, love? You're dreaming!

**Billy** What?

**Christine** You were having a dream.

**Billy** What?

**Christine** You were dreaming. Started crying out. Go back to sleep.

**Billy** *(sitting up, his head between the two front seats)*Where are we?

**Christine** We're in the car, love. Outside. It's all right. Go back to sleep, sweetheart.

*He settles. They wait until he is.*

**Racheal** *(quietly)*Funny bugger. 'I want to go in that car!' What car? Bloody beamer, is it? Kip in a Merc, is it?

**Christine** You should go to sleep and all.

**Racheal** It's mad this, int it?

**Christine** What?

**Racheal** This. It's a bit mad, I think. Don't you reckon?

**Christine** It is a little.

**Racheal** You should tell Grandad. Imagine this and you told Grandad. He'd go barmy. He'd smash Dad's head in, I reckon. Don't you reckon, Mum? Don't you think you should tell him?

**Christine** I don't think so, love, no.

**Racheal** I like Grandad. He's a right mad bastard. *(Beat)*Nana's a bit weird but Grandad's all right. Funny pipe-cleaners and that. Mad Joe 90 goggles. Mum. *(Beat)*Are you thinking of going? Mum?

**Christine** No.

**Racheal** I wouldn't blame you. Dad's a knobhead.

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** You could take us with you.

**Christine** You what?

**Racheal** You could. You could take us with you. We could go now. We could just leave. Wouldn't need no bags or nothing. Nothing like that. Just start driving. Go to Grandad's and

not come back. Go to country. Go to Disney World Florida. Couldn't we though, Mum? I reckon that'd be a top idea.

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** I reckon that'd be well smart. Me and you and Billy in Dad's car. Pissing off with no bags or nothing. Going to Disney World Florida. Don't you reckon that'd be sound? It would though, Mum, wouldn't it?

**Christine** Racheal.

**Racheal** What?

**Christine** (*quietly, menacing*) Just, fucking shut it, would ya?

**Racheal** What?

**Christine** (*still menacing*) We're not going to Disney World Florida. We're not going to countryside. We're not going anywhere. Jesus. Do you think? Do you really think that if I wanted to bugger off from here then I'd take you wurr us? I'm not daft, am I? Am I daft? No. No I'm not. Bloody dead weight, you two. Int you? Pair of yous. I'd piss off on me tod. Leave you two to fuckhead.

**Racheal** Mum, don't.

**Christine** We're not going. All right? We're staying put. You hear me? Do you?

**Racheal** Yeah.

*Pause. Racheal screws up her chocolate wrapper. Stares at it. Then looks to her mum. Christine stares up at the window.*

*Lights dim. In the dimness Christine exits. Racheal removes her tracksuit top. Billy pulls up the zip of his coat and lifts the hood above his head. Perhaps the car remains on stage throughout.*

## Scene 2

*1990. The cafe of Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport.*

*We see a white plastic wipe-clean table with yellow plastic trim. Four plastic moulded seats attached to the table. The whole stage is lit very brightly. An antiseptic white light. There is a large bottle fridge full of Fanta Orange.*

*It is nine o'clock at night. Billy Keats, aged eight, sits on one side of the table. Racheal Keats, aged thirteen, sits on the other.*

*They are both doing their homework. Billy holds his pen in his fist. He is unsettled. He unzips and zips up his coat repeatedly. After a short while he pulls his hood down. Sits grinning at Racheal. Racheal sits up straighter. She throws occasional glances at her brother. As though these glances will rein in his attention to his homework. They won't.*

*They continue with their work for a few seconds. Racheal looks up at him.*

**Racheal** What is it?

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** Yer homework.

**Billy** (*looking at the Fanta fridge*) Maths.

**Racheal** Yer want any help?

**Billy** No. It's easy. It's adding up. It's stupid.

**Racheal** If you get stuck. Just ask us.

*She looks down. Continues with her work.*

Mine's geography. My homework. (*Beat. Looking to him.*) Continental drift. Did you know that you're moving?

**Billy** (*looking back to her*) Yer what?

**Racheal** Right now. You're moving. Stockport's moving. England's moving. Getting closer and closer to America. Gonna smash up into it. Big fucking pile-up. Did yer know that? I bet yer never, did ya?

**Billy** When?

**Racheal** Not for ages. Thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of years. Yer'll be dead. Before it happens.

**Billy** Won't.

**Racheal** Yer will. Like Grandad.

**Billy** I'm gonna live for ever me.

**Racheal** Yer not.

**Billy** Grandad's never dead.

**Racheal** Will be soon. Probably is already. Probably in there. Dead. Hope he is.

*Pause. Billy rests his head on the table. On his book. Writes with his fist.*

Lift yer head off the table.

**Billy** Am thinking.

**Racheal** Can't think with yer head on the table. Yer'll fall asleep.

**Billy** Shut up. Yer not me mum.

*Pause.*

**Racheal** Don't write like that. Yer not an idiot. Don't hold yer pen like that. Hold it properly.

**Billy** *looks long and hard at Racheal. Then looks around the room. Back at the fridge again.*

**Billy** (*enthralled*) Look. They got Fanta Orange. In the fridge. Get us some.

**Racheal** I've not got any money. Dad never gave us any money.

**Billy** *stands. Takes his coat off and drops it on the floor by the table.*

**Billy** Am gonna nick some. Yer want some? I'll nick it. They won't do owt.

**Racheal** Billy, sit down.

**Billy** *(goes to leave the table)* They won't do nothing. They're fucking lazy bastards. Watch 'em.

**Racheal** Billy, I'm warning you. Sit down.

*He slumps back down in his chair.*

Thieving little gypsy.

**Billy** *(head in hands now)* He should have given us some money. I'm really thirsty.

**Racheal** Well, he never. He'll be back soon. Just wait.

**Billy** Mum'd have give us some money. She'd have let us nick a bottle anyways. *(Pause, looks at her. Brightly, inquisitively.)* Rache. What yer reckon it's like? Being dead?

**Racheal** Better than what's happening to him.

**Billy** *stands. Leaves the table. Begins to explore the whole space. She tries to persuade him to come back to the table with the words that she says.*

**Billy** Why?

**Racheal** Yer see him?

**Billy** No.

**Racheal** Should have seen him. Flapping around and that. Screaming.

**Billy** Was he?

**Racheal** I saw him last week. He were like a fish. It was mental. You know what I'm going to do?

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** I'm going to go in there. And kill him. Put him out of his misery. Stop him flapping around and that.

**Billy** Yer what?

**Racheal** I'm going to. I've decided.

**Billy** Yer fucking not.

**Racheal** I am. There must be summit in here, eh? Be good, wouldn't it? Imagine it, Billy. Gagging for breath he'd be. Like a mongoloid.

**Billy** Yer wouldn't.

**Racheal** I fucking would.

**Billy** You're nuts, you are.

**Racheal** It'd be mental.

**Billy** You're crackers. I think you're on drugs.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Billy** I think you are. I'm gonna tell our dad. You take drugs. You smoke drugs. You smoke blow.

**Racheal** I don't.

**Billy** I bet yer do. I bet yer on it right now. Stoned off yer fucking head.

**Racheal** Billy. Shut up or I'll fucking thump yer.

**Billy** So? I'd thump yer back. Where's our mum?

**Racheal** I don't know.

**Billy** Yer must do. It's her dad. She should be here by now. And Nana. Where's she?

*She stares at him for a while. And then looks away.*

**Racheal** Yer know summit?

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** When Grandad gets better. When he comes out. Am gonna go and live wiv 'em.

**Billy** *(returning to the table)* Yer never.

**Racheal** I am. Dad said. You're not coming with us. Just me and Nana and Grandad. It'll be fucking great.

**Billy** Fuck off.

**Racheal** *chuckles briefly.*

**Racheal** Did you see that kid in the lift?

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** When we got in the lift to come down? Did yer see the kid getting out of the lift?

**Billy** No. What about him?

**Racheal** It were horrible. He was all crippled up. All bandaged up. Every part of him. Looked like a mummy. He was tiny and all.

**Billy** *giggles. Sits sideways on to the table, facing the fridge.*

**Racheal** It's not funny, Billy.

**Billy** Yeah, it is.

**Racheal** It's not, Billy. It's horrible. This place is all fucking horrible.

**Billy** I like it. I think it's all right. They've got Fanta Orange. Chocolate. It's good.

**Ronald Abbey** enters. *A man of indistinguishable weight. Fifty years old. Milk-bottle spectacles. Thinning hair. He speaks with a certain amount of saliva rattling around his teeth, smiles inappropriately nearly all the time and blinks a lot. He never, ever looks at the people he addresses. His evasion becoming more pronounced as the conversation becomes more personal. The children think he is, by turns, disgusting and hilarious. For a short time he hugs the side of the stage.*

**Ronald** Hello, Billy. Racheal. Your dad said you were down here.

**Billy** Arrright, Ronald?

**Racheal** Ronald.

**Ronald** How are the two of you?

**Billy** Arrright, thank you.

**Racheal** You been to see Granddad?

**Billy** *starts giggling again.*

**Ronald** Yes. Yes I have.

**Racheal** How is he?

**Ronald** He was sleeping.

**Billy** *does fake snoring. And then continues to giggle.*

**Racheal** Billy. Shut it.

**Ronald** I wanted to say. I'm very sorry. About your granddad. And everything. I like him very much. He's a good person.

**Racheal** It's all right, Ronald. He's going to get better soon.

**Ronald** I do hope so.

**Racheal** He will.

**Ronald** *(moving closer to their table, almost circling it)* Are you bearing up? The two of you? Is everything OK?

**Racheal** Yes. We're fine thank you very much. Billy, shut it.

**Ronald** And your dad, is he all right?

**Racheal** I think he's fine, yes.

**Ronald** And have you heard anything from your mum?

**Racheal** No we've not.

**Ronald** I see. How long has that been now?

**Racheal** Fourteen months.

**Ronald** I see.

**Racheal** On Tuesday.

**Ronald** Good. Right. Well. If there's anything I can do for you. Anything at all. You know where I am.

**Billy** *bursts out laughing.* **Racheal** *stands, pissed off with Billy, backs away from Ronald.* **Billy** *remains seated between the two of them.*

**Racheal** Billy. For fuck's sake.

**Ronald** No, no. Racheal. That's all right. Is there something the matter, Billy?

**Billy** No.

**Ronald** Is there something very funny happening?

**Billy** I know where you are.

**Ronald** I'm sorry?

**Billy** You said, 'You know where I am.' And I do. I know where you are. All the time. Up Lancy Hill.

**Ronald** *(closer)* I'm sorry?

**Billy** *(rocking on his chair, drumming on his legs)* Int he? She's seen yer. She tells us. Yer up there all the time. Get yer knob out and everything, don't yer?

**Ronald** Maybe I should go.

**Billy** Don't he? You said.

**Ronald** Did she?

**Racheal** Billy. You're dead.

**Billy** Why? It's true.

**Ronald** *(closer still)* Did she say that, did she?

**Billy** Yeah. Get yer dick out for the little girls and that.

**Racheal** I swear.

**Billy** Can I see it, Ronald? Will yer gerrit out for us now? Will yer?

**Ronald** *(standing quite still, grinning)* Well. Racheal.

**Racheal** Ronald. I never.

**Ronald** *(still grinning, looking away from her, quietly)* You little whore.

**Racheal** Ronald!

**Ronald** You little tart.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Ronald** With your brother, Racheal. Surely not even you could go that far.



**Racheal** What did you say?

**Ronald** You heard me.

**Racheal** I don't believe that.

**Ronald** You heard me.

*Moves to leave. Jonathan Keats enters. Thirty-four years old. A sinewy man. Tattooed. Shaven-headed. He almost never registers any outward sign of emotional engagement. He is drinking coffee from a paper cup. He has a presence which registers immediately, not only with the children but also with Ronald, regardless of where they are looking. There is a stillness about him that is impressive.*

**Jonathan** Arright, Ronald.

**Racheal** Dad. You should have heard what he just said. I swear.

**Ronald** Hello, Jonathan. Everything all right?

**Jonathan** Everything's fine, mate. Yeah. Not bad.

**Racheal** Honestly, Dad. Billy. Shouldn't he?

**Jonathan** (*without really registering*) What?

**Racheal** Hear what Ronald just said.

**Jonathan** Why?

**Racheal** It was barmy.

**Ronald** I should be going.

**Jonathan** Right. OK. Thank you for coming.

**Ronald** No. Not at all. I was saying to Racheal and Billy. I like Gordon. He's a good man.

**Racheal** I'm going to tell him. Ronald. After you've gone.

**Jonathan** Tell him what? Tell who? What's going on?

**Ronald** I must go. There's a bus. I'll see you soon I hope, Jonathan.

**Jonathan** Yes. Right. I hope so too, Ronald. I'll see you later.

**Ronald** G'bye, Racheal. Billy.

**Billy** Tarrah.

**Racheal** (*laughing*) Yeah. See yer, Ronald.

*He exits opposite Racheal. Billy and Racheal laughing bewildered as he leaves.*

I swear.

**Jonathan** What's going on?

**Racheal** You should have heard what he was saying. He's a psycho that one, Dad. I'm telling yer.

**Jonathan** What did he say?

**Racheal** (*going to collect up her homework*) Nothing. It don't matter.

**Jonathan** Why? What was it?

**Racheal** It was nothing. I'll tell yer later.

**Jonathan** Right.

*He moves towards the table. Sits down. Looks straight ahead for a few seconds before he speaks. Drinks from his cup.*

Racheal. Billy. Yer grandad's died.

**Billy** *bursts out laughing again.*

**Jonathan** Just now. In his sleep and that.

**Racheal** (*crushed*) He never.

**Jonathan** He has, love. I'm sorry.

**Billy's laughing settles. Racheal backs off from the table.**

**Jonathan** I don't think it were painful or nothing. Didn't even notice at first. He just stopped breathing. Pulse stopped. You all right?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Jonathan** You done yer homework?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Jonathan** What about you, Billy?

**Billy** Didn't get none.

**Jonathan** Didn't yer?

**Billy** No.

**Jonathan** Right.

*Pause.*

Maybe you should go and see him. Yer can if yer want to. I think he'd have liked yer to.

**Racheal** No thank you.

*Silence.*

**Jonathan** What did Ronald say to yer?

**Racheal** Nothing.

**Jonathan** He's a funny cunt, int 'e? Mind you. Good of him to come and that. He liked your grandad. Remember that time he brought him round?

**Racheal** What?

**Jonathan** Maybe you weren't there. One time. Fucking freezing cold outside. Middle of winter. Knock on the door. It were Ronald. Holding your grandad up. Under his arm and that. Grandad's got his pants round his ankles. Reckon he was having a piss. Fell over and that. In the ice. Apparently loads of people walked past him. Ronald stopped to help him back.

**Racheal** (*defiant*) He never.

**Jonathan** (*matter-of-fact*) He did, love. Used to do it quite a lot. Could barely fucking walk half the time. He was never that big a man. Everybody said that he was but it weren't true. You with me? He was as much of a fuck as anything else. (*Drinks.*) You been behaving yerselves?

**Billy** Yeah.

**Jonathan** Yer better. You done yer homework properly, Racheal? Have yer, love?

**Racheal** Yes.

**Jonathan** Don't want fucking aggro, do we? Got to do your homework as well as yer can. Don't want to have to go up and see no teachers. Not unless it's Miss Ayling, eh? I'd go up and see her any time. Day or night. You wiv me? (*Finishes his coffee*) So. What are you gonna do now, Rache? Eh?

**Racheal** What do you mean?

**Jonathan** Got nowhere to go to now, have you, love? Monday nights and that. Tuesdays. Wednesdays. Weekends. (*Screws up his coffee cup and throws it away*) All the time she was round there, weren't she, Bill?

**Billy** Yeah.

**Jonathan** Can't do that any more. Can yer?

**Racheal** It's your fault.

**Jonathan** You what?

**Racheal** This. Grandad dying. It's your fault.

**Jonathan** (*with a chuckle*) What yer going on about, you, eh?

**Racheal** Fucking bastard.

**Jonathan** (*shouting, suddenly*) Eh!

**Racheal** If you hadn't been such a fucking bastard he would have been all right.

**Jonathan** What you nattering on about, you, eh? What she nattering on about, Billy?

**Billy** Don't know.

**Racheal** He told us. He used to tell us. What you did. To Mum.

**Jonathan** Racheal. Enough. Now. Shut it.

**Racheal** (*starting to cry*) Told us it used to break his heart. Yer fucking bastard.

**Jonathan** You don't shut it now I'll fucking leather yer.

**Racheal** *stands, offers herself to her dad for a battering.*

**Racheal** *(becoming hysterical)* Yeah? Would yer? Go on then! Fucking go on! Hit us! Hit us! Go on! I'd love it. I'd love it. Yer fucking bastard!

*Her hysteria collapses into sobbing for a short time and eventually calms down. Jonathan watches her simply and quietly, allowing her to calm. Billy stares down at his homework.*

**Jonathan** *(simply, quietly)* Should go and see him.

**Racheal** No.

**Jonathan** Should do.

**Racheal** I don't want to.

**Jonathan** How come not?

**Racheal** Scares me.

**Jonathan** What does?

**Racheal** People being dead. All that.

**Jonathan** *(with a gentle smile)* Don't be daft.

**Racheal** I'm not being daft. I'm being serious.

**Jonathan** *(moving to her)* Racheal. It's all right. You know? He won't bite yer. You should. You'd feel better for it. It'd make it a bit, y'know. Go on. I'll look after Billy. You go.

*She stares at him for a short time and then leaves. He watches her go. There is a silence between Jonathan, and Billy for a while. The two don't look at each other.*

**Billy** Dad.

**Jonathan** Yeah.

**Billy** Can I nick a can of Fanta Orange. Out of the fridge. They won't do owt.

**Jonathan** *(sitting)* Aye. All right.

*He does. Comes back to the table and drinks with relish. His dad watches him for a while before speaking to him. This time, when the two address one another, they start to hold eye contact.*

How are you, Bill?

**Billy** Yer what?

**Jonathan** Are you all right and everything? About Grandad and that?

**Billy** Yeah.

**Jonathan** *(looking away for a bit)* Your mum should have been here. Weren't even my dad. I held his hand. It were weird.

**Billy** Dad.

**Jonathan** Billy.

**Billy** I don't think it were you. Who killed Grandad or nothing. I think it was all the fags he smoked. He was always smoking, him. Like a big old chimney.

**Jonathan** I think so too.

**Billy** Stupid. Smoking.

**Jonathan** Yes it is.

**Billy** Racheal smokes.

**Jonathan** Does she?

**Billy** All the time.

**Jonathan** I see. Is she all right?

**Billy** Yer what?

**Jonathan** Racheal. Is she all right? Do you think?

**Billy** Yeah. I think so.

*Pause.*

**Jonathan** Billy.

**Billy** Yeah.

**Jonathan** I'm sorry, mate.

**Billy** What about? *(Beat)*Dad?

**Jonathan** Just. Yer know.

*Barely perceptibly, he starts to cry.*

Look at me. Big stupid git. Crying and that.

*Long silence. The two look away from each other. Jonathan still only just crying.*

**Racheal** *comes back before Jonathan notices. Stands by the table. She catches him crying. He realises she has caught him. A vulnerable moment and then he inhales a big lungful of air.*

**Racheal** You all right? Dad?

**Jonathan** I'm fine, love, yeah. You OK?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Jonathan** *(smiling at her)* Good girl. It weren't too bad. Was it?

**Racheal** No. It was all right.

**Jonathan** *(standing)* He was a funny fucker. Said to us. This morning. Tell Racheal and Billy that when I get better, we'll go out. Go to KFC. Go cinema.

**Racheal** His skin was very loose.

**Jonathan** Yer what?

**Racheal** On his bones. It was warm. Yer press the skin down though and the muscles and the bone are all cold. It was weird.

**Jonathan** Yeah.

*He picks up Billy's coat. Neatens the collar. Passes it to him.*

You wanna go home, you two?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Jonathan** See y'up at car.

**Jonathan** *exits. Billy follows.*

**Billy** *(leaving)* Starving.

**Racheal** *goes to leave. Stops herself. Looks back.*

*Lights dim.*

**Racheal** *pushes down her school socks. Removes her tie and reties it in a fat knot. Pulls her skirt up, tightens it slightly. Applies some makeup. Ties her jumper round her waist.*

### Scene 3

*1992. The L section of the bus station in Stockport town centre. It is approaching night-time and darkening. The station is deserted except for the children. It feels huge, almost completely hollow. The children's movement is freed by the absence of others.*

*An aluminium queue divider centres the stage.*

**Racheal Keats**, fifteen years old, leans against the divider's pole. Breathless. Waiting.

**Chris Bennett**, also fifteen years old, follows her. Not breathless. In a tracksuit. Cocky, confident, very handsome and knows it. He joins her, leaning against the pole. Looks at her for some time without speaking. She grows increasingly self-conscious of this.

*They are waiting for their friends. He watches her while she talks. She can't look back.*

**Racheal** Gonna rain. Bet ya.

**Chris**—

**Racheal** Gonna slash it down.

**Chris**—

**Racheal** *moves away from the pole — looks outwards and all around her.*

**Racheal** Always rainin' here. Always fuckin' leatherin' it.

**Chris**—

**Racheal** Fuckin' hate it.

**Chris** *laughs briefly* —

**Racheal** Don't you, Chris?

**Chris** *(smiles)* What?

**Racheal** Don't you hate it here?

**Chris** *(thinks, sniffs)* S'arright.

**Racheal** S'fuckin' never. S'fucking cheap. Grotty. Shit buildings. Stinks. *(She belches hugely and then giggles.)*

**Chris** *(with a grin)* Yer got a tab?

**Racheal** No.

**Chris** Liar.

**Racheal** Am not.

**Chris** Y'are. Fuckin' seen ya. Juss now.

**Racheal** Finished 'em.

**Chris** Yer didn't. Yer still got some.

**Racheal** I ain't.

*He reaches for her shirt pocket. Slight scuffle. Giggle.*

**Chris** Here.

**Racheal** Get off.

**Chris** In yer pocket.

**Racheal** Get off us.

*He pulls out a packet of cigarettes.*

**Chris** Told ya.

**Racheal** 'S me last one.

**Chris** Yer cheeky little monkey. Knew y'ad one.

*He puts it in his mouth. Goes to light it. She grabs for it. Misses.*

**Racheal** Don't.

*He backs away from her, always watching her, grinning.*

**Chris** Stop me

**Racheal** Chris.

**Chris** Come on.

**Racheal** What are yer like?

**Chris** If yer don't want me to smoke it come and gerrit off me.

**Racheal** Yer mental.

**Chris** Am not.

**Racheal** Yer crackers.

**Chris** Am not. Am well sane.

*He lights the cigarette.*

**Racheal** Loony.

**Chris** Look at yer. Yer all red. Yer look dead cute when yer all red.

**Racheal***(affectionately)* Cracked you.

**Chris** *takes a long draw on the cigarette. They stare at each other for a time.*

**Racheal** *(turning from him, out into space)* Only good things around here are Man U. And Mr Everson.

**Chris** Mr Everson?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Chris** He's a fat fucking thick twat.

**Racheal** He's not. He's fucking great.

**Chris** Yer fancy him, don't yer? Fucking hell.

**Racheal** No. I just think he's good.

**Chris** You fucking fancy him and all.

**Racheal** Teaches us new words.

**Chris** New words?

**Racheal** Catatonic. A state of schizophrenic unconsciousness.

**Chris** New words? Are you eight?

**Racheal** Philanthropy. Love of mankind. *(Suddenly turns to him.)* Yer know what else I love?

**Chris** What?

**Racheal** All mountains.

**Chris** Yer what?

**Racheal** Our mum went on about them all the time and all. Yer should've seen 'em this morning. Such a clear day. Yer could see 'em all really detailed. We should go. Shouldn't we? Me and you. Tek Luce and Danny.



**Chris** Tek your kid.

**Racheal** Fuck off.

**Chris** I like him.

**Racheal** Yer can have him.

**Chris** He's a nutter. Nicks owt, don't he?

**Racheal** What?

**Chris** Billy. Nicks owt. 'S funny. Like 'avin' a lickle dog.

*Silence.*

'S not mountains. 'S fuckin' hills. 'S fuckin' Pennine Way that. 'S never fuckin' mountains.

**Racheal** Yer ever noticed how many transport routes cut through this place?

**Chris** Yer what?

**Racheal** All the transport routes come through here. Every single fuckin' type.

**Chris** What yer crackin' on about now, you?

*She begins to circle away from him.*

**Racheal** Yer got yer A6 for yer cars. Yer got yer viaduct for yer trains. M62. River fuckin' Mersey. Flight paths down Ringway. 'S mental. Planes have still got the wheels down when they come over here. Every cunt's trying to get out.

**Chris** Am not.

**Racheal** Int yer?

**Chris** Nah.

**Racheal** *(to him)* Int yer, Chris? Really?

**Chris** No.

**Racheal** *(turning away, staring out again)* Fuckin' should.

**Chris** I like it.

**Racheal** Why?

**Chris** 'S a laugh, innit? Yer can bunk off school. Go home. Watch telly. Brother's all right. Mum and Dad and that. Phone yer mates. Come down here. Ride buses. Go down Manchester. Go cinema. Gerr up to all sorts.

**Racheal** *(turning to him, seriously)* I hate my family.

**Chris** No yer don't.

**Racheal** The only person in my family who's any cop was my grandad and he's been dead two year. Most significant person in my life and he's fucking snuffed it.

**Chris** Yer brother's all right.

*Pause. Racheal stares out.*

**Racheal** I hate death. Scares the shit out of us.

*Pause.*

Remember Paul Casde?

**Chris** Yeah.

**Racheal** Remember his brother?

**Chris** His brother?

**Racheal** In third year. When we was in first year. Threw himself off bridge over M62. Remember that?

**Chris** Oh yeah.

**Racheal** I remember thinkin' it were funny. And that he were stupid. That he were a thick cunt. I mean, as if yer do that. We're older than he was now. Paul Casde's older than his older brother. Nuts that, int it?

**Chris**(*disinterested*)Yeah.

**Racheal** It is though, Chris, int it?

**Chris** I used to like Paul Castle. He were all right. How come he never comes to school any more?

*She looks at him for three seconds. Looks away.*

**Racheal** I don't know.

*Pause. She looks back to him. He begins to lift his own weight up off the bar. And then stops.*

**Chris** Yer know one thing I like about you?

**Racheal** What?

**Chris** You've got really lovely tits.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Chris** Y'ave. They look lovely.

**Racheal** Do they?

**Chris** Yeah.

**Racheal** Right.

**Chris** Don't panic. It's a good thing.

**Racheal** Thanks.

**Chris** 'S all right.

*He turns away again, grinning.*

**Racheal** Where are they?

**Chris** Don't know.

*Pause.*

**Racheal** Chris.

**Chris** Yeah.

**Racheal** What are you scared of?

**Chris** How do yer mean?

**Racheal** Like I'm scared of death. And when I were a nipper I were scared of me mum when she used to thump us with her hairbrush and me dad because he was fucking weird. What are you scared of?

**Chris** Nothing.

**Racheal** Nothing?

**Chris** No.

*She touches his face with her finger. Pulls it away.*

**Racheal** (*seriously*) Liar.

**Chris** Am not.

**Racheal** Yer are.

*Long pause. Neither shakes eye contact.*

**Racheal** Y'ever get like yer just want to go fucking ape?

**Chris** Yer what?

**Racheal** Don't matter.

*She turns away from him. The two stare out. **Billy** runs on. He is ten years old.*

**Billy** That was fuckin' magic!

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** That was fuckin' brilliant!

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** That!

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** We just went down Merseyway. Fuckin' robbin' and everything! It were top!

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Billy** Just down Boots and that.

**Racheal** Boots's closed.

**Billy** Smashed the window.

**Chris** *bursts out laughing.* **Racheal** *is appalled.*

**Racheal** You what?!?

**Billy** Me and Luce and Danny.

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** Threw a big fuckin' brick through the window. Grabbed a load of films for cameras. And skin cream. And pegged it. Alarms going. (*Imitating the sound of the alarm.*)BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH!!

*As Billy talks he moves like a monkey. Swinging on the queue divider. Circling the stage. He hardly stops moving at all.*

**Racheal** Billy, I am going to fucking kill you.

**Billy** It were magic. It were mighty!

**Chris** Where's Luce now, Billy? And Danny?

**Billy** They're coming. Slow fuckers. Am a dead fast runner, me. Fuckin' slaughtered 'em.

**Racheal** What the fuck did you do that for, Billy? Christ!

**Billy** For a laugh.

**Racheal** Yer don't need skin cream!

**Billy** I nicked it for you. Lucy's got some and all.

*He gives her six bottles of skin cream that he pulls out of his pockets.*

**Racheal** I don't want this!

**Billy** Why not?

**Racheal** Fuckin' handling stolen, int it?

*She refuses to take them.*

**Billy** But I nicked it for you. And look at these. Fuckin' top these are. Fuckin' quality.

*He pulls out a handful of boxes of film.*

**Racheal** Billy. You haven't even got a camera. What do yer want film for, yer monghead?

**Billy** Fuck off.

**Racheal** No, Billy —

**Billy** Am not a monghead.

**Racheal** It's not on.

**Billy** Don't call me a monghead, Rache, because I'm fucking not one, arright?

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** Dad'll kill you.

**Billy** He won't.

**Racheal** He fucking will.

**Billy** Don't need to tell him.

**Racheal** I *know*.

**Billy** Don't need to tell him nothing. Gissa fag.

**Racheal** Fuck off.

**Billy** Go on. Am gasping.

**Racheal** Billy. You do my head in.

**Billy** Anyways. What's all this?

**Racheal** All what?

**Billy** All you two. What's all this about?

**Racheal** Shut it.

**Billy** Give 'im one, did ya?

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** Honestly, Chris. You should hear her going on about you. She really fancies yer. She'd definitely give yer one. If yer wanted. Just ask her.

**Racheal** Right, Billy.

**Billy** She's always going with lads and all. She's a right slapper.

**Racheal** *gives Billy a Chinese burn. He buckles in pain.*

**Racheal** Take that back.

**Billy** I was joking.

**Racheal** I don't care. Take it back.

**Billy** It was a joke, Rache.

**Racheal** It wasn't a fucking funny one. Take it fucking back.

**Billy** I'm sorry.

**Racheal** Take it back.

**Chris**(*amused*)You should take it back, Billy.

**Racheal** Keep out of this, you!

**Billy** Arrright. I take it back. I'm sorry. I take it back.

**Racheal** (*letting Billy go*) Nothing to do with you. To do with me and him.

**Chris** (*slight laugh*) Sorry. I was just trying to help.

**Racheal** Yeah. Well, just don't.

**Lucy and Danny** enter running. **Lucy** is fifteen. School uniform worn like **Racheal's**. Pretty. Slightly softer than **Racheal**. **Danny** is in messy school uniform too. **Lucy** is laughing. **Danny** fretting slightly.

**Lucy** Oh my fucking lord!

**Danny** I can't breathe.

**Lucy** Racheal. Your brother is a fucking lunatic.

**Danny** I've never known anything like it.

**Racheal** What did he do?

**Lucy** He is off his head. I swear.

**Racheal** What did he do, Lucy?

**Lucy** He wants to go up Dollis Hill. He wants to go in' fuckin loony bin.

**Racheal** Lucy, what did he fucking do?

**Lucy** Only threw a brick in window of fucking Boots is all. Only did that, didn't he?

**Danny** Racheal. He's cracked. Am telling yer.

*As Lucy talks, Billy's movements calm. He is very proud of himself. Lucy cracks into laughter as she speaks.*

**Lucy** Juss walking down Merseyway. Went into McDonald's and going down Merseyway. Just having us chips. And he just turns round with this fucking great brick and he just lobs it into window of fucking Boots. Grabs all these, all these, all these fucking films and skin cream and that and just fucking pegs it. He's off his fucking head. He wants to go to fucking hospital. What does he want fucking skin cream for? I swear. It were brilliant.

**Billy** I gave you some.

**Racheal** Lucy.

**Lucy** Yeah. You did, love. It were very sweet of you. I nearly pissed myself.

**Danny** Alarms going and everything.

**Billy** (*going to Lucy*) It were good though, weren't it?

**Danny** Cops coming now, I reckon, probly.

**Billy** Lucy, weren't it good though?

**Lucy** Eh?

**Billy** Doing that. It were good, weren't it?

**Lucy** *strokes his face. He beams.*

**Lucy** Yeah. Yes, love. It were fucking cracking.

**Racheal** You mean it wasn't your idea?

**Lucy** Yer what?

**Billy** Am gonna do it again.

**Racheal** Robbing shop. Robbing Boots. It wasn't your idea to do that?

**Lucy** No. First I heard about it he's got the brick in his hands and he's going, 'Watch this!'

**Billy** What you reckon, Danny, should we do it again?

**Danny** What?

**Billy** Go and do JD Sports. Get some trainers.

**Racheal** Billy, I need a word with you.

**Billy** Get us a football.

**Danny** Are you mental?

**Racheal** Billy. Now.

**Billy** Fuck off.

**Danny** Cops'll be fucking crawling all over this place. They'll be after yer. Get yer on camera and that.

**Billy** Will they fuck!

**Danny** They will, Billy.

**Billy** Be the last thing they expect then, eh? Go back and nick stuff from right in front of'em. Fucking thick coppers.

**Lucy** He's a lunatic.

**Chris** *(grinning, watchful)* I'll go.

**Billy** Excellent!

**Racheal** *(staring at Chris)* I don't believe this.

**Chris** You coming, Danny?

**Danny** What?

**Chris** You coming with us or what?

**Danny** No chance.

**Racheal** Chris, don't.

**Chris** *(big grin, loving it)* Chicken.

**Danny** Fuck off.

**Chris** Fucking ten-year-old got more balls than you do.

**Danny** I was fucking there just then, weren't I? Don't know where you were.

**Chris** Fucking coward. Int he, Rache? He's a fucking coward.

**Danny** I just done fucking Boots me, mate.

**Chris** Yer never. Billy did fucking Boots. You just stood there. That's not doing it. That's just fucking coincidence is what that is. Yer a fucking pussy.

**Danny** Fuck off.

**Chris** Fucking pussy. You coming, Lucy?

**Lucy** Me?

**Chris** Aye.

*Pause.*

**Lucy** Just let us get me breath back.

**Chris** Good girl.

**Billy** You coming, Rache?

**Racheal** (*looks at Chris, appalled, and then addresses Billy*) You're not going anywhere.

**Billy** Yeah I am. Me and Chris and Lucy are going robbing JD Sports. We're going getting trainers. You coming too, Danny?

**Danny** I don't know, mate.

**Chris** He's fucking chicken. 'S what he is.

**Danny** 'S not chicken. 'S never chicken, arright? 'S fucking mental is what it is!

**Racheal** Chris, please.

**Chris** What? Rache? Yer never going mard-arsed on us and all, are yer?

**Lucy** She fucking is, int she? What's she fucking like?

**Billy** *goes to leave.*

**Racheal** Billy. Wait here.

**Billy** No. Am going. You coming or what?

**Racheal** This is doing my nut in.

**Billy** Rache?

**Racheal** You can't take him, Chris. He's my brother. He's only ten.

**Billy** So?!

**Chris** (*with real relish*) Mard arse.

**Lucy** *laughs at Racheal.*



**Billy** God, Racheal.

**Danny** Yer shouldn't, Chris.

**Chris** Shut it, chicken shit.

*The two face off. Brief time. **Danny** looks away.*

**Billy** drops the face cream on the floor as he starts to go.

**Racheal** This int right.

**Billy**(turning to her as he goes)Am not a fucking kid any more.

**Racheal** Yes you are.

**Billy** (stops, stares at her briefly, sniffs once)Am going.

*He turns and leaves.*

**Chris** Me too. (Goes to leave.)Coming, Danny?

**Danny** (after a brief beat, and with great reluctance)Aye. Yeah. Am coming. Fuck.

**Chris** You wanna sort your head, Rache. Yer wiv me? It's turning fucking yellow, mate.

*Leaves. **Danny** follows **Billy** and **Chris** off. **Racheal** watches them go. Turns away. Looks out. Wraps her arms around herself. Brief time. **Lucy** goes right up to her.*

**Lucy** So?

**Racheal** What?

**Lucy** Did you?

**Racheal** What?

**Lucy** You and Chris? Did yer do it with him?

**Racheal** simply stares at her for a few seconds.

**Lucy** Yer did, didn't yer? I knew it!

*Pause. She stares at **Racheal** with a wonder that edges on to disgust. **Racheal** turns away from her.*

You coming?

**Racheal** I don't believe this.

**Lucy** You coming or what?

**Racheal** I hate this.

**Lucy** Racheal, are you coming with us or fucking what?

*No response.*

Used to be anight you and all, I thought.

**Lucy** leaves. **Racheal** watches her go and then stands.

*Lights dim.*

**Racheal** takes off her tie. Tucks in her shirt. Takes off her shoes and socks. Puts on a light, summer cardigan, maybe some sunglasses.

#### Scene 4

*1994. The garden of a nursing home in Offertan, Stockport.*

*A wrought-iron bench. Some flowerpots. It is a beautiful day. There is golden sunshine. A bright, warm, open light.*

**Racheal Keats**, seventeen, tends the plants in the pots. Afterwards she walks, relaxed, around the bench. Her nana, **Anne Dickinson**, sits still on the bench.

**Anne** is seventy-four years old. She is blind. She wears a powder-blue cardigan over a white dress. Her ankles are thick and rolled in brown tights and bandages. **Anne** is recovering from a stroke. Her temperament is resolutely cheery. Sometimes the tone of her voice is inappropriately, confusingly cheery.

*They are drinking tea from china cups and eating a huge block of Dairy Milk chocolate.*

*We can hear birdsong. Perhaps cars. And offstage we can hear the sound of an old **Man** howling from an open window.*

**Man** What am I doing here? What am I here for? I've never done nothing. I've not done owt. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please. Please don't. Please don't do that. Please stop doing that. Please stop.

*They stop to listen. After a short while the window is slammed closed. They both stare out.*

**Racheal** Who was that?

**Anne** Who?

**Racheal** That man. Him shouting.

**Anne** What man?

**Racheal** Did you not hear him. That fellah. Shouting on he was. Going crackers and everything?

**Anne** No.

**Racheal** He was shouting like mad.

**Anne** Oh. I don't know.

*Pause. They look out. **Racheal** checks her watch.*

**Racheal** It's a beautiful day, Nana.

**Anne** Yes. It feels it.

**Racheal** (*looking at the sky*) The sky's very blue.

**Anne** Is it?

**Racheal** It looks amazing.

**Anne** Does it?

**Racheal** Sun's out. Couple of clouds and that. All white. Very little.

**Anne** I love it when there's a little breeze.

**Racheal** Yeah. Me too.

**Anne** It smells like artichokes.

**Racheal** Artichokes?

**Anne** And tea. The air. From when I was a little girl and everything.

*Pause.*

**Racheal** Do yer want some more chocolate?

**Anne** Yes. I do please.

**Racheal** *cracks off a large chunk and passes it to her. Her nana starts biting on the large chunk.*

**Racheal** Nana, there was something I wanted to ask you.

**Anne** Does it no good.

**Racheal** What?

**Anne** My teeth.

**Racheal** No. *(Beat.)*Nana.

**Anne** How are you, love?

**Racheal** You what?

**Anne** How are you? Are you all right? Is everything all right? With you?

**Racheal** Yes. It's fine. I'm good. I'm all right. It's all right.

**Anne** How's your brother?

**Racheal** Billy?

**Anne** Yes. Billy. How is he?

**Racheal** He's not bad. Have you been to see him?

**Anne** Have I what?

**Racheal** Have you been to see him? Billy?

**Anne** No. No I've not.

**Racheal** You should go.

**Anne** I've not.

*Beat. Racheal turns to her.*

**Racheal** Have yer seen Mum, Nana?

**Anne** Have I what?

**Racheal** Mum. Have you seen her?

**Anne** No. I haven't.

**Racheal** Do you know where she's gone?

**Anne** No, I don't. Do you?

**Racheal** No. I've no idea.

**Anne** Yer what?

**Racheal** I said I've no idea.

**Anne** No.

**Racheal** (*moves to sit on the arm of the bench*) Can I ask you something, Nana?

**Anne** What, love?

**Racheal** Don't you miss her?

**Anne** Who?

**Racheal** Mum.

**Anne** (*smiling*) Yes. I do.

**Racheal** Doesn't it make you sad? That she's gone away and she never even said goodbye or nothing. She just left.

**Anne** (*smiling*) Yes it does.

**Racheal** I always wondered. It's been ages now. I always wondered if she wrote to you. Or spoke to you on the telephone. Or come to see you.

**Anne** (*smiling*) No she didn't.

*Pause. Racheal stares at her.*

**Racheal** Do you miss Grandad ever?

**Anne** What did you say, love?

**Racheal** I asked you if you ever missed Grandad?

**Anne** No. No I don't. No.

**Racheal** I miss him all the time.

*Pause. Racheal stands, moves away.*

**Anne** Have you got a boyfriend yet?

**Racheal** No. Nana. I haven't.

*Long pause. She tends the plants again. Then stops. Stares at her nana.*

**Racheal** Nana. I'm going to get a flat.

**Anne** Are you, love?

**Racheal** Up Edgely.

**Anne** That's nice.

**Racheal** I'm dead excited.

**Anne** Are you?

**Racheal** I am. It's really smart. It's got a bathroom. Kitchen. Got a shower.

**Anne** Has it?

**Racheal** It's cracking. Rent's thirty quid a week. I can afford that. It's all right.

**Anne** Good girl.

**Racheal** Nana. I need some money. For the deposit. I need two hundred and forty pound. For the deposit, which is a month's rent, and for a month's rent in advance. Nana, I've not got it. I can't afford the deposit. I was going to ask you. If you had it. If I could borrow it from you. If you could lend it to us.

**Anne** Were you?

**Racheal** Yeah.

*Pause.*

Can you, Nana?

**Anne** Can I what?

**Racheal** Can you lend us the deposit? The two hundred and forty pound?

**Anne**(*smiling*)No, love, I don't think so.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Anne** I don't think I can love, no.

**Racheal** Nana? Did you hear what I said? I've not got it. If I don't get the deposit and the rent then I'll lose the flat. I'll pay you back. I will, Nana, I swear. On my life. I'll pay you back. Every month. I could pay you like twenty quid a month or summit. I could do that. I could afford that. Nana. On my life.

**Anne**(*smiling*)I don't think so, love. No.

**Racheal** What do you mean you don't think so?

**Anne** I don't think I could lend you the money, love, not really.

**Racheal** Why not?

**Anne** I haven't really got enough, love.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Anne** I haven't. I can't really afford to do that.

*Silence. Racheal stares at her nana, disbelieving. She eats some more chocolate.*

I've not got the money.

**Racheal** I thought, Mum always said you were ... didn't Grandad leave you any?

**Anne** I'm sorry, love?

**Racheal** Didn't Grandad, I thought — Grandad always said there was some money ...

**Anne** No, love.

**Racheal** He always said, he told me, Grandad told me that there was some money and if that, if I ever needed some money badly that he would find it for me and he would lend it to me. He told me. He promised. *(Beat.)* Yer must have it.

**Anne** Love, I don't.

**Racheal** How do you, how do you, how do yer afford to pay for this place if you've not got any money, Nana?

**Anne** Yer what?

**Racheal** How can you afford to pay for this place if you've not got any money to lend us?

**Anne** It's not easy, love.

**Racheal** Not easy?

**Anne** No, love.

**Racheal** Grandad promised me.

**Anne** It's not, love.

**Racheal** I need that flat, Nana. I need it. Dad's, Dad's, Dad's, Dad's, ... I'll crack up. If I don't get that flat, Nana, I will go mental. I swear.

**Anne** You won't.

**Racheal** I will, Nana. I really will.

**Anne** Is there any more chocolate, love?

**Racheal** Grandad said.

**Anne** Is there? Could you pass me some?

**Racheal** I could pay you back thirty a month. If that's what's bothering you. Nana, please. I need this so much.

**Anne** You wouldn't.

**Racheal** What?

**Anne** You wouldn't, love. Would you? Not really. You never would.

**Racheal** You what?

**Anne** Would you?

**Racheal** I don't believe this.

**Anne** Would you though, love? You wouldn't. Would you?

**Racheal** I don't believe this one bit. I swear.

**Anne** Racheal, sweetheart, is there any more chocolate?

**Racheal** Don't call me sweetheart. You're not. I'm not your sweetheart.

**Anne** Is there, love?

**Racheal** You have no idea. Do you?

**Anne** Yer what, love?

**Racheal** Yer lying.

**Anne** Yer what, love?

**Racheal** You heard me. You can hear me perfectly well. Yer lying. Yer lying about yer ears and yer lying about yer money. Yer a lickle liar.

**Anne** Racheal, love. I'm not, I swear.

**Racheal** I'll give yer some more chocolate. Here y'are.

*Passes her a chunk of chocolate that she puts in her mouth.*

Here, Nana, have some more.

*Gives her some more chocolate, which she holds in her hand.*

Have some more.

**Anne** I can't hold any more, love. I can't fit it in my mouth.

**Racheal** Have some more chocolate, you skinny fucking tramp.

**Anne** Racheal, please.

**Racheal** Have it. Have it. Have it. Have it. Have it. I'll kick your teeth in.

*Anne takes some more. Puts some more in her mouth. Her mouth is full. Dribbles of chocolate on her chin.*

**Racheal** Have some more.

*The same. Anne can't talk. She's crying.*

Is it good being you, Nana? Is it good being a cripple? What about pissing all the time, is that good? Does it hurt? Do your legs hurt when you piss on them? Do they? Do you think—

**Anne** Christine?

**Racheal** Do you think, Nana — I'm not Christine, you blind — Nana, do you think you're going to die soon? Do you, Nana? Do you think you are?

**Anne** Where's Christine gone? Where is she?

**Racheal** She's not here. She's gone. She left you. She left you because she couldn't stand you.

**Anne** Christine?

**Racheal** Her and Grandad. Both of them. Yer blind fuck.

**Racheal** *picks up her nana's handbag. Pulls things out from it. Tissues. Sweets. Pills. A make-up compact. Her purse. She opens the purse and pulls out two or three ten-pound notes and a handful of change and holds them in her hand.*

**Anne** Christine? What are you doing, love?

**Racheal** *stares at her nana for some time. Appalled by the chocolate, the spittle, the tears, the money. Appalled by what she has done perhaps.*

**Racheal** *(gulping her breath)* Nana. What's the saddest thing that ever happened to you? What is it? Do you think?

**Anne** My daughter's gone. She went. She's gone.

**Racheal** Can yer blame her though, really, can yer?

**Anne** I feel sick.

**Racheal** Stick yer fingers down yer throat. Make yer feel better.

**Anne** I don't know who you are.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Anne** I don't know who you are.

**Racheal** *drops the handbag on the floor. Stares at the money and at her nana for three seconds.*

*Lights dim.*

**Racheal** *takes off her sunglasses. Watches her nana leave. Waits.*

## Scene 5

*1996. The staffroom of the Gateway's supermarket, Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport.*

*Early-evening autumn light coming in from a small window.*

*There are two sets of lockers at opposite sides of the stage. Each have a clipboard hanging from them with timesheets and a pen attached.*

*In the centre of the stage there is a double-sided bench divided by a row of hooks. Normally the coats on these hooks would divide the staffroom more obviously into a girls' changing area*



*and a boys' changing area but now there are no coats. The demeanour of the characters should still, however, delineate the gender of the areas.*

*Before the lights rise, **Racheal** puts her cardigan in her locker and puts on a green Gateway's uniform. She is getting changed out of her uniform. She will take trainers and socks from out of the locker.*

*Lights rise. **Danny Miller**, aged nineteen, stands perfectly still, quite rigid, in the boys' half. He has just been punched by a shoplifter. His eye is bruised. His contact lens has become dislodged. **Racheal Keats**, also nineteen, holds his eye open and is trying to prise the lens from underneath his eyelid.*

***Danny** has nurtured and developed the combination of boyish charm and guarded caution that we saw in Scene Three. He is a handsome boy now. He too is wearing a Gateway's uniform.*

**Danny** Careful.

**Racheal** I'm being careful.

**Danny** It kills that.

**Racheal** Shut up. Keep still.

**Danny** I'm keeping still, aren't I?

**Racheal** Danny.

**Danny** How fucking still do you want me to be?

**Racheal** You keep blinking. Don't swear.

**Danny** You're sticking your fingers in my eye. Of course I keep blinking. Fuck's sake.

**Racheal** Danny!

*She spots the lens and starts to move it out of the eyelid.*

Hold on. I see it. Steady. Steady. Steady.

**Danny** Rache.

**Racheal**(*succeeding*)Got it.

**Danny** (*olding back*)Arrrgghh.

*hands him the lens, which he takes.*

**Racheal** Say thank you, Racheal.

**Danny** Jesus. That was sore.

**Racheal** Danny.

**Danny** Thank you, Racheal.

**Racheal** Wash that. Before you put it back in.

***Danny** looks around. Finds nothing to wash it with. **Racheal** returns to the girls' side. **Danny** spits on the contact lens. Puts the lens back in his eye. **Racheal** takes off her*

*overall and puts it in the locker, folding it while she talks. Takes out socks and trainers, which she puts on, and a coat. Checks her hair in a mirror in her locker door. Maybe brushes it. Maybe applies some deodorant. All while she talks to **Danny**.*

**Racheal** That was weird. Touching your eyeball. It felt much harder than you'd have thought.

**Danny** Thank you for getting it out.

**Racheal** That's all right. Did he hurt you?

**Danny** No. Just caught us. Right on the lens and that. Couldn't get to it. It does your head in a bit.

**Racheal** He was a poor bastard, wa'n't he?

**Danny** Police come yet?

**Racheal** Just now. He were crying. Did you see?

**Danny** Serves him right.

**Racheal** Reckoned they'd send him down. Done it before, he said.

**Danny** Fucking tuna fish. Brainy fella, eh?

**Racheal***(grinning)* You looked very funny running after him.

**Danny** *(grinning back)* Fuck off.

**Racheal** Your legs were all mad. Flapping out behind you.

**Danny** Fuck off.

**Racheal** Run like a girl.

**Danny** Rache.

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** Shut it.

**Racheal** *(with a giggle, interrupting her changing, going to peer round into his side)* Or what?

**Danny** Or ... just ...

*They hold each other's eyes for a long moment. Smiling. Both of them on the point of saying something. Neither speaking. Eventually:*

You look beautiful. Even in uniform and that. You do.

**Racheal** Thank you.

**Danny** Uniform's hanging. Makes most people look like spastics. But it don't bother me on you.

**Racheal** That's good. You look like a knob in yours.

**Danny** *takes his shoes off and wipes dirt from them. Breathes on them. Polishes them. While he talks to Racheal he hardly looks at her. Concentrating deeply on the cleaning of the shoes. She goes back to her side, continues to change. He starts to talk quite quietly. As though he is afraid somebody might overhear him. Nobody would.*

**Danny** Last night. (*Beat.*) It was good, wasn't it? It was all right. I liked it.

**Racheal** Me too.

**Danny** I was worried when I got up this morning. Just looking at you and that. I was worried that you might have thought that you'd made a big mistake or summat. Y'know what I mean?

**Racheal** I didn't.

**Danny** I was trying to figure out if you were really asleep or if you were just pretending to be asleep so that I'd leave.

**Racheal** I wasn't.

**Danny** No. I know. You started snoring.

**Racheal** I never.

**Danny** Yer did. Like a little baby pig.

**Racheal** *sticks her tongue out at him.*

**Danny** I like your flat.

**Racheal** Thanks.

**Danny** It's smart. Yer lucky.

**Racheal** I know.

**Danny** Good area Edgely. I reckon.

**Racheal** It's all right.

**Danny** How much you paying?

**Racheal** Thirty quid a week.

**Danny** S all right that, int it?

**Racheal** Working here. It's easy.

**Danny** How d'yer get the deposit?

**Racheal** Saved up.

**Danny** Do you like it? Living on your own?

**Racheal** I love it.

**Danny** Don't you miss your Billy? Or your dad or nothing.

**Racheal** No. I see Billy most days. I never saw much of Dad anyway.

*Beat. Looks at **Danny** before she speaks.*

You know when you think of somebody?

**Danny** Yer what?

**Racheal** Like if you had a mental picture of somebody. When you close your eyes and you think of them just off the top of yer head.

**Danny** Yeah?

**Racheal** When I do that with my dad I can only ever see him down the pub. I can't imagine him in our flat. At all. I can't get it in my head. In the pub. Or in hospital.

**Danny** In hospital?

**Racheal** In the café there. Don't matter. It got to the point when I couldn't actually stand the way they smelled. The way the flat smelled. The way our dad ate apples. Did my head in.

**Danny** How's your Billy doing?

**Racheal** He's all right. Glad to be home. Reckons he's going to keep himself out of bother and that now. We'll see, eh?

**Danny** You reckon he'd remember us?

**Racheal** Course. He used to like you.

**Danny** Say hello to him for us, eh?

**Racheal** I will do, yeah.

*She comes round to the boys' side and sits on the bench and looks at him.*

Can I ask you a question?

**Danny** Go on.

**Racheal** Does it bother you that we didn't have sex last night?

**Danny** No.

**Racheal** Are you sure?

**Danny** Course I am.

**Racheal** Yer not lying?

**Danny** Rache, I had, it was, I thought, it was one of the best nights I'd ever had. In my life, Rache. In my whole life, mate. Honestly.

**Racheal** *(with a huge smile)* Right. Good. I just wanted to check.

*She smiles at him for a few seconds. Stands up and, as she speaks, moves around exploring the boys' changing room. Trying to open **Danny's** and even other men's lockers. Pacing the size of the side.*

What star sign are you?

**Danny** Yer what?

**Racheal** What's your star sign?

**Danny** Gemini, why?

**Racheal** I'm trying to think of things I don't know about you.

**Danny** Why?

**Racheal** I just think it would be good. To know them. I'm Aquarius. That's good. Gemini and Aquarius.

**Danny** Do you believe all that?

**Racheal** No. Not really. Sometimes. What's your favourite colour?

**Danny** (You're) Mental.

**Racheal** Go on, Danny, tell us.

**Danny** Why?

**Racheal** Because I want to know. What is it?

**Danny** Blue. What's yours?

**Racheal** Indigo.

**Danny** Indigo?

**Racheal** What's your favourite taste?

**Danny** Steak.

**Racheal** Steak?

**Danny** Yeah. A really nice steak. Juicy. All the blood. I love that.

**Racheal** You ever had ice cream and lemonade?

**Danny** Course.

**Racheal** That's better. Than steak.

**Danny** No it isn't

**Racheal** Fucking is.

**Danny** (*mocking, with a gentle snort*) Girl.

**Racheal** What about clothes? What are your favourite clothes? This is good this.

*She stands on the bench and walks up and down it. Kicking him out of the way when she arrives at him.*

**Danny** I've got a Pringle jumper that my brother got me. 'S top.

**Racheal** I like shoes better than almost anything in the world.

**Danny** Even better than ice cream and lemonade?

**Racheal** Miles. What's your favourite smell?

**Danny** Oil paint.

**Racheal** You what?

**Danny** Oil paint.

**Racheal** You some kind of glue sniffer, are you?

**Danny** No. Always reminds me of primary school. Used to love it there.

**Racheal** I love the way swimming pools smell. All the chlorine. And the fans on the walls outside. The way they're really warm.

**Danny** *(simply)* I love the way your hair smells.

**Racheal** Thank you.

**Danny** That's all right.

**Racheal** *(watches him, jumps down, and then, after a beat)* I really want to kiss you.

**Danny** Do you?

**Racheal** Like mental. like nothing you'd ever believe.

*The shop manager, **Jake Moran**, walks in. He is a short, bespectacled man. Forty-eight years old. He has short, wispy hair and wears a suit. He is agitated. He distracts himself from the frankness of his apology by constantly rifling through the timesheets, attached to a clipboard which he takes down from their place hanging on the lockers, and neatening his tie as he talks. He is surprised to find **Racheal** in the boys' side of the changing rooms.*

**Moran** Beirut. That's what it's getting like in here. It's like a war zone. It's like Beirut. All these little monkeys coming in here. Do you know, Racheal? Do you know how many, how many, how many incidents of shoplifting we've reported in the last month?

**Racheal** I'm not really sure, Mr Moran, no.

**Moran** Have a guess. Go on. I bet you never get it.

**Racheal** Twelve.

**Moran** Twenty-three. Twenty-three thieving fucking shoplifters in one fucking month. And they're just the ones we see. And report. It's not, what it's not, is, it's not reasonable. These aren't reasonable conditions under which my staff should be expected to work. Are you all right, Danny?

**Danny** I'm fine, Mr Moran, honestly. I'm all right, yeah.

**Moran** *(concentrating on the timesheets)* I tell Mr Ridgely. I tell him. I tell him. He makes sympathetic, well, noises. Sympathetic little noises is what he makes. But I don't think that's enough. I really, I, I really, actually, I really don't. I don't. Any more. I just don't. *(Looking straight at **Danny**.)* He could have hurt you. Couldn't he?

**Danny** He wouldn't have done.

**Moran** But he might have done. People get, these people, they, well, they get desperate is what they get. I'm really very sorry that this had to happen to you, Danny. I'm very grateful to you for what you did. If you want to take the rest of the afternoon off then you can do and I'll fill out your hours as normal. I'll do that. Because you shouldn't expect to deal with what you had to deal with just now. It's not ... *(large inhalation of breath as he finds the right word)*... reasonable.

**Danny** No. Honestly. I'll be fine.

**Moran** *(polishes his glasses on his shirt)* When the police came to get him. He started whimpering. Stamped his feet. Before they got here he begged me to actually, what he did is, he begged me to let him go. Actually. Had a, a, a, a tantrum. He must have been thirty. Thirty-two. If you need anything, Danny, I'll be in my office. It leaves you breathless. Doesn't it? Sometimes?

**Danny** It does, yes.

**Moran** Just. Breathless. Danny. Racheal. I'll be in my office.

*He leaves. They laugh affectionately. Smile at each other. Vaguely bewildered.*

**Racheal** Are you all right? Really?

**Danny** I'm fine. Honestly.

**Racheal** I wasn't worried or nothing. Watching you. My heart didn't beat any faster. It was just like watching TV. Is that bad do you think?

**Danny** No. Course not. *(Having tied his laces he stands.)* I should get back.

**Racheal** Do you have to?

**Danny** Got to finish stuff. Before the shift finishes. You done now?

**Racheal** Yeah. What time do you finish?

**Danny** Six.

**Racheal** Should I wait for you?

**Danny** Four hours. Don't be soft.

**Racheal** You could take the afternoon off. He said. Tell him you've got an headache.

**Danny** He wouldn't finish the work for us though, would he? It's not fair to leave it for night staff. I hate night shift. Keep yer for hours if you don't get stuff done.

**Racheal** I'd like to see you.

**Danny** Would you?

**Racheal** Yeah. Will you ring us?

**Danny** Yeah. Course.

**Racheal** Will you?

**Danny** I told you I would, didn't I?

**Racheal** You promise?

**Danny** What's the matter with you, eh?

**Racheal** I don't know. I just. I just get. I'd just like to see you. There's nothing the matter with me.

**Danny** Rache.

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** I bought you a present.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Danny** This morning. On way in. I got you a present.

**Racheal** (*not delighted*) Did yer?

**Danny** It's a bit shit.

**Racheal** Is it?

**Danny** I'm bollocks at buying presents, me. I'm shit at it. But. I just wanted to get you something.

**Racheal** Right.

**Danny** I never had time to wrap it.

**Racheal** That's all right.

**Danny** *passes her a paper bag. From the bag she takes out a small jewellery box. Inside the box there is a gold bracelet. He watches her, anxious.*

**Racheal** (*doesn't look at him*) It's ... Danny. This is a bit mad.

**Danny** Does it fit you?

**Racheal** (*trying it on*) Course. Look. (*Beat.*) I can't take this.

**Danny** Course you can —

**Racheal** Danny —

**Danny** I just wanted to. Last night, y'know.

**Racheal** I know.

*She looks at him only now. Goes towards him. Goes as though to kiss him. But doesn't.*

Thank you. Go back to work now.

**Danny** I'll ring you when I'm done.

**Racheal** All right.

**Danny** We could go Savoy or summit.

**Racheal** We could do, yes.



**Danny** You coming down with us?

**Racheal** No. Give us a minute. Gotta sort me timesheets out and that. I'm a bit all over the place.

**Danny** Say goodbye to us before you go, won't you?

**Racheal** Soft bugger.

**Danny** I'll see you later.

**Racheal** Yeah. See you in a bit.

*He leaves. She watches him go smiling.*

*She moves into the girls' room and pulls out timesheets from the clipboard. Sits on the bench. Starts filling one out. Clips it back and hangs the clipboard up. Stops. Stares at her bracelet. Takes it off. Stares some more. Hits her head against the locker, gently, five times. Rests her head against it. Whispers 'Danny Danny Danny Danny Danny. You ...' Stands up straight. Goes to leave. Pauses. Gathers her breath as though screwing up her courage to face something inexorable. Leaves.*

*Should it be decided not to have an interval here, then the lights should dim and **Racheal** should change according to the convention that has been established.*

## Scene 6

*1999. A hotel room. The Fir Tree Hotel, Edale, Derbyshire. New Year's Eve. The last night of the millennium. Pitch black outside. The room is a warm bubble of light around a bed and a dressing table. There is a large mirror. And a small fridge.*

**Racheal Keats** sits at the dressing table. She wears a short black dress. Her hair is tied up. She is applying make-up. She is twenty-two years old.

*Her husband, **Kevin Brake**, a wiry man, tied up like a knot, stands behind her. He is twenty-eight years old. He wears black jeans and no shoes, socks or shirt. He is drinking from a bottle of Corona. He is watchful. Slightly drunk.*

**Racheal** Funny looking in the mirror and seeing this room, Kevin.

*He looks at her.*

Yer get used to seeing rooms in mirrors. When you're doing your make-up. Your hair and that. When you see a new room. It looks odd.

*He puts on his shirt. Smiles at her.*

Been ages since I've stayed in a hotel. Years.

*Puts his shoes and socks on, ties his laces. She drinks from a glass of wine by her side. Turns to him.*

It's a beautiful part of the world this.

*He goes over to the window and stares out.*

I love it, all the hills. The smell of the air. You go for walks round here and you don't see anybody for miles. Only sheep. Come right up to you. Eat your butties. Find little pubs. Have a pint. By the fire sometimes. Get a nice packet of crisps. My mum used to come up here. She told us. When she were little. Yer can see this place from our dad's flat sometimes. On a clear day and that. Not this hotel. But round about here.

*He looks at her for a long time while she continues her make-up. Finishes his bottle.*

**Kevin** You're funny.

**Racheal** What?

**Kevin** You.

**Racheal** What?

**Kevin** Nothing.

*She drinks some wine. Sprays perfume on to her wrists and applies it to her neck.*

**Racheal** So. You excited?

**Kevin** Excited?

**Racheal** About tonight?

**Kevin** I am, yeah.

**Racheal** Big night, innit?

**Kevin** It's the biggest, Racheal.

**Racheal** Amazing when you think about it. *(Beat.)* Do you think of it, Kev, as the last night of this millennium or the first night of the next one?

**Kevin** I don't know.

**Racheal** 'Cause when you think about it it could be either, couldn't it?

**Kevin** It could be, yeah.

**Racheal** I think about it as a beginning. The beginning of something.

**Kevin** I hope so.

*They smile at each other.*

How late's the bar on until?

**Racheal** Four o'clock. I think.

**Kevin** It better have Jack Daniel's.

**Racheal** It will.

**Kevin** *(patting her back)* I'm telling you, Rache, it better fucking had do. You go to some of these places, don't you, though? Some of these fucking old country places and they don't have anything fucking any good. All fucking bald bastards with brandy and real ale and cigars and wank like that. I'm just drinking Jack Daniel's, me. Tonight. And champagne.

**Racheal** (*smiling at his description*) Yer want another bottle?

**Kevin** Yeah. Go on.

*She goes to fridge. Pulls out another bottle of Corona and the opened bottle of wine. Tops up her glass. Gives him the bottle. Goes back to the dressing table. Sprays herself with a touch more perfume.*

We just got to keep it together.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Kevin** Us two.

**Racheal** What are you like?

**Kevin** That's what matters.

**Racheal** Get you.

**Kevin** What?

**Racheal** (*imitating*) 'We just gotta keep it together. That's what matters.'

**Kevin** What?

**Racheal** Nothing.

**Kevin** What, Racheal?

**Racheal** Nothing. Honest.

*Some time.*

**Kevin** (*honestly, as though gently scared*) I hate the countryside. It's too quiet.

**Racheal** I like that.

**Kevin** (*the same*) At night-time. You open your window. You can't hear nothing. Scares the shit out of us.

**Racheal** You can hear foxes. Owls and that.

**Kevin** And it's so fucking dark. Can't fucking see anything. Yer need, yer need, yer need, yer need. I don't know. Something.

**Racheal** I think that's nice. Makes me feel cosy. Safe.

*He looks at her for some time.*

**Kevin** You smell nice.

**Racheal** Thank you.

**Kevin** Is that a new perfume?

**Racheal** It is, yes.

**Kevin** It's nice.

**Racheal** Billy got it for us.

**Kevin** Did he?

**Racheal** For Christmas.

**Kevin** That's nice.

*Some time.*

Did he nick it?

**Racheal** Kevin!

**Kevin** What?

**Racheal** No.

**Kevin** You sure?

**Racheal** He bought it. He's got a job and everything.

**Kevin** Has he?

**Racheal** He's working in Bull's Head.

**Kevin** He all right, is he?

**Racheal** He is. Yeah. Been six month now.

**Kevin** Good lad. Six month, eh? Fuck me. How's yer old man?

**Racheal** He's all right. Bit. Yer know.

**Kevin** What?

**Racheal** Bit moody.

**Kevin** Is he?

**Racheal** Strops about. Like a big kid.

**Kevin** You nearly finished.

**Racheal** Just do my hair.

*He watches her as she lets her hair down and starts to comb it.*

**Kevin** Tell you one good thing about hotel.

**Racheal** What's that?

**Kevin** It's very tidy, int it? *(He grins, squeezes his eyes tight. Opens them again and breathes out a sigh of relief.)* Not like our fucking dump. Eh, Racheal?

*No response. He coughs once.*

Sometimes wonder, honestly, sometimes I wonder what the fuck you actually do all day.

**Racheal** Yer what? Kevin?

**Kevin** So, your kid, he still hanging round all Chris Bennett? That lot. Lucy Moore?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Kevin** He see much of Danny Miller?

**Racheal** Don't know. A bit.

**Kevin** What do you mean?

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Kevin** You said you don't know and then you said 'a bit'. Which is it?

**Racheal** I think he sees him every so often.

**Kevin** Yer know that, do yer?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Kevin** (*quietly, grinning*) So, if you know that, if you know that, Rache, how come you said you didn't know when I first asked you?

**Racheal** You wha t?

**Kevin** (*still*) You heard. Bit fucking weird that, int it?

**Racheal** Kev —

**Kevin** (*louder*) No it is though, a bit fucking weird. Int it though? It fucking is. Why did you lie to us, Racheal?

**Racheal** I wasn't lying, Kevin. I just wasn't thinking. I was just, y'know.

**Kevin** No. I don't know, Rache. I don't know at all. What were you just doing? You were just — what?

**Racheal** I was talking without really thinking about what I was saying. That's not lying. That's different from lying. Kev, are you all right?

**Kevin** Me? I'm fine. Fucking great, yeah. Cracking. Never better. Yer just ...

**Racheal** What?

**Kevin** You look lovely, Racheal. You know that. You do, sweetheart.

**Racheal** Thank you.

**Kevin** You look ...

**Racheal** What?

**Kevin** When was the last time you saw him?

**Racheal** Who?

**Kevin** Danny Miller.

**Racheal** Two years ago.

**Kevin** Was it?

**Racheal** Just before we got married.

**Kevin** (*looking at her first*) Are you sure?

**Racheal** Yes.

**Kevin** You're not just talking without really thinking what you're saying now, are you, Rache?

**Racheal** No. Just after I left Gateway's. Down White Lion. I remember it.

**Kevin** I bet you do.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Kevin** I said I bet you remember seeing him. I fucking bet you do.

**Racheal** Kev, please, don't.

**Kevin** Don't what?

**Racheal** Just ...

**Kevin** Don't what, Racheal? I don't *believe* you. So. Can I ask you a question? Rache? Can I? Rache, look at us. Rache, if your perfume is a Christmas present, Racheal, if your perfume is a Christmas present, how come the bottle's not full?

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Kevin** It's not though, is it? Look. There's some gone out of that.

**Racheal** There's never —

**Kevin** Rache, there fucking is. Of course there fucking is. I can see there fucking is just by fucking looking at the cunt.

**Racheal** Kev.

**Kevin** (*picking the bottle up*) Now. If this was a Christmas present from your brother that you got last Saturday yes? And this is the first time I have seen you wear it yes? Then how come there is some taken out of the bottle?

**Racheal** Kev, I swear —

**Kevin** That must mean, Rache, when you think about it and everything, that must mean that either a) your brother gave you a half-full bottle of perfume for your Christmas present, which is a bit fucking mard-arsed of him in my opinion, or b) you've worn it before somewhere else when you went out with someone else, you've worn it for someone else, without letting me know. It must do, Rache, mustn't it?

**Racheal** No, Kev —

**Kevin** It must do. Really. Come on, Rache. I'm not a fucking thick cunt. Which is it?

**Racheal** What?

**Kevin** Which is it? Did your skinny-arsed fucking rat of a brother give you some dodgy cheap shitty bottle of half-filled fucking perfume or have you worn it before? This week? When I've been out? Which is it?

**Racheal** Kev, neither — it's not half —

**Kevin** Which is it?

**Racheal** I can't do this.

**Kevin** Do what?

**Racheal** I haven't got the energy any more, Kevin.

**Kevin** Which is it, Racheal?

**Racheal** It's not half opened.

**Kevin** Racheal, which is it?

**Racheal** Kev.

**Kevin** Don't you fucking lie to me. I'll break your fucking teeth. Which is it?

**Racheal** Kevin, don't.

**Kevin** Which is it, Racheal?

**Racheal** It's neither, I swear.

**Kevin** Why are you lying to me? Racheal? Why?

**Racheal** I'm not.

**Kevin** *(perhaps punches his chest with each beat)* Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

*Throws the perfume against the floor. It smashes. He pulls back. Finishes his can. Stares at her while she talks. Nodding his head. Chewing frantically.*

**Racheal** I thought we could have a night out. Just tonight. Just for the millennium. Just us two. Be nice, wouldn't it? If just for one night, if just one night. It would be nice. I hate this. You're just like fucking Dad. Stinks in here now.

**Kevin** *(very quietly)* Where's your phone?

**Racheal** You what??

**Kevin** *(still)* Where's your phone? Racheal? Your mobile phone.

**Racheal** What do you want my phone for?

**Kevin** *(still, he turns to her)* Where's your fucking phone, Racheal?

**Racheal** I'm not telling you. It's my fucking phone.

**Kevin** *(shouts suddenly)* Fuck.

*Goes to her. Grabs a handful of her hair.*

Where's your fucking phone, Racheal?

**Racheal** Get off me.

**Kevin** Tell me. Where is it?

**Racheal** It's in me bag.

*He lets her go. She falls to the floor.*

That hurt me. You little fuckwad.

*Flashes a glare at her. Raises his fist suddenly. She cowers back. He goes over to her bag. Pulls the stuff out of her bag randomly, wantonly, throwing it around. Pulls her phone out. Finds her phone-book function on it. Lists through the names kept on the phone.*

**Kevin** Where are we? Where are we? Come on? Where are we?

**Racheal** What are you doing?

**Kevin** C, C, C, C, C — D. Danny. Fuck. You lying fucking cunt.

**Racheal** Kev, I swear.

**Kevin** Who's Danny, Racheal? Heh? Who's that? Fucking Danny? Who's fucking Danny, Racheal? Is it Danny Miller? Is it?

**Racheal** Kev, please, don't.

**Kevin** You fucking slag.

*Gets her by her hair. Lifts her up. Throws her across the bed. Presses dial on the phone.*

It's engaged. It's fucking engaged. C'mon, Danny. You fucking cheap cunt fucker.

*Dials redial. It is still engaged.*

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

*He smashes his head into the mirror. Three times. It cracks around him. He slumps down on to the floor. Starts sobbing. Huge big sobs. Wails as he inhales. His shoulders heave. Racheal doesn't move. Stares at him.*

**Kevin** *(tiny broken-hearted voice)* You're my wife. You're supposed to be my wife. See, you know what your problem is? Don't you? You're a fucking tart. Is your problem.

**Racheal** *(simply)* I'm not.

**Kevin** Just a slapper. Just a slag. Worst day of my life day I married you. Hated it. Had to get drunk just to get through it. Manky old slag.

**Racheal** *(again, simply)* I'm not, Kev. Don't say that.

**Kevin** Don't you fucking dare even think about telling me what to do.

*He stares at her for a while. And then stands.*

I'm going out now. I don't know when I'm coming back. I hope you die soon.

*He leaves. She watches him go.*



*Stands up after a while. It hurts. She goes to pick up her wine glass. Drains it. Gets the wine bottle from the fridge and refills her glass. She goes to where **Kevin** has dropped her phone and picks it up. Sits back on the bed. Drinks from her glass. Phones her brother.*

**Racheal** Billy? It's me, Racheal. How are you? Good lad. Are you? That'll be good, won't it? I'm OK, love. I'm fine. I don't know. I don't think so. Kevin's had a bit of a bad one, mate, you with me? No I'm fine. He's just. I hate him, Billy. I want to kill him. I think I might. I fucking could. I bet you. No. I won't. No, don't worry about that. I'll be fine. I will. I'll be magic. I just wanted to talk to you. I was thinking about yer. Got yer perfume on. I have and all. I like it. It's really nice. Oh, fuck him. I think it's lovely. I just wanted to wish you Happy New Year. I know, well. I'm doing it early, aren't I? Happy New Year. I know. Happy New Century. Happy New Millennium. It's mental, int it? Listen, mate, I'm gonna fuck off. I just wanted to, you know, I just wanted to talk to you. No. I'll be, I'm fine. I'm cracking. Yeah. I know. I love you, Bill. Well. I do. I'll see you later. Have a good one. You have a good night, mate. See you later.

*She turns the phone off. Sits up on the bed. Staring out of the window.*

*Stands up after a while.*

*The lights fade. She walks right to the very edge of the stage. Puts on a small black cardigan.*

## Scene 7

*2002. The beer garden at the front of the Elizabethan Pub, Heaton Moor, Stockport.*

*It is ten o'clock at night. Towards the end of summer. The first night when you notice that the temperature has begun to drop.*

*There is a wooden table in the centre of the stage. Two wooden benches are attached, one either side.*

**Racheal Keats**, twenty four, enters. *She has just walked out of the pub. Something about her demeanour, the way she holds herself, the way she glances back to where she came from suggests that something has happened inside the pub to upset her. She stands in the middle of the stage. As though on the cusp of leaving the beer garden. But stops herself. Wraps her arms around herself to keep her warm.*

*After a short while, **Danny Miller**, also aged twenty four, in a short-sleeved shirt and jeans, comes out to find her. He carries her vodka and lime, half drunk, and his half-drunk pint of lager. He expects her to have left the beer garden. When he realises she hasn't he pulls himself up short.*

*She becomes aware of his presence. Straightens. Doesn't look back at him.*

**Danny**(tentative)So. Did you miss us?

**Racheal** (still not looking back, not smiling)Course.

**Danny** Should have rung us. We could have come to see you.

**Racheal** (still not)I know. I'm sorry.

**Danny** Always wanted to go to York.

**Racheal** *(still not)* It's very pretty.

**Danny** Go t'rases. Check out minster. All that.

**Racheal** Good pubs and all.

**Danny** Are there?

**Racheal** Cracking, aye.

**Danny** Are you all right?

**Racheal** Yeah. Funny.

**Danny** What?

**Racheal** *(with a nod back to the pub)* In there. All them cunts. Look at yer. Like. Once you've left you can't ever go back. Who do they think they are?

**Danny** I don't know.

*She turns back to him.*

How long were you there for?

**Racheal** Ten month. Bit more.

**Danny** *pulls out a cigarette. Lights it, looking at her.*

**Danny** Did you enjoy yourself, Racheal?

**Racheal** Yeah. I did. It was all right.

**Danny** Is it very different?

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** *(putting the drinks down next to her)* York. From Stockport?

**Racheal** I don't know. It feels smaller. It's older. With the wall and that. Load of fucking students. Shops are all right.

**Danny** Did you ... ?

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** I don't know.

**Racheal** *smiles. Moves towards him.*

**Danny** *(puts drinks on table)* You make any friends there?

**Racheal** Couple. They were all right. Couple of girls from work. People were well friendly, mind you. Go into pubs and folk just talk to you.

**Danny** What about fellas?

**Racheal** *(turns to face him briefly, with a smile)* What about fellas?

**Danny** Meet anybody?

**Racheal** No one special. Not really. Couple of morons.

**Danny** York City casuals?

**Racheal** Yeah, right.

**Danny** You not cold?

**Racheal** No, I'm fine.

**Danny** What's it like coming back?

**Racheal** It's all right.

**Danny** Notice anything different?

**Racheal** (*grins before she speaks*) You've had your hair cut.

**Danny** No. About Stockport.

**Racheal** Only weird stuff.

**Danny** What like?

**Racheal** I noticed how short the clock tower in Merseyway was.

**Danny** You what?

**Racheal** (*walks once around the table*) When I was a kid I used to think it was massive. Fucking big skyscraper. I couldn't understand how come, when they had programmes about the tallest buildings in the world, I couldn't understand why they never mentioned the clock tower in Merseyway. I went back in there at the weekend. It's tiny. Very squat. Really short. I was quite disappointed. Noticed the viaduct.

**Danny** The viaduct?

**Racheal** I never really paid any attention to it before. I never really noticed it. But I was looking at it, on my way into town. It's actually, y'know, it's quite impressive. There's something about it.

**Danny** Single largest brick structure in the world.

**Racheal** Oh aye?

**Danny** It is actually.

**Racheal** I noticed how many pubs there are. Pubs fucking everywhere in this place. A lot of the shops have changed. Smartened up a bit.

**Danny** Still fucking grotty, mind you.

**Racheal** I don't know. Some of them are all right. And I was up at the station. Looking down. Noticed the way the valley curves down.

**Danny** Oh aye?

**Racheal** When I was little, I used to love all geography. All about continental drift. And the ice age. Stuff like that. And looking at the town centre I could just have imagined what it

must have been like. All the ice and that. How it would have settled. See all the curves of where the water was. Imagine what it was like underneath the sea. That was a bit mad.

**Danny** Sounds it.

*She is on the point of sitting at the table. But then doesn't. Takes a drink. Moves away again. Folds her arms again. He settles on the bench.*

**Racheal** Funny going back into Manchester. All the rain. Went in with Billy. It were pissing down. Felt, kind of, it felt all right. Felt like it was meant to be raining here. Felt OK. You know what I mean?

**Danny** Built on rain. Manchester. All towns round here.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Danny** *(follows her)* Whole city only settled where it is because the air was so moist. Made it all right for cotton industry. All factories and that. If it hadn't rained so much it wouldn't have even been here.

**Racheal** Is that right?

**Danny** Fucking dead right.

**Racheal** Yer know a lot of funny stuff, you, don't you?

**Danny** It's not funny. It's good.

**Racheal** I did miss you. Funny that, int it? Mind you. You little bugger. Yer could have rang us.

**Danny** I couldn't find you.

**Racheal** Could have told us.

**Danny** Didn't know where you were.

**Racheal** Could have asked our kid.

**Danny** He was —

**Racheal** Well, our dad then.

**Danny** I ...

**Racheal** *(moves away from him)* Could have tried. I would have loved to have come. I'd love to meet her, Sarah.

**Danny** *(stays where he is)* You'd like her.

**Racheal** You reckon?

**Danny** She's very, I don't know, she's, she's tough. Is what she is. She's not thick. You know? Don't take shit from anybody. I, I, I really, yer know, I love her and that.

**Racheal** I should hope so.

**Danny** I do.

**Racheal** (*turns to face him*) How old's Hazel?

**Danny** She's two next September.

**Racheal** Good age that, int it?

**Danny** She's funny.

**Racheal** With all the talking and that?

**Danny** Yer should hear her.

**Racheal** I can imagine. Would y'ave another one?

**Danny** Maybe. One day. I hope so.

**Racheal** I bet yer a great dad, you.

**Danny** I don't know about that.

**Racheal** I bet you are. I bet she loves you like mad.

**Danny** (*drinks*) I wish I didn't have to work so much. So I could spend more time with her. All that.

**Racheal** How is your work?

**Danny** It's all right. Nice and quiet this time of year. Everybody's fucked off on holiday. Gets a bit mad around Christmas. All cards and that.

**Racheal** You got a uniform?

**Danny** Course.

**Racheal** I bet you look dead cute in it.

**Danny** Fuck off.

**Racheal** Like yer dressing up or summit.

**Danny** Sometimes think I'll jack it in.

**Racheal** Why?

**Danny** Sort something out. Set something up. Work for myself or summit. Sometimes I think I'd like to do that.

**Racheal** Doing what?

*While he talks he taps his fag packet.*

**Danny** Mate of mine's got a little company. Does panelling. Yer know, for people's houses. Pubs and that. Couple of months back he was having a bit of a rush on. Asked us if I could help him out. It were magic.

*He takes a cigarette out.*

**Racheal** Was it?

*He points with his cigarette to punctuate his observations.*

**Danny** It was quite, you know, it was creative. Yer had to think and that. But then after a bit, you get into it, get a rhythm going. And when you look at it all done. It looks quite, like, quite beautiful. You just, you just ended up thinking just — well, well, what the fuck? Why am I doing this? Why am I doing my job when I could be making panels? Be good, wouldn't it?

*Lights cigarette.*

**Racheal** Be great.

**Danny** Get a little van. Pop Hazel up in the passenger seat. Whizz all round. Doing panels. I'd love that. I think about it quite a lot.

**Racheal** You should do it.

**Danny** Yeah. Maybe.

*Beat.*

*He looks down at his cigarette. Smokes from it. Embarrassed by giving himself away a little. Racheal smiles at him.*

Rache.

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Danny** I was sorry to hear about Kevin.

**Racheal** (*turning away*) Oh yeah.

**Danny** He sounds like he was a fucking cunt.

**Racheal** He was.

**Danny** Yer seen him? Since you've come back?

**Racheal** Fuck off.

**Danny** Good. I'm glad. I don't think you should either. He don't deserve you.

**Racheal** No. He don't.

**Danny** I couldn't believe it. When I heard what he'd done.

**Racheal** (*turning back*) It was just a big. Horrible. Mistake. I should never have even. I don't know what I was thinking about. Just with, just with, with Lucy and Chris and everybody seemed to be, and he was there. And he was quite, yer know, he still is, quite handsome. He asks us. I just think, well, Rache, yer may as well. It's convenient.

*Looks straight at him.*

How shit is that?

**Danny** I know.

**Racheal** Convenient. I hope you never do anything like that because it's convenient, Danny. I really hope you don't, love.

*Beat.*

*She looks away only briefly. Goes to the table again. Stands by it, resting her weight on her knee against it.*

You see much of Chris and Lucy?

**Danny** Yeah. From time to time. You should give 'em a ring.

**Racheal** I will.

**Danny** Go out with Chris every so often. Have a bevvy.

**Racheal** They happy?

**Danny** Lucy's expecting.

**Racheal** Is she?

**Danny** Next February.

**Racheal** Fucking hell. Are they excited?

**Danny** Yeah. She is. She'll be great. Comes round to play with Hazel every now and then. Hazel loves her. I think Chris is a bit freaked out.

**Racheal** Bless him.

**Danny** Yer get like that. Most blokes. I think. And then when the baby's born. It's just, it's different. It changes. They live up in Moor.

**Racheal** Do they?

**Danny** Top of Dials tone Road.

**Racheal** Oh aye.

**Danny** Back behind of Elm's House.

**Racheal** Ha!

*She pushes herself away from the table again,*

**Danny** What?

**Racheal** That's where our gran lived.

**Danny** Is it?

**Racheal** Yeah. She died last year. *(Beat.)* Weird.

**Danny** What?

**Racheal** How small things are.

**Danny** Yeah.

*Beat. He moves towards her slightly.*

How's your dad?

**Racheal** He's all right. Bit drunk. Can be a bit of a fuckhead.

**Danny** You staying with him?

**Racheal** For the time being. It's all right. I don't see much of him. He sleeps quite a lot of the time.

**Danny** If you ever want a break, y'know, Rache? We've got a spare room and that. Could come and crash with us.

**Racheal** Thanks. I'll be all right. He's changed.

**Danny** Has he?

**Racheal** He seems much more gentle.

**Danny** Right. That's good.

**Racheal** In the morning and that he brings us a cup of tea in bed, if he's up.

**Danny** Well, we wouldn't do that for yer. That's certainly fucking true. (*He moves closer.*)How's your Billy?

**Racheal** He's Billy. Yer know. Not been run over for a long time.

**Danny** Yer what?

**Racheal** Do yer not remember? He were always getting, every week, for a while, he couldn't move without being hit by a bloody car.

**Danny** I don't remember.

**Racheal** It was never serious. Years ago now.

**Danny** When did he get out?

**Racheal** February.

**Danny** Is he getting any help or anything?

**Racheal** Bits. He goes to see probation. He's trying to sort himself out with another job. It's not easy.

**Danny** No.

*She moves away from him.*

**Racheal**(*talking out*)But he's done well. Yer hear stories of people who go down. Getting all fucked up with all kinds of stuff. He don't. He don't do drugs. Nowt like that. He just. He really tries. I hope ... (*Turns back.*)This is a very big chance for him. I hope he doesn't fuck things up this time. I hope he'll be all right.

**Danny** I'm sure he will.

**Racheal** You should go and see him. He'd love to, you know. He always really liked you.

**Danny** Did he?

**Racheal** He looked up to you.

**Danny** Fucking hell.



**Racheal** You know he did.

*Beat.*

*She looks at Danny before she speaks to him.*

Danny.

**Danny** Yeah.

**Racheal** Yer know you said you loved Sarah?

**Danny** Yeah.

**Racheal** Would you say you were in love with her as well?

**Danny** I think so. Yeah. I would.

**Racheal** That's good.

**Danny** Yeah. I think it is.

**Racheal** What do you think the difference is?

**Danny** I don't know.

**Racheal** Do you know what I think the difference is?

**Danny** Go on.

**Racheal** I think if you're in love with somebody then what you've got is a pure compatibility. There's something, it's just, it's pure. Is what it is. I think there's something pure about it.

**Danny** Maybe.

**Racheal** Just pure. *(Beat.)*I've never had that. Not with anybody. Never. You know what the closest I ever came was?

**Danny** What?

**Racheal** When I was with you. I thought ... We did all right, didn't we? And you know what? You know what I was thinking, what I was going to? Actually. You know what I was going to ask you? You know what I was going to ask? Do you think, did you ever think, if I asked you to leave Sarah, and leave Hazel, and come and live somewhere with me, you'd say no, wouldn't you?

*Long pause. The two don't shake eye contact from one another.*

**Danny***(very quietly)*Yes. I would.

**Racheal** I knew you would.

**Danny** I'm sorry.

**Racheal***(looking away from him)*No. Don't be. Don't be sorry, Danny. Honestly. It was just something I was thinking. *(Looks back to him again.)*I think about you all the time.

**Danny** I know.

**Racheal** Sometimes I just sit down and I just think why the fuck did I do that?

**Danny** I know.

**Racheal** I, I, I ...

**Danny** It's hard. Int it?

*She looks at him. And then turns away and can't look back.*

*After a pause.*

**Racheal** I keep having these nightmares.

**Danny** Nightmares?

**Racheal** Stupid ones. About our grandad. And our nana. About all these folk. Fucking Paul Castle's brother. Sarah Briard.

**Danny** Who?

**Racheal** Just this girl from our primary school. She died when I was ten. She wanted to play for Man U. I keep dreaming about people I know and who have died. It does my head in. Dream they're in the house with us. Watching us.

*Long pause.*

**Danny** Yer know what I think?

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** What I think about ghosts?

**Racheal** What?

**Danny** I don't think they exist, Racheal.

**Racheal**(*turns to him and then away*)Don't you?

**Danny** I think you need to go somewhere.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Danny** Somewhere, maybe, maybe, maybe somewhere you used to go with yer grandad or your brother or your mum —

**Racheal** My mum?

**Danny** Or summit. And just spend a night there. Watch the morning come up.

**Racheal** What the fuck are you going on about, you, eh?

**Danny** It's just something I think. It might help. I don't know. (*Pause.*)Rache. (*Pause.*)Rache, look at us. (*Pause.*)Yer know when yer have a mental image of somebody. When you close your eyes and think of somebody just off the top of your head. When I do that and think of you, yer know what I see? (*No response.*)I see you in the morning, on the first morning I stayed over at your house. Waking up. Watching you lying asleep next to me. You looked,

you looked. It was like. I think about that more than you probably think I do. *(Pause)* Rache, I'm really sorry. I can't. I just can't.

**Racheal** I know. All right? I know.

*She dries her eyes. Looks back at him.*

**Danny** You all right?

*She laughs once. Gently. Smiles at him for a moment.*

What? What are you smiling about?

**Racheal** You.

**Danny** What about me?

**Racheal** It's just, it's good to see you. I'm glad you're doing all right. Yer know?

**Danny** Yes. I do.

*Beat. She walks over to him at the table.*

You know you'll be all right, mate, don't you?

**Racheal** Everybody keeps fucking saying that.

**Danny** You will. You'll be, you'll be fucking great, Rache. I swear.

*She touches his face with her hand. Lets it fall. Holds his hand. Squeezes it.*

*Lights dim.*

**Racheal** goes back to sit in the car. **Danny** exits. **Billy** joins **Racheal**.

## Scene 8

*2002. A parked Vauxhall Cavalier in the car park of the flats on Lancashire Hill in Stockport. We should see the interior of the car stripped bare towards the edge of the stage.*

*Isolating light on the car.*

**Racheal Keats**, aged twenty-four, and **Billy Keats**, nineteen, stare out looking up at the flats and around the hill into the town.

*It is four o'clock in the morning.*

**Racheal** is in the driver's seat. **Billy** in the passenger seat. He tries to lower it as far back as it will go. Tries to sleep. Can't. Raises it back up again. Lights a cigarette.

**Racheal** Shouldn't smoke. Knacker your lungs. Make you sterile. Give you cancer.

**Billy** stares at her in utter disbelief.

**Racheal** 'S true.

**Billy** *(about her audacity rather than her science)* I don't believe you.

**Racheal** Well, it is.

**Billy** Do you know what time it is?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Billy** Well then.

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** This is stupid.

**Racheal** Yer don't have to stay here. I'll be all right on my own.

**Billy** Racheal.

**Racheal** I'm not a little baby, Bill.

**Billy** I'm not leaving you sat out here on yer tod. You said you wanted me to come with you.

**Racheal** I do.

**Billy** Well, I'm here.

**Racheal** Well, open the window.

*He does. Yawns. Stretches. Flicks fag ash out of the window. Turns to her.*

**Billy** What were it you wanted to ask us?

**Racheal** You what?

**Billy** Before. Said you had summit to ask us. What were it?

**Racheal** It can wait.

**Billy** I'm knackered, me. Honestly. I'm fucked.

*Long pause. Big, big, big yawn from Billy. His movements become agitated. Perhaps he starts tapping his feet under his chair. Drumming on his knees.*

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** Racheal.

**Racheal** Do you remember when we came here with Mum? When Dad locked us out?

**Billy** Yeah.

**Racheal** Do you remember that?

**Billy** Course I do.

**Racheal** Mad that, weren't it?

**Billy** She thumped us.

**Racheal** I know. I remember.

*Pause.*

I knew then that she was gonna go. Y'know? I figured it out.

*Pause.*

I never told anybody that. You're the first person. Keep your feet still. Always fucking drumming, like your wired up to the mains or summit.

*Beat. He does.*

Not changed that much really, has it?

**Billy** No

**Racheal** Used to like it here. It were all right. Me and Leanne Macynntyre. Come down here. Look for Ronald Abbey. Smoke fags. Play near the river. Look at the motorway. Throw stones at it.

**Billy** That's fucking dangerous. Yer can get sent down for that. I'm telling.

**Racheal** Don't.

**Billy** *(opens his car door, sits sideways, stretching his legs)* Fucking am.

**Racheal** Wonder whatever happened to Leanne Macynntyre.

**Billy** *(lighting another cigarette)* She fucked off.

**Racheal** Did she?

**Billy** Ages back. Her and her mum. Went up Sheffield, I think. You remember her mum? I used to fancy her summit rotten.

**Racheal** Fucking hell.

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** Just ... I wonder what she's doing. Right now. Right this second.

**Billy** Probably fucking sleeping, I expect. In a fucking bed.

**Racheal** Wonder what Ronald Abbey's doing.

**Billy** Having a fucking wank, knowing him. Thinking about you and Leanne Macynntyre. Happiest days of his life, they were. Never been the same since.

**Racheal** Sometimes I get quite sad.

**Billy** You what?

**Racheal** Thinking about people like Leanne Macynntyre. Ronald Abbey.

**Billy** What the fuck are you going on about, Rache?

**Racheal** Thinking about what they're doing. Dad.

**Billy** Yer live with Dad. You fucking live in the room next door to him.

**Racheal** Chris and Lucy. Danny. Kevin. Mum. That's the worst one. I get scared about people who've died. And sad about people who I don't really see much any more.

**Billy** You're fucking weird.

**Racheal** But I'm not sad just now.

**Billy** Thank fuck for that.

**Racheal** I'm all right. Just, y'know, thinking. *(Beat.)* I saw Danny last week.

**Billy** Did ya?

**Racheal** He told me to say hello to you.

**Billy** Right. Hello, Danny. How's he doing?

**Racheal** He's doing all right. He's doing great. Got married. Got a little girl. Hazel. She's two.

**Billy** That's good, int it? I always used to like him. He was all right.

**Racheal** Yeah. He was.

**Billy** Bit chicken, like. But he was all right. *(Beat.)* Yer know what I think's mental.

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** *(gesturing out)* Thinking about all t'athletes. Down Manchester.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Billy** All gathered together, like, in one place. Getting ready to compete. I think that's a bit mad. Can y' imagine?

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** Being them.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Billy** Being an athlete. Fucking off all over the world. Running and jumping. Being the best in the world and going all over the place doing your stuff. That'd be mental, wouldn't it?

**Racheal** Yeah.

**Billy** It would though, wouldn't it, Rache? I'd love that. I used to be a right cracking little runner, me.

**Racheal** Shoulda stuck at it.

**Billy** Shoulda done.

*Climbs back in the car. Lowers his seat slightly. Leans back.*

**Racheal** Billy.

**Billy** Rache.

**Racheal** What are you gonna do?

**Billy** You what?

**Racheal** What are you gonna do? It's been five month now.

**Billy** I know. Is this what you wanted to ask us about?

**Racheal** Yer not ...

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** Yer not gonna start nicking stuff again, are you?

**Billy** Is this what you wanted to ask us about, Rache?

**Racheal** Not only this. You're not though, are you?

**Billy** No. No way, mate.

**Racheal** I really don't want you to go back down.

**Billy** Yer fucking telling me.

**Racheal** I worry about you.

**Billy** Do you?

**Racheal** Because I know it's difficult. Getting a job and that.

**Billy** Difficult int the fucking word, Rache, you with me?

**Racheal** Billy, what was it like?

**Billy** What was what like?

**Racheal** Inside.

**Billy** It was horrible.

**Racheal** Why?

**Billy** Just ...

**Racheal** What was horrible about it, Billy?

**Billy** I don't really want to talk about this, Racheal.

**Racheal** Was it different to young offenders'?

**Billy** Yes.

**Racheal** How?

**Billy** Look, Rache, I told you... Can we just fucking drop it?

**Racheal** You should talk about it.

**Billy** *rolls over in the car seat, away from Racheal. Covers his head with his coat.*

**Billy** Fucking hell.

**Racheal** It might help.

**Billy** Fuck's sake.

**Racheal** Sorry. *(Pause.)* I worry about yer.

**Billy** Yer said. Don't bother.

**Racheal** It's 'cause I like yer.

*Pause. He looks at her very briefly, still lying down. Uncovers his head.*

**Billy** It was nasty. *(Pause.)* Does your head in. Gets me thinking odd stuff.

**Racheal** What like? What like, Billy? What kind of stuff do yer think about?

*Long pause.*

**Billy** Y'know, at times I imagine myself getting fucking smacked up something rotten or summit.

**Racheal** Like what?

**Billy** Like heading a flying concrete football. Getting smacked in the face by a metal girder. Having an iron spike cutting right through my brain. Yer know what I mean?

**Racheal** I'm not sure.

**Billy** I think about that stuff when I think about going down.

**Racheal** I see.

*Long pause. Billy props himself up. Looks out of the window.*

**Billy** Do you know how old the world is?

**Racheal** No.

**Billy** Five hundred million years old. They reckon.

**Racheal** How do you know that?

**Billy** I read it. In nick. And scientists are starting to think that it might be even older.

**Racheal** Are they?

**Billy** Do you know how long human beings have been around on it?

**Racheal** How long?

**Billy** Fifty thousand years. It's fucking nothing. We don't matter a jot. Not one jot.

**Racheal** I don't think that's true.

**Billy** It fucking is.

**Racheal** Did you cry ever?

**Billy** Yer what?

**Racheal** When you were in prison did you used to cry? *(No response.)* What's your favourite colour?

**Billy** I'm not playing this.

**Racheal** Go on.

**Billy** No. I'm too tired. I'm all —



**Racheal** Yer know what I reckon?

**Billy** What?

**Racheal** You know what I think. I think that nobody or nothing should make you cry. Ever. And I'm sorry because I know that there are some things that I just don't know about prison and about what it was like and what happened and all that. But I do get you now. I do get you. And I didn't always but I do now. And I love yer. And I do think that you will be all right

**Billy** You don't know what you're talking about.

**Racheal** You know I said that there was something I was going to ask you.

**Billy** Yeah.

**Racheal** Billy, I think I might go away again.

**Billy** Right.

**Racheal** But for a long time this time. Not just a few months. For years. And maybe, go, maybe even leave the country even. Go and live somewhere else completely. I wanted to talk to you about it. I wanted to know what you thought about it.

**Billy** What I thought about it? What's it got to do with me?

**Racheal** I wanted to check that you'd be all right. If I went away.

**Billy** If I'd be all right?

**Racheal** I'm still not sure. I still, I haven't really decided if I should go now or if I should go at all or if I should —

**Billy** I think you should. I think you should go. I think you should go now. I think you should just fuck off.

**Racheal** Yer what?

**Billy** I think you should.

**Racheal** Right.

**Billy** I mean, people should. You know? It's not enough to just stay somewhere. You can't do, all your life, you can't do things just for me. Or for Dad. Or any of that. It'd fucking kill your head, mate, you with me?

**Racheal** I am. Yeah.

**Billy** This place is just, it's odd. You should go and look at stuff. You might come back, mightn't you?

**Racheal** I might do. Yeah.

*Pause. He looks at her. She looks up at the flat.*

I want to go to college.

**Billy** That's a top idea.

**Racheal** Go and get trained up. Get some qualifications.

**Billy** Qualifications?

**Racheal** I want to work as a nursery nurse. Do it properly. Get certificates and that.

**Billy** You'd be very good at that.

**Racheal** And I really want to get a dog.

**Billy** A dog?

**Racheal** I couldn't get a dog in the flats and Stockport isn't a very good place for a dog anyway.

**Billy** What are you talking about? Loads of people have dogs in Stockport. Fucking hundreds. Anyway. Dogs stink.

**Racheal** They don't.

**Billy** They fucking do. *(Beat.)* I hope it works.

**Racheal** What?

**Billy** This. *(Beat.)* Or going away. Or whatever.

*Long pause. The two of them look out.*

I think about Mum all the time.

**Racheal** So do I.

**Billy** I hope she's all right.

**Racheal** So do I.

**Billy** She broke my heart though.

**Racheal** Mine and all.

**Billy** I'm going to go to sleep now.

**Racheal** All right.

**Billy** If I can get fucking comfy.

**Racheal** Good luck.

**Billy** G'night.

**Racheal** Goodnight.

*Long pause.*

Sun's coming up.

**Billy** Yer what?

**Racheal** Look. Up over hills. Sun's coming up.

*She points out of car window. He moves his head to look but doesn't move out of his reclined position. Settles his head back down. She looks straight ahead for a while.*

*Blackout.*