
This play, like everything, is for Poll.

‘Suppose, just suppose, nothing had ever happened. Suppose this was for the first time. It doesn’t hurt to suppose. Say none of the other had happened. You know what I mean? Then what? I said.’

Raymond Carver, *Chef’s House*

*Port* was first performed at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, on 12 November 2002. The cast was as follows:

**Racheal Keats**
**Billy Keats**
**Danny Miller**
**Christine Keats/Anne Dickinson**
**Jonathan Keats/Kevin Brake**
**Ronald Abbey/Jake Moran**
**Chris Bennet**
**Lucy Moore**

Directed by Marianne Elliott
Designed by Rae Smith
Lighting by John Buswell
Sound by Ian Dickinson

Emma Lowndes
Andrew Sheridan
William Ash
Siobhan Finneran
Nicholas Siddi
Fred Ridgeway
Colin Parry
Rachel Brogan
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

The characters that are bracketed together should be played by the same actor. Although distinct there are fundamental shared resonances in their relationships with Racheal Keats.

The play takes place in a variety of locations in and around Stockport, Greater Manchester, between 1988 and 2002.

The set should remain spare and non-naturalistic throughout. The locations should be evoked by space, detail and lighting rather than replicated.

The character of Racheal Keats must remain on stage throughout the play. In between scenes we should be able to observe the adoption of nuances of physicality, aspect and dress that the actor employs in order to dramatise her increasing maturity.

An interval may fall after Scene Five.

A note on punctuation:
- denotes interruption or a sudden halt
  . . . denotes a trailing off

Scene One

1988. A parked Vauxhall Cavalier in the car park 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. He 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.

Rachel (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  Shut it.

Rachel  No.

Billy  I'm gonna kill you.

Rachel (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  Shut it.

Rachel  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.

Rachel (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.

Rachel (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.

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

Billy  I hate you.

Rachel  Int he, Mum? Int he a dickhead?

Billy  Shut it.

Rachel  No.

Billy  I'm gonna kill you.

Rachel (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  Shut it.

Rachel  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 slams back at the window. Rachel sits still.

Rachel  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.

Rachel  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 snacks 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 eyces.
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.
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 window 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.
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.
Scene Two

Lights dim. In the dimness Christine exits. Rachael 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.

1990. The café of Slepping 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. Rachael 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 Rachael. Rachael 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. Rachael looks up at him.

Rachael What is it?

Billy What?

Rachael Yer homework.

Billy (looking at the Fanta fridge) Maths.

Rachael Yer want any help?

Billy No. It’s easy. It’s adding up. It’s stupid.

Rachael 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?

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.


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?
**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.*

**Billy**  What?
Ronald: Hello, Billy. Racheal. Your dad said you were down here.
Billy: Arright, Ronald?
Racheal: Ronald.
Ronald: How are the two of you?
Billy: Arright, thank you.
Racheal: You been to see Grandad?
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 grandad. 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?
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 yourselves?

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 natter on about, you, eh? What she natter on about, Billy?

Billy Don’t know.

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


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 collars. 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 andreties it in a fat knot. Pulls her skirt up, tightens it slightly. Applies some make-up. Ties her jumper round her waist.

Scene Three

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, sniff)  S’arright.
Racheal  S’fuckin’ never. S’fucking cheap. Grottzi. 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. Nick’s owt, don’t he?

Racheal  What?

Chris  Billy. Nick’s 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.


**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?


**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 Castle?

**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 Castle’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.**

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**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  Arright. 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 lob 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?
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 arright 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 Four

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.

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.
Anne I've not.

Beat. Rachel turns to her.

Rachel Have yer seen Mum, Nana?

Anne Have I what?

Rachel Mum. Have you seen her?

Anne No. I haven't.

Rachel Do you know where she's gone?

Anne No, I don't. Do you?

Rachel No. I've no idea.

Anne Yer what?

Rachel I said I've no idea.

Anne No.

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

Anne What, love?

Rachel Don't you miss her?

Anne Who?

Rachel Mum.

Anne (smiling) Yes. I do.

Rachel 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.

Rachel 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. Rachel stares at her.

Rachel Do you miss Grandad ever?

Anne What did you say, love?

Rachel I asked you if you ever missed Grandad?

Anne No. No I don't. No.

Rachel I miss him all the time.

Pause. Rachel stands, moves away.

Anne Have you got a boyfriend yet?

Rachel No. Nana. I haven't.

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

Rachel Nana. I'm going to get a flat.

Anne Are you, love?

Rachel Up Edgely.

Anne That's nice.

Rachel I'm dead excited.

Anne Are you?


Anne Has it?

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

Anne Good girl.

Rachel 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, disbeliefing. 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?
Anne You wouldn’t.
Racheal What?
Anne You wouldn’t, love. Would you? Not really. You never would.
Racheal You what?
Anne Would you though, love? You wouldn’t. 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.
Aine 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.
过去了她的一块巧克力并放进了她的嘴里。
Here, Nana, have some more.
过去了更多巧克力，她拿着在手里。
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 Five

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.


Danny Rache.

Racheal (succeeding) Got it.

Danny (folding back) Arrrgghh.

Racheal 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'nt 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. Breaths 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 summit. 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  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.

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, wisty 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 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.


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 Six

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 open 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 got to 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  Straps 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 what?
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?
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
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.


*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?


**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.

\textit{Flashes a glare at her. Raises his fist suddenly. She covers 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.}

\textbf{Kevin} Where are we? Where are we? Come on? Where are we?

\textbf{Racheal} What are you doing?


\textbf{Racheal} Kev, I swear.


\textbf{Racheal} Kev, please, don’t.

\textbf{Kevin} You fucking slag.

\textit{Gets her by her hair. Lifts her up. Throws her across the bed. Presses dial on the phone.}


\textit{Dials residual. It is still engaged.}


\textit{He smashes his head into the mirror. Three times. It cracks around him. He stumps down on to the floor. Starts sobbing. Huge big sobs. Wails as he inhales. His shoulders heave. Racheal doesn’t move. Stares at him.}

\textbf{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.

\textbf{Racheal (simply)} I’m not.

\textbf{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.

\textbf{Racheal (again, simply)} I’m not, Kev. Don’t say that.

\textbf{Kevin} Don’t you fucking dare even think about telling me what to do.

\textit{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.

\textit{He leaves. She watches him go.}

\textit{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.}

\textbf{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.

\textit{She turns the phone off. Sits up on the bed. Staring out of the window.}
The lights fade. She walks right to the very edge of the stage. Puts on a small black cardigan.

Scene Seven

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’races. 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?
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 f**k? 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.
Rachael  I will.
Danny  Go out with Chris every so often. Have a bevvy.
Rachael  They happy?
Danny  Lucy’s expecting.
Rachael  Is she?
Danny  Next February.
Rachael  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.
Rachael  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.
Rachael  Do they?
Danny  Top of Dialstone Road.
Rachael  Oh aye.
Danny  Back behind of Elm’s House.
Rachael  Ha!
*She pushes herself away from the table again.*
Danny  What?
Rachael  That’s where our gran lived.
Danny  Is it?
Rachael  Yeah. She died last year. *(Beat.)* Weird.
Danny  What?
Rachael  How small things are.
Danny  Yeah.

*Beat. He moves towards her slightly.*

How’s your dad?
Rachael  He’s all right. Bit drunk. Can be a bit of a
fucking fuckhead.
Danny  You staying with him?
Rachael  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, Rach? We’ve
got a spare room and that. Could come and crash with us.
Rachael  Thanks. I’ll be all right. He’s changed.
Danny  Has he?
Rachael  He seems much more gentle.
Danny  Right. That’s good.
Rachael  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?
Rachael  He’s Billy, Yer know. Not been run over for a
long time.
Danny  Yer what?
Rachael  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.
Rachael  It was never serious. Years ago now.
Danny  When did he get out?
Rachael  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 do? 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.

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Scene Eight

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.


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 Macintyre. 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 Macintyre.
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 Macintyre. 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 Macintyre. 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, isn’t 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 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.


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.