



FIGHTING WORDS

The write to right.

Young Playwrights 2020-2021

The Plays

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Till Next Time

Sam Ingamells

Characters:

ALEC, 17

OHDRAN (Oran), 17

The scene opens with two boys sitting at desks, one filled with trophies and loving photos and the other quite bare. ALEC is the one in the filled room whilst OHDRAN is in the bare room. They read out the messages that they are sending to each other.

ALEC

You honestly need to be locked up lmao.

OHDRAN

For liking pineapple on pizza?

ALEC

Yes, for exactly that, aha.

OHDRAN

Are you as perfect as you seem, or do you have a dark secret?

Rolls his eyes.

ALEC

Ahhh, don't make me blush, and there is a dark secret no one knows. Nah, I'm kidding. I have many issues though.

OHDRAN

Then blush, bitch. Anyway, what are your issues Mr. Perfect?

ALEC

Well, I mean for starters I'm gag.

OHDRAN

Gag? Oh, I'll make you gag.

ALEC

Gay, I meant gay. Wait, what do you mean?

OHDRAN

You're so innocent, it's cute. I'm sorry, how is being gay an issue? As far as I'm aware, I'm as gay as they come and my only issue, if you even want to call it that, is eating pineapple on pizza.

ALEC

Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean it like that at all. Sorry.

OHDRAN

Hey, it's not who my dad wants me to be either but I'm not going to let him dictate who I am, it's not his life.

ALEC

Very true, can't disagree with that.

ODHRAN

And I would never want to disagree with you

ALEC

Weird way to flirt but go off, I guess.

ODHRAN

Oh, you thought we were flirting?

ALEC

I just assumed that we were, sorry.

ODHRAN

I'm kidding. I was just trying to mess around. Don't be sorry, I'm the one that messed up, I guess.

ALEC

I guess we found one of my flaws, huh? Being an absolute buffoon and not getting jokes.

ODHRAN

You are not a buffoon. Don't say that about yourself. You certainly don't look like a buffoon.

ALEC

Wait, before I respond, that was you flirting right?

ODHRAN

...Yes.

ALEC

Well, then you're not too bad yourself. I might even call you handsome. Sexy, even.

ODHRAN

See, now I'm blushing.

ALEC

I'm being serious, the number of times I've stalked your Instagram just simping over you would probably get me put in prison for stalking. Oh god, I shouldn't have said that, you must think I'm a freak.

ODHRAN

How'd you even find my Instagram? It's nothing special anyway. And now I want your Insta, it's only fair that I get to stalk it too.

ALEC

I could give you my Instagram, or I could give you my number.

ODHRAN

Oh, now that was smooth. Are you serious right now?

ALEC

Deadly... Please?

ODHRAN

Only because you're so desperate.

The actors mime out typing on the computer before a chime comes from ALEC's phone. He takes it out and begins typing on his phone. OHDRAN takes out his phone and replies. They both move to their beds and lay on top of it.

OHDRAN

So, now you have my number.

ALEC

So, now you have *my* number

OHDRAN

Yeah, I guess I do.

ALEC

Where are you from, anyway? I know you're from Ireland, but whereabouts? You know what, you don't have to answer that. I know it's maybe a bit creepy to ask.

ODHRAN

Northern Ireland actually. I live in a place called Carrickfergus, I don't know if you've heard of it, you?

ALEC

I actually have heard of it, or at least I had after I looked it up. We are about two hours away from each other, so far enough to make me upset but not far enough to ruin all hope.

ODHRAN

Wait, so where are you from? And hope for what?

ALEC

Malahide, it's just outside Dublin. And hope for us, you know? More than endless pining and flirting. Because you're cute and sweet and incredibly smart, and I really want something more for us.

Pause

Forget what I just said, I was just picturing a life where we could be in a romance novel, it was unrealistic.

OHDRAN

Ok, that was the sweetest thing anyone has sent to me, ever. And you might want to take a look in the mirror cause you're adorable.

ALEC

Stop, that's actually so sweet.

OHDRAN

Not to be a party pooper but it is currently 3am, and I do have school in the morning, even if it is only online, so I should probably sleep.

ALEC

Of course, I'm sorry for keeping you up. Night, pineapple-pizza

OHDRAN

Really? Fine, two can play at that game. Night, stalker.

Both of them put their phones down and go to sleep.

They wake up and both go back to the desks, looking at their phones periodically, waiting for the other to message. Finally, ALEC messages.

ALEC

Hey, you.

OHDRAN

Speak of the devil, I was just thinking about you.

ALEC

And yet I was the one who messaged.

OHDRAN

I am currently in the middle of class, you know?

ALEC

Oh sorry, is this a bad time? I can message later. Or not, up to you. No pressure.

OHDRAN

Stop stressing, I'm not going anywhere. I'd much rather talk to you than listen to my teacher anyway.

ALEC

Class is that bad then, huh?

OHDRAN

Boring, so very boring. Come save me?

ALEC

I wish I could, but I've got my own boring class.

OHDRAN

Wait, so are you in sixth form?

ALEC

Sixth form?

OHDRAN

Oh, sorry, forgot how your education system is different. How old are you?

ALEC

17. You're not like 14 or something are you?

OHDRAN

Thank god. No, I'm 17 as well.

ALEC

Can I ask you something?

OHDRAN

That absolutely fills me with dread, but shoot.

ALEC

Do you maybe want to call later? We don't have to, I just thought it would be nice.

OHDRAN

I would absolutely love to.

ALEC

Really?!?

OHDRAN

Yeah, I wanna hear your voice.

ALEC

No, you really do not.

OHDRAN

See now you've said that, I need to hear your voice.

ALEC

I absolutely hate my voice.

OHDRAN

I can promise you that I won't hate it.

ALEC

But what if you do?

OHDRAN

Look, even if you have the worst, most scratchy high-pitched voice in the world, it wouldn't put me off you. Everything you said yesterday? You were talking about yourself.

ALEC

Can you get any better?

OHDRAN

Yes, I could be you.

ALEC

Now that was smooth.

OHDRAN

I hate to say it, but is it ok if I get back to my class?

ALEC

You don't always have to ask, if you need to go then just go.

OHDRAN

Ok, I'll talk later.

ALEC

Sounds perfect.

They both put their phones on the desk and place their attention to the computers in front of them. The lights warm up to indicate the passing of time. As the light turns warm OHDRAN goes and lies on his bed whilst ALEC relaxes on the chair.

ALEC

Ready?

OHDRAN

Ready

We hear a ringtone as OHDRAN rushes to answer, fumbling with the phone.

ALEC

Hello?

OHDRAN

Oh my God, hi. I mean -

Lowers voice dramatically

Hello there.

ALEC

Laughing

Stop.

OHDRAN

Continuing the lower voice

Stop what? What are you talking about?

ALEC

Please, before my ma comes in and I have to explain why I'm talking to a stranger.

OHDRAN

Did you just call me a stranger?

ALEC

I mean, yes? You kind of are

OHDRAN

Can't say otherwise. So, how are you?

ALEC

I'm not too bad, yourself?

OHDRAN

I'm feeling pretty good now that I'm talking to a cute boy. And can I just say that your voice is absolutely adorable. It's amazing.

ALEC

No, don't say that. I can't fall for you as a closeted gay boy who has no way to get to you.

ODHRAN

One can dream. And I do.

ALEC

So... what do your parents do?

OHDRAN

Huh?

ALEC

It was the first thing I could think of to ask.

OHDRAN

It's fine, it's a good question. My dad is an electrician and my mam... well, she died 11 years ago.

ALEC

I'm so sorry, I didn't know. I feel so stupid.

OHDRAN

Why? You had no reason to know, I never mentioned it.

ALEC

I still should've thought.

OHDRAN

It's fine, honestly. What do your parents do anyway?

ALEC

My dad redesigns buildings and designs extensions for houses, but he also applies for the permits to build it and everything. My ma buys clothes for a designer company to sell in their stores, its actually pretty cool.

OHDRAN

Oh, so you have money.

ALEC

I guess, but neither of them are home a lot, and ma travels all over the world so sometimes I don't get to see her for weeks at a time. They aren't bad parents though, and I know they love me, even if I did have a nanny until last year.

OHDRAN

You had a NANNY? Babes, you're privileged.

ALEC

One, I am not privileged and two, did you just call me babes?

OHDRAN

One, you have a nanny and live in Malahide, which I just looked up and damn son I will marry you if you have that much money. And two, yes babes, I did

ALEC

Awk, I never stop blushing when I'm talking to you I swear-

OHDRAN

So do it.

ALEC

Do what?

OHDRAN

Swear.

ALEC

Why?

OHDRAN

Because I want to hear the rich kid swear.

ALEC

That's such a weird thing to ask.

OHDRAN

Please... baby.

ALEC

Oh fuck, did you just call me baby?

OHDRAN

And you just swore, I win.

ALEC

Jokingly

Fuck you.

OHDRAN

I win again.

ALEC

Fine, I just won't speak then.

OHDRAN

Probably a good thing, I've just been called for dinner.

ALEC

It's only half five.

OHDRAN

Dad has to make it before he goes to work.

ALEC

Why's he working so late? Isn't he an electrician?

OHDRAN

He does some shifts at Sainsbury's to make ends meet... Coming, Dad. I gotta go but I'll talk tomorrow, ok?

ALEC

I can't wait.

OHDRAN exits before coming back on stage. The lights dim again indicating the passage of time as the two boys go to bed and get under the covers. OHDRAN gets to sleep quickly but ALEC tosses and turns before reaching for his phone. The two read out the texts they sent again.

ALEC

Are you up?

OHDRAN

Awakening

I am now. You really couldn't wait, could you?

ALEC

I have a confession.

OHDRAN

Yes?

ALEC

I like you.

OHDRAN

If you didn't, I'd be concerned why you were still talking to me.

ALEC

No... I like you like you.

OHDRAN

And I like you like you like you like you, what's your point?

ALEC

You don't get it, do you? I think... I think I might love you.

OHDRAN

Oh damn, I mean I got it the first time, but you really went out and said it, huh?

ALEC

I'm so stupid, sorry I'll leave you to sleep. I'm sorry again.

Long pause as they both put the phone down. This time ALEC sleeps and OHDRAN tosses and turns before picking up his phone.

OHDRAN

I think I do too. Love you, you know.

The lights fade back in and ALEC wakes up. He reaches for his phone and smiles to see the message he received during the night. OHDRAN wakes up next and also checks his phone but his face drops when he sees he hasn't received a reply.

OHDRAN

Forget what is said last night, it was stupid.

ALEC

Oh, really? It kinda made my morning.

OHDRAN

Well then, I meant every single word. Every. Single. One.

ALEC

I might do a thing.

OHDRAN

A thing?

ALEC

I might come out to my parents.

OHDRAN

Oh, I mean I was thinking of coming out to my dad soon anyway.

ALEC

We should both do it today.

OHDRAN

I don't know, my dad might not like it.

ALEC

Come on, it's not like your dad is going to kick you out or anything.

OHDRAN

What if he does though?

ALEC

He seems like a great father; I really don't think he will.

OHDRAN

You're really going to make me do this, aren't you?

ALEC

You don't have to, but I think I'm going to.

OHDRAN

I will as well, then. No time like the present.

ALEC

I'll call you later and we can talk about how it went.

OHDRAN

Okay then, I'm excited but also nervous. I'll let you know.

Both of them exit and the stage is left empty.

We hear various noises such as crying, shouting and smashing. ALEC comes back on stages, shaking a bit but smiling to himself. He rushes over to his bed and picks up his phone to ring OHDRAN. The phone rings as OHDRAN comes back onto the stage.

OHDRAN

Shouting

I can't believe you would do this! I am your son!

Picking up the phone. Shakily,

He-hello?

ALEC

Hey! Wait... are you ok?

OHDRAN

Not really no, but how did it go?

ALEC

It was so good. My parents completely accepted it. They honestly couldn't have been more supportive.

OHDRAN

Flatly

Yay, I'm so proud.

ALEC

How did it go with you?

OHDRAN

Honestly, it was absolutely shite.

ALEC

What happened? Are you ok?

OHDRAN

Not really, he gave me a choice. He told me either I could live in his house and be a- and be a straight man or I could go and live my life somewhere else.

ALEC

So, we find you somewhere to live. I'm sure my parents would let you stay with us for a while and whilst you do my parents can talk to your dad and try to talk some sense into him.

OHDRAN

You don't get it, do you? You live in this perfect house with a perfect family and a perfect nanny. You probably get everything you want, and why should an accepting family be different? I have none of that. I have my dad and my brother, that's it. No money, no family to run to when things get tough, nothing. So you tell me how you expect me to even get to your house, you live two hours away. Do you expect me to go and ask my father, who told me it makes him sick to have a gay son, to take me to some other gay guy's house. I don't think I would make it there in one piece. So yeah, let me go ask him for a lift. I'll go ask him now.

ALEC

I'm sorry I didn't think-

OHDRAN

No, you wouldn't think, because again, you wouldn't have a reason to. So you go live your perfect life whilst I try and pick up the pieces of the life I've just fucked up because I let you convince me to come out to my father.

ALEC

I'm sorry, I'll talk to you soon and-

OHDRAN

Oh, do me a favour and fuck off, will you? You've done more than enough.

OHDRAN puts down the phone and throws it. Both of them drop to the ground and wallow in their misery. The lighting goes through stages of a day to night cycle. OHDRAN exits the stage and ALEC picks up his phone and goes to his computer.

Time (shown through the lighting) flows as ALEC continues at his computer when suddenly it stops in the daytime as we hear a knock. OHDRAN walks in nervously.

ALEC

Mum, I told you not to interrupt me when I... Ohdran?

OHDRAN

Hey Alec, I'm sorry, I don't even know why I came. I'll just go.

ALEC

No, it's fine. What happened?

OHDRAN

Starting to cry

I had nowhere else to go. I just couldn't do it, you know? I just couldn't stay in a house where every time I was looked at, it was with nothing but hatred and embarrassment. I'm sorry, I was horrible to you, and I don't deserve anything but-

ALEC

Hey, hey, it's fine, you were hurting. I understand. How about we start over.

ALEC moves towards OHDRAN and hugs him.

OHDRAN

O-ok.

ALEC

Hi, I'm Alec.

Craiglockhart

Caoimhe Glynn-Manley

INT. Sandstone Building Office. Afternoon.

We are presented with a furnished room overlooking a paved street. 1917 London is bustling, and yet no sound reaches this office. A weary, suited man sits behind a mahogany desk overflowing with piles of official documents - registration papers, military reports, frontline briefings, death certificates...

It is one particular report that HARWOOD is looking at: a medical one.

We hear an abrupt knock at the office door. HARWOOD jumps, knocking a series of leaflets to the ground. He hurriedly clutches at them before observing the door. He clears his throat.

HARWOOD

Enter.

The door opens and a man steps into the threshold. HARWOOD visibly relaxes.

HARWOOD

Ah, Campbell. To what do I owe...?

The man, CAMPBELL, sighs and closes the door. He walks slowly to the window, peering at the passers-by. He stands in newly polished shoes and a crisp blue suit – we might assume him to be higher up the pecking order of

Parliament than HARWOOD, whose rumpled grey attire extends to the shadows of exhaustion beneath his eyes.

We wait. Then -

CAMPBELL

I take it you've seen it? Same one was on my desk this morning. Bloody idiots... How we're supposed to keep it from the reports, let alone the press, is beyond me.

HARWOOD

He's in the public eye, for god's sake. It's one thing to deny the existence of growing dissent and execute them for desertion... but something else for them to suggest he has shell shock, order unwarranted medical leave and continue as though his case isn't even something to contend with!

There is a pause. HARWOOD appears flustered, as though he didn't expect to reveal so much. CAMPBELL doesn't move.

CAMPBELL

I wonder whether this place will stand when this is all over.

We get the sense that HARWOOD doesn't know how to respond.

Continuing

You know, my son will be called up in a month.

He gives a bitter laugh.

He's almost 18. He wanted to volunteer at the stables – you know, the ones in Dover. Now all he thinks he wants is to fight on a frontline he thinks we have... I've spoken to him.

Gesturing

Sarah's had... words. I suppose it won't make much difference, if he still gets blown to pieces in a ditch in Flanders.

HARWOOD

Quietly

People will realise. More and more aren't returning, some alr –

CAMPBELL

Turning from the window

It isn't good enough for *some*, though, is it? For Christ's sake, Michael, Sassoon has just been carted off to Scotland with a gagging order and we're just expected to kick it under the carpet!

There is a pause. We get the sense that CAMPBELL wants to say more... HARWOOD sighs and buries his head in his hands. CAMPBELL remains a shadowed statue at the window.

HARWOOD lowers his hands and sits back in his seat, glancing at the medical report he was examining. A close-up of it reads:

The decision to send Siegfried L. Sassoon to military psychiatric hospital Craiglockhart, Edinburgh, comes as a response to the behaviour of the aforementioned when faced with the assigned conduct of war, and his public protest when addressing such. Sassoon has a network of influential connections and possesses the ear of several governmental figures who may later seek to undermine the morale and war effort that continues on the Front, should Sassoon pay the penalty for cowardice and desertion.

It is my belief that Private Sassoon cannot be deemed mentally sound in the present circumstances. It would undoubtedly be a best outcome for all concerned, if his condition were to be treated away from the conflict in France and the public eye in England.

Due to the nature of Pvt. Sassoon's impeccable war record (I direct you to the following page detailing his Military Cross awarded for bravery under heavy fire) and the recent loss of his brother, Hamo Sassoon, in Gallipoli (again, see files attached), my official record as a medical officer is that he suffers from the neologism, "shell shock". I have no doubt that the underlying message here is one of urgency, given the situation regarding public awareness of psychological trauma.

For these reasons, it is my opinion that he be transferred to Craiglockhart War Hospital – with immediate effect.

Yours in confidence,

Sergeant Oliver Saunders.

Silence.

The scene appears futile. The cramped confines of this office appear shabbier as we observe the rumpled paged, ink blots and old newspapers that dominate the desk. We might see small details that weren't apparent before – a window whose condensation never fades, regardless of the season, the faded font of haphazard documents on the floor...

CAMPBELL clears his throat and straightens his back, walking towards the door. He pauses in the middle of the office.

CAMPBELL

You know, I hear the psychiatrist there is a good sort. Thorough bloke. It might possibly be the best place Sassoon could be at the moment.

HARWOOD

Meeting CAMPBELL's eyes

Oh?

He gives a short laugh.

I give him two months – I'm sure those in the war office will soon send him packing. If the press gets wind of this... I wonder if he knew of the last one's holiday to Timbuktu. What's his name?

CAMPBELL

Opening the office door

One William Rivers.

Ext. Craiglockhart Driveway. Morning.

We follow an armoured black Bentley as it cruises up a twisted lane, sandwiched by ancient firs and beeches. Something about the focused purr of its engine in the midst of what appears to be rural Scotland would seem unnatural to the viewer.

The Bentley pulls to a halt on the gravel driveway of an imposing grey building we know to be Craiglockhart. A stern-faced government officer (JAUNDICE) climbs out of his driver's seat and opens the boot, revealing a single, battered trunk. Marching towards the car's passenger door, it is suddenly thrown open by a bespectacled man, knocking the air out of SERGEANT JAUNDICE, who lets out a pained grunt. A scuffle ensues, with JAUNDICE frog-marching SASSOON to the steps of the building.

Int. Craiglockhart Corridor. Morning.

SASSOON stands in a corridor, solemnly facing a door. Its placard reads 'Mr. W.H. Rivers'. Before he raises a hand to knock, it swings open, revealing a broad-shouldered man (60s) with an impressive moustache.

RIVERS

Well? Do come in, come in.

He stands back from the door and SASSOON enters. The large office is well lit, with a desk positioned in front of a wall of bookshelves. The walls are covered in various labelled diagrams of the brain, as well as RIVERS' framed qualifications.

SASSOON sits on a cushioned chair in front of the desk; RIVERS lowers himself into a wooden one opposite. The desk is tidily arranged – only one pile of documents sits on it.

RIVERS

Now, Siegfried. I do hope I can call you Siegfried? In this place, we do try to distance ourselves from... too many formalities. I trust the journey was fine?

SASSOON gives a curt nod.

RIVERS

Good. Now, as you have recently arrived, I won't burden you with the full medical review you can expect... during next week. For now, I would just like you to tell me why you feel you are here.

SASSOON looks at him.

SASSOON

I'm here because I was sent. From Flanders.

There is a pause.

I am not the sort whose battlefield qualities are admired when the fighting pauses.

Mrs Asia Ching

Princess Farrell

Name: AMANI OLUMIDE

Age: 43

Gender: female

Marital Status and Private Life: AMANI is a married mum of five children and works as a lawyer. She is Nigerian by birth, but was born and raised in America, therefore giving her dual citizenship.

Name: LI MEI CHING (nicknamed "ASIA")

Age: 45

Marital Status and Private Life: LI MEI is a soon to be divorcee and a mum of four children. She moved to California from Beijing one year prior and is enjoying her new life in the States but misses her home.

It's half ten in the morning, and AMANI is rushing to leave the house.

AMANI

Oh dear Lord I'm going to be late! Oh, where are my boots, ah, OK, I'll throw these on... Run down to the kitchen to get my purse... Keys! Where are my keys, maybe I left them in the kitchen... Ah, here they are! Ok... Just lock the door and... Ugh, here comes the circus.

She sees her neighbour, MRS CHING, who prefers to call herself "ASIA", as she seems to be having some mild sort of midlife crisis, approaching.

ASIA

Oh look, there's Ama- Ow! My ankle, gosh these heels are so hard to walk in. Ugh, my braids are all around my face! Oh, I can't see you properly with sunglasses on, hold on- Ah, here we go. What's up sista!

AMANI

Um, nice to see you too.

ASIA

Like my nails?

AMANI

Woah, they look almost like Cardi B's. You should be careful, you could impale someone with those.

ASIA

Mutters

Hmm, think I'll put on some music... Oh I love this song!

Amani

Right.

Frowns

What are you listening to?

ASIA

It's Beyonce babe!

AMANI

Oh.

Frowns again

I don't really like Beyonce.

ASIA

But, but, how's that possible?

AMANI

Sighs exasperatedly

Mrs Ching-

ASIA

Asia.

AMANI

Mrs Ching, you're forty-five, most women-

ASIA

Don't have a sense of style-

AMANI

Like you do, yes, but-

ASIA

Don't cut across me! I-

AMANI

May look like you're twenty five-

ASIA

But I am still your elder.

AMANI

Ugh, Mrs Ching, you're two years older than me!

ASIA

It's Asia to you, and-

AMANI

You have four children!

ASIA

So do you!

AMANI

My high heeled boots are nothing-

ASIA

Mimics AMANI's voice

Compared to your two-inch length skirts!

AMANI

But as I said before-

ASIA

Mimics AMANI's voice again.

It's not about how you-

AMANI

Dress, yes-

ASIA

Mimics Amani's voice again.

It's about how you act.

AMANI

Exactly! You have the maturity of a-

ASIA

Three year old! You tell me every day!

AMANI

You play Beyonce in front of me every day!

ASIA

Because you listen to rubbish music!

AMANI

Just because I hate Beyonce doesn't-

ASIA

Rolls her eyes and crosses her arms.

Mean you listen to bad music.

AMANI

Stop it! Look I'm going to be late.

ASIA

So?

AMANI

So I'm going to stop talking now.

ASIA

Alright! Call me!

AMANI

No.

ASIA

Please? I could use someone to talk to.

AMANI

No.

ASIA

I promise not to play Beyonce.

AMANI

Ugh, fine, look, I just need to go.

AMANI leaves the driveway, and ASIA walks back to her garden laughing. She bumps into ZHANG, her husband.

ZHANG

Li Mei, can I have a word with you in the kitchen?

ASIA

Sure, what is it?

ZHANG

Remember Su Li, my co-worker? And remember last night's dinner, when I asked the kids if they could make room for a new addition to the family, and they got excited because they thought I was going to get them a puppy?

ASIA

Yes, I remember last night's dinner. And lovely Su Li.

Rolls her eyes

So what is it, did you get them a puppy?

ZHANG

Um, no. See the thing is... Well- I- um.

Takes a breath.

I wanna divorce!

ASIA

What!

ZHANG

I'm so sorry, I feel terrible. But, Su Li is great, and I think you'll like her. Look, I have to go...I'm sorry.

ZHANG rushes out the door.

ASIA

Yeah. Bye.

Sniffles
Exit

It is now six o'clock in the evening. The sun is setting, and AMANI is knocking on the front door of ASIA's house.

Amani

Oh dear lord are you alright? You look like you've been crying.

ASIA

Oh no, I'm alright.

AMANI

Well, seeing as you aren't annoying me yet, you clearly aren't. Although, you definitely won't be in a minute. I have some very disappointing news.

ASIA

Oh dear. Here, there's some fresh tea on the table, have some.

AMANI

Sits down on the chair and picks up a cup.

Well, I was talking to my sister on the phone today, on my way home, when I saw your husband, Zhang in a cafe with this other woman. Initially I thought, well maybe she's a relative, but then...

Sips the tea.

...they kissed! So, you know how nosy I am and-

ASIA

I know.

AMANI

What?

ASIA

I know. Zhang came in this morning before work and said he wanted a divorce because he likes Su Li. The girl you saw with him was probably Su Li. If not, well... he isn't my problem anymore.

AMANI

Well. I may have, you know, given him a piece of my mind. To the point where I threw a chair at him and called him a few names that shouldn't really be said aloud. I got kicked out of the cafe, but, I felt it was worth it in the end.

ASIA

Amani! Thank you for defending me but I don't think it warranted that kind of reaction. Especially in public.

AMANI

One of the ten commandments is to be faithful in marriage and he clearly broke that one. As a good Christian, I felt it was my duty to amend that.

Sips her tea.

Well, initially that's what I-

ASIA

Didn't he tell you that he'd told me he wanted to end things already?

AMANI

He didn't exactly get the chance to say much. Anyways, I'm sorry about your divorce, is there anything that'll make this bearable for you? Actually, now that we're on the subject of Su Li, I'm guessing she's the prompter for this weird wardrobe change you've been going through?

ASIA

Weird wardrobe change?

AMANI

Yeah, you know, the overly long nails, eight-inch heels and knee length braids.

ASIA

I thought that, if I looked more like her, then maybe he'd still like me. It was stupid though, I don't know what I was-

AMANI

No, I understand, I'm sorry you had to go through that.

ASIA

Mmm. I really do like Beyonce though.

AMANI

Oh, I know.

ASIA

Really, how?

AMANI

Because her music is as annoying as you.

ASIA

May I ask why you hate Beyonce so much?

AMANI

I don't hate her. It's just that you've ruined the idea of Beyonce's music for me by playing it in my face to annoy me half the time. Don't get me wrong; I like Beyonce, I think she's great but, her music... Well, thanks to you, not so much. And you've also ruined "Single Ladies" for me. And I actually did that like that Beyonce song.

ASIA

Laughs.

Well, I'm sorry. Do you still find me as annoying as before?

AMANI

Sips her tea.

Oh yes, very much so. But I feel like we could be friends. May I ask what your first name is?

ASIA

Oh yeah, you've only known me as Asia or Mrs Ching since I moved here. It's Li Mei.

AMANI

Where did you move from?

ASIA

Beijing. The children miss it, but they like it here. What about you?

AMANI

Well, I was born and raised here in California, but by birth right I'm Nigerian. I have dual citizenship.

ASIA

Oh, how interesting.

AMANI

Mm, I suppose it is. Although I suppose the novelty is lost on me.

There is silence for a moment as the two women drink their tea.

ASIA

I got a job as a nurse at the local hospital today. I start at nine am tomorrow morning.

AMANI

Oh good, that means you won't be able to annoy me in the mornings.

ASIA

Aw, well that's upsetting.

AMANI

Not for me. Oh my gosh, look at the time. I need to go provide mac n' cheese for my brood. I'll see you sometime tomorrow, okay?

ASIA

Alright, goodbye.

AMANI

Blows a kiss.

Bye.

Exit

The next evening, AMANI and LI MEI (ASIA) are sitting across from each other having tea and talking.

ASIA

Wanna hear a story?

AMANI

I thought you weren't going to annoy me anymore.

ASIA

I won't, I swear.

AMANI

Alright, go on then.

ASIA

Well, I was in college at the time, and we were in class-

AMANI

I'm trying to figure out where this story is going.

ASIA

Shush and you'll find out. So the lecturer finished the lesson, and decided to ask us some questions. And everyone was scared-

AMANI

Why were they scared?

ASIA

Because nobody understood. But me? I started floating out of my seat and up to the ceiling. Then I stood on the ceiling, upside down. And you wanna know something?

AMANI

Surprisingly, I am curious to know. What happened?

ASIA

Well I... I understood.

AMANI

Sips her tea thoughtfully.

... Is listening to bad Nigerian jokes your way of getting through this divorce? Because if it's not, you would honestly want to run from this house as fast as you can.

ASIA

Out of fear for my safety and utmost honesty, yes.

AMANI

Sighs.

Ok good-

ASIA

I'm still understanding though.

Smiles and sips her tea.

AMANI

You must drive your kids crazy.

ASIA

No, they love me actually. And my sense of humour.

AMANI

Mm, I don't doubt it.

ASIA

You sound disbelieving.

AMANI

I am. You know something? I think I'm going to call you Asia. It can be a nickname or something.

ASIA

Ok... Why?

AMANI

You seem like an Asia. Extravagant, annoying and slightly humorous.

ASIA

I like it. It actually suits me. I chose Asia because-

AMANI

You're from Asia, I know. But it does suit you. Mrs Asia Ching.

Exit.

A CARD TRICK
Theo Monaghan

A man (BLAKE) is sitting at a table in a lonely bar. An empty glass is beside him, along with a deck of cards. A yellow clock hangs on the wall, reading the time 11.46 pm. The room has a pleasing look to it, with dark blue painted chairs, and mustard-coloured tables. There is soft jazz music playing from a radio sitting on the bar. The door jingles as a man (TAYLOR) walks in the door.

BARTENDER

What can I get for you?

TAYLOR

Just a glass of water, please.

The man walks to the bar and sits beside BLAKE.

TAYLOR:

Good evening.

BLAKE

Hello.

BLAKE

Fancy a game?

TAYLOR

Smiling.

Sure.

BLAKE deals out the cards.

BARTENDER

to TAYLOR

Here you go.

TAYLOR

Thanks.

BARTENDER

to BLAKE

Anything else for you, sir?

BLAKE

I'm good. Thank you.

BLAKE and TAYLOR start playing. A recording of a clock is projected onto the stage, with the hands moving at a fast speed, until half an hour has passed in the space of 10 seconds.

BLAKE

You've won every game we've played. I must be off my game today.

TAYLOR

Chuckles

I just play a lot.

BLAKE

Let's play again. It doesn't look like either of us have anything better to do.

The BARTENDER walks over.

BLAKE

Hey, could I get another?

BARTENDER

Sure thing.

BLAKE's face lights up, as if he's just had an idea.

BLAKE

Hey. Play a game with us? There's no-one else here, and you can always pause it if someone walks in.

BARTENDER:

Smiling

Sure. Let me just get your drink, then I'll play.

The BARTENDER gets BLAKE's drink and comes back and leans over the bar to play cards.

BLAKE

I'm going to sit this one out. I'll play next round.

TAYLOR plays a game with the BARTENDER, and wins. BLAKE is looking very suspicious. The clock projection is shown again. 40 minutes pass in the space of 15 seconds while BLAKE and the BARTENDER play three more games with TAYLOR. Once again TAYLOR emerges triumphant.

TAYLOR

I'm going to the bathroom.

Exit TAYLOR

BLAKE

You think he's cheating?

BARTENDER

He's certainly good, even if he's playing fair.

BLAKE

Even if he was that good, he's won every game. It's not like we're beginners.

BARTENDER

Yeah. We should talk to him.

TAYLOR enters.

BLAKE

Hey. What's the deal here? The way you're playing, it's almost as if you have eyes on the wall behind me here.

TAYLOR

I'm not cheating. Why would I be? It's not like we're playing for money.

BLAKE

You've won every game.

TAYLOR

I have a few tricks, but nothing against the rules.

BLAKE

A few tricks?

TAYLOR

Yep. Whenever you have a bad hand, you tend to run your hands through your hair a lot. And whenever he has a bad hand...

Gestures to the bartender

...he tends to bite his lip. It's just a matter of noticing the right details.

BARTENDER

How could you notice all this right away? It's not like you lost a round while figuring out that stuff.

TAYLOR

It's not that much of a big deal. When I saw you mess up your hair (*gestures to BLAKE*) a second time, I decided to take a chance, and it paid off. The same happened with you.

Nods to the bartender.

BLAKE

That's pretty smart. I'll be honest, I feel a bit like a fool. Up until now I considered myself a decent player.

TAYLOR

You just need to take note of who you're playing with. Think about times when that person has been...say... stressed out about something. What way did they act? Did they tap their foot a lot, or something else like that?

BLAKE

You've given me something to think about.

TAYLOR

I'm glad.

TAYLOR finishes his drink and pays.

TAYLOR

I'd best be going. Goodnight.

BLAKE

Nice to meet you. That was a fun night.

TAYLOR smiles and exits. BLAKE finishes his drink, pays, and exits as well.

Scene Two

We focus on a living room. The room is nicely decorated, with pictures hanging on the walls. There are two armchairs, and a roaring fire. BLAKE is sitting on one of the armchairs, and a teenage boy (Blake's NEPHEW) is sitting on the other.

NEPHEW

So... What did you want to show me, Uncle?

BLAKE

I met a man a few days ago, and I wanted to test out something he got me thinking about. You know how to play poker, right?

NEPHEW

Yeah. Grandpa taught me a few years ago.

BLAKE

Cool. Well, let's play.

He drags a small table over and leaves it in between the two armchairs. He then deals out the cards. BLAKE and his NEPHEW start playing. BLAKE's NEPHEW scratches his nose. BLAKE looks interested.

NEPHEW

So, uncle, you invited me over here *just* to play cards?

BLAKE

Pretty much.

Blake's NEPHEW looks suspicious. The game finishes, and Blake's NEPHEW has won. BLAKE looks slightly confused.

NEPHEW

I'm thirsty. I'm getting a glass of water.

The NEPHEW exits. BLAKE runs his hands through his hair, looking

disgruntled. After around thirty seconds, the NEPHEW returns.

NEPHEW

Alright. Let's play some more. Hopefully, I'm on a winning streak.

BLAKE

Don't get too sure of yourself.

They start playing. BLAKE runs his hands through his hair, occasionally glancing at his NEPHEW.

NEPHEW

Placing down cards

I win again. I thought you were better than this, Uncle.

BLAKE sighs.

NEPHEW

I do have a trick up my sleeve. I've noticed that whenever you have a bad hand, you run your hands through your hair.

BLAKE

That proved to be my downfall the other night as well. You're just like that guy I played with. His tactic was to notice the way people acted while they were playing. The bartender bit his lip whenever he had a bad hand.

The NEPHEW laughs.

BLAKE

Well done. You are a better poker player than your uncle.

NEPHEW

Some people are just naturals, I guess. Maybe he's a bit of a Sherlock Holmes character. You know, noticing every detail about people and how they act.

BLAKE: Yeah. I guess I'm just not one of those "naturals".

NEPHEW

Neither am I. I just decided to take a chance when I saw you messing up your hair.

BLAKE

I guess I was too busy looking for signs that *you* had a bad hand that I wasn't focusing on that. This morning I said to myself to not touch my hair while I was playing, and it completely slipped my mind. I guess you could say I was trying too hard.

NEPHEW

Hey, it's no big deal. I've seen you play with Grandpa. You've won loads of games against him.

BLAKE

My guess is that Grandpa isn't one of those "naturals" that you talked about, either.

NEPHEW

I guess that could be true. But I've lost to him loads of times. He's definitely good.

BLAKE

I guess.

NEPHEW

I'd better be going home. It's nearly time for dinner.

BLAKE

Sure. I'll drive you back.

NEPHEW

Thanks. Hey, that was a fun night.

BLAKE

Yeah. Slightly more fun for you though.

Laughs.

NEPHEW

Haha.

The two of them stand up, and Blake's NEPHEW picks up his coat. The pair exit stage.

What Happened to August?

Anna Bradley

Scene One

We open in a classroom of 16- or 17-year-olds. There are a few groups huddled round desks in the background, but a teacher is nowhere to be seen. There is a lone girl INEZ sitting at a desk centre stage when LOUIS enters.

INEZ

Awk look what the cat dragged in.

LOUIS

Oh my god, I'm sorry, wrong class. I'm meant to be in form class not horror movie prosthetics. Yours looks great by the way.

INEZ

Hahaha, very funny Lou.

She gets up and hugs him.

I'm glad to see you. I've missed you.

LOUIS

Oh my god? You're capable of emotions? I thought that was just a myth.

INEZ lets out a genuine laugh this time as they both go to sit down.

INEZ

Takes a deep breath and sighs.

Remind me to never go to Italy with my family ever again.

LOUIS

That bad?

INEZ

You don't know the half of it. When I tell you, my sisters are demon spawn straight from the depths of hell, I'm not being dramatic.

LOUIS

They're seven.

INEZ

Exactly, you get it.

LOUIS

Um, no that's not what I meant.

INEZ

They spent the whole trip complaining because they didn't have the Wi-Fi password or that it was too hot or not hot enough or everyone spoke weird and should just speak English or that walking around one of the most amazing countries in the world is just so boring. By the end of the trip my dad had to practically restrain me from punching one of them in the face.

LOUIS

Hey, we do not tolerate violence against siblings in this friend group.

INEZ

Ignoring what he said.

And don't get me started on Eoin.

LOUIS

As if taking offence for this.

Hey, what did he do?

INEZ

Well to put it short, Bri broke up with him before the trip because, well, he's about as immature as someone could possibly be, which he says is simply not true and in fact he is opposite. So, him being the mature 15-year-old he is, he spent our month in Italy moping around crying and desperately trying to get her to take him back.

LOUIS

Aw, well tell him I wish him the best and if he ever needs a shoulder to cry on, fifty bears shredded up and sent to her house, or say fifty rolls of toilet paper and a bunch of eggs and someone to help egg her house, I'm his guy.

INEZ

What?

LOUIS

Hey, I'm just looking out for my buddy. Also, I am going to have to tell him you said he was immature. Bro code.

INEZ

You know what, if you were two years younger you guys would probably be great friends.

LOUIS

No, no. We already are great friends.

JAMES enters and joins them.

JAMES

Why hello there, lady and gentleman.

INEZ

Hey James.

LOUIS

Hi.

JAMES

Hey. So, what y'all talking about?

INEZ

Well, I was just telling Louis about my trip to Italy and-

LOUIS

And how it was something I really couldn't sit through again, so basically her sisters complained the whole trip and Bri broke up with Eoin so he was sad. How was your summer, James?

JAMES

Oh, um, you know, it was alright. We went to Canada first to see my gran and the family. That was how it usually is you know - my mum fights with Aunt Liz, her wife and my dad get involved and then suddenly there's an entire rift between the whole family except for me, Jess and gran who are sat in the living room playing cards.

LOUIS

What was it about this year?

JAMES

Mums on a diet so, apparently, we shouldn't eat birthday cake in front of her. Something like that. Don't let her know I said this but I'm with Aunt Liz on this one.

INEZ

Oooh, what kind of birthday cake?

JAMES

It was delicious, it was from this lovely bakery in the town. Nicest carrot cake I've ever eaten.

INEZ

Carrot cake?

JAMES

Yeah, what's wrong with that?

INEZ

Oh, nothing it's just I thought it was your birthday not your granny's.

LOUIS leans over with a smile on his face and gives her a high five.

LOUIS

I've taught you well.

JAMES

Hey, carrot cake is good.

INEZ

Yeah, and my middle name is David.

LOUIS

So, what did you do after that?

JAMES

Well, we came back here and then, well, you know, *it* happened.

JAMES moves his focus to the desk, LOUIS moves in his seat uncomfortably and INEZ starts playing with a rubber band around her wrist after he says this.

JAMES

Um, but then, as father dearest got that promotion, this year not only did we go to Canada, but we also went to Australia with the extended family *and* Switzerland just ourselves.

INEZ

How was Australia? Was it as warm as they say it is?

JAMES

As who says it is?

INEZ

I don't know, people.

JAMES

What? Anyway, no it was winter there, so it was pretty cold, like between five and ten degrees.

INEZ

Oh yeah, well was it fun at least?

JAMES

Oh yeah it was good, we were in Sydney and it was cool. We went on this Whale Watching tour and Aunt Liz and Mum were fighting again because well

LOUIS

Liz saw the chance to call your mum a whale and took it.

JAMES

Pretty much yeah.

INEZ

Oh no, sounds like me and your Aunt Liz are about to have problems, how dare she say that about my great friend Em.

JAMES

-ily.

INEZ

What?

JAMES

It's Emily, not anything else.

INEZ

Okay.

JAMES

But yeah, after that we went to Switzerland, as I said before, and it was awesome. We stayed in Zurich and we went sailing one day, and there was this outdoor swimming pool, and it was amazing.

LOUIS

Sounds fun.

JAMES

Yeah, 'twas.

Silence falls upon the group as they all look around uncomfortably at one another.

INEZ

Next summer we should really try and stay in contact more.

JAMES

Yeah, but this year it wasn't exactly your normal summer.

INEZ

Still, we should have been there for each other.

LOUIS

Hey, I tried but no one replied.

JAMES

Yeah, I'm sorry.

INEZ

Sorry.

LOUIS

So, has anyone heard from her?

JAMES and INEZ

No.

LOUIS

Yeah, I thought, I was just checking.

JAMES

Have you heard what they're saying about her?

INEZ

Yeah, I heard that she went off the rails, broke into the sports hall and that was the last time she was seen.

TAYLOR enters, INEZ jumps up and gives her a hug and greets her and the two boys follow before they all sit down again.

TAYLOR

Oh my god, it's been too long, so what are y'all talking about?

INEZ

Well, we were just talking about August.

TAYLOR

Surprised and confused.

Oh?

JAMES

Well, um I heard she was found drunk round the back of Starbucks of all places.

TAYLOR

What?

LOUIS

Yeah, that does sound like our August, but someone told my brother who told me that apparently, she was caught selling the old *(he looks to INEZ as he makes sure to pronounce every letter)* marijuana.

INEZ

Oh my god, why do you say it like that? I hate it so much.

LOUIS

Jesus, get a sense of humour, cause it's fun...and because it annoys you.

Suddenly he steals INEZ's phone from her hand and starts running around the table with it as she desperately tries to get it back.

Oooh, who's Alex?

INEZ snatches the phone from Louis with a glare.

TAYLOR

Oh my god, can someone please tell me what is going on? I've been gone all summer. What the hell are you talking about? That doesn't sound like our August, she's not like that. She's probably just sick or not home from holiday yet, I mean I got back home yesterday. I'm sure she'll text us.

LOUIS, INEZ and JAMES all look at one another.

LOUIS

Y-You don't know?

TAYLOR

Know what?

JAMES

Man, you really must have had nothing on that island you stayed at.

TAYLOR

What? Did she get kicked out of school or something?

INEZ

I'm so sorry, we tried to call, but as James said that island must have had no service. We tried to get through, we did. We just assumed someone would've told you or your mum to tell you, or you would've seen.

TAYLOR

Can you all just stop, and can someone just tell me what the hell is going on? I've been away all summer and, if you hadn't noticed, I don't know what you are all talking about. What - is she in, like, juvie? Rehab? What? Cause you are all being super fucking mysterious and it's not helping. Just tell me.

INEZ

August went missing on the 1st of, well, August.

TAYLOR

What? Like *missing*, missing?

LOUIS

Yeah, *missing*, missing.

TAYLOR

Like search parties and posters plastered everywhere?

LOUIS

Well not everywhere, but pretty much, yeah.

TAYLOR

No, this is one of those jokes you have that I don't get, isn't it?

TAYLOR looks around the group hopefully but is met with sympathetic looks.

LOUIS

I really wish it were Taylor, but it's true.

TAYLOR

No. No. No, she wouldn't do that. She surely has got to have called someone, or She will. August is not like that.

JAMES

Except she is. She was different to how she used to be, and you know that. She was getting pretty secretive, acting different, cancelling plans. I mean we barely saw her out of school.

TAYLOR

Was? You're talking about her like she's dead. And yeah, she was acting differently. I mean we all are still growing up and, I don't know, changing. Jesus, I sound like one of those people school brings in, but anyway. You know who is acting different? You guys. She's your friend and she's missing, and you all knew and you're sitting round here gossiping and laughing and joking. She's one of your best friends and you all are talking like she's just someone you saw on the news; someone you don't have to care about.

JAMES

Look, Taylor, I wish she were here; I do. But you weren't here, and they searched everywhere they thought of, they brought us in, they asked us questions and we told them everything little thing we knew, but they never found her. Look, we've all had time to process this, and it is shit. It's absolute bullshit. So, if you need to cry or whatever that's cool. I know you were, well you were closer to her than we were. Especially much more before she...left.

TAYLOR

...we weren't that close apparently or she would have called.

LOUIS

Don't do that to yourself, you know that's not true. I'm sure if she's out there she's missing you right now, I'm sure she's missing us all.

INEZ

Taylor?

TAYLOR stays quiet for a moment before recollecting herself.

TAYLOR

So, what did you guys do over the summer? Oh my god, there was this really nice old woman on the island and one day whilst I was out on my daily run, because I go on daily runs now, um, it started raining and she insisted that I join her for a cup of hot chocolate and I kid you not, it was the nicest thing I have ever tasted. It was like actual heaven on earth. However, maybe it was the fire, as I had borderline hypothermia.

JAMES

That reminds me.

Everyone's focus turns away from TAYLOR to JAMES.

I got these chocolate truffles in Switzerland, and man, the Swiss know how to make good chocolate. They were so good, like a solid 8.74 out of ten.

INEZ

Oh my god you're not still rating food you try, are you?

JAMES

Oh, no.

LOUIS

Thank god.

JAMES

It's everything now, in fact, right this very second, I'm deciding how I should rate this conversation.

LOUIS

I feel like this is going to be a very long year.

As LOUIS is saying this, MR SMITH and a POLICE OFFICER enter the class.

MR SMITH

Taylor Wright, could you please come with us to the principal's office?

TAYLOR gets up and walks out of the classroom with them as the rest of the class start to whisper amongst their groups and glance over.

Promise

Sadhbh Reddington

Various couples of all shapes and sizes are littered around a very simplistic looking hallway and embarrassment is littered on every one of their faces as a man, dressed in flamboyant neon bright clothes, leaps around the middle of the floor, flinging his arms out and gesticulating wildly.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR

That's it my gentle doves! Let the music course through your veins like the way coffee often courses through many of our fellow beings early in the morning! You are passionate! You *are* all dancers! You are leaves blowing in the wind! *Observe!*

The man begins to leap and fling himself about even more wildly around the floor. Among them stand a young man and woman.

MARIA

Is this dude for real?!

JAMES

I...think so?

MARIA

If all of us left...do you think he would notice?

DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Fly my pretties! FLY! Wherever your heart may lead you!

JAMES

I'm gonna go with no?

MARIA

Giggles

You have to admit, he is pretty entertaining.

JAMES

Entertaining...is not quite the word I would have gone for. Crazy maybe?

MARIA

Hey, you're not a bad dancer. Why haven't I seen you here before?

James doesn't answer this question as memories come flashing back to him.

The room changes to a hospital room. James is noticeably younger, asleep in a chair holding the hand of a pale, sick woman.

EMMA

James? James! James, wake up!

JAMES

Startled

What is it? What's up? Are you okay? You're not in pain?

EMMA

I'm fine. I'm not dying. Well not yet any-

JAMES

Shhh! Don't say that! You're going to get better! You promised you would!

EMMA

James...

JAMES

No! I told you before, I don't want to talk about that kind of stuff.

EMMA

We're going to have to talk about it sometime you know. We can't put it off forever.

Nothing is said. Both turn their heads away in an effort to avoid conversation.

EMMA

The stars are so beautiful tonight.

JAMES

Yeah. It's too bad that we-

EMMA

I want to talk about it after.

JAMES

Nods.

Okay...after what?

EMMA

You know what after I'm talking about.

JAMES

Emma No! I told you I don't-

EMMA

James, we both know there is no way that I'm coming out of here alive.

JAMES

B-But...

EMMA

No! No buts. It's about time we talk about this. The minute I got sick, you took care of everything. While I'm so grateful for that, when I'm not here anymore, what will you have left?

JAMES

Well...I...

EMMA

Exactly, you can't answer me. So, after my funeral I want you to move on. The last thing I want is for you to spend the rest of your life moping after me.

JAMES

But...how do I do that?

EMMA

You'll figure it out. You always do.

JAMES

Yeah, because you're always there to tell me what to do.

EMMA

Exactly, I've always been the brains of this relationship you know.

The pair share a brief laugh, their hands still locked.

EMMA

I'm sorry that you have to take the rest of this journey alone, but maybe this could be good for you?

JAMES

Like what?

EMMA

I don't know. Take dancing lessons. Learn how to cook-finally.

Another laugh is shared.

JAMES

All that stuff was great because I had you though. I've forgotten how to be alone.

EMMA

Well rediscover what it's like then. You didn't always have me, in case you've forgotten. You're still a young man.

JAMES

Sad.

And what about you?

EMMA

Smiles sadly.

My time is over. We've had a good run James, but you deserve to be free of my burden. It's about time too. Promise me. Promise me you'll live the life that I won't get to.

JAMES

Emma...I...

EMMA

Promise.

JAMES

Sighs.

I'll try...for you. Promise me you'll watch from...well...y'know.

Raises his eyes to look at the ceiling.

EMMA

Laughs.

You can bet on that, and I swear if you do anything bad, I'll come back to haunt you.

The pair share a small laugh. Light rain has begun to fall.

JAMES

Guess the stargazing is out the window.

EMMA

You know what they say... "Be strong now, things will get better. It might be stormy, but it can't rain forever!"...

The pair continue to chat amid the sounds of quiet falling rain.

MARIA

James? James? Did you hear me?

JAMES

Huh? Sorry, I zoned out there for a minute. What was your question?

MARIA

I asked what brought you here tonight. I haven't seen you here before.

DANCE INSTRUCTOR

And now spin your partner! SPIN I SAY!

Shyly grabbing Maria's hand, James spins her around.

JAMES

I'm fulfilling an old promise. I like it though...maybe this could become a regular thing.

The pair lock eyes and share a shy smile. As the pair dance, James' shirt sleeves lift and the tattooed words on his hand become visible. "It may be stormy now, but it can't rain forever".

The Ricky and Bobby Show

Méabh Mac Philib

Notes: There are five characters. RICKY and BOBBY are both male. RICKY is 27 and BOBBY is 29 or 30.

The other character, CHIEF BAKER, is a man but the VOICE and POLICEMAN can be either sexes.

Two detectives walk home after a long night at the office.

RICKY

-and then I told her if you don't drive this hunk of junk around, I'll do it for you- *Laughs.*

BOBBY

Ha ha, yeah that's funny.

RICKY

Hey, what's the matter? You usually always laugh at my jokes?

BOBBY

You can thank Chief Hannigan for that.

RICKY

What did she do? Wait, are you on the night shift?

BOBBY

Mocking tone.

Stupid 'Bonobo Case'.

RICKY

Oh my god. That's even worse than I thought!

BOBBY

I am literally in the trenches.

RICKY

I think I can cheer you up.

BOBBY

Really? I doubt that's possible.

RICKY pulls out a bag of donuts from nowhere.

BOBBY

What's that?

RICKY

Dunk in! Dunk out! It's the amazing Dunkin donut! Available at a shop near you!

BOBBY

What was that?

RICKY

What was what? These are just donuts.

BOBBY

What you did there-

RICKY stares blankly.

BOBBY

Never mind, thanks for them

BOBBY grabs a donut from the bag and bites into it.

RICKY

What do you think? I am usually not a sprinkles kind of guy, but I'm willing to try.

BOBBY

Oh god, that's disgusting.

Spits out donut, throws it to the ground.

RICKY

Yeah, they haven't really perfected the formula.

BOBBY

You're telling me.

RICKY

But they promised it would be perfect.

BOBBY

Who's 'they'.

RICKY

A sponsor is only worth it if the product is good.

BOBBY

What on earth are you talking about?

A rustling can be heard in the bushes, they both look towards it.

RICKY

I think I heard something.

BOBBY

Forget about that. Who were you talking about?

RICKY

Buddy, we are detectives, we must investigate the sound.

BOBBY

Are we? I feel like I haven't worked a day in my life.

Ricky walks towards the bushes.

RICKY

I don't see anything.

BOBBY

Well then it was probably nothing.

RICKY

Maybe you're right, my senses are usually upside down!

Laughing can be heard faintly in the background.

BOBBY

Was that laughing I just heard?

RICKY

I'm thinking the title of 'smart detective' now goes to you.

A screech can be heard from the bushes. Out jumps the Bonobo.

BOBBY

Crips! Is that what I think it is?

RICKY

Golly gee, I knew I was right.

BOBBY

Did I just hear that? Crips? Golly Gee? What are we... from the 1940s?

RICKY

We can't dilly-dally!

The Bonobo starts to run away.

BOBBY

You're right, let's go, we can't let it get away.

RICKY

Or Chief Baker will have you in knots!

BOBBY

Wait I thought it was Chief Hannigen?

A theme song begins to start- 'It's the Ricky and Bobby Show chasing bad guys down the street, face down in the concrete is what you are going to get when you mess with the best of the best'.

Ricky and Bobby continue to chase the Bonobo until they corner it into a back alley.

RICKY

Looks like you've nowhere to run now, monkey!

BOBBY

Okay, I'll call animal control so they can deal with this mess.

RICKY

Now hold on a minute.

BOBBY

What? I think animal control can handle this.

RICKY

There is something off about this chimpanzee.

Edges closer to it.

BOBBY

Hey, what are you, crazy? Back away from that thing.

Ricky moves closer to the Bonobo and moves something from its face, seems to pull something off its face.

RICKY

Just what I thought.

Bobby pushes Ricky out of the way.

The Bonobo is revealed to be a man wearing a costume.

BOBBY

That is not possible.

RICKY

And to think you could have robbed all the banks in the world, Chief Baker!

BOBBY

Didn't we have a female chief at the start?

Muttering to himself.

BAKER

And I'd have gotten away with it too if it wasn't for you meddling detectives!

Eerie cheers can be heard in the background

BOBBY

Again? What is going on? Am I crazy?

Muttering to himself.

POLICEMAN

Thanks son, we have got it handled.

BOBBY

Where did you come from?

Bobby turns around. revealing there to be a squadron of police cars.

RICKY

Take'em away, boys.

BOBBY

They weren't there before. Were they?

Ignored.

RICKY

Wow, look at us. Let me tell you no one will ever look down on us again.

BOBBY

For the love of God, will you listen to me?

For the first time, it's completely silent. Realization dawns on Bobby

BOBBY

This doesn't feel right. This place... it doesn't make sense. The ads, the theme songs, the background noises. The character switching, the unmasking. It almost feels like I am being controlled on what to say to do. It's like I'm in a sitcom.

Pause.

The simulation. The simulation that we were building! Assistant, is that you?

Long Pause.

Nothing? You- We are trapped in a simulation, can you not hear me!

Pause.

And of course it's the one you got us sucked into. God, why did I trust you. You were so incompetent, you never listened to me. You could've at least acted interested!

RICKY

What would be the point in that? You're an ass.

BOBBY

I knew you could hear me, you piece of shit.

A voice emits from above.

VOICE

Participants are self-aware, the simulation must restart to be conducted successfully.

RICKY

Wait what does that mean?

BOBBY

Did you ever listen to a word I said!?

RICKY

You're a mad scientist, what would be the point in that?

BOBBY

If the simulation restarts, we will be stuck in a loop, repeating the same crap over and over again!

RICKY

Why the hell would you do that?!

BOBBY

It was a safety precaution. Who knows what would happen if the participants became self-aware?

RICKY

Like us?

BOBBY

Well, I didn't think we would get sucked into it.

RICKY

How would we even escape?

BOBBY

Let me think!

VOICE

Restarting in 10, 9, 8...

BOBBY

Wait, wait!

RICKY

What are you doing?

BOBBY

The voice - it's just another creator like you and me, maybe I can win it over.

RICKY

What, with your award-winning smile?

BOBBY

You're probably bored, right?

RICKY

It's not like it will listen to you.

VOICE

What's it to you?

BOBBY

Look, if you restart the simulation, we are just going to become self-aware over and over again.

RICKY

Yeah, it will be really annoying.

BOBBY

We are not supposed to be here. So, what if you don't do us a favour, and let us leave?

VOICE

Hmm that sounds tempting....

RICKY

So, you'll let us leave?

VOICE

Quiet! But yes, I'll let you go.

Ricky and Bobby jump up and down before hugging each other.

BOBBY

God, what are we doing? Get off me.

VOICE

But. But you are right, I am bored, so you are going to have to fight each other if you want to leave.

RICKY

Really that's it?

VOICE

To the death! It makes everything spicier.

RICKY

Ok, that's a bit of overkill. I think we are more civilized than that.

Bobby lunges towards Ricky and tackles him to the ground.

BOBBY

This was so much easier in my head!

RICKY

What the hell are you doing? We are not animals.

BOBBY

If it's for their entertainment, I don't care what I am.

Continue to struggle (Ad-lib).

Ricky pushes Bobby off him.

RICKY

I'm not going to fight you.

BOBBY

Come on, don't you want a chance to escape?

VOICE

Yeah! Bring on the fighting!

BOBBY

Or do you not want to escape?

RICKY

No, not really.

BOBBY

Why not? This-this place - It's creepy. We have no free will here, we're just characters at the end of the day.

RICKY

So? We are just as enslaved here as we are on the outside. While we are here, there is no threat of death. We don't have to be scared here. Yes, we are controlled like characters but so what? Here we have a purpose, we can entertain the masses, teach important messages. We wouldn't feel any pain here. It's like a paradise.

Bobby stands there in stunned silence.

BOBBY

Is that how you really feel?

RICKY

Yeah, so let's just stay here together.

Ricky reaches out his hand, Bobby shakes it.

VOICE

Ew, this is too sombre. Screw you, I'm restarting it anyway.

RICKY

Are you sure you don't want to leave?

BOBBY

No. But I won't remember anyway.

A flash of light and the scene begins again.

RICKY

-and then I told her if you don't drive this hunk of junk around, I'll do it for you-

Laughs.

BOBBY

Ha ha, yeah that's funny.

RICKY

Hey what's the matter? You usually always laugh at my jokes?

BOBBY

You can thank Chief Baker for that.

RICKY

What did she do? Wait, are you on the night shift?

BOBBY

Mocking tone.

Stupid 'Bonobo Case'.

RICKY

Oh my god. That's even worse than I thought!

BOBBY

I am literally in the trenches.

RICKY

I think I can cheer you up.

BOBBY

Really? I doubt that's possible.

Ricky pulls out a bag of donuts from nowhere.

BOBBY

What's that?

RICKY

Dunk in! Dunk out! It's the amazing Dunkin donut! Available at a shop near you!

BOBBY

Never heard of them.

RICKY

Really? Well trust me, you have to try them.

Bobby takes a bite of the donut and smiles.

BOBBY

These are absolutely amazing!

RICKY

Told you. Now what were you saying about the Bonobo case?

Scene ends.

Found Family

Fiona Connolly

ANNA and ROSA - Age 19/20

TOMMY - Age 16

Scene starts in a small, light blue bedroom. Walls covered with various video game and band posters. A long desk is placed on the right side of the room in front of what looks like the door to the room. A girl is placed next to the desk, slowly spinning on an office chair with a blank Word Document displayed on the computer on the desk. The girl stops spinning and looks blankly at the computer.

ROSA

Ok...alright...I have got exactly...one hour to complete this eight-page essay on

-

The girl picks up the face down smartphone and taps the screen a few times before reading out.

ROSA

- a unique aspect of either your family history or your life in general. This can be a number of things, including deep dives into your family tree, hobbies in your life that you would consider unique or unordinary to others, interesting event your family..bla bla bla bla..ya..ya, um essay must be at least between six to eight A4 pages of text, however pictures can be added during sections to..something..something..this essay must be completed by five pm on the 15th April. Deadline is final, late submissions will not be graded unless given with a reasonable excuse. This is worth 30% of your final grade for the semester. If you have any issues or queries, please contact me at something... boring email Yeah, and I got nothing.

ANNA

Seriously?

Lighting illuminates the doorway to the room to show a young girl leaning on it.

ANNA

You have a paper that is worth 30% of your final grade due in an hour and you got nothing?

ROSA

Yeah, pretty much

ANNA

Oh, for god sakes Rosa...you always do this.

ROSA spins to look at ANNA.

ROSA

I know I know, I just..wait..are you eating my mom's gingerbread?

ANNA

Umm...

Stops chewing.

No.

ROSA

Anna!

ANNA

Ok sorry, I got hungry, ok? Also, who bakes gingerbread in April?

ROSA

Dearest mother when her song writing son comes home from traveling the world with his new fiancée, who just so happened to adore the thing that you have now currently decapitated.

ANNA

Well, if she didn't want anyone to eat them, she shouldn't have left them out in the open

ROSA

They were in the oven, how did you find them anyway?

ANNA

Oh well, um, you see...

ROSA

I swear you're like a bloodhound for cinnamon.

ANNA

What can I say, I love anything sweet.

ROSA

Is that why you're dating me?

ANNA

Of course.

Walks over and leans on the girl's shoulder.

You're the sweetest of them all.

Places a kiss on ROSA's cheek.

I mean once you get past your sour exterior, that is.

ROSA

Hey!

ANNA

I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

Mutters.

Mostly, anyway. Let's get this essay done. You have any topics in mind?

ROSA

No

ANNA

Right, do you have any type of plan?

ROSA

Nope.

ANNA

Have you even thought about this essay since you got it?

ROSA

Honestly no, I kinda forgot about it till an hour ago.

ANNA

Sigh.

Rosa you've had this essay since February.

ROSA

Yes, but do you honestly think I would do a project early; you know me better than that.

ANNA

What I know is if you don't get this done to some capacity in 55 mins, you're going to likely fail your entire semester.

ROSA

Actually, it's due in 53 minutes to be exact, and I won't fail. You know why.

ANNA

You secretly have the project done and haven't left yet another assignment till the last minute...AGAIN.

ROSA

No, it's because I called you over, because you always bring out my creative side for things like this.

ANNA

No, you call me over because either A, you want a good distraction to not do your work or B, you're too lazy to come up with your own ideas, so you end up just getting me to think of some for you.

ROSA

And that is because you are my beautiful girlfriend, you're the best distraction I could ever ask for.

ANNA

Yeah, I don't know whether or not to take that as a compliment

ROSA

I mean, have I ever told you how I could just listen to your loving voice all day long and just forg-

ANNA

NO. No...nope. I know what you're trying to do and I'm not going to buy into your flirtatious trickery of back-and-forth compliments, especially not when you know YOUR FINAL GRADE IS ON THE LINE HERE.

ROSA

...I mean ...I still got nothing.

ANNA

Ok looks like once again I'm going to have to be the smart one here. Um, let's see...

Silence for a few moments.

ANNA

Oh, I got it - The assignment mentioned something unique about your family, right?

ROSA

Yeah...and?

ANNA

And your family definitely isn't the standard norm.

ROSA

Wow, thanks.

ANNA

Oh, you know what I mean. Why don't you write about you and your siblings - how you guys are kinda like a found family. Hey, that is a good title actually, another stroke of my excellence. Feel free to.

ROSA

Yeah, no, I'm going to stop ya right there, that's not happening. Onto the next idea.

ANNA

Wait, what? Why not, it could be a really good essay?

ROSA

Yeah, sorry Anna, but I'm not particularly in the mode to start pouring my heart out about my personal life out to an old college professor that I barely know.

ANNA

But isn't that kind of what the assignment is about, about an aspect of your family that is unique?

ROSA

Yeah, but I don't want to basically write about how the unique part of my family is that I didn't have one until I was 13, and before that was basically made to believe I was not good enough to ever find one. And also, my brothers' stories are their stories, not mine. They're personal and not to be written for some dumb essay regardless of if it will get me a good grade or not. So yeah, no.

The room is once again silent with no aspect of any noise coming from either girl for a few moments.

ANNA

I'm sorry...it was a dumb idea.

ROSA

No no...

The girl spins her chair around and takes the other girl's hand.

Look I appreciate the idea, but it's just not going to happen, no matter if it gets me an A. And it's for a final grade due in...um 50 minutes.

ANNA

It's fine, we can just come up with something else, something better and I am going to make sure it will get you that A. Together we can get thi-

Interrupted by the sound of a phone ringing.

ANNA

Um, one moment.

The girl picks up her phone.

ANNA

Hello? Hey Toby, can I call you back, I'm kinda...what? Slow down. You did WHAT? You and Lilly...Jesus, toby...yes mom will be mad if she...yes. No...ok hold on, I'll be home soon...yes...ok stay put, don't break anything else. Ok bye.

Phone is hung-up.

ANNA

Ok so umm, about the essay...

ROSA

Let me guess, you have to go?

ANNA

Yeah sorry, looks like Toby and Lilly were having too much fun with Nerf guns or something and ended up breaking Mom's vanity mirror. Don't ask how.

ROSA

Jeez, and let me guess, you gotta clean up this mess?

ANNA

Bingo. I'm sorry Rosa. I would stay if I could, but...

ROSA

I get it, don't worry. This is just the occupation of an older sibling. Trust me, I know. Look, forget about the essay. I got this, alright?

ANNA

You sure?

ROSA

Yes, I'm sure. I will come up with something. Now I think you should go and figure out this mess before Mother Abby finds out and blows a fuse.

ANNA

Thanks Rosie, I'm sure you will think of something great.

ANNA grabs bag and makes way out of room.

...by the way...you wouldn't happen to have any Superglue, would you?

ROSA

Bottom drawer in kitchen beside the oven. Take the two bottles - looks like you're gonna need it.

ANNA

Thanks, love you. I will give you a call later if I haven't been murdered by association.

ROSA

Looking forward to it. And Anna?

ANNA

Yeah?

ROSA

You can take another gingerbread man if you want.

ANNA

Yes, you're the best. Bye.

ROSA

Bye. love you.

Sound of footsteps going downstairs can be heard. Few moments pass before the sound of a door closing can be heard. Silence fills the room.

ROSA

Found family...Has a nice ring to it, Anna, but not going to happen.

ROSA begins again to slowly spin on her chair as she picks up her phone.

ROSA

Ok, 45 minutes. Do I have time to needlessly scroll through Instagram?

A moment passes as she stops spinning.

ROSA

What am I talking about? Of course, I always have time to mindlessly scroll through Instagram.

ROSA begins again to spin on her chair as she begins to scroll through her Instagram feed. After a moment, a loud bang can be heard of a door being slammed shut and footsteps coming up the stairs.

ROSA

Oh shoot, Dad is home and I have no work done whatsoever.

A knock can be heard on her closed bedroom door. ROSA immediately stops spinning as she grabs the desk, pulls the chair towards the desk, and starts typing.

ROSA

Hey, I'm busy.

The door slowly opens to a young boy in the doorway.

ROSA

Hey, I said...oh hey, Tommy, what up.

TOMMY stands in the doorway, not saying anything, just staring blankly at her.

ROSE

Hey...hello..hamster wheel, you there?

TOMMY

Oh...yeah, yeah. Um just...is anyone else home yet?

ROSA

Um nope, it's just me. Mom and Dad are still at work, and Daniel is god knows where. Think he's over at a friend's house last I checked, Anna was here. You probably saw her coming up the drive.

TOMMY

Anna. Um, yeah...yeah. I think I ...did see her.

ROSA

Um, Tommy, you ok?

TOMMY

Um. Yeah, yeah I'm fine. I'm just...you seem busy so...

The boy makes his way out.

ROSA

Hey, Tommy...wait.

TOMMY

Yeah?

ROSA

You know, I still have the bean bags in here, and there are chocolates on my shelf...Um, I'd appreciate some company.

There is no sound for a moment, ROSA turns back the computer and sighs.

ROSA

Eh, that never works. Oh...

TOMMY makes his way back in the room, flopping on the bean bag on the opposite side of the room, not saying anything and crossing his arms.

ROSA

Ok then.

ROSA goes back to typing on the computer for about two minutes as they both don't say anything, ROSA then spins her chair around to face TOMMY.

ROSA

Ok, what's wrong?

TOMMY

Nothing, I'm fine.

ROSA

Oh really? First of all, you come home silent, not announcing your glorious presence to the world unless it counts you nearly slamming the door off the hinges. You knocked on my door relatively gently instead of banging it down like you normally do. You actually agreed to sit in here with no smart remarks or wanting anything and the big kicker is this-

ROSA points to a large poster of One Direction hanging over her bed.

ROSA

You can't go for I'd say about 30 seconds without mocking my 1D poster while being in this room, yet you haven't even made one remark about it so.... what is up?

TOMMY

Like I said, nothing.

ROSA

Liar.

TOMMY

So, what, I didn't make fun of your stupid teen band poster. Something must be wrong. Can I not just be nice for once?

ROSA

Well, you could, but that would require you to actually be mature.

TOMMY

Oh, you know what? FUCK YOU!

TOMMY snaps as he gets up from the bean bag and storms towards the door.

ROSA

Woah, woah, I was joking... Tommy, wait.

ROSA tries to grab TOMMY's arm. She stops, noticing something.

ROSA

Tommy.

TOMMY

WHAT?

ROSA

You're not fine, are you?

TOMMY

YESSS, I -

ROSA

Cause if you were fine then your knuckles wouldn't be currently black and blue.

TOMMY

I...I'm...I don't.

ROSA

Don't even try to hide it, Tommy, I may wear contacts but I'm not blind. Now don't lie to me, there are only three reasons I can think of why you punched. Something, someone or self-defence. Do you care to tell me which one?

There is one again an all-too-common silence. ROSA turns her head away from her brother back to the computer, shaking her head slightly.

ROSA

Fine then...you don't have to tell me, but I'm going to have to tell Mom and Dad and the boys.

TOMMY

NO...don't tell.

ROSA turns her head back at her brother.

ROSA

Not unless you tell me.

TOMMY

I... I can't. It's stupid.

ROSA

Tommy, this is serious. If you injured yourself or someone else, then that is not some stupid thing.

TOMMY

I...um...I punched a tree.

ROSA

You what?

TOMMY

You know the big willow tree in the garden?

ROSA

The one that overgrows to the Smith's garden...yeah.

TOMMY

Yeah. Um, I punched that tree, that's how I got the bruise.

ROSA

So...wait. You punched the willow tree outside? Why?

TOMMY

I...um, I was angry...so I punched the tree when I got home.

ROSA

Ok...and I'm guessing the reason you punched the tree wasn't because some grey squirrel pissed you off.

TOMMY

No.

ROSA

Alright then...what was it that made you so angry?

TOMMY

It was just a stupid comment made at school. It was nothing...I just overreacted.

ROSA

Tommy. If it made you angry enough to punch a tree and nearly take the front door off the hinges, I'm guessing it's not a stupid comment. Not to you, at least.

TOMMY says nothing but walks back into the room and now sits on the edge of ROSA's bed. ROSA spins her chair around to look at her brother.

TOMMY

Do...do you think I belong here?

ROSA

What? What do you mean, Toms?

TOMMY

I mean, do you think I should be in this family?

ROSA

What? Tommy, of course you should be. Don't you feel like you are?

TOMMY

I do, I do, don't get me wrong. I know, I know it's stupid. I've been here for nearly four years and it has been the best years of my life but...

ROSA

But...?

TOMMY

I...I don't know. I just....how do I put this? Have you ever felt like you don't fit?

ROSA

Don't fit?

TOMMY

Yeah. Kinda like a puzzle, you think you have all the pieces to make the picture, but the final piece is just awkward and doesn't quite fit in right. You can make the picture out, it's just...

ROSA

A bit off.

TOMMY

Yeah, I know that doesn't make sense and is a stupid analogy but...

ROSA

But it's how you feel, and believe me, as a soon to English major, I have heard far worse analogies. Did you know comparing how pineapple on pizza is the same level of insanity to having an orange blob as president isn't a 'uni level comparison'.

TOMMY

Ha, yeah, I can imagine that's not the greatest use of your English ability.

ROSA

Yeah but, hey. it got you smiling. Tommy, you're not the only one who felt out of place.

TOMMY

Really?

ROSA

Yeah, I mean, when I first got her, I didn't think I belonged anywhere. I had been passed from house to house like a sad puppy before that. I thought I would never find a true family and then that all changed, and it was the same with Daniel before me, and William before him. And I hoped it'd be the same for you.

TOMMY

It was - I mean it is. When I'm here in this house, I do feel I'm finally part of a true family since...since when...you know. But lately I've just ...begun to notice.

ROSA

Notice what?

TOMMY

That... I just don't fit into this picture. Not like Will, or Daniel, or you do. I mean ,look at you, you're soon to be an English major, Will's an amazing musician traveling the world, Daniel can make a literal toaster into a machine that does his homework for him, somehow. You all have so much talent. And then there's me, an immature, annoying kid who thought the best way to deal with his feelings was punching a tree.

ROSA

Tommy, you are immature...and yes you can be extremely annoying at times. But you are a kid. I was too, still kinda am, and so are the boys. We aren't these extremely perfect, talented people with no flaws. I have literally left my final essay to the last minute again that is due in...about 40 minutes. So I definitely have my flaws, and that's okay.

TOMMY

Yeah, but-

ROSA

But nothing. Look at me.

ROSA reaches over and takes her brother's hands.

ROSA

You are amazing, ok, and you have so much talent. And you fit, ok, you fit perfectly into this family, it doesn't matter that we don't share the same blood, or DNA or genes. That's not what makes a family, ok? It is love and a choice, and I will always choose to have you as my little brother. Ok? No matter what, and so will Daniel and Will, and you are the perfect son to Mom and Dad...ok?

TOMMY

Ok...Thank you, sis.

TOMMY jumps into a hug with his unexpected sister.

ROSA

Oh...um we are hugging, ok.

TOMMY

Yeah...do you want me to stop?

ROSA

No, no, it's just you're never much of a hugger.

TOMMY

You're kinda ruining the nice moment, English major.

ROSA

Ok..sorry....this is nice.

TOMMY

Yeah, wanna stop before someone comes home?

ROSA

Oh yeah, we're never gonna live it down otherwise.

The two stop hugging.

ROSA

Ok well, now that the heart-to-heart mushy stuff is done there is one thing...

TOMMY

Yeah?

ROSA

Who is the guy that started saying shit to you, and - favourably - where does he live?

TOMMY

Oh, um, well one of the guys. He is in the year above me. I think his older brother was friends with Daniel. Um, he found out... that I was adopted...and um...

ROSA

Let me guess, the bitch started saying stuff about you that got under your skin?

TOMMY

Yeah, that's kinda how I ended up hitting the tree...are you gonna tell Mom and Dad?

ROSA

No, I won't unless this continues and if it does, and that guy says any more shit, then you come to me or one of the boys, ok?

TOMMY

What, you going to beat him up or something?

ROSA

What? No, I would never condone violence. Daniel on the other hand, well...

TOMMY

Ha, yeah.

ROSA

You feel better now?

TOMMY

Yeah, thanks to you. I feel less angry anyway, so...

TOMMY gets up from the bed.

TOMMY

I'm off to play online with Toby. Later, nerd.

ROSA

Ok...actually you might want to wait off on calling him for a bit. Let's just say him and Anna will definitely be busy with something. Don't ask.

TOMMY

Um...ok then.

TOMMY makes his way out of the bedroom. He stops and turns back to ROSA.

TOMMY

Oh...By the way, your music taste is the embodiment of the 2012 pre-tween.

ROSA

And there the hamster wheel I know.

As ROSA is alone in her room again, she looks around before lying on her bed and taking out her phone.

ROSA

All's well that ends well...though I think I'm forgetting something.

A notification appears on her phone and she reads it out loud.

ROSA

Essay due in 35 minutes. Oh jeez.

ROSA gets up from her bed and jumps back onto her office chair and moves back towards her desk.

ROSA

Though at least now I have an idea.

ROSA types on the Word Document the title 'Found Family'.

ROSA

Eh, what can I say, it has a nice ring to it?

The scene turns to black as loads of frantic typing can be heard.

Girlsie

Aileen Gordon

Two boys run onstage panting. They are around 15 years old. They look dirty and bruised and they have Manhattan accents.

RACE

Panting.

You alright?

RIDER

Yeah, I'm okay you?

RACE

Alright.

RIDER

They've gotta learn ta have some respect, we asked for the prices not ta be raised. S'not like it's a crime.

RACE

Doesn't need ta be, they'd take any reason ta fight us. We've got nothing ta protect us. Were just a buncha kids trying our best not ta starve.

RIDER

But we're not just kids! They think they're running this town, but this town would shut down without us. Millionaires like Pulitzer would be nothin' without the people that work under him.

RACE

Exactly. Which is why we gotta keep fighting. He won't stand a chance against us.

RIDER smiles at him.

RACE

Where's the first aid kit?

RIDER

Have we got one of those? I thought those was only for rich folks.

RACE starts looking through drawers and finds a small first aid box.

RACE

It ain't much, but it'll do.

RACE starts cleaning a cut on RIDER's hand.

RIDER

Aint ten cents worth more ta us than to Pulitzer? If they can't spare it how can we? This shouldn't be something we gotta strike over ta make them realise.

RACE

I know, Rider. I was also there.

RIDER

Who says I was talking ta you? Maybe I am tryna fill it in incase anybody is out there listenin' ta us.

RACE

Ah, my mistake.

RIDER

Do ya think that the other newsies are gonna pull out after this?

RACE

Nah they're strong, plus they wouldn't dare after making Spot and his borough join. Those Brooklyn newsies are scary.

Rider hums in agreement and readjusts the newsie cap on her head, revealing another injury.

RACE

Oh, yeah, got another one. Let me.

RIDER

No!

RACE takes off RIDER's cap showing her long hair that was pinned up, hidden by her cap.

RACE

Rider? Youse a girl!?

RIDER

Yeah...

RACE

But you- what?

RIDER

I'm sorry.

RACE

No, I'm not mad at you. But why?

RIDER

You think someone's gonna buy papers from a girl? I've got it hard enough as it is.

RACE

But you could have told me.

RIDER

I know, I'm sorry.

RACE

It's okay.

RIDER

Ya know, I'm real lucky ta have ya, Race. I don't tell ya that enough.

RACE

Hey, we're family, we've gotta look out for each other.

RIDER

Yeah, now let's go out there an' stick it ta Pulitzer!

RACE

What? Ya still got a busted head, are ya tryin' ta catch ya death?

RIDER

I'm tryin' to start a revolution is what i'm doin'.

RACE

Well, ya got time, so sit down.

RIDER

Ha, yeah.

RACE

Ya gonna be a great leader one day Rider, I just know it.

RIDER

Yep, and you're gonna be right by my side.

RACE

I am?

RIDER

Yep, you're not getting rid of me that easily.

RACE

I wouldn't dream of it.

The Grace of a Butterfly

Isabella Cardiff

Curtains open to show a sitting room where 70-year-old GRACE is sitting on her sofa reading a book. She puts down her book and stares into space, reflecting on her life and the moments that shaped her as a person and lead to the proudest day of her life. She picks up an old box and takes out pictures. She holds one up and the picture is projected on a wall behind her. It's her when she was six years old in a field where she first found her love for butterflies.

Flashback: 6-year-old GRACE is in her bedroom at a desk, drawing pictures, while her mum and dad are arguing very loudly in the other room. Her older sister, LILA is sitting on her bed listening to music to try to drown out the noise of her parents fighting.

LILA

What are you doing, Gracie?

GRACE

Drawing butterflies and flowers.

LILA

Can I look at them?

GRACE

Ok.

LILA walks over to GRACE and crouches down. She puts her arms around GRACE.

LILA

They're very pretty. I like the flowers. Very colourful.

GRACE

I used every colour in the rainbow, see?

She points to the different colours on the page.

LILA

Yeah, I do.

GRACE

What's your favourite colour? Mine is purple because-

Suddenly the shouting stops, some doors slam and their mother (CLAIRE) walks in. LILA stares at her mother, tears in her eyes and leaves.

CLAIRE

Hi Gracie.

GRACE

Only Lila can call me Gracie.

CLAIRE

I'm your mother, I can call you Gracie too.

GRACE

Only if I like you.

CLAIRE

Jokingly.

You don't like me?

GRACE

No.

CLAIRE walks over to GRACE and tries to put her arm around her. GRACE shrugs it off.

GRACE

Don't touch me.

CLAIRE

Taken aback.

Why not?

GRACE

Because you make Dad cry.

CLAIRE

What?

GRACE

And you shout at him.

CLAIRE

How do you know it's me?

GRACE

Your voice is squeaky.

CLAIRE

Your dad shouts at me.

GRACE

He's not mean like you.

CLAIRE

How dare you!

She gets up and leaves. GRACE continues to colour as tears run down her face.

Back to 70-year-old GRACE. She shakes the memory away and picks up another picture, once again projected on the wall behind her. It shows her at an Easter lunch at her dad's house with her ex-boyfriend, JAMES.

Flashback to their argument after GRACE accidentally-on-purpose broke some of her mum's plates. She left, flustered and angry, and JAMES was bringing her home.

JAMES

What is wrong with you?

GRACE

You've seen what she's like.

JAMES

Who?

GRACE

My mother!

JAMES

Your mother, who is perfectly nice?!

GRACE

Nice?! You call that nice?!

JAMES

Calm down Grace.

GRACE

Don't tell me to calm down.

Pause

JAMES

Why are you like this?

GRACE

What?

JAMES

What's so bad about her?

GRACE

You can't seriously be asking that.

JAMES

Well?

GRACE

She ruined our family and my life.

JAMES

Oh, I'm sure she did.

GRACE

You didn't have to live with her, with her snide remarks and-

JAMES

That's it, I've had enough! All you do is complain on and on and on. It's always 'oh *she ruined* this' and '*she said* that *to me*'. The world doesn't revolve around you and your stupid mommy issues. Other people have had it a lot worse, alright? It was 15 years ago, get over yourself! Honestly Grace, grow up! Everyone else has.

Back to 70-year-old GRACE. She pulls out a letter from the Seville Museum of Fine Arts. She then pulls out a picture of her and her sister, brothers and dad standing in front of her art hung in the exhibition and she smiles.

Flashback to GRACE in her childhood bedroom, lying on her bed. LILA walks in.

LILA

Hey Gracie, how're you feeling?

GRACE

I mean, at least I didn't waste any more time on him. It still sucks though.

LILA

Of course it does. It's hard when you realise the person you always thought would be on your side just turns on you.

Pause

LILA

Hey I heard that they're creating an exhibition for your art. That's amazing!

GRACE

Oh, yeah. It's great.

LILA

You don't seem excited , what's up?

GRACE

Well, what if people don't get the message that I'm trying to put out? What if they don't like it? What if they hate it? What if no one comes to see it? What if-

LILA

Hey! Listen to me, you are amazing, OK? Everyone has something, and your thing is painting, trust me. You are so talented, Grace.

GRACE

Thanks Lil. It's just, I'm supposed to have eight pieces that they can show and I've done seven already, but my mind is blank and they're been sent to Spain in three days. I'm screwed.

LILA

Look Grace, take some deep breaths. Stressing is not going to get you anywhere. You're feeling sad and angry and confused and lost all at once. Why don't you try channel that into your art? I remember when Mum and Dad were fighting and you drew the pictures of the butterflies. You turned something terrible into something beautiful.

Phone rings.

LILA

I'm so sorry Gracie, I have to go. I love you and I'm incredibly proud of you. You will be okay.

GRACE sighs and suddenly an idea comes to her. She gets up and goes to her old desk and looks in the drawer. She takes out the picture she drew when she was six years old. She finds an old canvas and some scissors and her old art set and starts cutting, gluing and painting. She picks up her finished piece and smiles.

Back to 70-year-old GRACE. She picks up a picture of her and brothers at her dad's 60th birthday party.

GRACE is at her father's 60th birthday with her two brothers, sister, her mother (CLAIRE), stepfather and step brother, along with friends and family

GRACE

What are you even doing here?

CLAIRE

For your dad's 60th, obviously.

GRACE

Did Dad actually invite you or did you just invite yourself like always and make your new husband tag along?

CLAIRE

I was invited by your dad. If you actually paid attention to something other than yourself, you would see that we are still friends and still support each other.

GRACE

I find it hard to believe that you actually care about him at all. But you're a caring person, aren't you? You're just a walking bundle of love.

CLAIRE

What do you get out of insulting me, huh? Happiness, satisfaction, is that it?

GRACE

I wouldn't call it satisfaction, more saying who you are.

CLAIRE

When you grow up and become mature, like your other brothers and sister, you'll see how real adults communicate their feelings. Max tells me he got a promotion in the office. A bonus of €500! And Lila is moving into her new apartment with Chris. By the way, how's James?

GRACE

James? I haven't talked to him in 3 years. I'm surprised you even remembered his name since you can barely remember mine.

CLAIRE

How can I forget James? The one who had to drive you home after you decided to go crazy at Easter after you smashed all the plates and got a shard of glass stuck in your hand?

GRACE

I'll give you something Claire, you have a great way with words. You should exaggerate for a living. You'd make a fortune, more than you do decorating peoples' houses. The 70s called, they want their ugly couches back.

CLAIRE

Somehow, I still make more than you. A lot more actually. What is it you do again? Paint or something?

GRACE

You'd love to know that I actually am on the way to getting my own exhibition in the Seville Museum of Fine Arts. They called me two days ago. I'll be moving there for a few months.

CLAIRE

Seriously? It would've been much better if it was in France, after all the money I spent on French grinds for you. What a waste.

GRACE

Dad paid for them, not you.

CLAIRE

Your dad has a habit of looking for talents that don't exist, like you and French.

GRACE

Dad is excited about it and happy for me. How do you feel, *Mother?*

CLAIRE

I guess it's good.

GRACE

What was it you said, when I told you I was doing a degree in art? Oh, that's right, that it's a waste of time and money.

CLAIRE

I would hardly call it a degree, it's just painting and colouring in. It's not exactly rocket science.

GRACE

It's about expressing oneself and being able to turn that into art and beauty.

CLAIRE

Speaking of expressing oneself, I noticed you got a new permanent mistake.

GRACE

Oh, you mean a tattoo? Yes, it's the Hercules constellation.

CLAIRE

So you ruined your skin for a few lines? Got it.

GRACE

I didn't ruin my skin. I chose it because it represents the constellations me and Grandad used to look at in the sky.

CLAIRE

How sentimental.

GRACE

I'm surprised you know that word, Mother.

CLAIRE

As much as I love our catch ups, I'm going to get some cake. If you'll excuse me.

GRACE

Please, don't let me get in the way of cake.

Back to 70-year-old GRACE. She takes out an old newspaper article. It's projected on the wall behind her. She takes out more pictures, pictures of Spain, the museum, her friends, her family and finally the painting. She takes it in her hands and tears swell in her eyes. A beautiful picture of flowers, grass and butterflies is projected. The picture she drew when she was six is incorporated with her new painting. She smiles and reads the title of the piece out loud.

GRACE

'The Grace of a Butterfly.'

