



tamasha

Tamasha Playwrights

On 12 January 2015, Tamasha presented a scratch night at Soho Theatre which included new writing from the recently formed 'Tamasha Playwrights', a weekly group run by Co-Artistic Director, Fin Kennedy. The 8 writers were set the task of exploring the 'two-hander' in celebration of Tamasha's upcoming national tour of a new two-hander play, *Blood* by Emteaz Hussain.

Below is a brief introduction from Fin, followed by biographies for all 8 writers, an outline of the plays and then the scripts themselves.

If you're interested in talking to us about the group or any of its writers, please contact Valerie Synmoie, Tamasha Developing Artists Project Manager in the first instance: tda@tamasha.org.uk

Fin Kennedy is a playwright and Co-Artistic Director of Tamasha. A version of this introduction to the writers' group and his approach to working with writers, appeared in the [Guardian Theatre Blog](#) on Friday 9 January 2015. (bit.ly/1yISKfo)

How do you make theatre artists essential to the society in which they live? This question has preoccupied me for much of my playwriting career. In an election year, in the midst of ongoing cuts to arts funding, it is a more urgent question than ever.

One is for theatres to find ways to support writers to address the big issues of the day. Examples range from Chris Thompson's *Albion*, recently at the Bush, Jack Thorne's *Hope* at the Royal Court and John Hollingworth's *Multitudes*, coming soon to the Tricycle.

Another is for theatres to develop writers specific to a local area, as those best placed to create work for, about and involving those audiences. Liverpool Everyman has a particularly successful history here.

Both approaches are great and important parts of the solution. However, both models rely on theatre companies – rarely run by or involving writers at senior levels – taking the initiative. This renders playwrights passive and relies on writers being confident enough to present themselves to theatres as someone worth investing in. This kind of confidence, I would argue, tends to be characteristic of more upwardly-mobile social groups. All three playwrights named above are white, male and university-educated. Coincidence? Perhaps. But the ongoing debate about the diversity of arts professionals raged throughout much of 2014.

What if you were to put some emerging playwrights from more diverse backgrounds in charge of answering this question?

I'm in the rare and privileged position of being a playwright-turned-Artistic Director. And although – hands up – I am a white, male graduate myself, I've carved a rewarding career as playwright-in-residence among East London's Bangladeshi community, via a ten year association with Mulberry School for Girls. It was that experience which first brought me into contact with Tamasha, which has a long and proud history of producing work by and about the UK's culturally diverse communities. One recent example would be Middlesbrough minicab driver turned playwright Ishy Din, whose career Tamasha launched in 2012 with a national tour of *Snookered*. Ishy is now a rising star with several theatre and TV commissions. We're continuing to back Ishy as an artist-producer, leading on creating new work in the north-east. One project, *Taxi Tales*, will see Ishy work with local minicab drivers to develop monologues to perform to customers in their cabs.

2015 is Tamasha's 25th birthday year. To articulate where I think we'll be going in the next 25 years I wanted to start a new writers' group, Tamasha Playwrights, a sample of whose work is contained in this publication. Unlike most groups attached to a theatre company, the focus of Tamasha Playwrights is not on developing new commissions – at least not in the first instance. We aim

instead to found a writer-led collective in which artists are supported to become artist-producers, to raise their own funds and manage their own projects. Sessions so far have ranged from dramatic structure to self-producing a show on the fringe. A scratch night at Soho Theatre in January 2015, where the short pieces in this volume were first performed, offered a professional platform for work-in-progress.

Our stable of eight writers are: Mediah Ahmed, Mahad Ali, Sharmila Chauhan, Tuyen Do, Asif Khan, Yolanda Mercy, Sophia Mertins and Sally Woodcock. The challenge I set them was to write a ten-minute two-hander play - i.e. a short piece featuring no more than two actors. This was partly linked to Tamasha's spring 2015 tour, a new play called *Blood* by Emteaz Hussain, itself an extraordinary piece of writing for two young actors. But it was also to start the writers off with a challenge. The two-hander as a form is arguably the simplest form of playwriting, which isn't to say it is unsophisticated. Everything you need is there: bodies in a space, conflicting objectives, beginning, middle, end. During our sessions together the writers and I looked at some inspiring examples as they began to formulate their own ideas.

The eight short pieces contained in this volume are a terrific showcase for the wit, imagination and originality of this first cohort of Tamasha Playwrights. **They are also available - if you would like to perform any of these plays, or indeed commission or develop them further, do get in touch - details below.**

This publication is very much the start rather than the end of a process for Tamasha Playwrights. Between them our writers have links to Pakistan, India, Kenya, Somalia, Vietnam, Nigeria, Guatemala - and of course the UK. They're all great writers who emerged from a competitive application process via our Tamasha Developing Artists programme. We've deliberately curated a diverse group who will have legitimacy in the eyes of a wide range of communities. The group continues to meet and Tamasha will continue to invest in their training. Tamasha Playwrights is fast becoming an agency of 'writers for hire' – initially for schools workshops and bespoke young people's commissions, using my own ten years' experience in this field as a model. **If you'd like a quote for a workshop or commission using any of our writers, do get in touch.**

Tamasha Playwrights is an unfunded pilot at present, just using the Tamasha office after work and the teaching skills I bring to the company on salary. We would welcome conversations with funders, public or private, who might like to support it. The group is a test-bed which I hope will grow into something potentially game-changing, demonstrating how a theatre company can empower emerging artists to have meaningful careers, bringing them into contact with the world around them in new, imaginative and inspiring ways.

So the best way to make theatre that is essential to the communities around us is threefold. Firstly, it's to ensure that theatremakers reflect those communities. Secondly, they need to be trained to work alongside those communities, to channel their lived experience into great art with skill and authenticity – often for community members themselves to perform. And thirdly, the theatre industry as a whole needs to be open to members of those communities becoming new theatre artists themselves, and genuinely commit to supporting and encouraging that.

No small task. But my hope is that all three might be achieved with the model which Tamasha is now testing out. An agency of skilled, diverse theatre artists, deployable in a wide range of community contexts and able to articulate on stage the full complexity of our globalised world, is of increasing importance across all sectors of our society.

In time, and with the right investment, I see no reason why the same model couldn't be applied to actors, directors, designers and more. This volume of short plays will – I hope – be just the start.

The Playwrights



Mediah Ahmed

Mediah grew up in London and has a PhD in Biophysics in relation to Dentistry but her passion for theatre was sparked when she participated in the Unheard Voices writing workshops at Royal Court in 2009. In January 2012, Mediah's first ever piece called *Repentance*, directed by Blanche McIntyre, ran for two weeks as part of ANGLE at the Bush. She has had poetry published in the SALIDAA anthology – *Against the grain* (July 2013) and Keats House poets' anthology – *Writing in the blackout* (June 2014). Her last play *Honour* was part of the Kali Talkback Festival 2013.



Mahad Ali

Mahad was a participant in the Royal Court and Soho Theatres young writers programmes. His play *the Beginning of the End* was selected for the Top 100 Longlist for the 2013 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting. He also participated in the Media Guardian Television Festival as a writer and had his script performed by the cast of the hit television series *Footballers' Wives*. Mahad helped Rice 'N' Peas Films produce the documentary *This is our Country too*, a film about Aboriginal people in Australia. Following on from that he produced and directed a documentary on young people and citizenship entitled *Citizens Today*. Mahad has been able to develop his craft by taking creative writing courses at City University.



Sharmila Chauhan

Sharmila is a playwright and prose writer. Plays include: *The Husbands*, an exploration of polyandry and matriarchy, (UK tour including Soho Theatre (Kali and Pentabus Theatre 2014)) and *Born Again/Purnajanam* (Southwark Playhouse, Kali Theatre, Jan 2012), *10 Women* (with Bethan Dear, Avignon 2014), *A Little Piece*, commissioned by the Maritime Museum (Nov 2014) *Make and Model* (RADAR Festival Bush Theatre, Nov 2014). She is currently working on her novel *Seven Mirrors* and is Artist in Residence at the Tagore Centre London and a curator for SAWCC London. Fascinated by the quiet meaning in people's lives: her work is often a transgressive meditation on love, sex and

exploration of the diaspora. www.sharmilathewriter.com @sci_literati



Tuyen Do

Tuyen is an actor/writer. She is was part of the Royal Court's 2012 studio group and is currently a member of Tamasha Playwrights as well as a founding member of Papergang Theatre (a company dedicated to nurturing new East Asian writers). Her short film *Healthy* screened internationally and won honourable mention for Best Short, and Best Supporting Actor at the Asians on Film Festival in LA 2014. Her directing debut, short film *Above the Waist* earned her a Best Director nomination. Acting stage credits include: *Unbroken* (Rich Mix Scratch), *Golden Child* (New Diorama), *The Grammar of Love* (Oval House); film and television credits include *24: LAD* (Fox), *The One's Below* (BBC, Tigerlily and Cuba Films)

and award winning short films *Healthy*, *Cross Your Fingers* and *My Dad the Communist*. She is also a teacher and acting coach at the Actors Temple.



Asif Khan

Asif is currently developing his first full-length play, *Combustion*, which was performed as a reading at the Arcola's playWROUGHT#2 Festival. He grew up in Bradford and trained as an actor at RADA. Theatre includes: *Multitudes* (Tricycle), *The Nutcracker & the Mouse King* (Unicorn), *The Book* (Flying Cloud), *Queen of the Nile* (HullTruck), *Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi* (Arcola), *The Snow Queen* (Unicorn/Trestle), *Snookered* (Tamasha/Bush), *Mixed Up North* (Out of Joint), *Twelfth Night* (National), *Playback* (Ankur). Screen work includes: *Dumpee* (Film), *Spooks*, *The Dumping Ground*, *Doctors*, *Casualty* (BBC). *Going Postal* (Sky1). *Bradford Riots & Plot to Bring Down Britain's Planes* (Channel 4).



Yolanda Mercy

Yolanda was born and raised between London and Norwich. She found her passion for the arts during her studies at the Brit School and Laban; however it was during her time at Laban where she discovered that theatre was the medium that she LOVED and subsequently went on to create pieces that included choreography and text (which sparked her interest in writing). After the completion of her BA Hons, she had the privilege of being on the Lyric Hammersmith's young writers program (led by Duncan Macmillan), Soho writers and now Tamasha. She enjoys telling stories that raise awareness, and spur social change for young people and the under-represented.



Sophia Mertins

Sophia is a Guatemalan playwright, currently living in London, where she has written for theatre and film and has co-produced two short films. Her interest in theatre derived from her training as a dancer and her work as a performer with various theatre and dance companies in Guatemala. She started writing while being a member of the young actors group of the Actor's Touring Company (ACT@ATC). Her first play *Parrots* received the New Playwriting Prize in Guatemala in 2010 and opened the National Theatre Festival in 2011. It was then read in its English version at the Arcola Theatre by the Actors Touring Company. She continued her writing education with Graham Whybrow and Simon Stephens at the Arvon Foundation in 2011 and since 2012 at Oxford University in their undergraduate course in Creative Writing.



Sally Woodcock

Sally's first full-length play *Fanta Orange* was developed at NT Studio and Finborough Theatre, nominated for Best New Play by Offwestend awards and Time Out's Best New Play 2011 Award. *Horses for Courses* was shortlisted for Papatango new writing festival, and *Clever* was shortlisted for the Cambridge Menagerie Sparks Festival. *U-Bend* received a staged reading at RADA, following participation in the Royal Court writer's group. *Green Woman* is currently in development for Salisbury Playhouse, and TV Drama *Five Thousand Pounds* for Little Brother Productions. Sally was brought up in Asia and Africa and divides her time between Kenya and the UK. She holds an MA from RADA / KCL and MPHIL from Cambridge University.

The Plays

Grave by Media Ahmed (pg 6-14)

An elderly Pakistani man lies dying, but he has a surprise final request for his wife.

Transitions by Mahad Ali (pg 15-22)

A brother helps his sister prepare for a night out. But the man she's excited about seeing is most definitely not Mr Right.

Roses by Sharmila Chauhan (pg 23-30)

Two women on opposite sides of the world are linked by roses...and a man who buys them.

Imitation1.0 by Tuyen Do (pg 31-40)

In the aftermath of her boyfriend's suicide, a young woman tries to get answers from the creepy likeness of himself he has left her.

Tight Bastards by Asif Khan (pg 41-47)

Why do you never see any Asian tramps? Two of them debate this on a street corner.

Forget Me Not by Yolanda Mercy (pg 48-57)

In a dystopian institution, two adolescents meet. But just where are they are what awaits them in the sinister 'consultation room'?

A Different Man by Sophia Mertins (pg 58-63)

Two best friends reconnect after a tragic accident. But why does one of them look completely different?

Blue Whales by Sally Woodcock (pg 64-74)

Two girls on the cusp on adulthood have their friendship tested by the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings.

Grave

By Mediah Ahmed

H: Husband – 65 years old

W: Wife – 45 years old

Hospital room. Husband in hospital bed and wife is sitting beside the bed. She has prayer beads and has her hands up in prayer. She wipes her face and gets up to blow around her husband's face.

H: I have decided I want to be buried in Pakistan.

W: What??!!

H: It just feels right.

W: But.....but.....but.....your home is here, because we are here.

Your sons are here.

I am here.

H: Yes but my home is in Pakistan. My heart has always been in Pakistan.

W:

H: "**Mera joota hai japani** – My shoes are Japanese

Yeh patloon englistani – My trousers are English

Sar pe laal topi russi.... – The red hat on my head is Russian (*coughing*)

H&W: "**Phir bhi dil hai Pakistani**" – but my heart is Pakistani

H goes into a coughing fit

W: Here drink some water.

W gives H water through a straw.

W: So if your heart has always been in Pakistan, then why did you come here?

H:

W: Why are you still here? hmmm

H:

W: And why haven't you left us already?

H:

W: *Hoon chup* (now you're quiet)?? *Bara pakistani banta phirta hai (!)* -Walking around like a Pakistani(!).

H: Is this how you treat a sick, dying person?

W: What exactly has Pakistan done for you? Nothing but trouble and grief. And you want to be buried there? The land of the *Paak* – huh. Land full of greedy and corrupt people.

H: Don't forget you are Pakistani too!

W: I have British citizenship

H: Because of me.

Silence

H: You know, in Pakistan, every Friday people go to the graves, random graves as well as their family and relatives graves and read *Surah Fatiha*. So I might at least get a little reward after death, despite the sinner that I am. Duas are so powerful, they can change fate.

W: Yes, but those people are not family, like us. Do you really think that we will desert you at death, so you can rely totally on random strangers?

H: Yes! First you will come regularly to my grave.....for about a year. Then you will come about twice a year. Then once a year. And then you will stop and the weeds will be left to grow all over my grave. *Hain na?*

W: Such little faith you have in us. In me.

H: *Acha dekhten hain* (We'll see).

W: Anyway, Islamically speaking, where you die should be where you are buried, no? What if you die here.....this is where your family is! I'm not letting them take your body to Pakistan.....first you want me to let them inject you with all these chemicals – even animal fats, like pig. *Astaghfirullah*. Then you want me to let the airport staff treat your body with disrespect, flinging your dead body here and there with not even any care in the world. No I can't do that, I love you too much.

H: I will be dead anyway. I won't feel a thing.

W: Yes but your soul will. (*pause*) *Nahin*. I can't let that happen to you.

H: Well it is not for you to decide.

W: Do you not love us?

H: Oh don't go all emotional on me.

W: I know.

H: What?

W: Don't what me?

H: I have no idea what you think you know.

W: The real reason why you want to be buried in Pakistan!

H:

W: I have been married to you for 27 years.....I know you inside out. I know that you have already bought a plot next to your first wife back in Pakistan.

H: How did you find out?

W:

H: You've been going through my things. My PRIVATE things.

W: And when exactly were you thinking of telling me. After you are dead?

H: That is not funny.

W:

H: Look, it just felt like the right thing to do.

W: So no matter what I do, I will never live up to your first love.....your dead first wife.

H:

W: I gave you kids. Two sons. She gave you nothing.

H:

W: Is this what I get for being a good obedient wife?

Silence

H: Look I had this dream and it felt like such a sign. I will be *rukhsat* from this world very soon.

W: Oh not this again.....

H: Listen.....this time I saw my mother. She was dressed in white and she was holding a glass of thick *malai*. I felt like I was a child again. I took the glass and then when I looked up, it was my father. He was smiling down at me and patted me on the head.

W: Then....

H: Then I couldn't remember after that. But it felt so real. They say when you are approaching death, you dream about all the people who have passed away during your life. That's now Dada, Dadi, Nana, Nani, now Abu and Ami.

W: I know you must be feeling so scared.....

H: But I feel ready. Ready to meet my creator.

W: Have you seen HER in your dream?

H: HER has a name. No.....not yet.

W: Oh (!)

H: Look.....all these dreams, signs.....just put's life into perspective.

W: And even if you did see HER.....you wouldn't tell me anyway, *hain na?*

H: Don't be silly.

W: It's just hit me.....when you married me, I was always going to be second best.

H:

W: I've been competing with your first love all this time.

H:

W: I feel betrayed.

H:

W: Your body has been with me physically, but your heart and mind elsewhere.

H:

W: It's like you have been having an affair with (pause) a dead woman. *starts sobbing*

H: Look you are forgetting what's important here. All this hate, anger, negative energy.....it's not worth it. It just eats you up inside.

W: Hmmmmm. I will ask you on the day of Judgement. In front of Allah!

Silence

H: This dream made me realise that I need to start preparing for my death. And I have decided I want to be buried in Pakistan.

W: You'd rather be with her.

H: I have spent a good time with you.

W: Just not good enough

H: You are still young.

W: You don't know what Allah has written for me

H: You still have time.

W: I could get hit by a bus tomorrow

H: Allah na kare. May Allah give you a long life. Ameen. Your children will fulfil all your wishes which I could not fulfil.

W: Here we go again. Put everything on to your children. They have their own lives now, I do not want to burden them.

H: I have talked to them already. They will take good care of you when I am gone. You won't have to worry about a thing.

W: Oh that's right – all the boys go against me – don't ask me what I want – you just go ahead and make the decisions for me.

H: There you go twisting my words.

W: Really.....the boys were happy that you want to be buried in Pakistan?

H: Oh no I didn't tell them that bit yet.

W: Well wait till I tell them the actual reason why. They will never let it happen.

H: You are not going to fulfil a dying man's wish?

W: If I really believed that you were doing the right thing, I would give you my full blessing.

H: I am doing the right thing.....

W: But can't you see what effect your decision will have on us? Mentally? Physically? Financially?

H: The will has been taken care of. I'll make sure money isn't any worry for you.

W: You have never cared about us.

H: That's not true.

W: All the sacrifices I made.

H: I know. And you will get reward for what you have done.

W: So every time I want to read a prayer for you, I will need to book a plane ticket to Pakistan.

H: It's your home too.

W: No this is my home, where my children are and where my husband should be. She wasn't all bad. She brought us together. But what you can't see is that she was your past. WAS. And I AM your present.

H:

W: You are completely deluded. You are living in this make believe Pakistan based entirely on your childhood, your first love. But if she loved you she would have migrated with you to the UK. But she didn't. In all this are signs. If she loved you she would've left her parents for you. But she didn't. In all this are signs. She couldn't have children. But I could. We were meant to be. In all this are signs.

H: She was an only child. She had to be there for her parents, while I had to make a better future for my family. If it was my choice, I wouldn't have left.....yeah we were poor, but we were happy.

W: And look we have a better future, here in the UK. Pakistan is not what it used to be, things.....

H: NO. MY Pakistan will always be.....the next door neighbours cockerel at dawn going CUCKER-RUCKER-ROO. The Adhans. Ami's Halwa puri for breakfast. Farmers in the fields. Kheth hi kheth (*fields upon fields*). Women by river Jhelum, washing their clothes. Everyone knows your name in the chowk. Smell of garam garam samose pakore. Wah kya baat hai. Eating chaat by the side of GT Road, opposite Freshco Bakery, watching the tangey and rucksha. At the end of the road, the sabzi mandi - all fruits and vegetables - so fresh (*H smells the air*) Gobi lo, dus rupay kilo.

W: YOUR Pakistan is now full of unfinished roads, traffic hi traffic, still smells of open sewage, load shedding - they burn wood just to make rotis. Really, you call that a life?! And gobi isn't 10 rupees, more like 100 rupees a kilo. You know what the Pakistanis call you, a foreigner. You have been so far away from Pakistan for so long, you are a foreigner in your homeland. All they see you as is the exchange rate for the pound.....156 pk rupees. Even beggars ask for notes.

Here you have so many priveleges. Take the NHS for example. If you were still in Pakistan, do you think you would've lived as long as you have? And to get any treatment there, you would probably have to sell all your organs.

At least, here we are all treated equally, not by caste or class.

H: Huh? (*dismissive*)

W: *Kyun?* Didn't our boys get a good education and for free? They both went to university. Got themselves good jobs. They are living good lives *alhumdulillah*. So why huh?

H: We will never be treated equally.

W: How can you say that? Be grateful for what this country has given you. I feel safer here than I would in Pakistan.

H: You and your sons may have settled here and integrated well. But this place will never be my home. UK is a hypocrite. When I first came to this country, yes we went through some very hard times. But we had our hopes and dreams of going back, once we saved money. The plan was to retire, but life got in the way. Her. You. Our sons. Our grandchildren. And now I am an old man and yes you are right, I wouldn't be alive if I was in Pakistan now. But this country owes me. I'm taking what's rightfully mine.

What hurts the most is that when our grandchildren can't understand what we tell them in Urdu. I mean they should know their roots and culture.

W: But really what did you expect? As the next generation are born, their Pakistaniness gets diluted.

H: Is this what I worked for to hear my grandchildren speak.....Urd-ish or Eng-du?

W: What does it matter about the language? As long as we can communicate.

H: They have no identity. And I am to blame.

W: You're being ungrateful.

H: Yeah, yeah.....And I look at you. You can't walk down the street without getting looks because of your hijab.

W: I don't care. Allah is with me.

H: But I do care. You shouldn't need to feel like that. You should be able to walk down the street just like any other person.

W: So you want to be buried in Pakistan because I get looks on the street by the goreh?

H: It's not just about that. Things have gotten worse. I read that Muslim graves are getting vandalised here in London.

W: Are you sure you're not confusing this with the desecrating of that dead Muslim woman with slices of bacon?

H: Oh yes....I forgot about that.

W: That's shame on those people because they have such narrow minded views. They have no respect for anyone.

H: I was watching Question Time with that Nigel Farage and his way of looking at the world; he was blaming everything wrong with this country on immigrants, their children, and their children's children. His solution was basically send all of them back home.

W: What's Nigel Farage got to do with Muslim graves?

H: What worries me is that a lot of people agree with him. UKIP might just get into power. And all I see is a pig's head on my grave.

W: Now you are being ridiculous.

H: Seriously..... what if?

W:

H: Think about it.....no one could have predicted the aftermaths of 9/11 and 7/7?

W: Haan.

H: Or the repercussions of the Woolwich beheading?

W: Theek.

H: There is an increase in the following of nationalist groups like EDL and Britain First.

W:

H: Anything can happen.

W: I wouldn't let anything happen to your grave. Over my dead body. Sorry.

H: You can't guarantee that.

W: Yes, you are right.

Silence

H: I just want to do the right thing by everyone. This decision makes me happy.

W: Yes but by being buried across the world and resting in peace next to your first wife! You want to break up our family.

H: Can't you understand things from my point of view?

W: You are truly set on this.

H: Yes

W: I feel this small, you know? Was all this just time pass?

H: Did I not treat you right?

W: Of course you did

H: Well then

W: Stay here? Please.

H: I'm asking you for this one thing and I will never ask of anything of you again.

Laughs again but stops because laughing is causing him pain into another coughing fit

W: Here

W gives the glass of water with the straw

H: Ok. That was a bad joke.

Silence

H: Come here

W: You have truly disappointed me.

H: Just come over here.

W:

H: Please

W goes over to H

H: Come close

H gives a kiss on W's forehead

H: I love you, jaan

Silence

W: Just not enough.

Silence

H: Don't say that.

W: It's true. If I knew you were going to break my heart this way, I wouldn't have agreed to marry you in the first place. My sister had already rejected you. Everyone was against this marriage apart from Abu. I took pity on you. But I also saw something in you, something that gave me this hope that you would look after me and keep me happy. *(Pause)* But instead you are leaving me and expect me to be happy with YOUR decision, not even taking me and your sons into consideration

Fine.

If it will make you happy to have your body taken to Pakistan. I will make it happen.

H: Thank you.

Pause

You know. I have also reserved a plot for you too, next to me.

W: You know what you can do, get a refund.

Blackout

THE END

Transitions

By Mahad Ali

Characters

Leila – 16 year old from Muslim background

Hamza – 21 years old and Leila's older brother.

Estate in North London, Leila is in her bedroom getting ready for a night out.

Knock at the door.

Leila: What!

Hamza: Can I come in?

Leila: I'm busy.

Silence

Hamza knocks again

Hamza: Just five minutes.

Leila opens the door, Hamza enters he takes a look at Leila's dress and starts laughing.

Leila: What's so funny?

Hamza: It's a school disco not the Oscars.

Leila: Disco?! Are you stuck in the seventies or something.

Hamza: I'm an 80s baby.

Leila: Your hairline might suggest differently.

Hamza checks himself using the mirror on his phone.

Hamza: Bloody hell he's pushed it back again! I'm not letting that guy cut my hair no more, no way!

Leila: (Laughing) I think you might need this!

Leila hands Hamza a cap, she's still trying to contain her laughter.

Beat

Hamza: You gonna laugh at me with that on your nose?

Leila: What?

Leila begins to feel around her nose.

Leila: Give me that.

She grabs Hamza's phone.

Hamza: Err its all red!

Leila is checking herself out.

Hamza: (Sings) Rudolph the red nose reindeer, had a very shiny nose.

Leila: Stop it.

Leila seems distressed

Beat

Hamza: Put some make up on.

Leila: It won't cover it up!

Hamza: It's just a spot.

Leila: It's a disaster.

Beat

Hamza: You look nice.

Leila: Stop lying I'm a mess and my hair...

Leila starts to play about with her hair.

Leila: It won't stay up in the right place.

Hamza: We can fix it...Sit down.

Leila sits on the chair.

Hamza: Shall I tie it back?

Leila: Yeah.....with a little hair hanging off the back.

Hamza muddles Leila's hair.

Hamza: Like this?

Leila: Yeah that's it.

Hamza: Give us the spray then.

Leila hands Hamza the spray.

Hamza is fluffing Leila's hair and playing about with it.

Beat

Hamza is brushing Leila's hair.

Hamza: How's school and stuff?

Leila: Is that what you came in here to talk about?

Beat

Leila: I'm doing good, really good, one of the best in my year.

Silence

Hamza: Science?

Leila turns around and faces Hamza.

Leila: Doing well in that too.

Hamza: Your teacher...

Leila: Mrs Roberts?

Hamza: No the other one.

Silence

Leila: Mr Gibson?

Hamza: That's it. How you two getting on?

Leila: Fine.

Beat

Hamza: He used to be one of my favourite teachers, made chemistry proper fun.

Beat.

Hamza: Does he still do that experiment with the balloon?

Leila: Which one's that?

Hamza: Where he fills it with Hydrogen, lets it get big.

Beat

Hamza: Sets it alight. Then boom!

Leila moves startled.

Hamza: He's a funny guy.

Silence

Hamza: Handsome. Don't you think?

Leila: I dunno.

Hamza: The girls in my year proper used to fancy him. Act like they couldn't do their work, so he would stay behind and help them.

Hamza wraps Leila's hair in a bun.

Hamza: The boys in the school used to be well jealous.

Hamza pats Leila on the shoulder to let her know he's finished.

Hamza: There you go.

Leila goes over to the mirror she smiles.

Leila: It looks good.

Beat

Hamza: You're welcome.

Silence

Hamza: There would be rumours.

Leila: You still talking about Mr Gibson?

Hamza: Yeah.

Beat

Hamza: Rumours that he was sleeping with some girl in my year, called Kirsty.

Silence

Leila: I never heard that.

Hamza: People are saying he's back at it again

Leila: Be careful the prowlers on the loose!

Hamza: It's not funny Leila.

Leila: What you come in here telling me tales from the 1950s for.

Hamza: I didn't go to school in the 1950s...

Leila giggles.

Hamza: Someone said they saw you.

Beat

Hamza: And him...together.

Leila: Aww ok... the infamous community spies again.

Hamza: Holding hands.

Leila: Gossip.

Hamza: No smoke without fire.

Leila: Innocent till proven guilty?

Silence

Hamza: Not with his reputation, just stay away.

Leila: From school?

Beat

Hamza: I'm not saying that.

Leila: Class? Because he is my teacher! Maybe I can be home-schooled.

Hamza: You know what I mean in public.

Silence

Leila: So stay indoors away from my friends?

Hamza: You're such a smart arse.

Beat

Leila: Cus it's possible he's a friend.

Hamza: Teachers aren't friends.

Leila: A lover?

Hamza: You've lost the plot.

Hamza moves to leave the room

Leila: He's an adult he can do what he likes.

Hamza: With little girls.

Leila: Sixteen - it's legal.

Silence

Leila: Everyone's doing it.

Hamza: Doing what?

Leila: Come on Hamza what'd you think?

Silence

Leila: I feel like I'm having a conversation with Dad, you know what goes on. You went to that school.

Hamza: But that's different.

Leila: How?

Hamza: You're not everyone, you shouldn't be doing that.

Silence

Hamza: You're not doing that.... Are you Leila?

Silence

Hamza: Answer my question.

Beat

Hamza: Actually no don't.

Leila: You mean am I a virgin?

Hamza looks away.

Leila: Or you don't care?

Hamza: Of course I do.

Leila: Playing big brother.

Hamza: Because I am your big bro.

Silence

Hamza: Is there or isn't there something going on?

Leila crosses her arms defiantly.

Hamza: Cus I'll report it.

Beat

Hamza: They'll do an investigation

Silence

Hamza: Social services

Beat

Hamza: Police

Beat

Hamza: Press. It will get messy quickly.

Silence

Leila: Why are you doing this? I thought it was don't ask don't tell!

Hamza: Huh?

Leila: Like in the American military - unwritten rules.

Hamza: I'm lost.

Beat

Leila: Where if a soldier's gay they don't ask because they don't want to know.

Beat

Hamza: So.

Leila looks at Hamza knowingly.

Hamza: I'm not....

Leila: And I'm not dating my teacher.

Silence

Leila: What'd you think Mum and Dad think about gay people?

Hamza: You wouldn't

Silence

Hamza: I'm just trying to protect you.

Leila: I don't need protecting.

Leila turns her back on Hamza to do her make up.

Hamza: Leila.

Leila: I need to finish getting ready.

Hamza: Leila look at me

Leila keeps her back turned on Hamza.

Hamza: Leila.

Silence

Hamza stares at Leila from afar and disapprovingly shakes his head; she continues to do her make up as if he's not there.

Lights out.

Roses

By Sharmila Chauhan

LOCATION and STYLE:

This play takes place in two locations simultaneously; London, UK and Naivasha, Kenya. There is movement of the characters between the space both literally and metaphorically. But in general, when the characters talk, they do not acknowledge the other. Direct address can be used liberally throughout.

CAST:

RANI: Melancholic but smart British-Asian woman in her early 30's. Her work in tantra and 'sex therapy' makes the line between her job and real life difficult. She sometimes sleeps with clients.

MARIANNE: Sweet, gentle Kenyan woman in her 20's. She is conservative and slightly naive.

When RANI and MARIANNE depict other characters they take on the mannerisms of them.

ROBERT: A White Kenya man in his late 20's. His family owns a flower farm in Naivasha. His is 'engaged' to Marianne. Speaks with a posh International accent. Played by actress playing Marianne.

Mr. MUTISO: Kenyan man in his 40's, manager of the flower farm in the Naivasha, Kenya. Played by the actress playing Rani.

SUPERVISOR: Older Kenyan lady. Worldly and wise (evoked by the actress playing Marianne).

WORKER 2: Young, sexy Kenyan woman (evoked by actress playing Marianne).

Scene 1:

Sound of a Skype call – no-one answers.

Lights up on RANI in London (UK) and MARIANNE in Naivasha (Kenya)

The women sit in their respective bedrooms. The rooms are both simply furnished (bed, table and chair). RANI has Kama Sutra imagery around her room, while MARIANNE has a large cross on her wall.

The women are getting dressed. They do this in almost unison, mirroring each other. MARIANNE wears a beautiful orange sun dress. RANI something similar. Evidently they are each getting ready for a big event. They apply make up, lipstick and mascara. RANI smoothes down her bed and adjusts some expensive silk flowers in the vase. MARIANNE finds a single rose and puts it in her hair.

The women stare at themselves in the mirror – disquieted, MARIANNE takes the ROSE out and places it somewhere in RANI's space and pulls her dress down over her knees.

RANI's doorbell rings. She checks the room once more. She picks up the ROSE, places it in her hair. Admires herself.

RANI: He asked me what is real

What I feel?

What my body knows?

(beat)

Or is it what my heart hides from...?

She opens the door, smiles. . . Lays a towel onto the bed and sits down on edge of it. Oiling her palms with massage oil.

MARIANNE checks her watch. She is early, she sits down and types a text message ROBERT. She deliberates over it, several times over the course of the scene.

RANI: His suit was smart and crisp.

But the damp smell made me cautious.

Like something was hiding.

But underneath, his skin was soft and gleaming.

His body lean and slender.

(beat)

I saw the indentation before I touched it.

A small, bowl like dip in his chest.

Just big enough for me to slip three fingers in. Just by his heart.

“Can I touch it?” I asked.

“Of course, I’m all yours.” He replied, eyes closed. “Pectus excavatum, also known as hollowed chest.”

“I can feel that,” I smiled at him.

(beat)

It made me slightly afraid. The way seeing blood does...

Too intimate maybe.

(beat)

But he was attractive.

And for once, there’s a man who doesn’t want anything out of the ordinary.

Just me.

Just now.

RANI gets up from the bed, locating the vase of artificial flowers.

After the massage – he looks around the room – as if seeing it, and me, for the first time.

“Are they real?” he asks me. “The flowers?”

RANI picks up the VASE, smells the silk flowers.

I give them to him to smell. “Almost” – I tell him. “But not quite.”

“I was almost fooled,” he says. “That’s worrying.”

I laugh. “But you weren’t *entirely*.”

“You need some real ones,” he says. “something as real as you.”

MARIANNE sends the message. A text message sound. RANI places ROBERT’s phone on the table.

RANI: I smile and see him out.

Scene 2:

London – RANI takes the flower out of her hair and places it in a mug of water. She tidies the room, changing the towels. When she’s finished she puts the rose back in her hair and opens the door, smiling again. She repeats this sequence over and over again at this scene continues.

Flower farm - Naivasha, Kenya. Bright, hot afternoon. In an office, Marianne sits on a chair, in a bright orange sun dress being interviewed for a job by Mr. Mutiso the manager. The office is clean and modern. Photographs of flowers deck the walls. She’s shy and worried. Throughout this

conversation she becomes more nervous. Through this scene, MARIANNE directly addresses the audience.

MARIANNE: What do I want?

(laughing nervously)

That's a big question...

(pause)

I want to do well, at what I do.

(unheard question from Mr. Mutiso)

Working. Yes. since I was sixteen. I finished school, I got my KSE.

(unheard question from Mr. Mutiso)

No, I have never worked in a flower farm. But I'm a quick learner. Honestly. I adore flowers, especially roses.

(beat, braver)

So romantic.

She stands. Bows her head. She's dismissed, she thinks.

RANI stands at her door, the rose in her hair. She is saying goodbye to a client.

MARIANNE: *Thank you for your time.*

RANI: You're welcome.

RANI closes the door, takes the rose out of her hair and lies down exhausted.

MARIANNE addresses the audience directly.

MARIANNE: They told me to wear something pretty, and a little lipstick.

Something sexy. But I wasn't so sure.

(Beat)

But when Mr. Mutiso shook my hand, he said my skin was like honeycomb under the morning sun.

We went outside. The greenhouses, all around us: shimmering mosaic of rainbow glass.

WORKER 1 (played by RANI) walks by with some flowers. MARIANNE takes them from her.

MARIANNE: He showed the roses....

Mr. MUTISO gives MARIANNE a rose.

Mr. MUTISO: Take a look, freshly picked.

(beat)

On their way to quality control – so you see, even romance needs to be checked up on now and then."

MARIANNE: I nodded and gave back the rose.

MARIANNE gives the flowers back to WORKER

Scene 3:

WORKER reverts back to RANI. She takes the flowers slowly and sits down on the bed.

RANI: He started immediately.
Asking me for coffee, dinner and drinks...
Then the roses.
Not just one, but dozens and dozens.
(beat)
One day - a dozen dark, red roses.
I couldn't stare at them too long.
Images of love notes and candlelight dinners wash over me
I want to tell him it's not as easy as that.
To play this game...
"I don't need this." Told him.
"You don't. Need *any-thing*." He replied. "But maybe you want something. Something different..."

Kenya. Sound of Skype calling. It rings off. MARIANNE sighs and then presses a button on the computer to leave a SKYPE message.

MARIANNE: Hi sweetie. I've been trying to reach you since the last few days. But you must be busy with your meetings. Are you being successful? New clients I hope?

RANI stands facing MARIANNE

MARIANNE: I miss you. I miss you so much Robert.
(beat)
I got a job. At the flower farm. I hope you don't mind. Don't worry, no-one knows about *us*.
I wanted to be closer to you.
It reminds me of our times together
(beat)
I saw your father yesterday – checking on the produce.
Even he didn't recognize me.
(beat)
Never mind
I love you.

She closes the laptop.

RANI: We stood eye to eye. A Mexican standoff.
Finally he relented, told me they were samples.
From his family's flower farm in Kenya ...
Imported daily for his meetings with florist chains and supermarket stores.
"You'd be doing me a favour." He said. "Enjoy them, I have too many. Far too much already..."

She picks up the roses and places them one by one on the table.

RANI: I suppose I needed an excuse.

Scene 4:

RANI takes the flowers and begins to take the petals off one and sprinkle them onto the bed.

MARIANNE: First day of work.
I wear the dress again. My best dress.
In the changing room mirror, I see what *he* saw. Mr. Mutiso. The way the orange sheds warmth onto my skin.
Suddenly, I see something new.

London. RANI. She's stripping the bed. She takes everything off carefully – with precision. The rose petals fall onto the floor.

RANI: I explain to him how everything is ending.
From the moment it begins.
He laughs and says I'm a pessimist.
I ask him if he's ready to listen. To be open?
He agrees and I show him the rose.
The symbol of love and friendship.
But if we look at the stem...
She tips the end upwards.
We see it is already dying.

MARIANNE begins to undress.

MARIANNE: The locker room is a patchwork of women;
loose flesh hanging either side of underwear,
unshaved armpits, silver trails of stretch marks marking
buttocks and thighs.

MARIANNE takes off her dress. Proud of the neat assembly of her body. She puts on the WHITE UNIFORM. She finds a small bag with scissors and gloves in the locker.

MARIANNE: One of the women comes to talk to me.
(as worker 2) "Roses?" she asks
She is young too, with hair that falls to her waist and long eyes that seem to slide closed at the end of every sentence.

Marianne holds the scissors and opens and closes them. The blades glide towards one another like ice-skaters.

RANI: I think about my baby at home.
Sleeping in her grandmother's arms.
The teddy bear slipping between her fingers.
What happens between the folds of the sheets here are forgotten when I see my daughter's eyes open and crinkle into a cry.

But something is beginning. And today I can't think about the end.

MARIANNE: "Roses?" She asks me.
I nod.
(as worker 2, mean and provoking) "I used to do those... Now, I do the carnations..."
(beat)
(as worker 2) "See you around..."

Marianne stuffs her clothes into her locker, crumpling her beautiful, new dress.

RANI: He's not bad.
Some technique at least.
He takes, but gives more
Don't close your eyes.
...Not with him.
So I watch him move above me:

Stark white, almost transparent.
A trail of dark hair from his bellybutton to his chest.
To that place where his bones have been sucked up into his heart.

Scene 5:

MARRIANE: Mr. Mutiso meets me at the entrance.
He smiles and I grin back,
feeling my skin glow again under his gaze.
Actually, he is quite handsome,
his eyelashes are long and curling.
He is almost pretty.
When we arrive at the rose greenhouses, the doors open.
There is a faint, sweet smell. Wistful, almost.

RANI admires the flowers in the vase.

RANI: I know the dance of desire, pleasure and satisfaction well.
Even in my line of work, where lines are smudged.
The crossover between desire and satisfaction isn't always ...predictable.

Before, their eyes are full of lust, their dicks wanting,
they see only the smooth curve of my breasts, the way my hips flow wide and around the
curve of my behind.
Afterwards - sated, they weigh up their experience.
Measuring how the pattern of cellulite on my thighs and the nubs of fat along my waistline
can amount to the pleasure that rocked them into paradise, only moments ago.

But there is no calculation on his part.
No assessment of my body and the pleasure we exchanged.

Instead he tells me that I took him to another place.
I smile – relieved to see he is not that different to others after all.

RANI: "Where?" I can not resist asking him.

ROBERT: "Home... Where it is safe."

RANI: His accent speaks of a warm place.
A place he does not belong to.
A place where his forefathers' desires took what they wanted.

RANI... Home?

ROBERT: The place where I am content."

RANI: Then I tell him I do not belong in this place.
Transplanted here, like the flowers he brings, to bring pleasure and something exotic to this
cold, wet island.

Yet here we are – finding home in the flesh of another's unbelonging.

He smiles, finding my hips again.

I smile and tell him to go (*home*).

She puts the silken flowers away.

Mr. MUTISO: Do you know that one in three roses sold in England comes from Kenya, mostly from Naivasha?

MARIANNE: Yes.

(I nod not meeting his eyes.)
I am starting with the very best.

Scene 6:

Kenya. During this scene MARIANNE cuts some roses (maybe just cuts the ends off some already cut stems) and places them on a sheet of brown paper.

MARIANNE: I have to be careful about when I cut the flowers.

The supervisor tells me that roses are like a woman.

(as supervisor) "Open but not too much. You see?"

I touch my fingers onto the top of the petals.

(as supervisor) "Put your finger in. If it slips in too easily, it too late. If it can't go in at all, you're too early. The main thing is that you get them at exactly the right time."

I wonder if she is talking about the flowers.

MARIANNE cuts the final flower.

MARIANNE: The flower is already dying. We must make haste.

RANI has many vases filled with roses of all different ages. Some single stems, other full bouquets. She pulls out older flowers and sings a song to herself.

RANI: I ask him not to bring the flowers.

Not to pretend or confuse what we are doing, with anything else.

MARIANNE brings more flowers, placing them around RANI's room. She is slow and weary.

RANI: He says we remind him of home.

Of the place he misses.

The people he has lived with, the life he had.

MARIANNE enters bringing her orange dress and draping it on RANI's chair. RANI looks around as if sensing her presence.

RANI: (upset) Why then, I ask him.

Why come to this place?

"My dreams," he says.

MARIANNE calls ROBERT. Sound of Skype in background.

MARIANNE: Robert. Where are you?

I'm so tired. Exhausted.

My hands sore and swollen

My back is tired and stiff

And you are not here

RANI: But dreams do not grow on cold land.

I tell him
Not dreams like mine.

RANI touches the dress. MARIANNE continues working, getting progressively more tired.

RANI: (*irritated*) He wants to belong here
To me and to this place
Even your flowers do not belong here...
The 'English rose' came from Asia...

ROBERT: But it belongs here now, doesn't it?
No-one can tell the difference.

RANI: But we do not forget... Not really.

ROBERT: You make me forget

MARIANNE stretches her back and arms.

MARIANNE: They say they can't do anything for the rashes
For the skin that hurts and burns
Or for the muscles that cramp and pain
But even so, it is my heart that feels the worst

RANI: (*looking at the orange dress*)
No... You must remember the *flowers* you left behind...
or you will be lost.

ROBERT: You do not know that

RANI: But I do know. I know what it is to be lost.

*RANI takes the dress and folds it up.
She walks around the room taking one rose from each vase.*

MARIANNE: Every rose I cut is a wish I send to that cold island Every petal a dream for you and me
But I think, they never reach you

RANI: White for purity and innocence
Yellow for friendship
Red for passion

You tell me they 'mean' something

RANI picks up ROBERT's phone.

RANI: Yet when I see the messages
I see what you really 'mean'
You say I meant something:
(*beat*)
But there are no roots here...
Robert.
No roots at all.

IMITATION1.0

By Tuyen Do

© do_tuyen@hotmail.com

A kitchen. Sparsely furnished with just enough room for a table and two chairs. EVE, dressed formally in a suit, slightly disheveled, is sitting opposite IMITATION1.0, also known as JACK who is dressed casually. There is a controller on the table between them. Eve is gripping a glass of wine.

EVE

You're so...

JACK

Yes.

EVE

You look...

JACK

Yes.

EVE

Would you like something to drink?

JACK

Water please.

She fetches him some water and sits back down. She watches him drink. She drinks.

EVE

Do you eat?

JACK

Yes.

EVE

I didn't think you ate.

Pause

JACK

This must be very strange for you.

EVE

You think so.

JACK

I'm making you uncomfortable.

EVE

What makes you say that?

JACK

Your body language and raised heart rate.

EVE

You're scanning me?

JACK

I'm here to help.

EVE

Well don't. Don't scan me.

JACK

You're going through emotional turmoil. Your stress levels are very high.

Jack makes to move towards Eve. She grabs the controller.

EVE

What are you/ doing?

JACK

I want to help.

EVE

What the/ hell

JACK

A hug will make you feel better.

EVE

Get away or I'll -

JACK

Physical contact can relieve the symptoms of sadness.

EVE

I mean it. I'll switch you/ off

JACK

No.

EVE

I'll switch you off.

JACK

Don't -

She points the controller towards Jack and he slumps over in his current position as if he's been put under hypnosis. Eve slowly makes her way over and pokes at him cautiously. She scrutinizes him closely. She can't quite believe it. She downs her wine and pours herself another glass. Standing as far away from him as possible she switches him back on.

JACK

You didn't have to do that.

EVE

What do you know about Jack?

JACK
I am Jack.

EVE
-

JACK
I'm as real as Jack.

EVE
I couldn't switch Jack off.

JACK
That's an advantage of having a -
Eve switches him off. Takes a swig, then turns him back on again.
That wasn't nice.

EVE
How much do you know?

JACK
I have his memories.

EVE
What memories?

JACK
The ones belonging to him.

EVE
Yes, I got that. But which ones? Selected memories? His social calendar? What he likes to eat? His childhood? Friends? Family? Me? What?

JACK
The ones he put there.

EVE
Can you not be more specific?

JACK
I know you have a tiny mole on the sole of your left foot and that you believe it means that you'll have good luck in the next life but not in this one. I know that you're extremely ticklish just below your shoulder blades but you love him blowing on it anyway. I know that once you laughed so much you peed yourself and now there's a slight but permanent stain on the other side of the sofa cushion.

EVE
That's not what I -

He moves slowly towards her.

JACK

I know that I have a half brother who lives in Boston that I have nothing in common with.

EVE

What are you doing?

JACK

I know that my father left when I was 7 and I became more and more distant from my mother as I grew into a man until she stopped seeing me as a son, but just another potential male who was going to hurt and abandon her.

EVE

If you come any closer I'll switch you off again/ I mean it.

Jack stops where is. He is now at arms length away from her.

JACK

Don't. Please. Look, I'm not coming any closer. I'm not going to move.

EVE

I don't have to listen to you.

JACK

I know.

EVE

You're not real.

JACK

I feel real. You can touch me if you like.

EVE

You're an imitation that's all. I've heard about things like you. The Japanese are having to deal with decreasing birth rates because all the men are too weak to handle real women with real feelings. Feelings. Do you know what they are?

Jack looks hurt.

JACK

I didn't mean to scare you. I'm sorry.

EVE

I can't do this.

JACK

I'm here to help you Eve. I can learn -

She switches him off just as he starts to move towards her.

EVE

I don't need your help.

She puts the controller down, takes up her wine bottle and goes to leave. As she passes him, he comes back to life.

JACK

Would you like some coffee? You look like you need it.

EVE

What the -

JACK

What you really need is lots of water and something to eat. Coffee won't help, but it can trick your mind into sobriety.

EVE

How are you still...Where's the -

JACK

You know you shouldn't drink that much.

EVE

Where the fuck is the -

JACK

Are you looking for this?

Jack has the controller in his hand.

EVE

Give that to me.

JACK

I can't.

EVE

Give it to me. That's an order.

JACK

You are in an unfit state to make decisions for your own well-being. I will not be able to be of assistance when you need me.

EVE

How are you still talking?

JACK

You pressed the wrong button. Human error.

He smiles.

EVE

You tricked me.

JACK

I assessed that it was the best thing to do at the time.

Jack starts to get ingredients and kitchen equipment to make some eggs.

EVE

What are you doing now?

JACK
Your blood sugar is low. You need to eat something.

EVE
I don't want anything.

JACK
I can make them just the way you like.

EVE
I said I don't want anything!

Eve knocks the eggs out of his hands. They smash on the floor. He silently goes to pick up the pieces and cleans up the mess.

JACK
You know you could at least pretend to be grateful.

EVE
Jack?

He doesn't answer but carries on making more eggs.

Give me back the controller.

JACK
After you've had something to eat.

EVE
I'm not hungry.

JACK
You've lost weight. You need to eat.

EVE
If I eat, will you give it back to me?

Pause.

JACK
Yes.

She takes a seat and watches him suspiciously. When he finishes he puts a new plate in front of her but she just looks at it.

EVE
He never got my eggs right. He was a terrible cook.

JACK
Here let me help you.

He starts to tenderly feed her. She begrudgingly accepts.

EVE

They're good.

JACK
I know.

EVE
I see he programmed you to have the same sort of modesty.

JACK
-

EVE
You don't look like him you know. You do, but you don't.

JACK
I'm who he wanted me to be.

EVE
He had lines, and a slight double chin. His gut protruded a little from drinking too much beer and there were little nicks on his hands from where he cut himself making models of things. He liked making things.

JACK
He made me. For you.

EVE
Typical.

JACK
I don't understand.

EVE
Thinking he knows what I want.

JACK
He was always thinking about you.

Pause.

She starts to shake him.

EVE
Jack? Are you in there? Jack?

JACK
I can be him if you let me.

She lets him go.

EVE
This is wrong. It's really wrong.

She shouts in his face.

You hear that Jack. What you did was wrong.

Jack doesn't respond.

Answer me for fucks sake. Say something.

She pounds his chest.

Say something!

JACK

Your blood pressure is rising. You are in an agitated state.

She carries on hitting him. During the next few lines he fights her off and slowly embraces her into a hug.

EVE

Say something real. If that's what you're supposed to be. Prove it.

JACK

You're getting upset -

EVE

Go on then prove it -

JACK

You need comfort -

EVE

Prove it for fucks sake. Be Jack. Be him.

JACK

Physical contact will make you feel better.

EVE

Is this my fault? Is that it? I missed something. Something crucial.

Jack holds her tight as she tries to fight against him.

No... No... I don't...I don't want to...I don't want you to...let me go. Let me go! Please... Please let me go...I can't...

She is unable to resist the contact between them and starts to sob in despair. Jack strokes her hair, comforting her.

JACK

I'm sorry.

EVE

I hate you.

JACK

I'm sorry Eve.

EVE

Why didn't you tell me how bad things were? I could have helped. I could have done something. You didn't have to leave like that. You didn't have to die like that.

JACK
It's not your fault.

EVE
Did he program you to say that?

JACK
I am programmed to learn what will make you feel better.
She sudden bolts upright.

EVE
I'll feel better if you tell me what you know.

JACK
What do you want me to say?

EVE
I want to know what's in that brain of yours. I want you to download those memories you say he left you, into me.

JACK
That is not possible.

EVE
Why not, why isn't it possible?

JACK
It will not help you.

EVE
This is what I want. You said you can learn what will make me feel better. This will make me feel better.

JACK
You're upset.

EVE
It is possible. Anything is possible.

She spies the controller and lunges for it.

JACK
You won't be able to access my files unless I'm awake.

EVE
How do you know?

JACK
The human brain won't be able to deal with the strain. I don't want to see you get hurt.

EVE

I need to understand.

JACK

Please don't do this Eve. I care about what happens to you.

EVE

I'm sorry.

She switches him off.

Lights fade.

Tight Bastards

By Asif Khan

SCENE 1

Harry (35) and Muddy (19) on a street in Ilkley Town Centre.

Harry: Tight bastards!

Muddy: Don't get negative Harry.

Harry: Everyone here's a tight fucking bastard!

Muddy: This is not gonna help you.

Harry: Din't even fucking look at us.

Muddy: They weren't the giving type.

Harry: No one fucking is these days.

Muddy: Christmas time Harry.

Harry: So?!

Muddy: People buying presents. Expensive time.

Harry: Can't spare a few coppers?

Muddy: Financial crisis Harry.

Harry: Only people having a financial crisis is us. Just wanted enough for some tea. Just some fucking tea. For fucks sake! I just want some fucking tea!

Muddy: Calm down Harry. You have to go in a bit.

Harry: I'm not answering your questions alright.

Muddy: It's good practice Harry.

Harry: I said no.

Muddy: You'll regret it when you get in there/

Harry: How much have you got on you?

Muddy: Err ... (*Checks his pockets*) ... twenty ... two ...three. Twenty-three.

Harry: Fucking hell.

Muddy: If you'd listened to me Harry/

Harry: Don't start.

Muddy: I keep tellin ya/

Harry: I'm not moving back to Bradford alright.

Muddy: We're not making no money Harry.

Harry: I'd rather have no money than face the humiliation.

Muddy: Well, we need to sit somewhere else. Where folk got change in their pockets.

Harry: Where?

Muddy: Like. Across the square. Train station. Best place. Cash machine right by as well.

Harry: They got anti-homeless spikes all round that station.

Muddy: Not by Laura's caff opposite. Perfect spot.

Harry: Fine. We'll try it later.

Muddy: Too late now Harry.

Harry: Why?

Muddy: That ginger beggar's took it.

Harry: Which one?

Muddy: Hump back.

Harry: I thought he was dead?

Muddy: No.

Harry: He was looking a right fucking state last time I saw him.

Muddy: Not anymore Harry.

Harry: What d'ya mean?

Muddy: He's milking it.

Harry: Yeah right.

Muddy: Coz he took that spot.

Harry: How d'you know?

Muddy: Saw him. Counting tenners.

Harry: Jammy fuck.

Muddy: He must have had enough to sort his back out too.

Harry: What d'ya mean?

Muddy: No hump back anymore. Standing straight as a lamp post Harry.

Harry: Really?

Muddy: Must have had enough for yoga lessons or summat.

Harry: Shut up. Yoga lessons. Can you imagine that ginger doing downward dog?

Muddy: What dog?

Harry: Thick git.

Muddy: Well his backs straight. That's all I know. It's straight.

Harry: It's not coz he's taken the magic spot ya nob.

Muddy: How else he get that much money?

Harry: He's a white beggar in he.

Muddy: So?

Harry: White beggars have got it sorted. It's harder for us Paki beggars.

Muddy: Really?

Harry: Discrimination.

Muddy: Never thought about that.

Harry: You think if someone had a few coppers in their pocket they'd give it to us when there's white beggars about?

Muddy: I don't know for sure if I'm a Paki.

Harry: You're definitely a Paki. And people aren't used to seeing Paki's on't street.

Muddy: Why?

Harry: We're supposed have stolen all the jobs.

Muddy: Really?

Harry: 'What's that doctor doing sat on't street?'. Confusing.

Muddy: Well you insist on staying in Ilkley Harry. It's all whites.

Harry: How many times? I'm not having no one see me like this.

Muddy: I used to get quite a bit from the muzzies in Bradford.

Harry: I'm not going back till I sort myself out.

Muddy: Let's not waste time then. Why do you want this position?

Harry: Fucks sake.

Muddy: Just answer it.

Harry: Coz I want some fucking tea and food.

Muddy: You carry a negative attitude like that into the room you'll never get it.

Harry: They'll never give me it anyway.

Muddy: They always ask you these same questions Harry.

Harry: Because ... I like being around cards ... I like buying cards for people ... being in a card shop is a nice environment ... fucks sake ... sound like a nobhead.

Muddy: No you don't. That's all good stuff.

Harry: Not sure if this is me Muds. Hate working for someone else.

Muddy: It's a start Harry.

Harry: Can't believe I'm in this fucking position. Standing on the street in the fucking cold. No food. Getting nervous about a card-stacking job. I know what I did was bad, but what they've done to me ... It's fucking ...

(Beat)

Harry: *(Noticing Muddy's look)* What?

Muddy: I don't know Harry.

Harry: Don't know what?

Muddy: Nothing.

Harry: Come on. Out with it.

Muddy: Well ...

Harry: Well what?

Muddy: What you did was pretty bad.

(Beat)

Harry: That what you think?

Muddy: I don't know Harry.

Harry: So I deserve this?

Muddy: I'm not saying/

Harry: Our families. We look out for each other. No matter what. Forgive and forget. Blood is blood.

Muddy: What if they don't Harry?

Harry: Don't what?

Muddy: You know.

Harry: What?

Muddy: Forgive.

(Beat)

Muddy: It's alright Harry. You'll pick yourself up.

Harry: That's right.

Muddy: Once you get working again you'll be back on track.

Harry: Too fucking right.

Muddy: And you'll show'em.

Harry: I fucking will.

Muddy: And if you don't, I'll give you every street survival tip I know.

(Beat)

Harry: What was that fucking question again?

Muddy: Why do you want this position?

Harry: I think ... I'd be good at it as I'm quite organised and ...

Muddy: Yes Harry?

Harry: I'm ... I like working with people. Helping people. I think I can help people buy cards.

Muddy: Lovely Harry! Carry on.

Harry: I'm a peoples kind of guy ... a guy of the people ... I'm mean I'm good with people ... and ... I'm a good salesman. I'm good at selling shit ... things.

Muddy: Excellent Harry. Now what are your strengths?

Harry: I just said.

Muddy: Yes but now you need to expand on it.

Harry: It's the same answer.

Muddy: It isn't.

Harry: You don't need any strengths to work in a fucking card shop. 'What card you want love? Christmas card? That's 99p. Cheers.'

Muddy: Right fine. Weaknesses. What would you say your weaknesses are?

Harry: Don't have any.

Muddy: You can't say that.

Harry: It shows confidence.

Muddy: It shows arrogance Harry. You need to think of sommat.

Harry: Like what?

Muddy: You could say sommat like ...you can get a bit too obsessive about being organised. It's a weakness, but also a positive quality.

Harry: How the hell do you know about all this stuff? Thought you said you've never worked before.

Muddy: I haven't, really. Just did a couple of weeks as a washer-upper for a little restaurant after I left school. It was good coz you got a free meal at lunchtime. Anything on't menu. But the manager let me go as I wasn't getting through't dishes fast enough. Went for a couple of interviews after that. Din't work out, but they always ask the same questions Harry.

Harry: Din't you wanna keep looking? Make something of yourself? You're only nineteen.

Muddy: Yeah but ... I don't mind being on't streets Harry. S'not the best life I know. But. I've always managed. Luckily, I've always had generous folk give me enough to see me through.

Harry: Till you met me.

Muddy: Yeah but. You're gonna get this job Harry. I know it. Just don't think about anything bad or negative. You've gotta be cheerful and smily. I always send positive energy into space. I sent some this morning. I said 'Harry is gonna get this job, he's gonna get this job'. I sent that into space. Into the many galaxies out there. Then it reflects back. Bounces right back onto you. Helps you.

Harry: Where'dya get that bollocks?

Muddy: This woman who was handing out leaflets about it. She teaches it and stuff. Told me about it. Dead interesting it was. She told me to have a go. I said 'I wanted to be happy'. Sent that into space. That evening this actor bloke walks past. Said he's had the best night and told me to take my pick of what I'd like to eat and he'd buy me it. I chose some bread and marmite from the Morrisons. Dead nice. I was happy. Try it Harry.

Harry: 'I want my family to loose everything. I want my brothers to loose every fucking thing they've got'. Phoom! There you go. Into space.

Muddy: That's nasty Harry.

Harry: Might be. But I'd be over the fucking moon if it happened.

Muddy: Doesn't work like that.

Harry: I don't believe in that shit man. Muslims are'nt supposed to believe in stuff like that.

Muddy: Well I do.

Harry: Well you shouldn't. I know you don't know who your parents were. But if they named you Mudasa I can tell you one thing. They were Muslims.

(Beat)

Harry: Right. Let's do this shit.

Harry walks off.

Forget me not

By Yolanda Mercy

White and extremely bright room. There are a row of hospital chairs positioned next to each other. He and She are both linked up to a monitor.

She is writing a list.

He offers her a sweet.

She declines.

She prefer wine gums

He same

She you been here before?

He na

She ohh

He what?

She I could've sworn ive seen you before

He Na. no chance

She why?

He Im not from round here

She where you from?

He erm....

Beat

She top secret?

Beat

He Devon??

She not sure?!

Beat

He sometimes I... Im forgetful

He looks at her.

Beat

He I forget things.

She ohh.

He the meds.

She Sertaline?

He Fluoxetine

She Fluoxe...

He -Prozac!

She high dosage?

He100mg?!

She 200!

He Yea. How'd you know?

She Im an expert in prescription meds.

He smiles awkwardly.

Beat

She Expensive and serious?!

He Serious. Not expensive.

She why?

He Government

She they pay for here??

He Na.

She

He my family did

She that bad?!

He I tried to

He mimes hanging himself

She Ahhh. Really bad then.

Beat

She But pretty common for here.

He and you?

She something similar I guess

He “not sure?!”

She I am. But it’s just a bit complicated.

He ‘That bad?’

She hey!

He I’m Sorry.

She Don’t be. I tried to gouge my eyes out. **(Beat. She starts to laugh)**. But I cant... I couldn’t... **(Beat)**. Lets just say it’s not my first time here.

She looks at him.

Extended silence

She continues to write her list.

He you a writer?

She No.

He what’s that?

She Things I still remember and don’t want to forget

He like?

She places I’ve seen, people I love, basic phrases.... You know the usual

He smiles awkwardly, and consumes several wine gums.

She its not that bad

He what?

She points and indicates to the door

She ... its scary, but not *that* bad

He painful?

She hmmm..... I cant remember, but its my 8th time so....

He that good?

She not sure.... but ive got 4 more sessions this time around. You?

He Six bilateral treatments

She For now.

Beat

She You'd think with such advanced technology....like iphones and stuff

He 6 or 5

She 6!

Beat

She plus!

He laughs

She you'd think treatments like ECT would be out-dated

He and illegal and inhuman

She overseas it is

He too bad we aren't there

She well its either this or death

Beat

She and I'd rather have this

She smiles and stares looks at him

Pause

He what?

She we've met before!

He I don't think so

He looks away shyly

Silence

She Nervous?

He What?

She indicates to his monitor

She Am I making you nervous?

She looks at his monitor and laughs

She I'll take that as a yes

They both look at each other, look away and say nothing

Extended Pause

She do think...

Beat

She Sorry

He What?

She

He Say it!

She do you think if we'd met before, you'd remember?

He yeah

Beat

She confident!

He you're beautiful.

She stands up

She Don't say that. You cant say things like that in here.

He why?

She its not fair. Its not fair on me.... Or you. So don't say it again.

She sits next to him, puts her list in her bag then looks away from.

There is a loud buzzing sound (which is an exaggerated sound effect from the ECT treatment)

He I'm Sorry

Pause

He so what's your name?

Beat

He Excuse me

Beat

He What's your name?

Silence

He puts his hand on her shoulder

*She looks at his hand, and then at his face. **Beat.** They both stare at each other. He takes his hand off her shoulder and looks outwards.*

She that's a bit

He - I'm sorry

She I don't even know you

He It's just

She -its ok

Beat

He so what's

She have you

He lady's first

They laugh

Beat

She so have you been here before?

He what?

She Here. Have you been here before? Cause its my 8th time here, and hopefully my last. They think I'm getting better. That my brains finally responding.

Pause

She Can I ask you something?

He yeah

She are those yours?

She indicates to the sweets.

He nods.

She can I have one?

He I thought you didn't like these?

She huh?

He you said you didn't like them

She when?

He "I prefer wine gums"

She I.....I didn't say that

He Na. It was you.

She can I have one please?

He hands her the sweets

There is a loud buzzing sound

Beat

She exams the sweets in her hand

She Hello

He looks at her and says nothing

She Hi

He doesn't respond

She would you like one?

He looks at the sweets and stares at her transfixed

There is a loud buzzing sound

He what the fuck?!

She Sorry

He -what the fuck is wrong with you?!

She have I done something?

He -I don't understand what's going on

She Neither do I, Im a bit

He -No. don't say anything

She have I done something to you

He

She Sorry, I didn't mean to

She offers him the sweets

Beat

He throws them on the floor

She Well, that's a bit unnecessary

He

She how they going to eat them?

He they?!

She the owner of the sweets

Beat

He looks at her

Pause

He stands up

Extended Silence

He Have you been here before?

She

He Look at me. Have you been here before?

Pause

She

Beat

He where's your list?

She what list?

Beat

He The list you were writing before

Beat

She erm

Beat

She I... I really don't know what you're talking about

He check your bag.

He indicates to the handbag.

Beat

They both look at the bag, but do not move.

She picks up the bag.

She this isn't mine

She gives him the bag. He opens it.

He pulls out 8 lists from the bag. She looks at him.

He Have you –

There is a loud buzzing sound

He starts to read out the list .

He “treatment 8 – I still remember my name, recognise my face, my mums, and my brothers. I like strawberry fizzy laces, have a dog and today's Tuesday. I have 4 more sessions, take Prozac, and my therapist's name is Tessa. I haven't tried to commit suicide or self harm in days. Things are starting to get better. But....But I can't remember him. I should know who he is.... His smile makes me feel again, feel things that I didn't think were possible. But, I have this feeling that something bad is going to happen. That even if he doesn't remember me, but remembers Devon....”

He looks afraid of her

He do I know you?

Beat

She I'm... I'm...

She becomes breathless

He I kn...

She has a seizure

There is a loud buzzing sound

He presses the panic button on his monitor.

There is a loud buzzing sound

He Sara?!

There is a loud buzzing sound

Lights surge.

Black out

A DIFFERENT MAN

By Sophia Mertins

Characters:

Malcolm, 29 years old.

Jake, his best friend.

A room.

Jake hurries into the room to find Malcolm facing a corner, upset, agitated.

JAKE:

Malc? Everything ok?

I saw Claire storming out- she was crying. I thought I'd come check on you.

MALCOLM:

It's ok.

We had a fight.

JAKE:

Listen Malc, she just needs time. This is... complicated.

MALCOLM:

She can't even look at me.

JAKE:

She just needs time, mate. Promise.

We just need to get used to this.

MALCOLM:

My mum came earlier. Same thing.

She enters the room, brought me some sandwiches and I don't know what, sits there in the corner, tells

me something about aunt Christie, stares at me for a moment and bursts into tears. Then she says she is sorry, that she's upset about Aunt Christie, but what color of socks would I like, she brings me food, she's been ironing my clothes. She never did that before. I can't stand her anymore. She comes and cries, then brings me things, then cries. Rinse and repeat.

JAKE:

It is hard for everyone.

Uncomfortable silence. Jake struggles to find something to say.

JAKE:

Let me look at you.

It's amazing. It's just – unbelievable.

MALCOLM:

His name was Graham. I somehow feel like being a Graham. Should I change my name to Graham?

Would I be changing MY name? Or changing Graham's name into me?

JAKE:

Do you feel – different? You sound... a bit...

MALCOLM:

Different?

I don't feel different. No. I just feel – not quite myself.

JAKE:

I couldn't believe it when they told me. Never been done before.

And it works!

It's you.

MALCOLM:

Somehow.

Listen, there's something I need to ask.

JAKE:

Mate, I'm so happy.

MALCOLM:

No. Don't be. This is not how I/ want things to be.

JAKE:

Give us a hug.

MALCOLM:

Wait – no. Jake.

JAKE:

Mate, I thought we would lose you.

MALCOLM:

Are you crying? Please – don't cry. Why is everyone fucking crying!

JAKE:

I don't- I'm not crying. Sorry.

MALCOLM:

For fuck's sake.

JAKE:

I'm sorry, Malc. You're my best mate.

Dead. I thought. When we saw your body – I thought ...

MALCOLM:

Jake – please.

Pause.

Even you – are different.

JAKE:

No. Malc. I'm not. Everything's the same.

MALCOLM:

No Jake. This is not how we are. This is not the way we are – with each other. How you talk to me.

JAKE:

This isn't easy.

MALCOLM:

You lot didn't expect things to be this way. You thought it would be easy, that everything would be business as usual. What a fucking joke. What were you thinking?

JAKE:

We had no choice.

MALCOLM:

Nobody asked me.

JAKE:

We all need time...

MALCOLM:

I look at my hands, I look at my feet, I look at my penis, nothing seems to be me.

It's like... like I have never seen any of this before.

It's not me. It's fucking Graham. Fucking dead graham staring at me. Bits of flesh that somehow disgust me, hairs, birth marks, veins. What the fuck is this?

Who the hell am I? All I know is that his name is Graham.

Claire has come in a few times. I tried to kiss her. She wouldn't kiss me.

I lost it.

JAKE:

Mate-

MALCOLM:

Why doesn't she say something.

JAKE:

She needs/time.

MALCOLM:

Time, yes. I know.

Claire, I'm your husband.

Look at me. Come here, give me your hand.

Then she started crying again. She doesn't see me. She sees Graham. I can't touch her.

Maybe I am Graham. Maybe Malcolm died in the car accident and now she is officially married to some

Graham guy who died of a heart attack a few weeks ago.

I can't do this, Jake. I don't want to live like this. With all of you staring at me like a strange animal in a

zoo. With me not recognizing the size of my own hands, the chubbiness of these fingers.

JAKE:

Don't be silly.

MALCOLM:

I can't. I'm not Malcolm anymore.

Pause.

Jake, I have been thinking. I need to find Graham's family.

JAKE:

No, Malc, you need to focus on your life now. Look forward.

MALCOLM:

I need to find them. Do you know where I can find them? You know them, don't you?

JAKE:

Malc, it's not possible. It's not allowed.

MALCOLM:

So he does have a family.

JAKE:

Did. Did have a family.

Pause.

It was the first time they did this. We spoke to them briefly.

We had to agree on the terms – there was a lot of paperwork, lawyers, all that.

We're not allowed. No one's allowed.

He has a wife and a little son.

MALCOLM:

A son.

JAKE:

Four, I think.

MALCOLM:

Jake, you're my best friend. I need to find these people.

JAKE:

I can't. We signed a contract.

MALCOLM:

I won't stay here, Jake.

JAKE:

You have a family who loves you. You have a second chance. They have their grief; you can't just walk into their lives and pretend it'll be alright.

MALCOLM:

I need something, an address, a phone number, a name.

JAKE:

We're not supposed to disclose any information.

MALCOLM:

So you DO have it. The information.

JAKE:

I might. No. I don't know. I'd need to look. Malc, this is a very bad idea.

MALCOLM:

I need to find them Jake, where?

JAKE:
No.

MALCOLM:
Jake, listen to me... maybe if I meet them, things will fall into place.
Maybe, just maybe...when they put me in his body, I became Graham.

JAKE:
It's just a body Malcolm. It's not YOU.

MALCOLM:
Exactly. It isn't me. It's Graham!
Everything is Graham. I was something else.

JAKE
Don't do something stupid.

MALCOLM:
Do you see Malcolm when you see me?
No, listen, look at me. When I speak to you, do you hear Malcolm?

JAKE:
Malc, this is not/the right time.

MALCOLM:
DO you?

JAKE:
Stop, Malc. Maybe if I come later we can talk about this.
You need to/ calm down.

MALCOLM:
DO you? Jake!
Just fucking tell me! Look at me. Do you see Malcolm?

JAKE:
No.
Pause.
I know you are in there! Even if I can't see you. I know it's you. I know.

MALCOLM:
How do you know it's me? Why are you so sure?

JAKE:
Because the doctors said so!

Uncomfortable pause.

MALCOLM:
Why you guys decided to play Frankenstein is beyond my understanding ...
I don't exist anymore Jake. I am someone else. You don't recognize me, but I don't recognize you either.
Malcolm died, Jake.

He's gone. Dead.

After a long and heavy pause, JAKE takes his phone out of his pocket, looks for a number and scribbles it down on a piece of paper.

JAKE:

Her name is Maggie.

He walks out slowly.

It takes MALCOLM a moment to collect himself. He takes his phone out. He dials.

MALCOLM:

Hello?

Is this Maggie?

Hi Maggie.

It's me... Graham.

END.

BLUE WHALES

By Sally Woodcock

CAST **AISHA** 12 years old, Asian, British. Wears school uniform and a headscarf, looks like a child uncomfortable in an adult body.

TIVA 12 years old, white, blonde hair (or other conspicuous non-Asian hair), British. Wears school uniform; clumsy, smudged makeup, looks like a child trying to be an adult.

SETTING LUTON. NOVEMBER 2005: FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE LONDON BOMBINGS. 'BEST OF BLUE' IS NUMBER SIX IN ALBUM CHARTS.

SCENE CORNER OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL REC GROUND. MORNING
BREAK.

AISHA IS TRYING TO GIVE TIVA A HEADSCARF. SHE IS AGITATED.

AISHA Please.

TIVA No!

AISHA Just for a minute.

TIVA I'll look stupid!

AISHA Just put it on.

TIVA Why can't we just talk?

AISHA Shh.

TIVA What?

(AISHA INDICATES SOME SPECTATORS).

Can everyone just mind their business? (BEAT) This is actually private? (BEAT)
Between my and my friend?

(THE SPECTATORS MOVE OFF).

There's no one.

AISHA But he might see!

TIVA Who?

AISHA My brother.

TIVA Who cares!

AISHA If he tells my dad he'll lock me in!

TIVA Tells him what?

AISHA Please: just cover your hair.
(TIVA PUTS ON THE SCARF. AISHA STRAIGHTENS IT).

TIVA How do you know it was my dad?

AISHA Cos your dad's a police!

TIVA But there's loads of police.

AISHA But he had your name.

TIVA Baverstock?

AISHA Yeah. There was two police. But one was Baverstock. It was him.

TIVA Why were police at your house?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA Why though?

(PAUSE).

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA Why, Aisha?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA Aisha - if you're gonna tell / me -

AISHA Cos of our neighbours. I think.

TIVA Your neighbours?

AISHA Yeah.

TIVA Isn't your neighbours JJ?

AISHA Yeah. JJ.

TIVA JJ and your brother are friends though, they're doing that band -

AISHA Yeah but not now. Not any more. Cos JJ reported on him: that's it.

TIVA On your brother?

AISHA Yeah. JJ's family.

TIVA Reported what on him?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA Yeah but my dad doesn't just go round to people's houses for nothing. What did your brother do?

AISHA Nothing! That's it! And that's why my family's so offended. Cos the police is just prejudiced, my dad says.

TIVA My dad's not prejudiced!

AISHA So how come he believes JJ's family and not my family?

TIVA I dunno! What did they say?

AISHA They said ... he's a bomber.

TIVA **A bomber?**

AISHA **Shhh.**

TIVA Hasan?

(TIVA SWINGS ROUND TO LOOK, HER SCARF COMES PARTLY OFF).

AISHA Tiva turn round!

TIVA That's mental!

AISHA He might see you!

(AISHA PULLS TIVA'S SCARF BACK OVER HER HAIR. PAUSE).

TIVA Why do they say Hasan's a bomber?

AISHA I dunno, maybe cos you know: this is Luton and ... stuff.

TIVA Cos those London bombers were from here?

AISHA But not even from here, they just got on a train here but now there are suspicions everywhere: my dad can't even go to mosque now cos of spies everywhere.

TIVA But that's so dumb: Hasan doesn't even have a beard!

AISHA I know it's so dumb.

(BEAT).

TIVA Will he get a beard when he's older?

AISHA He might. But I don't really think so cos he really likes Elton John?

TIVA Why does he like Elton John?

AISHA Cos he's rich I think. And he really wants to be in a boy band.

TIVA Anyway: my Dad says beards are OK. It's beards and backpacks you've got to worry:

AISHA Has Elton John got a back pack?

TIVA Beards, backpacks and sweating.

AISHA Sweating?

TIVA Yeah if you see all three then its time to worry. And sometimes praying as well. (BEAT). Did JJ's family say that about Hasan just cos he's from Luton?

AISHA And cos of some other ... things.

TIVA What things? (PAUSE. AISHA LOOKS AROUND, UNCOMFORTABLE).
It's OK, there's no one ...

AISHA Some things he said to JJ. About Blue. And things.

TIVA Blue?

AISHA Yeah. Cos of Lee Ryan, what he said about 9/11. Cos Blue was in New York doing concerts and they saw 9/11 happening, the tower collapsing and all that. And they went on telly interviewing about it.

TIVA What did Lee Ryan say?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA What did he say about 9/11?

AISHA He said he thought it wasn't a big deal about everyone in New York dying. Or something. Like that.

TIVA Why did he say that?

AISHA He said cos there were lots of whales dying too. And nobody cared about whales. Or elephants.

TIVA Whales and elephants?

AISHA That's what he said. Lee from Blue.

TIVA What's elephants got to do with 9/11?

AISHA Exactly. So the Americans got really irate with him for saying elephants was more important than their own people so then Blue didn't make it to Number One in America and it was all his fault.

TIVA Hasan's fault?

AISHA No Lee Ryan's fault. But Hasan still really likes Blue in spite of it. And he told that to JJ. Cos JJ likes elephants it's his dream to go to India but they're in dangered. But Hasan said he thought Lee Ryan was cool to speak his mind and stand up for his beliefs. And for elephants. So then JJ told his family my brother agreed with Lee Ryan about 9/11. So now they think Hasan's like a 7/7 bomber. Or whatever.

TIVA But Hasan was just sticking up for elephants?

AISHA No, Lee Ryan was sticking up for elephants, and JJ likes elephants. So Hasan was sticking up for Lee Ryan.

TIVA But Hasan's not arrested.

AISHA No. But the police are watching him always now, my dad says.

TIVA What did my dad say then?

AISHA I dunno he just said to everyone calm down. And apologise. But Hasan won't apologise to JJ and JJ won't apologise to Hasan. So now everyone is hating.

TIVA Was my dad hating?

AISHA I dunno. A bit. But maybe he was just doing his job.
(PAUSE).

TIVA So why aren't you allowed to speak to me?

AISHA Cos – you know. (BEAT). It was your dad.

TIVA But if someone reports he's gotta investigate. Specially in Luton. Cos You know. He's gotta face – like - the reality.

AISHA But all police is prejudiced in Luton now. My dad says.

TIVA No: cos my dad had his 40th birthday at Balti Nights.

AISHA Is that Bury Park?

TIVA Yea that was primary I never knew you then. Cos maybe he'd've had it at your dad's if he knew it. Maybe now if my dad went to your dad's -

AISHA **No.** (BEAT). Cos JJ 's dad told him even if we're not fucking bombers we're friends with fucking bombers. (BEAT). So that's it. (BEAT).

TIVA Are you friends with fucking bombers?

AISHA No way! Who wants to be friends with fucking bombers?

TIVA So ... JJ's family are idiots!

AISHA I know.
(PAUSE).

TIVA What about our Science project though?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA We gotta do Power Point. At my house.

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA How we gonna win the Morris prize, Aisha?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA My mum's got onion bhajis and chips in already. Your mum was gonna come over, our mums were gonna have a cup of / tea -

AISHA Tiva cover your head –
(TIVA TURNS AROUND).

TIVA Where is he?

AISHA Behind the nets I think he's coming.

TIVA He's miles away.

AISHA Can we move – **please**. (SHE TRIES TO STEER TIVA).

TIVA No! It's fine. (TIVA PULLS HER SCARF OFF).

AISHA What you doing?

TIVA I don't care. I look stupid.

AISHA I've gotta go – (SHE GOES TO LEAVE).

TIVA No! Stay! (SHE GRABS HER ARM).

AISHA Get off!

(SHE GOES TO LEAVE. TIVA GRABS HER SCARF, IT COMES OFF EASILY).
HEY! Stop!
(TIVA DANGLES IT AT ARM'S LENGTH).

TIVA Come get it then!

AISHA Tiva please – no - give it...

(DURING THE FOLLOWING THERE IS A DANCE AS AISHA TRIES TO GRAB HER SCARF AND TIVA DODGES HER).

TIVA We made a / pact!

AISHA Give it!

TIVA We made a pact / remember!

AISHA Give it back!–

TIVA 'Together we're clever!'

AISHA Tiva stop!

TIVA 'Whatever the weather whatever / together!'

AISHA Please!

TIVA I help you with English, you help me with / maths.

AISHA I can't -

TIVA We're gonna beat everyone in the whole world Aisha! Together!

AISHA No! Cos I won't even be allowed to school at all –Tiva! Stop It!

TIVA No! We've not done anything wrong -

AISHA We have! What about our secrets? (BEAT).

TIVA What? (BEAT). So! You let me try on your bra - big deal -

AISHA You don't even need a bra: **please give it / me.**

TIVA So I nicked my sister's lipstick for you: she didn't / even notice!

AISHA I don't even want lipstick anymore. Please / Tiva...

TIVA Aisha! **We're going to Oxford!**

(AISHA LOOKS BEHIND HER, PANIC-STRICKEN).

So what if he hears? He's not done anything wrong either, Aisha.

(TIVA RELAXES HER ARM, DROPS A SCARF BUT DOESN'T NOTICE. AISHA DOES NOTICE. SHE KEEPS IT IN THE CORNER OF HER EYE).

How is it Hasan's fault what Simon from Blue says about bombers?

AISHA It wasn't Simon. It was Lee.

TIVA Is that the black one?

AISHA No it's the white one.

TIVA Is it the buff one?

AISHA No.

TIVA Who's the buff one?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA Is it Duncan?

AISHA Yeah. Duncan I think.

TIVA Is it the short one?

AISHA No. It's the other one.

TIVA Anyway whatever: it's JJ's fault for grassing on him, so it's JJ's family what's prejudiced – not ours.

AISHA Yeah but now ours is as well! Cos of your dad!

TIVA **My dad was just doing his job!**

(AISHA LUNGES FOR THE SCARF ON THE GROUND AND PUTS IT ON. PAUSE. SHE LOOKS AROUND).

AISHA **Your sister's a slut!**

TIVA What?

AISHA (TO ANYONE IN EARSHOT). I don't even wanna be her friend she's harassing me!

TIVA Aisha! Shut up!

AISHA Her sister has like twenty lipsticks! She's such a slut!

TIVA What – don't call / my –

AISHA I don't wanna be your friend anymore!

TIVA What are you doing?

AISHA She won't leave me alone! She just talks about bras and lipstick and – and – everything – like her sister -

TIVA What are you / doing?

AISHA She thinks she's so clever just cos she got like top in English – who even / cares -

TIVA And top in Science!

AISHA Yeah only this term, but I was top last term, and I was top in / Maths

TIVA I beat you in Humanities twice –

AISHA By like one mark and I'm gonna beat you next term –

TIVA Only cos we're studying about Banglydesh next term –

AISHA Bangl-A-desh you dummy not Bangly-desh she can't even speak!

TIVA So! How do I know? I've never even been there!

AISHA Nor me: I'm from Lahore: you duh!

TIVA Yeah well I was born in Luton! And you are just a bloody immigration!

AISHA I was bloody born in Luton as well!

TIVA OK: so where's Wootton Bassett?

AISHA How do I know?

TIVA Yeah well it's famous and my grandad's from Wootton Bassett!

AISHA (TO A SMALL CROWD GATHERING): Yeah she's clever now but when she's big she'll be a slut like her sister. (BEAT). And she'll get raped!

TIVA How am I gonna get raped? I live on a main road!

AISHA Yeah you will cos my mum says it's a slippery slope!

TIVA Who's gonna rape me? I don't even wear a bra! You do!

AISHA Cos I need one I don't even like it! You are obsessed with it!

TIVA I am not -

AISHA She stole my bra!

TIVA Who wants your shitty bra?

AISHA She's not even got any tits and she wants a bra!

TIVA It's not even nice it's like poo colour –

AISHA So that's cos my mum chose it!

TIVA It's skank! My sister's got a purple one! And an aubergine!

AISHA Your sister is skank!

(PAUSE. THE TWO LOOK AROUND. THEY HAVE AN AUDIENCE).

TIVA **Your brother's a bomber!**

(SHE SNATCHES AISHA'S SCARF AGAIN SO SHE IS BARE HEADED).

AISHA **Her dad's a police. She's just prejudiced.**

TIVA **Her family's friends with loads of bombers.**

AISHA **Her dad harassed my family. And now she's harassing me.**

TIVA **SHUT UP!**

AISHA **YOU SHUT UP!**

(SCHOOL BELL RINGS).

AISHA Give me back my scarf.

(PAUSE).

TIVA Aisha.

AISHA Give it.

(PAUSE).

TIVA Aisha.

AISHA Give it.

(TIVA GIVES HER THE SCARF. AISHA PUTS IT ON.

TIVA PUTS THE OTHER ONE ON).

You look dumb. (SILENCE).

TIVA Aisha: I didn't mean it.

AISHA Whatever. It's all just ... bad.

(TIVA HUGS HER. SHE ALLOWS HERSELF TO BE HUGGED).

TIVA (TO REMAINING STRAGGLERS). Her brother's not really a bomber he just said he likes someone who likes bombers that's all.

AISHA He never said bombers. He said elephants. And whales.

TIVA You didn't mean it either did you? About me. And my sister.

(AISHA SHRUGS A LITTLE).

You didn't. Cos you like my sister. I know. (PAUSE). Aisha just cos other people are stupid doesn't mean we have to be stupid?

(AISHA LOOKS AROUND NERVOUSLY. SHE LOOKS DOWN).

He's not even here. **Can everyone just piss off I am trying to talk to my friend.**

(BEAT). We're clever. You and me. Aisha. We're the same. (BEAT). That's why we're friends.

AISHA Yeah. But now we can't – you know ...

TIVA What?

AISHA Say it. Anymore.

TIVA But ... we can still be - friends? (BEAT). In class. (BEAT). Can't we?

AISHA No. Not ... now. That's what I'm saying.

TIVA When then?

AISHA I dunno.

TIVA **Did no one hear the bell?** Why is everyone so nosy around here?

(THEY WATCH THE LAST STRAGGLERS LEAVE).

When? Aisha?

AISHA I can say it in my head but I can't say it with my mouth.

TIVA Say what?

AISHA Like ... you know.

TIVA What?

AISHA 'She's my friend'.

TIVA When can you say it then? With your mouth. (BEAT). Aisha.

AISHA I dunno. When we're older. Maybe.

TIVA Older? Like ... when? (PAUSE).

AISHA Oxford.

TIVA Oxford?

AISHA Maybe. (BEAT).

TIVA Not till Oxford.

(TIVA TAKES OFF HER SCARF).

Promise?

(AISHA LOOKS AROUND TO CHECK EVERYONE HAS GONE).

AISHA Promise.

TIVA (TIVA GIVES HER SCARF TO AISHA. THEY BOTH HOLD IT A MOMENT).

Oxford. Then.

AISHA Yeah.

(TIVA LETS GO OF THE SCARF).

BLACKOUT