

**Writer in Residence, Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme**

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## Characters

**Jay Conway**, m, 40s. American. Actor.

**Leigh Carver**, m, 40s. English. Director.

**Ruth Davenport**, f, 30s. Northern Irish. Playwright.

*London, present day.*

*Leigh Carver's living room. It's Sunday evening, around 8pm. Jay and Leigh sit on a sofa. Jay drinks a can of Diet Coke. Leigh drinks red wine.*

**Jay** Is there homophobia in Hollywood? Of course. And misogyny? How can we deny it? It's reflected in so much of our output. Narrative upon narrative centred around the *abuse* of women, the *violent* abuse of women. And racism? Only a fool could pretend otherwise. We've come a long way since Stepin Fetchit . . . fuck we've come a long way since *Poitier* but still . . .

**Leigh** No I agree with what you're saying.

**Jay** You ever use the n word?

**Leigh** Mm?

**Jay** You ever use the n word?

**Leigh** The n word?

**Jay** Yeah.

**Leigh** The actual word?

**Jay** Yeah, the actu-, you need me to say it?

**Leigh** No.

*They laugh.*

**Jay** So have you?

**Leigh** *shakes his head no.*

**Jay** Never?

**Leigh** Not that I remember.

**Jay** So you may have? If you were drunk or –

**Leigh** Maybe as a teenager.

**Jay** Ohh . . .

**Leigh** But it's unlikely. My parents were old communists so . . . it wouldn't have been . . .

**Jay** I've *never* said it. I don't even like saying the phrase 'The N Word'. Even referencing it obliquely like this causes me discomfort.

**Leigh** I know what you mean.

**Jay** But I do wonder if that's right. Are we abnegating our responsibility to history by refusing to speak the word? Maybe we have a responsibility as white people to say it as much as possible. To take possession of the word. As our ancestors once took possession of the people. Not my ancestors obviously.

**Leigh** Nor mine.

**Jay** My ancestors were – uh

**Leigh** Yeah, mine were probably . . .

**Jay** They were not slave-owners.

**Leigh** No. Nor mine.

**Jay** You ever see Ice Cube on *Real Time*?

**Leigh** What's *Real Time*?

**Jay** It's a talk show.

**Leigh** I don't know the American talk shows.

**Jay** One week Bill Maher said the n word.

**Leigh** Who's Bill Maher?

**Jay** He's the host of the show.

**Leigh** And he's white?

**Jay** Yes.

**Leigh** Ohhhhh . . .

**Jay** In context it was not without irony, but it still proved controversial.

**Leigh** 'Course.

**Jay** So the next week they had Ice Cube on as a guest, I know Cube, he's very honest, straight-talking . . .

**Leigh** He's a rapper, isn't he?

**Jay** And a great one. If he'd been murdered in the nineties he would be spoken about with the same reverence as Tupac and Biggie, Big Pun.

**Leigh** Mm.

**Jay** Big L. And of course Eazy E.

**Leigh** Yasss.

**Jay** Cube made the mistake of surviving. It says something about America that we prefer our iconic black artists to meet unnecessary, preferably violent, deaths.

**Leigh** It's a tragedy.

**Jay** So on the show he said that under no circumstances can the white man say the n word anymore. 'That's our word now', he said.

**Leigh** Right . . .

**Jay** And the studio audience applauded.

**Leigh** You can see his point of view.

**Jay** Completely. But I also love what Baldwin said.

**Leigh** What did Baldwin say?

**Jay** Baldwin said that that word had nothing to do with the black race. That it was an invention of the white race and was placed upon black people without their consent.

**Leigh** Who could argue with that?

**Jay** So as it's the white's man word, it's the white man who must look inside himself and ask himself why he invented that word, why he needed that word in his lexicon. It's a really good question.

**Leigh** It is a good question. And what was his conclusion?

**Jay** Baldwin's conclusion?

**Leigh** Yeah.

**Jay** I don't think he had one.

**Leigh** Mmm.

**Jay** But I think that was his point. That it was a question for the white race.

**Leigh** But surely the point he's making is that it's precisely his responsibility.

**Jay** Is it?

**Leigh** As a white man.

**Jay** As a *white* man?

**Leigh** Yes, as a white man, he has to answer for his racist language.

**Jay** Who?

**Leigh** Baldwin.

**Jay** Baldwin was black.

**Leigh** Really?

**Jay** Definitely.

**Leigh** No.

**Jay** I promise you.

**Leigh** Alec Baldwin's black?

**Jay** *Alec* Baldwin?

**Leigh** He must be very light-skinned, you can't even tell.

**Jay** Not talking about *Alec* Baldwin.

**Leigh** Who are you talking about?

**Jay** James Baldwin.

**Leigh** Ohhh!

**Jay** *laughs.* **Leigh** *laughs.*

**Leigh** Is he the youngest one? The one who was on Big Brother?

**Jay** No James Baldw – you never heard of James Baldwin?

**Leigh** I don't know all the Baldwin brothers by name. Was he the one in *Sliver*?

**Jay** No James Baldwin was uh . . . an African-American author – prolific in the sixties. He wrote *Notes of a Native Son*.

**Leigh** Oh . . . yeessss . . . God, I'm a –

**Jay** He was also gay.

**Leigh** I do know who you mean now. I am a complete Neanderthal, forgive me.

**Jay** He's not as well-known as he should be. Perhaps because America – and the world – wasn't ready to hear his voice. It was presumptuous of me to assume you would have heard of him.

**Leigh** I have heard of him, I should have . . . I'm a fucking idiot. Sorry.

*Pause.*

**Jay** Am I talking too much?

**Leigh** No.

**Jay** I get like this when I'm nervous.

**Leigh** You've no need to be nervous. What are you nervous about?

**Jay** The journey.

**Leigh** Just jump on the Victoria line and change at King's Cross.

**Jay** *looks confused.* **Leigh** *realises his mistake.*

**Leigh** Oh you mean . . . ?

**Jay** I mean the spiri –

**Leigh** The internal . . .

**Jay** The process . . .

**Leigh** *(at the same time)* The process.

*He repeats it, pronouncing it the American way, like Jay.*

**Leigh** Process, yes. Well everyone's nervous at this stage! The other actors, they'll be very intimidated by you.

**Jay** I don't want them to be intimidated.

**Leigh** They should be intimidated. Your character is intimidating.

**Jay** Ok . . . ok . . . good.

**Leigh** I like to keep things very relaxed on the first day anyway.

**Jay** I cannot wait to meet our writer!

**Leigh** I don't understand why she's so late.

**Jay** I really want her to like me.

**Leigh** She loves you.

**Jay** I love her name. 'Ruth Davenport.' It's so real. So Irish.

**Leigh** Well she is real. And she is Irish.

**Jay** I connected so much with this play I can't tell you.

**Leigh** You have told me.

**Jay** These *words*.

**Leigh** Words are everything.

**Jay** The savagery. The visceral rhythm and savagery.

**Leigh** That's exactly what I said to her. It's visceral. Poetic.

**Jay** Savage.

**Leigh** Relentless. And yet compassionate.

**Jay** Only a woman could write with this kind of relentless compassion.

**Leigh** She is a woman.

**Jay** I love that she's a woman. To hear a woman tell this kind of story. And this important moment in history. When women's voices are crying out to be heard.

**Leigh** I think it's true we need to do more for women. Create more opportunities.

**Jay** Agreed.

**Leigh** Etcetera.

**Jay** Well fucking listen to them for once.

**Leigh** Yep.

**Jay** Allow *them* to be heard. Learn from our mistakes. This is where we're at as a culture.

**Leigh** Historical materialism.

**Jay** You ever heard of the Bechdel theory?

**Leigh** I've heard of the Bechdel *test*.

**Jay** It's this theory that for a work of art to be truly progressive, it must feature two women talking.

**Leigh** Yes, I'm familiar with it.

**Jay** About something that's really important.

**Leigh** And about something other than a man.

**Jay** What?

**Leigh** It has to feature two women talking about something other than a man.

**Jay** That's the Bechdel theory?

**Leigh** The Bechdel test, yes.

**Jay** And they have to talk about something feminist, right?

**Leigh** No.

**Jay** Yeah a woman told me this, they have to talk about something women give a fuck about. Rights. Voting. Equality. *Pay*.

**Leigh** I don't think – all those issues are important – but I don't think that's strictly speaking part of the Bechdel test.

**Jay** Well it fucking should be. Bechdel should have added that to his fucking test. If he really gave a fuck about women.

**Leigh** Bechdel was a woman.

**Jay** No I don't think so.

**Leigh** She was. Is.

**Jay** A woman told me Bechdel was a man.

**Leigh** I'm sure Bechdel's a woman.

**Jay** You sure?

**Leigh** Yes.

**Jay** Really sure?

**Leigh** I am in fact 100 per cent positive Bechdel is a woman.

**Jay** Well there you go. Right?

**Leigh** Right?

**Jay** Bechdel was a woman.

**Leigh** Bechdel *is* a woman.

**Jay** So that's an example. Why should I, a man, dictate to Bechdel, a woman, what should or should not be part of her fucking theory? This is me, learning from my mistakes, learning to shut the fuck up.

**Leigh** I suppose.

**Jay** And that's what I'm saying, this is where we're at. Guys like me and you taking a back seat. Allowing the Ruth Davenports of the world to have their say. Fucking white heteronormative, privileged fucking uh . . . *cis* . . . motherfuckers like you and I who have to stand aside now. We have a moral responsibility to . . . I mean not *me*. Obviously. I'm Irish Catholic, so I can't . . .

**Leigh** Of course.

**Jay** I'm not part of that – the equation of –

**Leigh** Neither am I.

**Jay** I have an intersectional exemption. Am I white? It's undeniable. Am I heterosexual? Yes completely. Am I trans? Well I love my dick, so no. But I'm not part of this rampant elite the, who –

**Leigh** And I'm English so . . .

**Jay** Exactly you're English, so –

**Leigh** So I'm sort of . . . not really part of –

**Jay** Because we have no power. Do you have power?

**Leigh** Well I run a theatre.

**Jay** But that's not power. Not real power.

**Leigh** I suppose not.

**Jay** And I'm just an actor.

**Leigh** Sure.

**Jay** Admittedly I have *some* power.

**Leigh** Well you have a power onstage. And onscreen.

**Jay** I would classify that as charisma more than power.

**Leigh** And you have won an Oscar.

**Jay** That means nothing to me. I've never sought external validation.

**Leigh** It's why you're so good.

**Jay** I work my program. I talk to my sponsor on a daily basis. On a daily basis I pray, I meditate, I maintain my relationship with a power greater than myself.

**Leigh** Nice.

**Jay** Did I tell you my sponsor is a priest?

**Leigh** You did, yes.

**Jay** I told you I'm in AA, right?

**Leigh** Yes.

**Jay** Being open about with trusted colleagues helps me maintain my sobriety.

**Leigh** Sensible.

**Jay** I distanced myself from God, when I was a kid. I come from a big Catholic family.

**Leigh** You told me this.

**Jay** I turned my back on the Church when I discovered acting. Acting became my religion.

**Leigh** Yes, we talked about this last time we met. It's really really fascinating.

**Jay** When everyone else had turned their backs on me, it was God, it was the Church, it was the Twelve Steps, it was Father Michael Mulcahy, that lifted me up.

**Leigh** Very moving.

**Jay** So now I . . . I'm just trying to be a better fucking person now, Leigh. A better Catholic. Treat people with respect, starting with myself. Honour my truth. The truth of who I am.

**Leigh** If one can't live truthfully, how does one live at all?

**Jay** It's what drew me to this script. The truth of it.

**Leigh** Yes.

**Jay** And the unremitting violence.

**Leigh** I know what you mean.

**Jay** What it says of the Irish. And who we are as a people historically.

**Leigh** History is so important.

**Jay** And where we're going.

**Leigh** Where are we going? Where are the Irish going? These are all important questions. Particularly in the current climate.

**Jay** These tumultuous times.

**Leigh** The post-Brexit environment.

**Jay** And the rise of women. The voices of Irish women. And all women everywhere. Which must be heard.

**Leigh** True.

**Jay** A woman from England, a British writer, forgive me but it's true . . .

**Leigh** What?

**Jay** A British writer could never have written a play like this.

**Leigh** A play set in Northern Ireland?

**Jay** A play of this kind of emotional intensity.

**Leigh** Why not?

**Jay** Because of how emotionally repressed the British are.

**Leigh** I don't think that's –

**Jay** It's a stereotype?

**Leigh** It may have been true at one point. But these days the British are more open, more emotionally articulate. Particularly since the death of Diana.

**Jay** Diana who?

**Leigh** Princess Diana. The Princess of Wales.

**Jay** Oh. Oh *Diana*. Riiiiight.

**Leigh** 'Our dead princess.'

**Jay** Yeah yeah.

**Leigh** When she died, there was a sea change.

**Jay** I get it now.

**Leigh** *They* say.

**Jay** Now she's someone I would loved to have met.

**Leigh** Really?

**Jay** Just to have a conversation with her. Find out what *she* thought. I bet no one ever really spoke to her. I think her whole problem was no one ever saw her as a real human being with real problems and real feelings. And clearly Charles, Prince Charles, he never loved her. At least not in the way that a woman like that needed to be loved.

**Leigh** Charles had a very old-fashioned view of marriage, I suspect. Not untypical of the Windsors.

**Jay** He needed to love that woman like a . . . well, like a princess. Actually. Because that's what she was. She was a princess. Even if she was a . . .

**Leigh** Hmm.

**Jay** A waitress. Had she been born a waitress.

**Leigh** Yes, that is a very interesting remark. Very perceptive. And very very interesting.

**Jay** *sets his can down and leans forward.*

**Jay** Would you mind if I asked you a troubling question?

**Leigh** . . . No.

**Jay** May I?

**Leigh** Go ahead.

**Jay** Do you think there are any circumstances where it's morally acceptable to rape someone?

*Pause. Leigh furrows his brow. He clears his throat.*

**Leigh** . . . Sorry?

**Jay** Is it ever ok to rape someone? A woman?

**Leigh** No. No I wouldn't have . . . *thought* so, sorry, why are we talking about this?

**Jay** I made a picture with Paul Verhoeven once. You won't have seen it, no one's seen it, it was very early in my career but there was a scene in it, eventually got cut from the script but it was a great scene where my character had to, uh – he was being held hostage in a room full of women. And this terrorist, this evil son of a bitch, played in the eventual movie by Rutger Hauer, who is the sweetest man – well, he forced my character at gun point to select one of the women to rape. And if I refused, he would detonate a nuclear bomb in



downtown Minneapolis. Eventually, my character chose . . . one of the hostages was his ex-wife . . . so he chose her. Which he naturally felt conflicted about. It was a terrific scene and it really took the story to a whole 'nother level but too many people at the studio, mainly women it has to be said, found it objectionable. And maybe they were right. Maybe it did cross a line. But it got me thinking cos I like to think about things, that's what draws me to stories, it's what drew me to this story – am I provoked? Does it make me think? Does it make me see the world in a new way?

**Leigh** Right, right.

**Jay** And it got me thinking. If I had to rape someone. Who would I rape?

**Leigh** Right. But you wouldn't actually want do that to anyone, would you?

**Jay** Of course not, Leigh. I'm a fucking feminist. How could I not be? I benefit from the patriarchy yet I am nonetheless demeaned by it.

**Leigh** I actually am a feminist.

**Jay** Diana.

**Leigh** What?

**Jay** I would rape Princess Diana. If I had to. At gunpoint.

**Leigh** . . . Uhm . . .

**Jay** Think about it, it was her life's mission to empathise with the oppressed and the marginalised. Them. Out there. You know? *AIDS. Landmines. Africa.* If you raped Diana, it would have given her a deeper sympathy with the victims of sexual assault. She could have used it in her work. Some good could come from it. Now I'm not for one minute justifying violence against women. But if you did wish to justify it. It can be done. So?

**Leigh** So?

**Jay** Who would you rape? If you had to?

**Leigh** . . . Uh . . . No one.

**Jay** No one?

**Leigh** No one.

**Jay** You can choose anyone in the world.

**Leigh** I wouldn't.

**Jay** But if someone put a gun to your head?

**Leigh** I still wouldn't.

**Jay** Right but if someone put a gun to your head?

**Leigh** Yes I understand but I still wouldn't.

**Jay** They're going to kill you.

**Leigh** I understand.

**Jay** They have a gun to your head.

**Leigh** I know.

**Jay** They'll detonate a nuclear bomb.

**Leigh** I understand what you're, the premise of, but I – I wouldn't. They would have to kill me.

**Jay** I don't think you understand.

**Leigh** I do understand.

**Jay** It's Rutger Hauer.

**Leigh** Yes I know but – I just could never . . . under any . . . It's wrong.

*A momentary pause.*

**Jay** What if it was Jesus?

**Leigh** Sorry?

**Jay** What if Jesus put a gun to your head?

**Leigh** Well . . . I'm not a Christian but –

**Jay** You don't have to be a Christian.

**Leigh** I'm not a Christian but –

**Jay** Yeah you don't have to be a Christian.

**Leigh** If you'll let me finish my *bloody* . . . !

*Pause.*

I'm not a Christian but from what I know of Jesus, from what I've read of his teachings I don't think it would be in his character to put a gun to a person's head and request that they sexually assault someone.

*A silence. Jay seems to disappear into himself. The silence seems to go on forever. Jay won't look at Leigh. Leigh is unsure how to respond.*

*Then . . .*

**Leigh** Thatcher.

**Jay** *looks up.*

**Leigh** Margaret Thatcher. If I was forced to . . . 'do that' . . . to anyone. I would . . . Thatcher.

**Jay** Why?

**Leigh** Everything about that woman was . . . I grew up somewhere . . . well, everything that woman stood for disgusts me . . .

**Jay** Ok . . .

**Leigh** But even she didn't deserve that. No one deserves that.

*Pause.*

**Jay** Have I upset you?

**Leigh** No.

**Jay** Cos I'm sensing this uh, if you'll excuse me, this sense of passive resistance from you.

**Leigh** From *me*?

**Jay** This attitude of barely concealed resentment like I've said something to offend you?

**Leigh** Not at all. I don't know where you're getting that from.

**Jay** If I've offended you, you have to tell me. I know I can be overwhelming. I know I can be intense.

**Leigh** You haven't offended me.

**Jay** It would kill me to offend you. I know we've only known each other a short time but I feel that I can trust you with my life.

**Leigh** You absolutely can.

**Jay** There is no more important relationship, Leigh, than the relationship between an actor and a director. It's as important as the relationship between a mother and a newborn.

**Leigh** I honestly couldn't agree more.

**Jay** For the next four weeks you are my mother. You are my father. You are my lover, my king, my cousin, my brother. My wife, my fuckbuddy, my cuck, my nemesis, my *dick*. That's the level of –

**Leigh** Yes.

**Jay** That I put you at.

**Leigh** Well I am humbled. And you have not offended me.

**Jay** Great. Ok. Great.

**Leigh** *gets up and heads for the kitchen.*

**Leigh** Would you excuse me for a second?

**Jay** Everything ok?

**Leigh** I'm just going to uh, are you ok for drinks?

**Jay** I'm fine. Thank you.

**Leigh** *enters the kitchen. Jay flicks through his script. He reads the lines to himself in a terrible Belfast accent.*

**Jay** 'You fucking dirty Fenian bastard. You fucking dirty Fenian fuck.'

*He plays with the word in his mouth.*

'Fenians.' 'Fenians.' 'Fenians.' 'I hate the Fenians'. 'I hate the Fenians'. 'I want to murder all the Fenians.'

**Leigh** *re-enters with a huge glass of wine.*

**Jay** Do you think I could have an eyepatch?

**Leigh** A what?

**Jay** An eyepatch.

**Leigh** You mean for the play?

**Jay** I think it would be a great metaphor for my character's moral decay.

*The buzzer goes. Leigh goes to answer it.*

**Jay** Is that Ruth?

**Leigh** I hope so.

*When Leigh goes out to the hall, Jay stands up, makes a great fuss over himself. He fixes his hair, maybe does some star jumps. From the hall, we hear Leigh welcoming Ruth.*

**Leigh** *(from off)* Hi!

**Ruth** *(from off)* Hello!!! Hello!

**Leigh** *(from off)* Come in, come in!

**Leigh** *enters, followed by Ruth.*

Ruth this is, ah . . .

**Jay** Hi Ruth, I'm Jay Conway.

**Ruth** Oh I know who you are! Hello! I'm Ruth . . . eh . . . Davenport, hi.

*She offers her hand and they shake.*

It's really nice to meet you.

**Jay** It's so great to meet you.

**Ruth** I'm so sorry we haven't been able to meet before it's just the dates and –

**Jay** Forget about it.

**Leigh** Is everything ok?

**Ruth** Yes, I'm sorry I'm so late.

**Leigh** What happened? Why didn't you call?

**Ruth** My phone ran out of battery. And God . . . so . . . I was . . . my mother was driving me to the airport. And we've been arguing a lot lately, really getting under each other's skin, that's the kind of relationship we have and I love her but she's really fucking . . . you know how it is with parents.

**Leigh** She's quite something, Ruth's mother. You'll meet her.

**Jay** Can't wait!

**Ruth** So we're bickering about everything and she asks when I'm coming back from London and I tell her not for another month or two and she says, 'Sure I'm going away to Portrush with Joan Maginness next week, so who's gonna feed the cat?' And I'm like, 'Get Kelly to do it.' Kelly's my sister so . . .

**Jay** You live with your mom?

**Ruth** Yeah yeah.

**Leigh** Would you like a drink?

**Ruth** No. Yes actually.

**Leigh** Wine?

**Ruth** Yeah. So I'm . . .

**Leigh** Red ok?

**Ruth** Yeah yeah.

**Leigh** *exits.*

**Ruth** So she says, 'I can't ask Kelly, she's too busy with the kids' and I'm like, 'Mum, I've got a play opening in London with Jay Conway in it, I'm not coming back to feed the cat.' But she's no idea who you are.

**Jay** Oh!

**Ruth** Sorry! She hasn't been to the cinema since *Dr Zhivago*, so –

**Jay** Great movie.

**Leigh** *re-enters carrying a glass of wine for Ruth.*

**Ruth** Then she says, 'This isn't another play about the Troubles, is it? People are sick of hearing about the Troubles!'

**Leigh** There you go.

*He hands it to her.*

**Ruth** Thanks. Then she says, 'you're too young to remember the Troubles anyway.' And I'm like, 'Mummy I'm thirty-six, I grew up in the nineties of course I remember the Troubles. I remember Omagh, I remember the Shankill Chip Shop bombing. My best friend was killed in the Troubles!'

**Jay** You lost a friend?

**Ruth** Yeah, she was killed in a bomb in the city centre.

**Jay** I'm sorry to hear that.

**Leigh** Ruth's actually dedicated the play to her.

**Jay** That's beautiful.

**Leigh** Gemma Spencer.

**Ruth** Yeah. So my mother says, 'you would never have stayed friends with Gemma Spencer anyway. You weren't that close. And she was awful dreary. That whole family was dreary. Her being murdered was the most interesting thing about them.'

I just lost it with her and – I don't know what came over me, I just said, 'Mummy – why do you always have to be such a cold-souled, black-hearted thoughtless fucking bitch?'

**Leigh** Oh . . .

**Jay** You called your mom a fucking bitch?

**Ruth** Uh huh.

**Ruth** *drinks her wine.*

**Leigh** So what happened then?

**Ruth** Well then she crashed the car.

**Leigh** She crashed?

**Ruth** Yeah.

**Jay** God . . .

**Leigh** Is she ok?

**Ruth** No. No she's in hospital. I left her there a few hours ago and got the first flight I could to Heathrow.

*She drinks again. Jay and Leigh are speechless.*

**Ruth** It's fine. She's fine. My sister's with her now.

**Leigh** Do you need to ring anyone or –?

**Ruth** Yeah I should. I forgot to pack a charger.

**Leigh** Give me your phone.

*She hands it to him.*

**Ruth** Could I get another wine as well?

*She knocks back her drink and hands him the empty glass.*

**Leigh** *exits.*

**Jay** Wow.

**Ruth** Yeah . . . Yeah . . .

**Jay** What a journey you've had.

**Ruth** Yeah . . .

**Jay** I hope your mother's ok.

**Ruth** She'll be fine. She's a tough woman.

**Jay** You know what they say? *(In a terrible Irish accent.)* 'We do make them tough in the old country.'

**Ruth** *laughs nervously.* **Jay** *laughs self-consciously.* *They sit.*

**Ruth** Sorry, I shouldn't have told you all that, I must seem like a real weirdo to you.

**Jay** No, no.

**Ruth** It's because I feel like I know you.

**Jay** I feel like I know you.

**Ruth** Listen, thank you for doing my play.

**Jay** Please! Thank me, thank you! It's the role of a lifetime.

**Ruth** I'm your biggest fan. I've loved you since I was like two.

**Jay** Well now you're making me feel old.

**Ruth** Sorry sorry!

**Jay** No I'm kidding! It means a lot to me that my work has spoken to you.

**Ruth** Can I tell you my favourite film of yours?

**Jay** Go ahead.

**Ruth** Would that be ok?

**Jay** Go ahead.

**Ruth** *Elixir.*

**Jay** Really?

**Ruth** That final scene in the car between you and Jack Lemmon?

**Jay** *Jaaaaack!* I learnt so much from that man. He was like a father to me. When he died I wept for two weeks.

**Ruth** Is Jack Lemmon dead?

**Jay** I think so. Yeah, he is . . . yeah.

**Ruth** There's one word for that scene – heartbreaking.

**Jay** Heartbreaking is two words.

**Ruth** It's one word.

**Jay** Hey you're the writer.

**Ruth** I am.

**Jay** But I think you're wrong.

**Ruth** I'm not.

**Jay** *smiles.* **Ruth** *smiles back at him.*

**Jay** So can I tell you something now?

**Ruth** Go ahead.

**Jay** Would that be ok?

**Ruth** Go ahead.

**Jay** Your script. Your fucking script, Ruth. Is the single best script I've read for ten fucking years.

**Ruth** That's so nice to hear.

**Jay** I mean it.

**Ruth** Thank you.

**Jay** I hope you don't mind but I sent it to Quentin.

**Ruth** You sent it to who?

**Jay** Is that ok? I felt I had to share it. It had such a visceral impact on me, it didn't feel right to keep it to myself.

**Ruth** Quentin who?

**Jay** Tarantino.

**Ruth** No way!

**Jay** We're talking about doing something together next year and I was telling him about this. He loved it. Is that ok?

**Ruth** Of course! Oh my God!

**Jay** He said if you were ever in LA he'd love to meet.

**Ruth** Are you serious? I fucking love Tarantino.

**Jay** Well he loves you.

**Ruth** Sorry for swearing but that's too exciting.

**Jay** Oh please. I love to swear. I swear like Liza Minelli with a twelve-inch cock in her ass.

*A shocked, delighted laugh from Ruth.*

**Jay** After this is all over, you come out to LA, I'll introduce you to him. How about that?

**Ruth** Yes. Definitely!

**Leigh** *re-enters with a glass of wine.*

**Leigh** Ruth, do you need me to call you a doctor or anything?

**Ruth** No I'm fine, he . . . listen to this . . . have you told Leigh?

**Jay** No.

**Ruth** He . . . Jay . . . sent my script to Quentin Tarantino.

**Leigh** Well that's . . . wow.

**Ruth** Oh! I forgot.

**Jay** What?

**Ruth** Leigh's not a fan of Tarantino.

**Jay** *What??*

**Leigh** No I think he's great, I just . . .

**Jay** Are you *insane??*

**Leigh** No he's brilliant but I just find the gratuitous violence in his work inherently problematic. It's juvenile. Isn't it? I mean he's very accomplished but he's not exactly Nuri Bilge Ceylan, is he?

**Jay** Who is?

**Leigh** Who is Nuri Bilge Ceylan? I'm glad you asked. He's this extraordinary Turkish *auteur* that I am obsessed with –

**Jay** Motherfucker, I know who Nuri Bilge Ceylan is! I'm co-producing his American debut.

**Leigh** Oh. Of course you would know . . . That's wonderful that you're . . .

**Jay** Nuri would love this play. I really think this play could play anywhere in the world. We need to take this play to Broadway.

**Ruth** Do you think that's possible?

**Leigh** You know we've sold out London already? Thanks to this man, we're critic-proof!

**Jay** Hey fuck the critics, I don't give a fuck about the critics.

**Leigh** No me neither.

**Jay** They're fucking animals, Leigh. They're animals, Ruth. And we should do with them what we do with animals. Kill them and eat them. And the good ones keep as pets.

**Ruth** I try not to read them.

**Leigh** I find it's best to, if you're going to read them at all, you should read them after the run of a show ends.

**Jay** Only thing I ever want to read from a theatre critic is a suicide note.

**Ruth** Can we actually stop talking about critics? It's making me nervous.

**Leigh** You have nothing to worry about.

**Jay** Your script is ALIVE.

**Leigh** Your words, Ruth, that's why we're here.

**Jay** Words words words words words.

**Leigh** Language.

**Jay** The truth. The truth. The truth. The truth. The truth the truth the truth. The truth. The. Truth. THE TRUTH. The truth.

**Leigh** He's right, you know.

**Ruth** Well that's what you have to write isn't it? The truth.

**Leigh** What is there but truth? This is what we go to the theatre for.

*Pause. Leigh and Ruth drink their wine. Jay watches Ruth and Leigh drink.*

**Jay** Would you excuse me for a second? I have to make a phone call.

**Leigh** Of course.

**Jay** *puts on a baseball cap.*

**Jay** Give you both a chance to talk about me.

*He puts sunglasses on and flashes a smile.*

'Cos I *know* that's what you'll do.

**Ruth and Jay** *laugh as he exits.*

**Ruth** Oh my God, he is so – fucking – *real!* He's everything I hoped he would be. Oh my God, I fucking love him.

**Leigh** Do you want to borrow my phone?

**Ruth** Why?

**Leigh** To ring your mother.

**Ruth** No.

**Leigh** Or someone in your family?

**Ruth** It's fine.

**Leigh** You don't want to check she's ok?

**Ruth** *No.*

**Leigh** *Ok.*

**Ruth** *paces around excited, knocking back her wine. Leigh has his head in his hands.*

**Ruth** Do you really think we could go to Broadway?

**Leigh** With him in it, yeah.

**Ruth** Do you think Americans would understand the play?

**Leigh** I don't know. I'm not fucking American am I?

**Ruth** What's wrong with you?

**Leigh** Nothing.

**Ruth** Are you upset about the Tarantino thing? Look I'm sorry if you felt I embarrassed you –

**Leigh** It's fuck all to do with Quentin fucking Tarantino!

**Ruth** . . . ok . . . so what is it?

**Leigh** He said something.

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** Something really terrible.

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** *looks to the door.*

**Ruth** Was it about me?

**Leigh** No.

**Ruth** About the play?

**Leigh** No.

**Ruth** So why can't you tell me?

**Leigh** He said . . .

**Leigh** *gets up to look out the window, stumbles a bit.*

**Ruth** Are you drunk?

**Leigh** A bit, yeah.

**Ruth** Is he drunk?

**Leigh** No he's in AA. That's all he fucking talks about as well. 'AA! The program! My sponsor!' Has no one in AA told him that the second A stands for anonymous?

**Ruth** So what did he say?

**Leigh** You won't believe this.

**Ruth** Tell me.

**Leigh** He said . . . he *said* . . . he wanted to . . .

**Ruth** . . . *What?*

**Leigh** *Rape. Diana.*

**Ruth** Diana?

**Leigh** *nods.*

**Ruth** Diana who?

**Leigh** Princess Diana.

**Ruth** Are you serious?

**Leigh** That's what he said.

**Ruth** You're joking?

**Leigh** Nope.

**Ruth** That's fucked up.

**Leigh** I know.

**Ruth** Are you sure that's what he said? Because you do have a tendency to exaggerate.

**Leigh** I am not exaggerating. Those were his exact words.

**Ruth** What was the context?

**Leigh** He was talking about some film he made, and then he started talking about how if he had to rape a woman, he'd rape Diana, about how it could be good for her.

**Ruth** Fucking hell.

**Leigh** It was horrendous. It was appalling. I was . . . I was appalled.

**Ruth** So what did you say?

**Leigh** What do you mean?

**Ruth** Did you tell him you were appalled?

**Leigh** I did.

**Ruth** And what did he say?

**Leigh** Well then he asked me who I would rape.

**Ruth** Who *you'd* rape?

**Leigh** Yes!



**Ruth** So what did you say?

**Leigh** No one. I told him, I told him I found the idea repellent. Offensive. Misogynistic.

**Ruth** Right. And what did he say when you said that?

**Leigh** . . . he apologised.

**Ruth** Ok. Good.

**Leigh** It was awful. I felt sick when he was talking about it.

**Ruth** Well ok . . . so . . . I think it's important right now to make it clear to him that that kind of comment won't be acceptable in rehearsals.

**Leigh** Well I think he knows that.

**Ruth** But we should be clear with him.

**Leigh** But we don't want to offend him.

**Ruth** But what if he makes a comment like that to one of the women in the company?

**Leigh** It's an all-male cast.

**Ruth** What about the stage manager, the box office staff, the ushers?

**Leigh** He's an Oscar-winning movie star, he's not going to talk to the fucking ushers.

**Ruth** He says something like that to anyone in the theatre it could jeopardise the whole production.

**Leigh** Now you're being hysterical.

**Ruth** How am I being hysterical? I'm trying to protect us, protect my fucking play! I'm doing him a fucking favour here!

**Leigh** Alright! Calm down.

**Ruth** Don't tell me to calm down, you're the one being fucking hysterical, I'm trying to deal with this.

**Leigh** Ok! Jesus . . .

**Ruth** We have to make it clear to him that just because he's famous he can't be allowed to say and do whatever he wants.

**Leigh** But if you say something then he'll know I told you.

**Ruth** So what? You already told him you were appalled.

**Leigh** Yes but he also made me promise not to tell anybody what he said. He was very embarrassed.

**Ruth** So why did you tell me?

**Leigh** How could I not tell you?

**Ruth** Jesus . . . look I think it's really important for the sake of the play we clarify some professional boundaries. We're all adults here. We can have a conversation.

**Leigh** He's not an adult, he's an actor. The best actors, and he is one of the best actors in the world, are like children. Gifted, precious, special children. I understand the psychology of actors much better than you. If you confront him about this, he'll no longer trust me, and then we're all FUCKED! And you'll never get to meet Quentin Tarantino. And I'll never get to run the National.

*Noise of Jay entering in the hall.*

**Ruth** In what universe are you running the National?

**Leigh** Please, Ruth! Don't say anything!

**Jay enters.**

**Jay** Sorry about that. I was talking to my sponsor.

**Leigh** Oh yes?

**Jay** I'm part of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Leigh** Yes I think you might have mentioned that.

**Jay** If I'm in a situation where alcohol is present my sponsor likes me to ring him every hour.

**Leigh** Oh I'm sorry, we can stop drinking if you like.

**Jay** No no, my illness cannot be allowed to affect your behaviour. It's my responsibility to maintain my own sobriety not yours.

**Leigh** Well as long as you're sure.

*He takes a big drink, draining his glass.*

Would anyone like another drink?

**Jay** Yeah I'll have another Diet Coke.

**Leigh** Would you like another wine, Ruth?

**Ruth** I'll just have a glass of water.

**Leigh exits. Jay picks up his script and pencil.**

**Jay** Do you mind if I . . . ?

**Ruth** Not at all.

**Jay** Interrogate?

**Ruth** Go ahead.

**Jay** So first question:

**Ruth** Yes?

**Jay** What is Ulster?

**Ruth** What is Ulster?

**Jay** I mean I understand what it is, it's a *place*, right?

**Ruth** It is a place, yes.

**Jay** But I need to know specifically.

**Ruth** Well, Ulster is historically part of Ireland.

**Jay** History is so important to this. For this play, I feel like I need to know the history of Ireland like I know my own ball sack.

**Ruth** Ok. Ulster is another name for Northern Ireland. It's what loyalists like Tommy usually call Northern Ireland.

**Jay** *writes this down.*

**Jay** Great. Second question – do you think I could have an eyepatch?

**Ruth** An eyepatch?

**Jay** I think it would be a great metaphor for my character's moral decay.

**Ruth** I don't see a reason for it.

**Jay** It's a metaphor.

**Ruth** Ok.

**Jay** So that's a yes?

**Ruth** No. I was just saying 'ok'.

**Jay** I took that as a yes.

**Ruth** Well it wasn't.

**Jay** Ok. Ok . . .

*He flicks through his script.*

So on page thirty-five, this line puzzles me . . .

**Ruth** Which one?

**Jay** When Tommy says he's British.

**Ruth** Uh-huh?

**Jay** Why does he say he's British?

**Ruth** He says he's British because he is British.

**Jay** But why would an Irishman call himself British?

**Ruth** Because he's a unionist. Unionists call themselves British. Like me. I'm a unionist. I'm British.

**Jay** You're British?

**Ruth** Yes.

**Jay** But you're Irish?

**Ruth** No.

**Jay** No what?

**Ruth** No I'm not Irish. I'm British.

**Jay** Ok . . . So that's interesting. So you're British because you're what? You're British because . . . now let me try to understand this . . . you're British because . . . No I'm sorry, I don't get that?

**Ruth** Well –

**Leigh** enters with drinks.

**Leigh** Here we are.

**Jay** Leigh you told me Ruth was Irish.

**Leigh** She is Irish.

**Jay** But she says she's British.

**Ruth** I am British.

**Leigh** Yes well ok, I know that's a thing you say, Ruth, I know you call yourself British, and you're in some ways part-British. Perhaps in historical terms British.

**Jay** History is so important to this.

**Leigh** Oh it's vital.

**Jay** I was just saying this I have to know the history, the cultural woodwork of this play, like I know the contours of my own genitalia.

**Leigh** Mmmmm.

**Jay** So historically Ruth is British?

**Leigh** Sort of, yes.

**Jay** Even though she's Irish?

**Ruth** I'm not Irish.

**Leigh** She is Irish.

**Ruth** I'm not Irish. I'm British.

**Jay** Are you British because Britain used to own Ireland? So they used to own you, like a slave, so you're British?

**Leigh** Exactly!

**Ruth** They never *owned* me. I was never a slave!

**Jay** It's confusing because to me you sound Irish.

**Ruth** I sound Northern Irish.

**Jay** Northern Irish is still Irish though, right?

**Leigh** Northern Irish is still Irish, yes.

**Jay** Because 'northern Irish' sounds to me like *Irish* but from the *northern* part of Ireland?

**Leigh** That's right.

**Ruth** But Northern Ireland's part of the UK. The UK is British. I was born in the UK. So I'm British.

**Jay** Ok I think I'm starting to understand.

**Leigh** It's very complicated, the whole history of the region is very complex and tragic that's why Ruth's voice is so important in helping us understand this tragic and complex history. Particularly in this disastrous post-Brexit nightmare we're living through.

**Jay** Is Brexit relevant to this?

**Ruth** Not really.

**Leigh** Completely. Brexit is a tragedy waiting to happen for Northern Ireland, it undermines the Good Friday Agreement, the peace process.

**Ruth** It won't necessarily be a tragedy though.

**Jay** Could there be a return to war?

**Ruth** I don't think so.

**Leigh** It is possible though. That's why the play is so important.

**Ruth** A *play* isn't going to stop Brexit.

**Leigh** Not on its own, but as part of a general cultural resistance.

**Jay** So if Tommy is British?

**Ruth** Yes?

**Jay** Why does he hate the British?

**Ruth** He doesn't.

**Leigh** But he does doesn't he? He has that speech about betrayal.

**Ruth** But that speech is about the failure of successive British governments to defend the British people of Ulster. Tommy feels betrayed by the British state, there's a difference.

**Leigh** Is there? Most English people I know are indifferent to Ulster unionism, if not downright hostile, embarrassed by what they see as a meaningless hangover of colonialism.

**Ruth** I don't understand your point, Leigh.

**Leigh** My point is that Ulster unionists aspire to be British when most real British people want nothing whatsoever to do with them.

**Ruth** We don't aspire to be British. We are British. We don't need your permission to be what we are.

**Leigh** Well . . .

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** You sort of do need our permission to be British, don't you?

**Ruth** You don't get to decide who's British and who isn't.

**Leigh** Well we sort of do. That's the point. That's what the Empire was all about. Which is why imperialism was such a shameful chapter in our history.

**Jay** History. It all comes down to history.

**Leigh** Everything is history. Because history is everything.

**Jay** This is more complicated than I thought.

**Leigh** Don't worry we have four weeks.

**Jay** So my character is British?

**Leigh** Not really.

**Ruth** Yes.

**Jay** He thinks he's British?

**Leigh** Yes.

**Ruth** Because he is British.

**Jay** But he hates the Fenians. He wants to kill them all. 'The Fenians'. Right from the first speech.

*He reads in a terrible Belfast accent.*

'Dirty fucking Fenian bastards. Dirty fucking Fenian cunts. Fenian fucking cuntbags.'

*He looks up.*

**Leigh** Isn't his accent incredible?

**Ruth** Yep. Incredible.

**Jay** So?

**Ruth** So what?

**Jay** Well that's the British he's talking about. The Fenians are the British. Right?

*Pause.*

**Leigh** Nnnnoooo. That's not right . . . Ruth?

**Ruth** No Fenians are . . . uh . . . The Fenians are not the British no.

**Leigh** The Fenians are the Catholics. Right, Ruth?

**Jay** Catholics?

**Ruth** Yeah. Well Irish Republicans or nationalists, Catholics.

**Leigh** It's an offensive term used by Protestants.

**Jay** Offensive?

**Ruth** Can be, yes.

**Leigh** It's a bit like the n word isn't it, Ruth?

**Ruth** No. It doesn't have the same kind of history.

**Leigh** History. That word again.

**Jay** So the word Fenian is offensive to Catholics?

**Ruth** It depends on the context. When Tommy uses it, it signifies hate, anger, murderous rage.

**Jay** So it's hate speech? You admit you've written hate speech?

**Leigh** Well it's a play. It's a dramatic construction. Ruth isn't motivated by hate.

**Jay** And when Tommy celebrates 'killing Fenians', when he talks about driving all the Fenians out of Ulster, 'murdering all the Fenians', he's talking about killing Irish Catholics?

**Ruth** Yes. That's the point of the speech.

**Leigh** But that's not Ruth's point, is it? That's Tommy's point?

**Jay** He's talking about killing innocent people? Because they're Catholic?

**Ruth** Yes.

**Jay** But I'm Catholic. I'm Irish Catholic.

**Ruth** Ok.

**Jay** He's talking about killing people like me. Are we endorsing the murder of innocent people here?

**Leigh** But it's a character. Right Ruth? You as a playwright are not condoning murder, are you?

**Ruth** I think my feelings are quite complicated about this. And I think the play is complicated about this subject. I think in the context of Northern Ireland it's hard to say that the murder of innocent people was always wrong. The UVF did murder many innocent people, innocent Catholics. Which was a deliberate strategy to terrorise the nationalist population. To weaken support for the IRA. Who were also engaged in a campaign of sectarian murder. Now the British government, the British army, had no vested interest in protecting working-class Protestant communities from IRA attack. We were completely vulnerable. And while the UVF undoubtedly behaved monstrously . . . they murdered the innocent, they murdered children, in the case of the Shankill Butchers, they hacked limbs from bodies, they decapitated so-called 'innocent Catholics', disembowelled them, as Tommy does in the play. But if they weren't there, what would the IRA have done to us? They were our last line of defence – the Protestant community's only line of defence – against one of the world's most well-organised, well-funded ruthless terrorist machines. Funded, I might add, in large part, by wealthy Irish Americans like yourself, Jay. So . . .

**Leigh** So . . . what Ruth's saying here is she is dissecting murder. She is dispassionately examining the historical circumstances that allow ordinary people to commit extraordinary acts of violence. Isn't that right, Ruth?

**Ruth** I'm not sure that is what I'm saying.

**Jay** Wait, wait, wait. Wait.

*They wait.*

**Jay** Is she a Protestant?

**Ruth** Yes. Is that a problem?

**Jay** Well . . .

**Ruth** Is it a problem?

**Jay** Yeah, I . . . I kinda feel like I've been lied to here.

**Ruth** By who? By me?

**Jay** By both of you.

**Leigh** In what way?

**Jay** I feel that I was approached with this project on the understanding it was a story about the struggle for Irish freedom, written by an Irish Catholic. And now I find it's a story about the murder of Irish Catholics written by a British Protestant, written by someone I would consider a traitor to the cause of Ireland.

**Ruth** Excuse me?

**Leigh** Jay, no one at any point said anything about Ruth being a Catholic or a Protestant. I didn't realise it was important to you. And secondly, I know she says she's British but she's Irish.

**Ruth** I'm British.

**Leigh** I know you perceive yourself to be British, but in terms of how the rest of the world perceives you, you're Irish.

**Ruth** I don't care what the rest of the world thinks.

**Leigh** And that's great. That's why you're such a ferocious, uncompromising, indispensable artist. But the fact of the

matter is that most audiences who see this play, theatregoers in London by and large will see you as an Irish writer and will receive this as an Irish play. The notion that the Ulster Protestant community is in any way British is absurd to most real British people. They won't understand that any more than you will, Jay. This is, I promise you, really not an issue.

**Jay** I have to take some time to consider if this is a project I want to be involved in.

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** Well wait just a second here. We start rehearsals tomorrow.

**Jay** I know that.

**Leigh** There's a contract here.

**Jay** There's a contract here.

*He points to his heart.*

Here! Ok?

**Leigh** Ok.

**Jay** I have a contract with a power greater than myself! Ok?

**Leigh** Ok.

**Jay** And I have a contract with my Irish ancestors! Ok?

**Leigh** Ok. I hear that. I respect that. But you do have an actual legal contract with us.

**Ruth** Have you ever been to Ireland?

**Jay** Me?

**Ruth** Yeah, have you been to Ireland?

**Jay** The north or the south?

**Ruth** Either.

**Jay** No I haven't been to either.

**Ruth** Jay. I'm a British citizen. Where I come from, union flags are flown with pride from every rooftop. There are symbols of Britishness everywhere – the crown, the Red Hand of Ulster, the King James Bible. I grew up watching British TV, studying British history. I went to a British university, I've built my career and reputation in Britain. And generations of my family have given their lives in wars for Britain. And you? You've never even been to Ireland. So why is it absurd for me to call myself British? But it's not absurd for you to call yourself Irish?

**Leigh** Who are you asking?

**Ruth** Anyone who'll answer me.

**Leigh** It's a good question. I don't know the answer.

**Jay** My blood is Irish.

**Ruth** My blood is British.

**Leigh** This is excellent. No it is. This discussion is really helpful for the play. This is what Marx would term *praxis*. Just imagine what Brecht would make of this conversation!

**Jay** But, you see, in my mind, now. In *my* mind. This is over. This is over now. You have to find someone else.

**Ruth** Can he even do that?

**Leigh** Well now, this is a, we're all very nervous, we all feel like this the night before rehearsals, but you're doing the fucking play, I mean come on. You're doing the fucking play, Jay!

**Jay** I was led to believe this was an Irish play by an Irish writer.

**Leigh** It is an Irish play. She is an Irish writer!

**Ruth** It's a British play and I'm a British writer.

**Leigh** Oh fuck off, Ruth!

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** That is so disingenuous. Part of the reason people take you seriously as a writer is because you're writing about Ireland, Irish history. You wouldn't be taken so seriously if you came from the fucking Home Counties. I have built my reputation on discovering Irish writers and directing Irish plays. I know an Irish play when I see one, Jay. This play is about a murderous psychopathic terrorist released from prison under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement who roams the backstreets of Belfast decapitating Catholic priests because he believes the ghost of Bobby Sands is trying to send him to Hell. It couldn't be more Irish if it tried. It's as Irish as a fucking potato famine.

**Jay** I've made up my mind. I'm out.

**Ruth** Fine. We'll get someone else.

**Leigh** Well let's not . . . come on now . . . There must be some kind of compromise we can reach here.

**Jay** I don't see how.

**Leigh** Are there changes Ruth can make to the play?

**Ruth** I'm not changing anything.

**Leigh** Keep an open mind. Please, Ruth.

**Jay** *thinks*.

**Jay** Make Tommy a Catholic.

**Ruth** No.

**Leigh** Wait, Ruth.

**Jay** Put him in the IRA.

**Ruth** No fucking way.

**Jay** And there's gotta be dancing.

**Ruth** Dancing?

**Jay** Irish dancing.

**Leigh** Like *Riverdance*?

**Jay** People love Irish dancing. And if we want to go to Broadway, this play needs to be Irish.

**Leigh** It is Irish.

**Jay** More Irish. It needs to be as Irish as a pig fucking his sister in a peatbog. Let's get a pig! A live pig! Think about it!

**Leigh** Well I'm not sure about the pig, but Irish dancing is very theatrical. It can be very effective.

**Ruth** Protestants don't dance.

**Leigh** Well that's . . .

**Ruth** It's true.

**Jay** Everyone dances.

**Ruth** Protestants don't.

**Leigh** That's all the more reason to put it in. Challenge stereotypes.

**Ruth** I thought you both loved the truth of the script.

**Leigh** We do.

**Ruth** Its authenticity.

**Jay** I can't fault its authenticity.

**Leigh** But you know, if anything it's almost too authentic.

**Jay** That's a really interesting thought. Go with that.

**Ruth** What are you saying?

**Leigh** I believe its authenticity is potentially alienating.

**Jay** Yes! That's . . . he's . . . yes!

**Ruth** Why have you never mentioned this before, Leigh?

**Leigh** I always felt there was some kind of problem.

**Jay** I did too. I couldn't put my finger on it but –

**Leigh** If this play has a weakness and I don't believe it does but if it has a weakness, it's its –

**Jay** I think I know what you're gonna say.

**Leigh** It may be guilty of a certain parochialism.

**Jay** Parochial, yeah. That's what I –

**Leigh** A certain introspective uh . . .

**Jay** Mentality.

**Leigh** Mentality, yeah, a mindset.

**Jay** A mindset yeah.

**Leigh** That's something the critics might, they could pick up on.

**Jay** They definitely will.

**Ruth** I thought you didn't care about critics.

**Jay** I don't. But you do.

**Ruth** You told me this was the greatest script you'd read for ten years.

**Jay** That still holds true.

**Ruth** And Leigh, when you first read it you compared it to Pinter.

**Leigh** I stand by that. In many ways it's better than Pinter. I think if Pinter were still alive he'd admit that himself.

**Jay** It reminds me of Chekhov. When I read this, I thought, I have to do this. This chick is the new Chekhov.

**Ruth** *Chick?*

**Leigh** Well don't be . . .

**Ruth** Don't be what?



**Leigh** He's saying something complimentary. Honestly, Ruth, a great actor compares you to Chekhov and all you focus on is chick!

**Jay** I'm sorry for saying chick. It was purely for alliteration.

**Ruth** I'm not making Tommy a Catholic. I'm not making him a member of the IRA. That's not happening.

**Jay** Ok.

**Leigh** What if he wasn't a Catholic. But also he wasn't a Protestant.

**Ruth** What?

**Jay** Go on.

**Leigh** This story is so universal you could really set it anywhere. You could set it in England. You could set it in Doncaster or Wolverhampton, or Chicago or Cape Town.

**Ruth** I'm not rewriting the play so it's set in Wolverfuckinghampton.

**Leigh** And I'm not saying you should.

**Ruth** I don't even know where Wolverhampton is.

**Leigh** Well, maybe you'd know where Wolverhampton was if you were . . .

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** Genuinely British.

**Ruth** I'm not changing a word of this play.

**Leigh** You're not listening to me, you're letting your bloody –

**Jay** Emotions.

**Leigh** Emotions – thank you, Jay – you're letting your bloody emotions get in the cloud. I mean cloud your –

**Jay** Judgement.

**Leigh** Judgement, thank you Jay. It's like your mother said, Ruth – nobody wants to hear about the Troubles anymore.

**Ruth** Don't mention my mother.

**Leigh** But with just a few cuts, it can become a universal –

**Ruth** I am not cutting a fucking word. I'm not cutting a fucking word from this –

**Leigh** If you'll listen to me –

**Ruth** I AM NOT CUTTING A FUCKING WORD FROM THIS PLAY. Fuck you and fuck you. I am not cutting *A WORD*.

**Jay** Whoah.

**Leigh** Look.

**Jay** I am not used to being spoken to like this, Ruth. I like your balls. If you were a man I'd put your balls in my mouth right now. And I'm not even gay.

**Leigh** Look. You've been in a car crash.

**Ruth** That's completely irrelevant.

**Leigh** Your mother's in hospital.

**Ruth** Stop talking about my mother!

**Leigh** But I think it's affecting –

**Ruth** Stop talking about my fucking mother!

**Leigh** Ruth.

**Jay** Ruth.

**Leigh** Ruth.

**Jay** Please Leigh, let me. Ruth. I understand. I do. I also am an artist. Directors are not – no offence, Leigh.

**Leigh** No none taken.

**Jay** But directors are not artists in the same way that writers and actors –

**Leigh** I completely agree. I myself see myself as a *liberator* of artists, an enabler.

**Jay** I know Leigh is right here. My instincts are never wrong. This play could play anywhere in the world.

**Leigh** The *world* Ruth.

**Jay** If you let us explore and and . . .

**Leigh** Reimagine it.

**Jay** Reimagine it, exactly. Also.

**Leigh** Yes?

**Jay** It allows us the opportunity to revisit the question of the eyepatch.

**Leigh** Oh.

**Jay** Because an eyepatch is universal. Everywhere in the world, everyone knows what an eyepatch is.

**Leigh** That's true.

**Jay** Any audience in the world could see an eyepatch and think . . . 'That's an eyepatch'.

**Ruth** Look. We all know what's going on here.

**Leigh** What's going on?

**Jay** What's going on?

**Leigh** What is going on?

**Jay** I don't understand.

**Leigh** What's going on here is we're trying to put on a fucking – bring some fucking ground-breaking art into the world. And it's what the world needs.

**Jay** 'Zactly. Now more than ever.

**Leigh** This disastrous environment of the post-Brexit disaster.

**Ruth** You wouldn't put up with this shit from a regular actor. It's just because he's famous you're letting this happen.

**Leigh** I'm insulted by that. No I am.

**Jay** I think we both are. You're being insulting, Ruth.

**Leigh** I'm trying to do what's best for the play. And this glorious genius of an actor – I'd cast him if he were a complete unknown.

**Jay** Thank you. And I know that's true.

**Ruth** Even though he can't do the accent?

**Jay** What?

**Leigh** *What?*

**Jay** I can't do the accent?

**Leigh** Your accent is perfect.

**Jay** I've worked really hard on the accent. (*In the accent.*) 'How now brown cow.'

**Leigh** It's perfect.

**Jay** 'You're telling me I don't sound like an Irish fella.'

**Ruth** It's really bad.

**Leigh** I strongly disagree.

**Ruth** You sound like a Belfast Dick Van Dyke. Like you're Dick Van Morrison. I mean, if we're talking about the truth here . . .

**Jay** *gets up.*

**Leigh** Jay please don't leave.

*But he's not leaving. He goes to his bag. He takes out his Academy Award. He places it on the table. Jay looks at Ruth. Ruth looks back at him. Leigh looks at the Academy Award.*

**Jay** You want to talk about the truth. This is my truth. I take it with me everywhere I go. To remind myself that I mean something to the world. That my work resonates with people. That I will not be spoken to as if I am a piece of shit. When someone treats me like a piece of shit and it never happens but when they do I bring it out. I display my truth. And my truth is speaking to you right now, Ruth. It has something to say. It's saying I'm right. I'm right about your play. And even if I weren't right its presence here makes me right. Change the play. Perhaps if you do, you too may find yourself the owner of the truth one day too. There are no coincidences. The universe, God, Vishnu, Medea, is speaking to you now. And if that doesn't mean something to you then nothing means anything.

**Leigh** Nothing means anything, exactly.

**Jay** Make this a story for everyone.

**Leigh** Yep.

**Jay** A story of a Jew or a Muslim, a fucking Welshman or a kid in Alabama.

**Leigh** A suffering Palestinian.

**Jay** Some kid with no shoes in a shanty town in Cairo.

**Leigh** A, a, a, kid from the Bronx whose brother's just been shot by a racist police officer.

**Jay** A teenager in some European city like Prague who's thinking to himself 'you know what? I might be a fucking woman.'

**Leigh** Or a, a, Congolese immigrant in the suburbs of Paris who's considering suicide –

**Jay** – could come and see your play and say – This is My Story too. All it needs is.

**Leigh** Yes.

**Jay** Yes!

*Silence. They watch Ruth. She looks at the Academy Award. Then looks at Jay.*

**Ruth** Would you like to rape me?

Or do you only rape dead princesses?

*Silence.*

**Leigh** . . . ok . . .

**Jay** stands up. He goes to exit. **Leigh** chases after him and blocks his exit.

**Leigh** Jay Jay please don't leave!

**Jay** No I don't have to be here right now. I don't have to be treated like this.

**Leigh** I am well aware of that.

**Jay** I don't have to be in England arguing about a fucking play!

**Leigh** I understand how you're feeling, Jay, I do.

**Jay** I turned down James Cameron to be here!

**Leigh** Completely I know.

**Jay** Why did she say that?

**Leigh** I've no idea.

**Jay** Is she insane? What kind of person says a thing like that?

**Leigh** I'll get her to apologise. Ruth apologise.

**Ruth** No I don't think so.

**Leigh** Apologise Ruth! He doesn't have to be here. Didn't you hear him? He turned down James Cameron to be here!

**Ruth** Fuck James Cameron.

**Jay** *Excuse* me? Did you just say fuck James Cameron? Did she just say fuck James Cameron?

**Leigh** I know, but bear in mind her mother's in hospital.

**Jay** I don't know how to talk to this person. I can't be part of a dialogue with someone who questions the artistic legacy of Mister James Cameron. I'm done here, Leigh.

*He goes to the door and turns back.*

I happen to know a little something about American cinema and James Cameron is the greatest filmmaker in the history of our art form and more than that he is a pioneer, a philanthropist, an inventor of worlds and a benefactor. He's the American David Lean. He's the American Tarkovsky. He's the American Bergman. How can you deny that?

**Ruth** He's Canadian.

**Jay** I'm outta here.

*He starts to go but Leigh stops him.*

**Leigh** Wait!

**Jay** I'm leaving.

**Leigh** Let me talk to her. Come on. Let's not end things like this. I'm sure we can still find a way through. Remember what brought you here. The play is still the play. You are the only actor for this role. And as for your Belfast accent, to my ears it's perfect. And most of the audience who come to see this will be from my socio-economic background. It's unlikely anyone from Belfast will ever hear about this play.

And Ruth, Jay's right. You are the new Chekhov. You're better than Chekhov. You're Chekhov with jokes. Real jokes, not Russian jokes.

We were both so excited when you said yes to this part. The only actor of his generation comparable to Clark Gable and Fred Astaire. Celebrity does unusual things to people like us. It does, Ruth. We expect too much of our celebrities. And the bigger the celebrity the more we expect. And the bigger our disappointment when they fail to meet our ridiculous expectations.

We've talked a great deal tonight about honesty and truth. So let me be honest.

Before Ruth arrived tonight you made a comment, which discomfited me. I felt compelled to share this comment with Ruth when she arrived.

Specifically it was your comment about Princess Diana. Do you remember what you said? You said that if you had to – a woman. You'd – Princess Diana.

I found this comment deeply – not deeply, let's not exaggerate – I found this comment *somewhat* distressing. The comment yes, but also who made this comment. An artist, in my view, *sans pareil*. I was disappointed. And I relayed my disappointment to Ruth when she arrived. I now see that I shouldn't have. I realise now, having got to know you better, that this comment was intended ironically. It was a thought experiment. We've asked you to come here to engage with this thematically very troubling play, to essay this rich and complex character. We can't then ask you to not access subconsciously your own dark side in preparation. We start tomorrow morning after all. Whether you knew it or not you were getting under the skin of the character, enveloping yourself in this play's psychically devastating undercurrents.

Ruth wanted to confront you about your comment. And I stopped her. That was wrong. A great man once said that workers in the theatre were the 'engineers of the human soul'. Well the human soul is a messy and unforgiving country. And our currency in this country is honesty. If we are unable to give voice to the erroneous thought, the

unspeakable comment then our currency will lose all value. And so will the human soul. The human race depends upon us, the makers of theatre, for its very survival. And without the freedom to be wrong in the pursuit of the truth, then we're no better than actual engineers. We're no better than theatre critics.

**Jay** You told her what I said?

**Leigh** I did.

**Jay** I said those things in confidence.

**Leigh** It was an unforgiveable betrayal. But I hope we can move past it.

**Jay** If it's unforgiveable how can we move past it?

**Leigh** That's a very good question.

**Jay** I trusted you.

**Leigh** And I trust Ruth. She won't repeat this conversation to anyone. Will you, Ruth?

*They look to her.*

**Ruth** Why did you say it?

**Jay** It was hypothetical. I was saying who I would choose to . . . if I had to . . .

**Ruth** Rape?

**Jay** *nods.*

**Ruth** So say rape.

**Jay** . . . Rape.

**Ruth** So you chose . . . ?

**Jay** *nods.*

**Ruth** Say her name.

**Jay** Diana.

**Ruth** I don't understand why you would say something like that in the first place.

**Jay** Because I was saying she could have turned it around, made it into a positive experience.

**Ruth** Why Diana?

**Jay** Because of how she – who she was – and the good work she – this is what I'm saying – this movie I was in – it was in context of this –

**Ruth** You see, I think it's disgusting.

**Jay** Disgusting?

**Ruth** You're disgusting. That you would think that, let alone say it. That you would not just contemplate raping someone but you would speculate about who exactly that would be. What kind of sick mind comes up with something like that?

**Leigh** Ruth, I know it seems –

**Ruth** And you chose Diana because she's, what? Powerful? Totemic? Iconic? Because she was better than you? You want to put her in her place, is that it?

**Jay** No. I love strong women. I chose her bec –

**Ruth** You want to bring her down to size. Remind her she's nothing compared to your dick? Your big powerful dick? I bet it's fucking tiny. I bet it's fucking microscopic.

**Jay** Now look. You're crossing a line here. There's a line. And you're crossing it.

**Ruth** Have you ever raped anyone?

**Jay** Jesus. . .

**Ruth** Have you?

**Jay** I'm embarrassed you would even ask me that.

**Ruth** I wonder. Everything I've seen from you tonight makes me wonder. What have you done? Who are you really?

**Jay** Are you accusing me of rape? Because of a . . . a thought! You listening to this, Leigh? She's calling me a rapist. Where's your evidence?

**Leigh** Just be careful what you're saying, Ruth.

**Ruth** I don't know if you're a rapist.

**Jay** Ok then.

**Ruth** But I do know you're a fucking prick.

**Jay** That's it. We're done here.

**Leigh** Let's just –

**Jay** No, fuck her! Fuck her, Leigh! She needs to apologise. For everything she's just said.

**Ruth** I have nothing to apologise for.

**Jay** I can't believe this is happening! I am one of the nicest people in this business. Ask anyone! I love women. I respect all women. My manager's a woman. A black woman! I respect you, Ruth, as a woman and as an artist, but if you don't apologise to me right now, I will make it my life's work to destroy you like the cunt you are.

**Ruth** Excuse me please.

*She disappears into the kitchen.*

**Jay** I can't tolerate this, Leigh. I can't be in her play. Not after what she's said.

**Leigh** I understand how you're feeling.

**Jay** She's going to have to apologise.

**Leigh** I agree. I think this has all gone too far.

**Jay** Too fucking far, yes!

**Leigh** I think we should all apologise.

**Jay** Who?

**Leigh** All three of us. I think we've all said things tonight we shouldn't have.

**Jay** I'm not apologising. What the hell do I have to apologise for?

**Leigh** Well . . .

**Jay** She's the one being unreasonable here.

**Leigh** You just called her a cunt.

**Jay** Yeah . . . I meant that in a good way.

**Ruth** *returns with her phone.*

**Ruth** Ok, Jay. You're going to be in my play and there'll be no cuts. You'll say every word I've written. And you won't wear a fucking eyepatch.

**Jay** Why would I agree to that?

**Ruth** Because I've composed a tweet and I'm ready to hit send. 'Tonight Jay Conway told me he wanted to rape Princess Diana'. You stay and do the play, or I'll tell the world what you said.

**Jay** Gimme the phone.

**Ruth** Stay away from me.

**Jay** Leigh, get the phone off her.

**Leigh** Don't do this, Ruth.

**Jay** *steps towards her.*

**Ruth** Stay the fuck away or I hit send!

**Jay** Do not send that tweet. Delete it. Delete what you've typed. Delete the tweet.

**Ruth** Here's what I want . . . I want you to go back to your apartment now. I want you to start learning your lines and work on your Belfast accent until it's at least passable. We'll see you tomorrow morning at ten o'clock sharp. Over the next four weeks you're going to work like fuck, you're gonna work like a paddy on the railway, and you're gonna give the Tony-award-winning performance of your fucking career. And then you and I are gonna fly out to LA together first class where you'll introduce me to Quentin Tarantino and any other motherfucker in Hollywood I want to meet. And then. *Then.* I'll delete the tweet.

**Jay** *goes towards her.*

**Ruth** Stay away.

**Jay** *stops. Then goes again.*

**Ruth** Stay the fuck away.

**Leigh** Ok look.

**Jay** I need that phone, Leigh. She can't expect me to tolerate this.

**Leigh** I'll get it off her.

**Ruth** No you won't.

**Jay** She's a very disturbed young woman. She's disturbed and damaged and she has to be stopped.

**Ruth** You both stay away from me.

**Jay** *paces around, tortured.*

**Jay** Fuck! FUCK FUCK FUCK!

**Leigh** Let's all stay calm.

**Jay** I will not be held to ransom by a fucking tweet!

**Ruth's phone rings. They all watch her. She stares at the number.**

**Leigh** Are you going to answer it?

**Ruth** Keep him away from me.

*She answers it.*

**Ruth** *(on phone)* Hello?

Ok . . .

Ok . . .

Can I call you back in five minutes? I'm just in a meeting.

Thanks for letting me know. I'll call you back.

*She hangs up.*

**Leigh** Ruth?

**Ruth** Yes?

**Leigh** Why don't you give me the phone? I can take care of the phone while we work out some kind of compromise. Ruth?

**Ruth** Yes?

**Leigh** Are you listening to me?

**Ruth** No.

**Leigh** Well could you listen to me please? We're in something of a fucking crisis situation here I think you'll agree.

**Ruth** My mother's dead.

**Leigh** Oh.

Oh.

Well, I'm . . . I'm very sorry to hear that. Uhm . . . I think . . . I think the three of us should all . . . you should go back to your apartment Jay, and Ruth, if you like, you can sleep in the spare room. I'm assuming you'll want to get back to Belfast in the morning? Ruth?

**Ruth** *nods.*

**Leigh** I'll get the theatre to book you the first flight we can.

**Ruth** I'd appreciate that, thanks.

**Leigh** As regards the production, let's uh . . . let's just all get a good night's sleep. A lot's happened tonight we all need to process. In the morning, I'll ring both your agents and we'll work out what to do next. I think we've all got a bit carried away and forgotten about the bigger picture. There are more important things in life than putting on a play.

**Jay** Leigh the uh . . .

**Leigh** What?

**Jay** The tweet.

**Leigh** The . . . ?

**Jay** I need some kind of reassurance she's not going to send that tweet.

**Leigh** I think we can discuss this another time, don't you? Her mother's just died.

**Jay** I'd feel better if you had her phone.

**Leigh** Ruth. Would you mind if took your phone?

**Ruth** What?

**Leigh** Could I . . . ? Your phone?

**Ruth** *doesn't respond. She's lost in her thoughts. Leigh sneaks up to her. He gently takes the phone from out of her hand. She doesn't notice. Leigh and Jay watch. Leigh gives Jay a surreptitious glance. He nods at Jay.*

**Ruth** Can I use your bathroom?

**Leigh** Of course.

*They watch her disappear into the bathroom.*

**Jay** Leigh, if she blackmails me I will sue you. I'll sue your fucking theatre.

**Leigh** Relax! It will not come to that! Hopefully now that her mother's died she'll have a different perspective on all this. Proves your point actually.

**Jay** What point?

**Leigh** About Diana. That good things can come from terrible events.

**Jay** And why the fuck did you tell her what I said about Diana? You're such a little *bitch!*

**Leigh** Well there's no need to call me a *bitch!*

**Jay** You betrayed me, motherfucker!

**Leigh** I know. And I'm sorry. But Ruth is one of my oldest friends. I thought I could trust her.

**Ruth** *re-enters unseen by them.*

**Jay** I could have told her what you said about Thatcher. Let's not forget that.

**Leigh** Well hold on here, what I said was not in the same league as what you said.

**Jay** What you said was much worse.

**Leigh** No it wasn't.

**Jay** You said you wanted to punish Margaret Thatcher by raping her.

**Leigh** I never said that.

**Jay** I was trying to help Diana. Make the world a better place.

**Leigh** Ok. Ok. Thank you for not telling her. I appreciate it.

**Jay** Whole situation is fucked.

**Leigh** We're not fucked. You still want to do the play don't you?



**Jay** Not like this. I came to do an Irish play. Not British propaganda!

**Leigh** Well the great thing about her mother being dead is she'll be away for at least a week and even when she does come back her mind won't be on the play. We can really shape it into whatever we want to. We can cut what we want.

**Jay** You don't think she'll object?

**Leigh** Not once she sees how much better we'll make it. I understand Ruth's process – she's sensitive, fragile, haphazard. She writes from her *id*, it's wild and free and poetic – but there comes a point where she needs rational guidance. Most women writers are the same. As are most Irish writers. She's Irish *and* a woman so she needs it more than most.

**Ruth** No.

**Leigh** Oh. Ruth. We were just talking about –

**Ruth** You're not cutting anything.

**Leigh** How long have you been . . . ? Of course we wouldn't cut anything without your permission.

**Ruth** You're cutting nothing, Leigh. You're cutting nothing.

**Leigh** How are you feeling?

**Ruth** How am I feeling?

**Leigh** Yeah how do you feel?

**Ruth** I feel I'd miss my mother's funeral before I'd leave you two untrustworthy cunts alone with my play.

**Leigh** Ok.

**Ruth** But that's so typical of me, isn't it? I'm so sensitive and fragile and haphazard.

**Leigh** I'm sorry you heard that but I meant all of it as a compliment.

**Ruth** So you want to rape Margaret Thatcher?

**Leigh** No.

**Ruth** To punish her?

**Jay** Context.

**Ruth** What?

**Jay** There was a context.

**Ruth** What was the context?

**Leigh** Well he was . . . there was a gun to my head.

**Jay** Rutger Hauer had a gun to his head.

**Leigh** It was Jesus actually.

**Jay** Jesus had a gun to his head and asked him who he would –

**Ruth** Rape, I know. But you told me you refused to answer.

**Leigh** I did, didn't I? Initially.

**Jay** He did yes.

**Ruth** You told him he was a misogynist.

**Jay** I don't remember that. You think I'm a misogynist?

**Leigh** I didn't use those exact words.

**Ruth** Why Thatcher?

**Leigh** I was worried Jay would be offended if I didn't come up with an answer and so I thought of the worst woman I could think of and . . .

**Jay** I wouldn't have been offended. You thought I would have been offended?

**Leigh** Well when I did refuse to answer, you were offended.

**Jay** I wasn't.

**Leigh** You were. You were acting all weird.

**Jay** No I wasn't.

**Ruth** So you lied to me?

**Leigh** You did act weird, you went very quiet and intense.

**Jay** That's part of my process. I can't believe you thought I was offended.

**Ruth** Look at me, Leigh.

**Jay** I'm offended now. *Now* I'm offended.

**Ruth** You lied to me?

**Leigh** Yes. I was worried you wouldn't understand. And I was right. You don't understand.

**Ruth** I understand exactly what's happened here.

**Leigh** You're not appreciating the context.

**Ruth** But you lied. You said you didn't answer but you did answer. And now you're planning to betray me by changing my whole fucking play while my mother is . . . fucking . . . while my mother . . . my mother . . .

**Leigh** Ruth please.

*He goes to her.*

**Ruth** *Fuck you!*

**Jay** Ruth, just –

**Ruth** *And fuck you!*

**Leigh** I did it for you!

**Ruth** For me?!

**Leigh** Yes!

**Ruth** For fucking *me*?!

**Leigh** Everything I've done tonight has been for you. For your play! To get your play on! To keep him happy! Including saying I would rape Margaret Thatcher. You know me! You know I'm not capable of that! I'm the biggest fucking feminist you'll ever meet! No one has done more for women in theatre than I have. Look at you!

**Ruth** What about me?

**Leigh** Well you wouldn't have a fucking career if it wasn't for me! I believed in you when everyone thought you were shit. I kept your career alive! So yes, for the sake of the play, for your sake, because I care too much I said I would rape Maggie Thatcher. I'm fucking sorry! But I also said that as awful as she was, as horrendous and evil a human being as that woman was, even she didn't deserve to be raped. Because no woman deserves to be raped.

**Jay** He did say that.

**Leigh** Despite the fact she herself was practically the worst rapist this country's ever seen, that she raped the miners, she raped the trade union movement, she raped the working people of this country, despite all that even she doesn't deserve to be raped.

**Ruth** So if you disagree with a woman it's ok to fuck her over?

**Leigh** That is not what I'm saying and you know it. Don't twist my words.

**Ruth** It sounds very like that's what you're saying.

**Leigh** I'm saying that she didn't deserve it. That no woman deserves it, even a woman as evil and cold and inhumane as Thatcher! As a socialist you surely understand where I'm coming from?

**Ruth** Who said I was a socialist?

**Leigh** As a social democrat.

**Ruth** Who said I was a social democrat?

**Leigh** As a person on the left.

**Ruth** I'm not on the left.

**Leigh** What do you mean?

**Ruth** I'm a Conservative.

**Leigh** What?

**Ruth** I voted Conservative in the last election.

**Leigh** Fuck off.

**Ruth** And in the local elections.

**Leigh** I don't believe you. You're saying this to hurt me.

**Ruth** I intend to vote Conservative in the next election too.

**Leigh** Next you'll be telling me you voted for Brexit.

**Ruth** I did vote for Brexit.

**Leigh** Oh God.

**Jay** Are you ok?

**Leigh** I know you only said that to hurt my feelings. I get it. I've hurt you. I've betrayed you. Now you're pretending to betray me.

**Ruth** I don't see how I've betrayed you.

**Leigh** But how could anyone *sane* vote Brexit?

**Ruth** I don't like the European Union. I don't see how that has any bearing on our friendship.

**Leigh** This is a betrayal of everything we've worked towards. You cannot be a Brexit-voting Tory bastard! I refuse to believe this! You're a fucking artist!

**Ruth** So artists are only allowed to think one way?

**Leigh** What's thinking got to do with it? It's not about thinking! It's about feeling! It's about empathy! It's about foodbanks! And fucking austerity and fucking . . . foodbanks! Tell me you're not a Tory. As a woman, as a feminist . . . You're not even British! You're fucking Irish! You shouldn't even have a vote on Brexit! Tell me it's not true.

**Ruth** Is it worse than what you said?

**Leigh** You can't tell anyone.

**Ruth** I can't tell anyone what you said?

**Leigh** Well you can't tell anyone what I said but you also can't tell anyone you voted for Brexit. Nobody will ever commission you again.

**Ruth** I've no intention of telling anyone.

**Leigh** It would ruin your career. Your career would be over.

**Ruth** Like me telling everyone you're a misogynist.

**Leigh** Why would you call me a misogynist?

**Ruth** You joke about raping women.

**Leigh** It wasn't a joke.

**Ruth** So you were serious about raping women?

**Leigh** No fuck off, Ruth, you know I'm not a misogynist. I adore women. I want to be a woman. I wish I was fucking trans! That's how much I love women.

**Ruth** Give me my phone.

**Leigh** Why?

**Ruth** Give it to me.

**Leigh** Why do you want your phone?

**Ruth** Because it's my phone.

**Leigh** You're not going to tweet are you?

**Ruth** That's my business.

**Jay** Don't give it to her.

**Ruth** Hand me the phone now.

**Leigh** I need assurances that you're not going to put anything on social media about me.

**Jay** Same.

**Leigh** About what I said.

**Ruth** I need to ring my sister.

*They look at her. Leigh doesn't know what to do.*

**Ruth** My mother has just died. I want to speak to my sister. I need my phone.

**Leigh** looks at **Jay**. **Jay** shakes his head disapprovingly. **Leigh** hands **Ruth** the phone.

**Ruth** Thank you.

*She appears to be texting on her phone.*

**Leigh** What are you doing? Ruth?

**Ruth** I'm texting her.

**Leigh** You said you were ringing her.

**Ruth** I'm texting her to ask if it's a good time to talk.

*She keeps texting.*

**Jay** She's tweeting.

**Leigh** What?

**Ruth** I'm not.

**Jay** She's tweeting. She's on Twitter.

**Ruth** speeds up her typing, walks away from them.

**Leigh** How do you know?

**Jay** I can see in the mirror.

**Ruth** speeds up her typing, tries to run as they grab her and try to get the phone out of her hand.

**Ruth** Fuck off!

**Leigh** Give me the phone!

**Ruth** Get the fuck away from me!

**Jay** bites **Ruth's** hand. She screams in pain. Blood pours out of her hand.

**Jay** Get the phone! Delete the tweet!

**Leigh** picks up the phone. He fiddles with it, trying to delete the tweet. **Ruth** goes for him but **Jay** physically restrains her.

**Leigh** I can't find it! I'm not a Twitter user, I don't know how to operate the app!

**Jay** Show me!

**Leigh** holds up the phone, **Jay** looks at it. While he's distracted, **Ruth** stamps on **Jay's** foot. She escapes from his grasp. She grabs **Jay's** Academy Award and smashes it over his head two or three times. He stumbles and falls. She goes to **Leigh**.

**Ruth** Give me the phone.

**Leigh** Now wait –

*She smashes the Academy Award over Leigh's head. She beats him with it until he stops moving. She goes to get her phone as Jay struggles to his feet. As Ruth almost gets the phone, Jay grabs her by the throat, pushing himself against her, choking her. She gasps for breath. She is on her knees. Jay stands above her, choking her. She reaches on the ground and finds Jay's pencil on the floor. She drives the pencil deep into Jay's eye. He screams in agony, as blood pours out of him. Ruth stands up, covered in blood, the Academy Award still in her hand.*

**Ruth** Now you can wear a fucking eyepatch!

**Leigh** moans in pain. She steps over him and grabs her phone out of his hand. She types her tweet and presses send. She sits exhausted, phone in one hand, Academy Award in the other. Lights slowly down as her phone buzzes and beeps with notifications.

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