

Characters

**Mark and Jan,
Leah and Phil,
Lou, John Tate and Danny,
Richard,
Cathy and Brian and
a Boy**

Names and genders of characters are suggestions only, and can be changed to suit performers.

Takes place in a street, a field and a wood.

One

A street. Jan and Mark.

Jan Dead?

Mark Yeah.

Jan What, dead?

Mark Yeah

Jan Like dead, dead

Mark Yes

Jan proper dead, not living dead?

Mark Not living dead, yes.

Jan Are you sure?

Mark Yes.

Jan I mean there's no

Mark No.

Jan mistake or

Mark No mistake.

Jan It's not a joke

Mark It's not a joke.

Jan coz it's not funny.

Mark it's not funny because it's not a joke, if it was a joke it would be funny.

Jan Not hiding?

Mark Not hiding, dead.

Jan not

Mark Dead.

Jan Oh.

Mark Yes.

Jan God.

Mark Yes.

Jan God.

Mark Exactly.

Pause.

Jan What are we going to do?

* * *

A field. Leah and Phil, Phil eating an ice cream.

Leah What are you thinking?

No answer.

No, don't tell me, sorry, that's a stupid, that's such a stupid –

You can tell me, you know. You can talk to me. I won't judge you, whatever it is. Whatever you're, you know, I won't, I won't . . .

Is it me?

Not that I'm –

I mean it wouldn't matter if you weren't or were, actually, so –

Are you thinking about me?

No answer.

What good things? Phil? Or . . .

I mean is it a negative, are you thinking a negative thing about –

Not that I'm bothered. I'm not bothered, Phil, I'm not, it doesn't, I don't care. You know. I don't . . .

What, like I talk too much? Is that it? That I talk too much, you, sitting there in absolute silence thinking 'Leah talks too much, I

wish she'd shut up once in a while' is that it, is that what you're, because don't, you know, judge, you know, because alright, I do. There, I'm admitting, I am admitting, I talk too much, so shoot me. So kill me, Phil, call the police, lock me up, rip out my teeth with a pair of rusty pliers, I talk too much, what a crime, what a sin, what an absolute catastrophe, stupid, evil, ridiculous, because you're not perfect actually, Phil. Okay? There. I've said it, you're not . . .

You're a bit . . .

You're . . .

Pause. She sits.

Do I disgust you? I do. No, I do. No don't because, it's alright, it's fine, I'm not gonna, you know, or whatever, you know it's not the collapse of my, because I do have, I could walk out of here, there are friends, I've got, I've got friends, I mean alright, I haven't got friends, not exactly, I haven't, but I could, if I wanted, if I wanted, given the right, given the perfect, you know, circumstances. So don't, because you haven't either, I mean it's not like you're, you know, Mr, you know, popular, you know, you haven't, you know, you haven't, you know, you haven't, but that's, that's different, isn't it, I mean it is, it is, don't say it isn't, really, don't, you'll just embarrass us both because it is different, it's different because it doesn't matter to you. Does it. Sitting there. Sitting there, all . . .

All . . .

You're not scared. Nothing scares, there, I've said it; scared. Scared, Phil. I'm scared, they scare me, this place, everyone, the fear, the fear that everyone here, and I'm not the only one, I'm not the only one, Phil, I'm just the only one saying it, the fear that everyone here lives in, the brutal terror, it scares me, okay, I've said it and I am not ashamed. Yes, I am ashamed but I'm not ashamed of my shame, Phil, give me that much credit at least, thank you.

Everyone's scared.

S'not just me.

Pause.

We've got each other.

We need each other.

So don't give it all . . .

You need me as much as . . .

Don't give it all the . . .

Beat.

What are you thinking?

Jan and Mark enter.

Pause.

Mark We need to talk to you.

Leah Oh, shit.

* * *

A wood. Lou, John Tate and Danny.

Lou Screwed.

John Tate No, no, it's not, no, Lou, we're not

Lou We are screwed.

John Tate No, Lou, we're not . . . it's not . . . we're not . . .
Nothing's . . .

Lou It is.

John Tate No, no, no, look, there I have to, I really have to,
you're going to have to listen to me on this one, and you are going
to have to believe me. Everything is, everything's fine.

Lou Fine?

John Tate Not fine, no

Danny Fine?

John Tate not fine exactly, alright, fair enough, I mean things are
bad, things are a little, alright, yes, I'm not trying to hide the, this
is tricky, it's a tricky

Lou Tricky?

John Tate situation, but it's not, because actually what you are
saying is a very negative, and that's . . .

Look, haven't I looked after things before?

Lou This is different.

John Tate Lou, are you scared of anyone in this school?

Lou You?

John Tate Apart from me.

Lou No.

John Tate Exactly

Lou Richard, maybe

John Tate exactly, that's exactly, that's what I'm saying –
Richard, you're scared of, are you . . .? – I mean you can walk
down any corridor in this – I don't think Richard's – any corridor
in this school and you know, no one bothers you and if you want
something it's yours and no one bothers you and everyone respects
you and everyone's scared of you and who made that, I mean I'm
not boasting, but who made that happen?

Lou You.

John Tate Thank you, so are things really that bad?

Lou Yes.

John Tate Richard? I mean are you really?

Danny I can't get mixed up in this. I'm gonna be a dentist.

Lou This is different, John. This is

John Tate Alright, it's a little bit

Lou This is really serious.

Danny Dentists don't get mixed up in things. I've got a plan. I've got a plan John, I've made plans, and this is not . . .

John Tate It's a bit serious, but let's not, I mean come on, let's not overplay the, the, the

Lou He's dead.

John Tate the gravity of . . . Well, yes, okay, fair enough, but

Danny This is not part of the plan. Dental college is part of the plan, A-levels are part of the plan, dead people are not part of the plan, this is not dental college.

Lou He's dead, John.

John Tate Alright, I'm not denying, am I denying? No, I'm

Lou He's dead.

John Tate Well, don't keep saying it.

Danny This is the opposite of dental college.

Lou But he is dead.

John Tate Well, you just, you're saying it again, didn't I just –

Lou Because he's dead, John, he's dead, dead is what he is so we have to use that word to –

John Tate Alright. New rule; that word is banned.

Beat.

Lou What, 'dead'?

John Tate Yes.

Danny Banned?

John Tate Yes. Banned. Sorry.

Lou You can't ban a word.

John Tate and if anyone says it I'm going to have to, you know, bite their face. Or something.

Danny How can you ban a word?

John Tate Well, just say it then.

Pause.

Say it and see what happens.

They say nothing.

Look, we have to keep together. We have to trust each other and believe in each other. I'm trying to help. I'm trying to keep things together.

Richard enters, with Cathy and Brian, Cathy grinning, Brian crying.

Pause.

Richard He's dead.

John Tate Right, that's . . . now I really am getting a little bit cross, do not use that word.

Richard What?

John Tate No one says that word, okay, no one.

Richard What word?

Cathy This is mad, eh?

John Tate You know.

Cathy Talk about mad. I mean, it's quite exciting as well, though, isn't it.

Richard What, 'dead'?

John Tate Don't say it again, Richard, or I'm gonna

Cathy Better than ordinary life.

Richard What?

John Tate I'm gonna

Richard What?

John Tate I'm gonna

I'm gonna hurt you, actually.

Beat.

Richard You're going to hurt me?

John Tate Yes.

Richard Me?

John Tate Yes. If you use that word.

Cathy I mean I'm not saying it's a good thing, but in a way it is.

Danny Shut up, Cathy.

Cathy You shut up.

John Tate I am trying to keep everyone together. Ever since I came to this school haven't I been trying to keep everyone together? Aren't things better? For us? I mean not for them, not out there, but for us? Doesn't everyone want to be us, come here in the woods? Isn't that worth keeping hold of?

They say nothing. Richard steps forward, a little hesitantly.

Richard You shouldn't threaten me, John.

John Tate I beg your pardon.

Richard I'm just saying. I'm just saying, I've just walked in here. I've been with these two. I've walked all the way from school with these two, with him crying and with her being weird, and I've just walked in here and I've got you threatening me, you shouldn't threaten me, you shouldn't threaten me, John.

Pause.

John Tate Or what?

Richard What?

John Tate No, I mean, you know, or what?

Richard Well . . .

John Tate Because I'm interested.

Danny He's just saying, John.

John Tate Are you on his side, Danny?

Danny No, I'm just saying that he's just saying.

Cathy Shut up, Danny.

Danny You shut up.

John Tate Don't tell Cathy to shut up, Danny, that's really, not . . .

Danny I'm not telling her to -

Cathy He's on Richard's side.

Danny I'm not!

John Tate Are you, Danny? Are you on Richard's side?

Danny No -

Cathy He is.

Richard What do you mean by my side, there is no -

John Tate Have you got a side now, Richard?

Richard No, no, there's no -

John Tate because that's a bit, is that what you've got?

Danny John, I'm not on -

John Tate Because if you've got a side that means you're not on my side and if you're not on my side that means you're setting yourself up against me and I thought we'd got over all that silliness.

Richard We have, we -

John Tate I thought we were mates now.

Richard We are, we are mates now, we -

John Tate So if me and Richard are mates now, which we are and all that silliness is over, which it is, and you're on someone's

side, Danny, then you're on your own side, which is very, well, to be honest, very silly and dangerous.

Danny No, you've got it wrong, that's not —

John Tate Are you on my side?

Danny Yes, I'm on your side!

John Tate Which means you want . . . ?

Danny I want to keep calm, I want to say nothing, just like you, you're right, you're right, John.

John Tate So what are you on about, Cathy?

Cathy I'm —

John Tate Are you on my side? With Richard and Danny? Are you on our side, Cathy?

Cathy Yes.

John Tate Good. Lou?

Lou Yes.

John Tate You're on our side, Lou?

Lou Yes, John.

John Tate You sure?

Lou Yeah, I'm —

John Tate That just leaves you, Brian. You crying little piece of filth.

Beat. Brian stops crying. Looks up.

Brian I think we should tell someone.

John Tate *begins to walk towards Brian.*

Mark and Jan *enter with Leah and Phil, Phil drinking a Coke.*

John Tate *stops.*

Goes back to where he was.

John Tate I'm finding this all quite stressful. You know that? I'm under a lot of stress. You lot shouldn't put me under so much stress.

Leah walks forward.

Leah Can I just say, John, that we haven't done anything. First I want to say that, but if we have, John, but if we have done a thing, which we haven't, but if we have then we did it together. Whatever we did, we did, me and Phil, it wasn't just Phil, if that's what you're thinking, if you're thinking it might just have been him, on his own, without me, well that's not, we are completely, I am responsible as much as he, as much as Phil, but we didn't because —

John Tate *places a finger on her lips. She is silent.*

John Tate Have you told them?

Mark No.

John Tate Brilliant. Is there one thing that I do not have to do?
Beat.

Jan So you want us to tell them?

John Tate Yes! Please.

He takes his finger away from Leah's lips.

Mark It's Adam. He's . . .

I mean we were just having a laugh, weren't we, we were all, you know . . .

You know Adam, you know what he's like, so we were sort of, well, alright, taking the piss, sort of. You know what he's like he was, sort of hanging around

Jan Trying to be part of

Mark Yeah, trying to be part of, yeah, yeah, so we're having a laugh

Jan with him

Mark yeah, with him, I mean he's laughing as well, see how far he'll go . . . We got him to eat some leaves.

Jan Great big ones, dirty leaves off the floor, he ate them, just like that

Mark Just like that, we were all

Jan stitches

Mark We were in stitches, weren't we

Jan Adam too, he was

Mark Oh yeah, Adam was, he was laughing harder than anyone.

Jan Nutter.

Mark Nutter.

Jan complete

Mark complete nutter

Jan Big fistfuls of leaves, eh John

Mark laughing his head off, eh John

Jan He burnt his own socks!

Mark Yeah, yeah, he did, that's right he, he set them alight

Jan anything, he'd do, just a laugh

Mark we got him to nick some vodka

Jan you could tell he was scared

Mark oh, he was terrified, he was completely, but like you know, pretending, you know, pretending he's done it before, big man, pretending he's

Jan You know what he's like, he's

Mark Do anything. And you're thinking 'Will he do anything? What won't he do?'

Jan Let us punch him.

Mark he was laughing

Jan In the face.

Mark He was laughing.

Jan at first

Mark Yeah, at first he was, I mean we took it a bit far, alright, half hour, forty minutes

Jan I mean he was still joking all the way, but

Mark you could tell

Jan He weren't really

Mark fear

Jan well

Mark you don't want to admit, you know what he's like, Phil . . .

Jan Stubbed out cigarettes on him.

Mark joking, we were

Jan Arms, hands, face

Mark having a laugh, really, he was laughing

Jan and crying, soles of his feet

Mark or crying, sort of, a bit of both

Jan Made him run across the motorway

Mark you're thinking what is this nutter, and with the vodka making you feel a bit, you know, you're having a laugh, together, what is this nutter gonna do next, we can make him do, we can make him do -

Jan That's when I went home

Mark anything, yeah, only because you had to.

Jan I wasn't there when -

Mark Only because you had to, you would've been there otherwise, you did all the . . .

Beat.

We went up the grille. You know, that shaft up there on the hill. Just a big hole really, hole with a grille over it, covering, just to see if he'd climb the fence, really and he did, and we thought, you know, he's climbed the fence which we didn't think he'd do so walk, you know, walk on the grille, Adam, walk on the, and he did, he's walked on, you know, wobbling and that but he's walking on the grille and we're all laughing and he's scared because if you slip, I mean it's just blackness under you, I mean it's only about fifteen foot wide so, but it might be hundreds of feet into blackness, I dunno, but he's doing it, he's walked on the grille. He's on the grille. He is.

And someone's pegged a stone at him.

Not to hit him, just for the laugh.

And you shoulda seen his face, I mean the fear, the, it was so, you had to laugh, the expression, the fear . . .

So we're all pegging them. Laughing. And his face, it's just making you laugh harder and harder, and they're getting nearer and nearer. And one hits his head. And the shock on his face is so . . . funny. And we're all just . . .

Just . . .

Really chucking these stones into him, really hard and laughing and he slips.

And he drops.

Into . . .

Into the er . . .

So he's . . .

So he's . . .

So he's —

John Tate Dead. He's dead.

Cathy says you're clever.

So. What do we do?

Pause. They all stare at Leah and Phil.

Leah goes to say something, but nothing comes out.

Silence.

More silence.

Phil puts his Coke carefully on the ground.

Phil Cathy, Danny, Mark, you go to Adam's house, you wait until his mum's out, you break in

Danny What?

Phil through an upstairs window so it's out of the way, make sure no one sees you. Get in, go to his bedroom, find a pair of his shoes and an item of his clothing, a jumper or something, don't touch the jumper, that's very important, do not touch the jumper, but you have to get it in the plastic bag without touching it

Cathy What plastic bag?

Phil The refuse sacks that you are going to buy on the way, do not use the first one on the roll, use the third or fourth, do not be tempted to use a bin liner you have knocking around the house as that will be a DNA nightmare.

Richard, you take Brian to the Head, tell him that you found Brian crying in the toilets, asked him what was wrong and when he told you, you brought him here.

Richard Me? But I hate him!

Phil Brian, you cry

Richard Me with Brian?

Phil and you tell them a man showed you his willy in the woods

Brian Wha . . . what?

Phil by the bridge, last week, a fat Caucasian male, 5 foot 9 inches say, with thinning hair and a postman's uniform, sad eyes, softly spoken

Danny Who's that?

Phil The man who showed Brian his willy in the woods, please keep up, I'm making this up as I go along

Danny What were his teeth like?

Phil Bad, very bad.

Danny Thought so.

Phil Lou, Danny and Jan you take the shoes, Lou you put them on, and you enter the woods from the south entrance

Cathy Which one's south?

Mark By the Asda.

Phil Danny, you enter from the east entrance with Jan on your back

Danny Is he taking the piss?

Phil the weight of the two of you combined should equal that of a fat postman with bad teeth, you make you way into the woods, do not put her down unless it's on concrete or a tree trunk, never when you're walking on mud. You meet Lou near the bridge, you move around a bit, you exit from the south,

Mark By the Asda.

Phil Cathy and Mark, you meet them there, but on the way you find a quiet street, you wait until it's just you and a man, you walk ahead of him and when you're far ahead you drop the jumper. The man picks it up, runs after you covering it in DNA and then gives it back, make sure you let him drop it in the bag, say you're taking it to a charity shop. Take it to the south entrance, tear it a little, chuck it in a hedge, all go home and wait a day or two until Adam's declared missing and then John Tate comes forward and says he thinks he saw Adam with a fat man in a uniform by Asda's but he

can't be sure, they'll think he's been abducted, they'll be inquiries, police, mourning, a service and if everyone keeps their mouths shut we should be fine.

Any questions?

They stare at him open mouthed.

He bends down. Picks up his Coke.

Starts to drink his Coke.

* * *

A field. Leah and Phil sitting.

Pause.

Leah Apparently bonobos are our nearest relative. For years people thought they were chimpanzees, but they're not, they are completely different. Chimps are evil. They murder each other, did you know that? They kill and sometimes torture each other to find a better position within the social structure. A chimp'll just find itself on the outside of a group and before he knows what's happening it's being hounded to death by the others, sometimes for months. For years we've thought that chimps were our closest living relative, but now they saying it's the bonobos. Bonobos are the complete opposite of chimps. When a stranger bonobo approaches the pack, the other bonobos all come out and go 'Hello, mate. What you doing round here? Come and meet the family, we can eat some ants.' And if a bonobo damages its hand, whereas the chimps'll probably cast it out or bite its hand off, the bonobos will come over and look after it, and they'll all look sad because there's a bonobo feeling pain. I saw it on a programme. Such sadness in those intelligent eyes. Empathy. That's what bonobos have. Amazing really, I mean they're exactly like chimps, but the tiniest change in their DNA... The woman was saying that if we'd discovered bonobos before chimps our understanding of ourselves would be very different.

Pause. Phil pulls out a bag of crisps.

Leah You don't care, do you. I could be talking Chinese for all you care. How do you do it? You're amazing. You're unreal. I

sometimes think you're not human. I sometimes think I wonder what you would do if I killed myself, right here in front of you. What would you do? What would you do, Phil?

No answer.

Phil, what would you do? Phil?

Still no answer.

Suddenly she grabs her throat.

I'm gonna do it!

She squeezes.

I mean it! I'm gonna do it . . .

No answer. She strangles herself, her face turning red.

She falls to her knees with the exertion.

Phil looks on.

She is in considerable pain. Grits her teeth and squeezes.

She strangles until she is lying prone on the floor.

(Gasping.) Phil! This is it . . .

She stops.

Lies there, panting.

Phil opens his crisps and begins to eat them.

Leah gets up, sits next to **Phil**.

Phil eats on.

Leah Course, they shag a lot. Bonobos. Always at it. Sex mad. Sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, constant sex, randy, in the bonobo world having it off is like saying I like your shoes. Partner swapping, men and women, women and men, women and women, men on men, fathers, mothers, oral, group masturbation, the lot. It was like an orgy, when bonobos get going. It was fairly disgusting, actually.

Pause.

But that's bonobos for you.

Pause.

We're in trouble now.

We're in trouble now, Phil. Don't know how this'll pan out.

Trouble now.

Two

A street. Jan and Mark.

Pause.

Jan What?

Mark He's not going.

Jan What do you mean he's not going?

Mark He's not going.

Jan He's not going?

Mark Yes.

Jan That's what he said?

Mark Yes.

Jan He said he's not going?

Mark Yeah, he said he's not, he's not . . .

Jan What?

Mark Going.

Beat.

Jan Is he off his head?

Mark I know.

Jan Is he insane?

Mark I know.

Jan Is he joking?

Mark I know, I know.

Jan No, that's a question.

Mark He's not joking, he's not going, he's said he's not going, I said you've gotta go, he said he's not going, 'I'm not going' he said.

Jan That's what he said?

Mark That's what he said, I'm saying that's what he said.

Jan Shit.

Mark Exactly.

Beat.

Jan What are we going to do?

* * *

A field. Phil and Leah, Phil slowly eating a pack of Starburst.

Leah has a Tupperware container on her lap.

Leah Are you happy?

No, don't answer that, Jesus, sorry, what's wrong with me, sorry –

Are you?

No, I'm just wondering. I mean what is happy, what's happy all about, who says you're supposed to be happy, like we're all supposed to be happy, happy is our natural, and any deviation from that state is seen as a failure, which in itself makes you more unhappy so you have to pretend to be even happier which doesn't work because people can see that you're pretending which makes them awkward and you can see that they can see that you're pretending to be happy and their awkwardness is making you even more unhappy so you have to pretend to be even happier, it's a nightmare. It's like nuclear waste or global warming.

Beat.

Isn't it, Phil? Phil? Isn't it, like nuclear . . .

Phil doesn't answer.

Leah Yeah, you know, you know it is, you know more than I do, I can't tell you any, you know. People getting all upset about polluting the natural order? When this planet is churning molten lava with a thin layer of crust on top with a few kilometres of atmosphere clinging to it? I mean, please, don't gimme all that,

carbon dioxide? Carbon dioxide, Phil? And look at the rest of the universe, Venus, Phil, there's a, look at Venus, what about Venus, hot enough to melt lead or Titan with oceans of liquid nitrogen, I mean stars, Phil, a billion nuclear reactions a second, I mean to be honest it's all either red hot or ice cold, so, so, so . . . No. It's life that upsets the natural order. It's us that's the anomaly.

But that's the beauty, isn't it, Phil. I couldn't say this to anyone else, they'd say 'That's a pretty bloody grim view of the world, Leah', but you can see the beauty, which is why I can talk to you, because you can see the incredibly precious beauty and fragility of reality, and it's the same for happiness, you can apply the same theory to happiness, so don't start, Phil, don't come here giving it all the, you know, all the, all the . . .

Beat.

Can you remember the happiest moment in your life?

Beat. Phil eats another Starburst.

Leah I know mine. I know my happiest moment. Week last Tuesday. That sunset. You remember that sunset? Do you? You don't do you. Oh my God, you don't.

He says nothing.

She opens the Tupperware container.

Shows it to Phil.

Leah It's Jerry. I killed him. I took him out of his cage, I put the point of a screwdriver on his head and I hit it with a hammer. Why do you think I did that?

Phil shrugs.

Leah No. No, me neither.

She closes the lid.

Everything's much better, though. I mean really, it is. Everyone's working together. They're a lot happier. Remember last month, Dan threatened to kill Cathy? Well yesterday I saw him showing

her his phone, like they were old friends. Last week Richard invited Mark to his party, bring a friend, anyone you like, can you believe that? Richard and Mark? Yep. Everyone's happier. It's pouring into the school, grief, grief is making them happy.

They say John Tate's lost it though, won't come out of his room. Bit odd. Maybe that's what's making people happier. Maybe it's just having something to work towards. Together. Do you think that's what it is? Are we really that simple?

Where will it stop? Only been four days but everything's changed

Pause.

Adam's parents were on the telly again last night.

Phil looks up.

Leah Yeah. Another appeal.

To the fat postman with bad teeth.

What have we done, Phil?

Mark and Jan enter.

Jan We need to talk.

* * *

A wood. Phil and Leah, Lou and Danny. Phil has a muffin.

Pause.

Leah What?

Danny They've found . . .

They . . .

Well, they've found –

Lou The man.

Danny Yeah, they've found the man.

Leah They've found the man?

Danny Yeah.

Leah They've found the man?

Danny Yes.

Leah Oh my God.

Lou Exactly.

Leah Oh my God.

Lou That's what we thought, we thought that, didn't we, Danny.

Danny Yeah, we did.

Leah Are you sure? I mean are you . . .

Danny Definitely. He's in custody now. They're questioning him.

Leah But how, I mean who, how, who, who is, who is, how?

Lou Dunno.

Leah Who is he?

Lou He's the man who kidnapped Adam.

Leah Right. No.

Lou Yes.

Leah No.

Danny Yes.

Leah No, no, yeah, no, actually, because that man, the man who, he doesn't actually, I mean I'm not being fussy or anything, but the man who kidnapped Adam doesn't actually exist, does he? Well, does he?

Lou No. But they've got him.

Danny I heard his teeth are awful.

Leah You know, I mean he doesn't, he doesn't . . . Phil? Any . . . Any thoughts? Any words, any comments, any . . . ideas, any, any, any . . . thing? At all?

I mean this is, this is, isn't it, this is, is it?

Shit. Oh shit.

Danny He answers the description. Fat postman, thinning hair, his teeth are terrible, apparently.

Leah But that's just

Lou Yeah. That's what we thought.

Leah we just, didn't we, Phil, we just, we just, I mean you just . . .

Danny What are we gonna do?

Lou We're screwed.

Leah We're not . . .

Lou We're -

Leah No, no, sorry, no we're not, are we Phil, I mean we're, no we're alright.

Danny They're looking for Brian.

Leah Why?

Danny Because he can identify him.

Leah No he can't.

Lou Because he saw him in the woods.

Leah He didn't

Lou He did, he -

Leah No he didn't because that wasn't the man in the woods because there wasn't a man in the woods.

Where's Brian?

Danny Hiding. Dan and Mark have gone to find him.

Lou He's shitting it.

Leah I mean what, they just picked this bloke up, they just saw him and said 'You look dodgy, you're a murderer because you've got a postman's uniform'?

Danny Well, there's the teeth as well.

Leah You can't go to prison for bad teeth.

Lou What if he goes to prison?

Leah He won't go to prison.

Lou You just said –

Leah He won't get done for it because he hasn't . . .

Danny This sort of stuff sticks, you know.

Leah Look, everyone, everyone calm, okay. Isn't that right, Phil. Phil, isn't that, I mean things are, everything is, well, better and isn't everyone more, you know, and cheerful and stuff, so let's, please, let's –

Danny How am I gonna get references?

Lou We are completely –

Leah We are not –

Danny You need three references for dental college, how am I gonna get references?

Richard *enters with Cathy.*

Richard We just came from the police station. It's full of reporters.

Cathy It was great.

Richard It was shit. Phil, have you heard?

Leah We heard.

Cathy They wanted to interview me.

Richard You've heard? You know?

Cathy Didn't have time, but I'm gonna go back

Richard So you know they've caught him?

Cathy get on the telly

Leah How can they have caught someone who doesn't exist?

Richard I don't know, Leah.

Leah Because that's impossible.

Richard Why don't you tell them that? Why don't you pop down the station and say, 'Excuse me, but that fat postman with the bad teeth doesn't actually exist, so why don't you let him go?'

Leah Sarcasm, that's the lowest.

Cathy they might even give me money for it, do you think I should ask for money?

Lou He's gonna go to prison.

Leah Lou, they are not going to send him to prison because he answers a description, they need more than that, they need fibres, they need samples, they need evidence.

Richard DNA evidence.

Leah Exactly, they need DNA –

Richard No, they've got DNA evidence.

Beat.

Leah What?

Richard He answers the description, but they've got DNA evidence linking him to the crime.

Leah DN . . . What are you talking about?

Richard We spoke to a reporter. They matched up the DNA evidence they found on the jumper to a police database and they came up with this man, this man who answers the description perfectly.

Leah That's impossible.

Richard Well, it's what happened.

Leah No, because, we made that description up and they got DNA from a random –

Beat. She turns to Cathy.

Leah Cathy?

Pause. They all stare at Cathy.

Cathy You told us to get DNA evidence. We got DNA evidence. We did what you said.

Leah Right.

Okay.

Hang on.

Where did you get the DNA evidence?

Cathy From a man, like you said.

Beat.

A man down at the sorting office.

They stare at her.

Leah What?

Cathy Well, we thought, you know, I mean you'd given a description so we thought, well, I thought, you know, show initiative, we'll look for a fat balding postman with bad teeth.

They stare at her.

There were quite a few.

Danny Oh my God.

Cathy What?

Lou Oh my God.

Cathy We showed . . . initiative, we –

Leah And who asked you to do that?

Cathy Richard, we showed initiative.

Richard That is the most stupid –

Danny Oh, Jesus.

Cathy Why?

Leah Why? Because there is now a man in prison who is linked to a non-existent crime, answering a description that Brian gave.

Lou Oh, Jesus Christ.

Cathy But isn't that . . .

Leah No, Cathy, it is not what we wanted.

Richard What we wanted was to cover up what had happened, not to frame someone else.

Lou We're screwed.

Leah Yes. We might actually be . . . This is a nightmare.

Danny We can't let them think it's him. I mean, I really can't be mixed up in something like that, it wouldn't be right.

Lou What if he goes to prison?

Richard What if we go to prison?

Leah Yes, I think now, we might just actually be a little bit, well, screwed.

Jan and Mark enter with Brian. Brian is crying.

Brian I'm not going in.

Richard You dick, Mark.

Mark It was her idea!

Lou Mark, you dick.

Brian I'm not going to the police station.

Jan He has to. They're looking for him.

Brian I can't go in. It was bad enough talking to them before, saying what I said, but I can't do it again.

Jan They're searching everywhere for him. They want him to identify the man.

Brian I can't identify him, I can't go in there, don't make me go in there, I'm not going in there.

Danny This is terrible.

Brian I can't face it. They look at me. They look at me like I'm lying and it makes me cry. I can't stand the way they look at me. And then, because I cry, they think I'm telling the truth, but I'm crying because I'm lying and I feel terrible inside.

Lou We're going to have to tell them.

Leah Maybe we could do nothing?

Danny We can't do nothing, they want Brian.

Brian I'm not going in.

Leah Phil?

No answer.

Phil?

Pause. Phil walks over to Brian and lays a hand on his shoulder.

Phil This is a bad situation. We didn't want this situation. But we've got this situation. It wasn't supposed to be like this. But it is like this.

Beat.

You're going in.

Brian No.

Phil Yes.

Brian No, Phil –

Phil Yes, yes, shhhh, yes. Sorry. You have to go in. Or we'll take you up the grille.

Pause.

We'll throw you in.

Richard Er, Phil.

Danny Is he serious?

Leah He's always serious.

Phil We'll take you up the grille now. We'll get you by the arms. By the legs. And we'll swing you onto the grille. We'll throw rocks at you until you drop through. You'll drop through. You'll fall into the cold. Into the dark. You'll land on Adam's corpse and you'll rot together.

Beat.

We're in trouble now. We need your help. If you don't help us we'll kill you. Are you going to help us?

Pause.

Brian *nods.*

Phil Okay. You go in there. Richard'll take you

Richard Not me again.

Phil Richard'll take you. You take a look at that man and you say it's him. You say it's the man in the woods. That's what you do. Okay?

Slowly, Brian nods.

Phil Everyone else stays calm. Keep your mouths shut. Tell no one or we'll all go to prison. Just get on with things.

He starts to eat his muffin. They stare at him.

* * *

A field. Phil and Leah, Phil picking his teeth.

Silence.

Suddenly Leah jumps up, shocked.

Leah Woah! Woah, woah, woah...

No reaction from Phil.

Leah I just had déjà vu, but really strong, I just...

And you were...

I was . . .

I mean we were just here and, and . . .

I was sitting like that and . . .

Woah. I've been here before, Phil. Phil?

Phil carries on picking his teeth.

Leah watches, then explodes.

Leah That's exactly what you did when I said Phil! I knew you were going to do that, I said Phil and you picked your teeth, Phil, you just carried on picking your teeth!

Oh my God. This might be the real thing. Maybe I have been here before. Maybe this has all happened before. Phil? Do you think this has happened before? I know what you're gonna do next. I can see, I know, I know, you're gonna . . . you're gonna . . . you're gonna . . . do nothing!

Phil does nothing.

Leah Yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! You see? This is amazing, this is, the world has just changed, reality is not what we think, Phil maybe, this isn't real, maybe we're caught in some sort of . . . hang on, hang on, a bird is going to . . . a starling, a starling is going to land by that stone . . . now!

Nothing happens.

Now!

Still nothing happens.

Any minute . . . now!

Again, nothing happens.

Leah sags. She sits back with Phil.

Leah Look at that sky.

Have you ever seen a sky like that? I've never seen a sky quite like that. Strange time we've been born in. No other time quite like this one.

Pause.

Do you think it's possible to change things? I know, I know, but I feel like this time . . . I dunno, this time . . . I feel like this is an important time. Do you think people always feel like that? D'you think we're doomed to behave like people before us did?

Phil?

No answer.

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Phil?

Pause.

PHIL!

Slowly Phil turns to her.

Leah If you change one thing you can change the world. Do you believe that?

Phil No.

Leah Right.

Well, I do.

I do, Phil.

Beat.

Phil?

Three

A street. Jan and Mark.

Jan Okay. Okay. Okay.

Beat.

Okay.

No.

Mark Yes.

Jan No, no

Mark yes

Jan no. No way, that's

Mark I know

Jan that's

Mark I know, I know

Jan And are you . . . is this . . .

I mean are you . . . there's no mistake or . . .

Mark No.

Jan Because this is

Mark That's what I'm saying

Jan this is really

Mark Yeah, yes, yeah.

Jan really, really

Mark Exactly.

Jan Are you sure?

Mark Yes.

Jan Where?

Mark In the woods.

Jan In the woods?

Mark In the woods, Cathy found him in the woods

Jan Cathy?

Mark Yes.

Jan Cathy found him . . . ?

Mark Yes, she

Jan in the woods?

Mark Yes.

Beat.

Jan Cathy found him in the woods?

Mark Yes.

Jan Oh.

Mark I know.

Jan I don't . . .

Mark I know, I know.

Jan This is . . .

Mark Yeah.

Jan Does anyone know?

Mark You and me. And Cathy. For the moment.

Jan Right.

Right.

Pause.

Right.

* * *

A field. Phil sits with a bag.

Takes out a paper plate.

Places a waffle on it.

Takes out a pack of butter and a jar of jam.

Takes out a knife.

Leah turns up. *She is carrying a suitcase.*

He stares at her.

Leah I'm going. I'm out of here, I'm gone, I'm, I'm, this is it. I'm running away, Phil.

Phil says nothing.

Leah Where'm I going? I dunno. Wherever the universe decides that I should be. It's a big world, Phil, a lot bigger than you, it's a lot bigger than you and me, a lot bigger than all this, these people, sitting here, a lot bigger, a lot lot bigger.

Pause. Phil starts to butter his waffle.

Leah Don't. No words. There's no point, so . . . What's the point? 'Why are you going, is it me, is it us, is it what we've done, is it what we're becoming, why Leah, why, is it me, is it the impossibility of ever saying exactly what you mean?' There's no point, Phil. So don't even try. I'm outta here. I'm gone. I am part of history, I'm on a jet-plane, I'm moving, I'm discovering, I'm, I'm, sayonara, baby, sayonara, Phil, and hello, discovery, and yeah don't try and stop me, because, because, exit stage left Leah, right now. Right now.

Phil stops buttering the waffle.

Opens the jam.

Starts putting a thin layer of jam on the waffle.

Leah Right now. Right now, Phil, right, bloody . . . I mean it! I really, really . . .

Pause. Phil continues with his waffle.

Leah You're not going to stop me, are you? You're not even thinking of stopping me. You're not even thinking of thinking of stopping me. The only thing in your brain at the moment is that waffle. Your brain is entirely waffle, single-mindedly waffle and maybe a bit of jam, I don't know how you do it. I admire you so much.

Phil decides that the waffle needs more jam.

Leah sags. *She drops her suitcase and sits with Phil.*

Leah Did you see Jan at Adam's memorial? Floods of tears. It was wonderful, everyone felt wonderful, I felt terrible of course, but everyone felt wonderful. It's incredible. The change. This place. You're a miracle worker. Everyone's happy. You know that? You notice that? Cathy was on the telly. Used that clip on every channel. She's like a celebrity, there are second years asking for her autograph. Suddenly Adam's everyone's best friend. Richard's named his dog Adam. Mark's mum says if her baby's a boy she's going to call him Adam. Funny thing is they're all actually behaving better as well. I saw Jan helping a first year find the gym. Mark's been doing charity work, for Christ's sake. Maybe being seen as heroes is making them behave like heroes

Phil considers his waffle. *Decides it needs more jam.*

Leah Yeah, everyone happy. Well it's not all roses, you know. Brian's on medication. Did you know that? Phil? Did you know that they've put Brian on medication?

No answer.

Yep, Brian's off his head, John Tate hasn't been seen in weeks, and the postman's facing the rest of his life in prison, but, you know, omelettes and eggs, as long as you've your waffle, who cares.

How do you feel?

Phil turns to her.

Considers.

For a long time.

Opens his mouth to answer.

Stops.

Shrugs and goes back to his waffle.

Leah *stares at him.*

Leah I admire you so much.

The waffle is ready. Phil looks pleased.

Jan and Mark *enter.*

Jan You better come with us.

Mark You really better come with us.

Leah What is it?

Beat.

Jan You really, really better come with us.

Leah *goes with Jan and Mark.*

Phil *looks at his waffle, looks after Jan, Mark and Leah, then back at the waffle. Irritated, he puts it carefully away.*

* * *

A wood. Cathy, Brian, Leah, Mark, Lou and Jan.

They stand around a boy who looks like a tramp. His clothes are torn and dirty and his hair is matted with dried blood from an old gash on his forehead that has not been cleaned up. He stands there, twitchily, staring at them as though they were aliens and it looks as though he might run off at any moment.

Finally Phil speaks.

Phil Hello, Adam.

Adam Alright.

Pause.

Cathy We found him up there, up the hill

Brian I found him

Cathy living in a hedge.

Brian a hedge, I found him, I found him, I found Adam living in a hedge, I found him

Cathy It's like this hedge complex he's made, you have to crawl to get in.

Brian I crawled, I love crawling, I love crawling, Leah.

Cathy Like a warren in this hedge and he's dragged bits of cardboard and rags to make it better, more waterproof.

Brian I loved it, Leah, it was like a hideout.

Cathy He's been living in there.

Brian Living, she was shouting at me to get off the ground, but I love the ground, don't you like the ground?

Cathy He was hiding away at the back.

Brian D'you ever feel like the trees are watching you?

Cathy Terrified.

Adam No I wasn't.

Brian D'you ever want to rub your face against the earth?

Jan No.

Brian He wouldn't speak to us. I don't think he knew his name.

Adam Adam, my name's, I've got a name, it's . . .

Brian Shall we do that? Shall we rub our faces against the earth? What do you think, shall we rub our faces against the earth?

Cathy I think his head's hurt.

Mark Who, Brian's or Adam's?

Brian Don't they eat earth somewhere? Shall we eat the earth? I wonder what earth tastes like, what do you think it, do you think it tastes earthy, or, or . . .

He bends down to eat a handful of earth.

Cathy I think he's been up there for weeks. Hiding.

I don't think he's very well.

Brian (*spitting the earth out*) That's disgusting!

He suddenly starts giggling as he scrapes the earth from his mouth.

Cathy I dunno how he's survived, what he's eaten.

Brian (*like it's hilarious*) He's probably been eating earth!

He bursts into laughter.

Cathy It took me half an hour to get him to come out.

Brian D'you feel how wonderful this day is?

Cathy I used violence.

Brian She did.

Cathy I threatened to gouge one of his eyes out.

Brian She was gonna do it. She loves violence now. Can you feel the day licking our skin?

Cathy He's a mess.

Mark Which one?

Brian Shall we hold hands? Come on, let's hold, let's hold, let's hold hands, come on, let's –

Suddenly Cathy slaps him.

For a second he looks as if he might cry, but instead he just giggles.

Leah Okay. Right. Okay.

Adam.

Adam Huh?

Leah Hello, Adam. How are you?

Adam . . .

Leah Yeah. Great. Phil?

Phil *says nothing.*

Leah Because this is a bit . . . isn't it. I mean this is really, talk about a bolt from the, yeah, shit. No, not shit, I mean it's good

Lou Good?

Leah it's, yeah, yes it's

Jan How is it good?

Leah it's, it's good, Adam, that found, but I mean yes, it does make things a bit

Lou Screwed?

Leah tricky, no, not . . . don't say

Lou We are absolutely –

Jan What are we gonna do?

Leah Don't panic.

Mark What are we gonna do?

Leah I said don't panic.

Mark We're not panicking.

Leah Good, because that's the one thing that's . . . So. Adam. How's . . . how's . . . how's things?

Adam I know my name.

Leah Yes you do.

Adam Adam, it's Adam, my name's Adam.

Leah Good. Well that's . . .

Brian starts giggling.

Leah No, no, no, Brian, that's, that's not gonna, so shut up. Please.

Cathy What are we going to do?

Leah Phil?

What are we gonna . . . ?

Phil?

Phil?

Say something, Phil!

Pause. But Phil says nothing.

Leah What happened?

Adam doesn't answer.

Leah goes to him.

Leah What happened?

Adam I . . .

I was in a

Dark . . .

Beat.

Walking, crawling in this dark, when you're moving but with your hands and knees, crawl, crawling in this

Dark

Place and I don't remember

Things

I fell, I falled into, I fell onto this . . .

Wake, woke, wake up, I woke up with liquid on my head, leaves, dead and rotting, I remember leaves, but just dark maybe a light high, high, high, high, high . . .

Above and, I drank the liquid it was blood, there was, it was mine, so I, it's not wrong because it was my

Crawling for a long time, I thought, but that was hard to tell, tunnels, scared, I was, I felt like the dark was my fear, do you know what I mean? I was wrapped in it. Like a soft blanket.

And then I came out.

I saw this

Light, this daylight light, I saw this light and went that way, towards, and I thought I died because that's what people

Go to the light, you

And there was such a pain in my

I thought the light would make it go, but it didn't because the Light was . . . this.

Beat.

I was confused.

Beat.

Outside. I was sad, crushed.

Came outside.

I couldn't remember things.

I couldn't remember anything.

I was new.

A new

A new

A new me. And I felt

Happy.

It hurt to laugh. But I laughed.

Beat.

Then night came and then I was

Panicked, because, again dark, I panicked again

I ran

Scratching there was lots of, scratching my skin

And I found my place where I live, and that's where I live now, I live there.

And I do know my name so you can shut, you can . . .

I live there. It's

Mine, I

Live

There.

Adam.

I'm not coming back.

Beat.

It's Adam.

Leah How've you been living?

Adam In the hedge.

Leah No, how?

What have you been eating?

Adam You can eat anything. I eat things.

Nothing dead, I don't

Insects, grass, leaves, all good, but nothing, I caught a rabbit once and ate that, it's fur was soft, warm, but nothing, I found a dead bird and ate some of that but it made me sick so nothing, nothing dead, that's the rule, nothing

Beat.

What?

Jan Jesus Christ.

Mark He's lost it.

Jan He's off his -

Leah Okay. Now things are strange. Things are really, really strange, Phil. I mean with the greatest of respect, Adam, you are supposed to be dead.

Adam Dead?

Leah And I mean, there's been a service, there's been appeals, there's been weeping . . . They're naming the science lab after him, for God's sake.

Adam I'm . . . dead?

Brian *starts giggling.*

Cathy Shut up.

Adam Am I dead?

Leah I mean now we really have, I don't know how we're gonna get out of this one because now we really have

Adam I thought I was dead.

Lou You're not dead.

Cathy *(to Brian)* If you don't shut up you'll be dead.

Brian I love this! This is great! Mates!

Jan What are we going to do?

Mark Yeah, what are we going to do?

Leah We're gonna, right, we're gonna . . . What are we gonna do?

Phil Adam?

Adam Yes?

Phil Do you want to come back?

Adam What?

Phil With us.

Adam I

Phil Or do you want to stay? Are you happy? Here?

Leah Phil –

Phil Shut up. Do you want to stay?

Pause. Adam thinks. Looks at Phil.

Phil smiles, kindly. Nods.

Phil Brian? Take Adam back to his hedge. Then come back to us.

Brian This is great!

Brian *takes Adam off. They all stare at Phil.*

Leah What's going on?

Phil *(to Mark and Jan)* Go back home. Don't say anything to anybody about this. You too, Lou.

Leah Phil . . . ?

Jan Are we going to be in trouble.

Phil If you go now and you say nothing to no one about this, you won't be in trouble.

Jan thinks. Nods to Mark. They go.

Lou stands there, unsure.

Lou What about . . .

What about Cathy?

Phil goes to her. Places a hand on her shoulder, smiles, warm, reassuring.

Phil Everything is going to be fine.

Beat. Lou goes off after Jan and Mark.

Leah Phil, what are you doing?

What? But he's . . .

Beat.

Phil, he's off his head. He's injured, he's been living off insects for weeks, he's insane, Phil, he needs help.

Phil He's happy.

Leah He's not happy, he's mad.

Phil He doesn't want to come back.

Leah Because he's mad! We can't leave him here, I mean that's not, are you serious? Are you seriously –

Alright, yes, there'll be –

Phil, this is insane. I mean I've never, but this, because, alright, whatever, but this is actually insane. We can't just leave him up here.

Phil I'm in charge. Everyone is happier. What's more important: one person or everyone?

She stares at him.

Leah It's Adam, Phil, Adam! We used to go to his birthday parties, he used to have that cheap ice cream and we used to take the piss, remember?

Phil If he comes back our lives are ruined. He can't come back, Cathy.

Leah Oh, great, now you're talking to Cathy, like, I'm not, I'm not, because you don't like what I say and now it's Cathy, you sit there and you say nothing for years and suddenly now you chatting with Cathy.

Phil Cathy?

Leah Let's, come on, let's, it won't be that bad, it'll be, we can explain, we can talk. We can go through the whole thing and make them understand –

Set in the woods
safest near home

Phil (to **Cathy**) Do you understand?

Leah Understand what?

Cathy Yeah. I do.

Leah Oh great, now you're at it.

Brian comes back, giggling.

Leah (pointing at **Brian**) I mean I might as well talk to him for all the sense I'm getting. Phil, we can't do this, I mean what if he comes down next week, next year, in ten years, even?

Phil Take Brian.

Cathy Okay.

Brian We going somewhere?

Leah No, no, wait, you can't, no, this is . . . **Cathy**?

Phil Make a game of it.

Brian We gonna play a game?

Phil You and **Cathy** are going to play a game. With **Adam**.

Brian Brilliant!

Cathy How?

Leah How what? What are you, will you please talk to me as if

Phil Brian?

Brian Who?

Phil Come here.

Brian goes to **Phil**.

Phil I'm gonna do an experiment with this plastic bag. I want you to stay still while I do this experiment.

Brian I love experiments! Will there be fire?

Phil (emptying his carrier bag) No. No fire. Stay still.

Phil places the bag over **Brian**'s head.

Brian It's all gone dark.

Phil pulls the handles back around his neck and to opposite corners, making it airtight.

Brian is giggling inside, looking around and breathing the plastic in and out of his mouth.

Brian Bit stuffy.

Phil looks to **Cathy**. She nods.

Brian This is great!

Leah Phi . . . **Phil**?

Phil takes the bag off.

Brian That was great!

Phil You just do what **Cathy** says.

Brian I am brilliant at doing what people say.

Leah No! Stop, don't, don't, **Phil**, don't, what are you doing, what are you . . .

Phil He's dead. Everyone thinks he's dead. What difference will it make?

She stares at him.

Leah But he's not dead. He's alive.

Cathy Come on, **Brian**.

Brian This is brilliant.

Leah No, **Cathy**, don't, stop, **Cathy** . . . ?

But **Cathy** goes, taking **Brian** with her. **Leah** turns to **Phil**.

Leah **Phil**?

Phil?

Please!

status

knowledge
of scene

presence in
scene

Phil is of
highest status

Brian profile

Age: 16

high on meds

I played a fun

game with

Cathy and **Adam**

I'm getting tricked

into killing **Adam**

I'm extremely

Asinine and naive

Please, Phil!

But Phil just walks away.

* * *

A field. Phil and Leah, sitting.

Complete silence.

Phil takes out a pack of Starburst.

Opens.

Has one.

Chews. Thinks.

He offers one to Leah.

She takes it.

She begins to quietly cry.

Crying, she puts the sweet in her mouth and begins to chew.

Phil puts his arm around her.

Suddenly she stops chewing and spits the sweet out.

Gets up, stares at Phil.

Storms off.

Phil Leah?

Leah?

Four

A street. Jan and Mark.

Jan Gone?

Mark Yeah.

Jan Gone?

Mark Yeah.

Jan What, she's gone?

Mark Yes.

Beat.

Jan When?

Mark Last week.

Jan Where?

Mark Dunno. No one knows.

Jan No one knows?

Mark Well, not no one, I mean someone must, but no one I know knows.

Jan I mean she must've gone somewhere.

Mark Moved schools. That's what people are saying.

Jan Moved schools?

Mark Yeah.

Jan Just like that?

Mark Just like that.

Jan Without saying anything?

Mark Without saying a thing

Pause.

Jan Oh.

Mark Yeah.

Jan Oh.

Mark Yeah.

Jan Oh.

Mark I know.

Jan Does Phil know?

* * *

A field. Richard sits with Phil.

Phil is not eating. He stares into the distance.

Silence.

Suddenly Richard gets up.

Richard Phil, Phil, watch this! Phil, watch me, watch me, Phil!

He walks on his hands.

See? See what I'm doing? Can you see, Phil?

He collapses. Phil doesn't even look at him.

Richard gets up, brushes himself down, and sits with Phil.

Silence.

Richard When are you going to come back?

Phil shrugs.

Richard Come on, Phil. Come back to us. What do you want to sit up here for? In this field? Don't you get bored? Don't you get bored sitting here, every day, doing nothing?

No answer.

Everyone's asking after you. You know that? Everyone's saying, 'Where's Phil?' 'What's Phil up to?' 'When's Phil going to come down from that stupid field?' 'Wasn't it good when Phil was

running the show?' What do you think about that? What do you think about everyone asking after you?

No answer.

Aren't you interested? Aren't you interested in what's going on?

No answer.

John Tate's found God. Yeah, Yeah I know. He's joined the Jesus Army, he runs round the shopping centre singing and trying to give people leaflets. Danny's doing work experience at a dentist's. He hates it. Can't stand the cavities, he says when they open their mouths sometimes it feels like you're going to fall in.

Pause.

Brian's on stronger and stronger medication. They caught him staring at a wall and drooling last week. It's either drooling or giggling. Keeps talking about earth. I think they're going to section him. Cathy doesn't care. She's too busy running things. You wouldn't believe how things have got, Phil. She's insane. She cut a first year's finger off, that's what they say anyway.

Doesn't that bother you? Aren't you even bothered?

No answer.

Lou's her best friend, now. Dangerous game. I feel sorry for Lou. And Jan and Mark have taken up shoplifting, they're really good at it, get you anything you want.

Phil?

Phil!

He shakes Phil by the shoulders. Slowly Phil looks at him.

Richard You can't stay here for ever. When are you going to come down?

Phil says nothing. **Richard** lets go.

Phil goes back to staring at nothing.

Pause.

Richard Nice up here.

As I was coming up here there was this big wind of fluff. You know, this big wind of fluff, like dandelions, but smaller, and tons of them, like fluffs of wool or cotton, it was really weird, I mean it just came out of nowhere, this big wind of fluff, and for a minute I thought I was in a cloud, Phil. Imagine that. Imagine being inside a cloud, but with space inside it as well, for a second, as I was coming up here I felt like I was an alien in a cloud. But really felt it. And in that second, Phil, I knew that there was life on other planets. I knew we weren't alone in the universe, I didn't just think it or feel it, I knew it, I know it, it was as if the universe was suddenly shifting and giving me a glimpse, this vision that could see everything, just for a fraction of a heartbeat of a second. But I couldn't see who they were or what they were doing or how they were living.

How do you think they're living, Phil?

How do you think they're living?

No answer.

There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Brighton beach.

Pause.

Come back, Phil.

Phil?

No answer. They sit in silence.

End.

Notes

A-levels (p. 54): Advanced levels are the school-leaving qualifications taken by many UK students when they are around eighteen years old.

in stitches (p. 60): laughing uncontrollably.

nutter (p. 60): a colloquial/slang word for a crazy or eccentric person.

nick (p. 60): a colloquial/slang word meaning 'to steal'.

grille (p. 62): a frame of metal bars or grating used as a covering.

fifteen foot wide (p. 62): about 4.5 metres.

pegged a stone (p. 62): threw a stone.

DNA (p. 63): Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is a molecule carrying genetic information that is essential for all known forms of life. Every individual (except identical twins) has their own unique DNA. Because DNA is contained in hair, skin, saliva, blood and semen, it can be used to match human traces left at a crime scene with suspects.

5 foot 9 inches (p. 64): about 1 metre 80 centimetres.

Asda (p. 64): an affordable supermarket belonging to a large chain.

bonobo (p. 65): a species of great ape closely related to the chimpanzee.

Starburst (p. 69): a fruit-flavoured chewy sweet.

Titan (p. 70): the largest moon orbiting the planet Saturn.

déjà vu (p. 79): the experience of perceiving a new situation as if it had happened before.

sayonara, baby (p. 84): goodbye (*sayonara* is the Japanese word for goodbye). The phrase was said by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the dubbed Spanish version of the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.

section (p. 101): to detain someone and keep them in hospital under the Mental Health Act.

Brighton beach (p. 102): a beach that stretches the length of the tourist town of Brighton on the south coast of England. Brighton beach is a pebble beach, rather than the sandy beach that Richard implies.