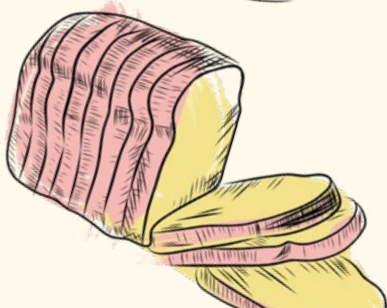


Wakefield
LitFest

An Anthology of New Plays by Wakefield Writers



2023



FOREWORD

Wakefield LitFest is a literature festival created for and by young people aged 14–25. The Programme Board is comprised of six young people from the Wakefield district who are interested in creativity, literature, and the arts, and want to champion these amongst young people in the district. Some of us are new to the programme board this year, and others have been here from the start. Some of us are students, some in work. Some of us are mathematicians, others poets, still others journalists, and more. We have varying degrees of experience, but all of us are passionate about the power of words and literature on young people.

If you're interested in getting involved, whatever your experience, interests, and passions, we'd love to hear from you! Please do get in touch.

Together, we have shaped the way that LitFest has unfolded in 2023, making decisions regarding the general direction of the festival, as well as how to make best use of the funding and resources available to us.

This year, that involved commissioning a portfolio of plays written by talented young playwrights in Wakefield that have a love of words. These were directed and performed at a showcase on the 16th September. We are proud of what was achieved by all involved.

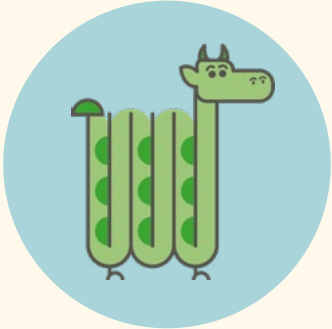
LitFest was established during the pandemic, in 2020, to provide a creative outlet for young people that puts them in control. While the board have support from industry professionals, the decision making remains in the hands of young people every step of the way. Our mission today remains the same as it has been since our inception – celebrating words, defying convention, and creating community.

We hope you enjoy reading the plays enclosed, written by incredibly talented young people. We hope you will join us next year for Wakefield LitFest 2024!

Programme Board
Jenny Wilkinson, Jeevan Ganatra,
Toni Stephenson, Olli Watkins,
Wynn Crawshaw, John Broadhead,
Sarah Osborne

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PROJECT TIMELINE

2022

9 Sept, Over Discord

12.53pm

Sarah Osborne first pitched the Festival of Plays idea.

17 Oct, The Cluntergate

Centre 7.30pm

Programme Board met for the first time to discuss the Festival of Plays idea in more detail.

2023

4 Apr, WYTDC *4pm*

Programme board met for the second time, and a timeline for Litfest 2023 was created.

12–18 Apr

Recruitment for new members of the programme board.

19 Apr

Official announcement that the theme of this year's project is Playwriting.

26 Apr – 27 May

Applications for playwrights.

3 May

Applications for Artwalk event opened.

30 May *5pm*

Programme Board met to select the successful 8 writers, and assign each their briefs.

31 May, Wakefield

Theatre Royal *5pm*
Wakefield Artwalk Event with Long Division.

20 June *6.30pm*

Playwrights met over Zoom, facilitated by the Programme Board.

22 June – 8 July

Applications for Directors.

27 June *6.30pm*

Dramaturge Workshop with Jasmin Mandi-Ghomi.

4 July *6.30pm*

Dramaturge Workshop with Tess Seddon.

9 July

Initial drafts of all 8 plays were submitted.

11 July *6:30pm*

1-On-1 Dramaturge Workshops with Tess Seddon.

15/07/2023

Successful Directors were chosen and assigned to a play.

18 July – 8 Aug

Applications for Actors.

22 July

Final Draft of all 8 plays were submitted.

22 July *2pm*

Playwright to Director Handover event at The Hepworth Wakefield.

26 July, WYTDC *5.30pm*

Director Workshop with Sarah Osborne.

8 Aug

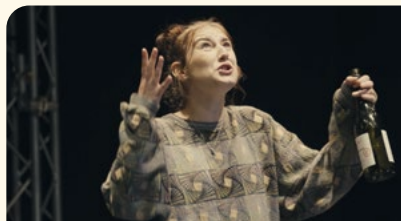
Programme Board met to decide casting for each play.

9, 10, 17, 23, 24 Aug & 9 Sept, WYTDC

Rehearsals.

16 Sept, The Mechanics

Theatre *10am–6pm*
Festival of Plays.





WRITERS' BIOS

Two Sides, Same Coin

In a world where gifts determine your status: Two men, an elite and a blue worker, on very opposite sides of the class system established on these gifts learn of the cruel reality for both of them.

Playwright

Ehsan Musa, 14



*"Hello everyone!
My interest in writing started because of my interest in reading, at some point I couldn't find anything new to read so I started writing things myself for fun. I would show them to my friends or even post them online. My teacher introduced me to Litfest and it's been really fun! I've learnt a lot and met new people so that's why I've enjoyed it! In the future I want to make a career out of writing or at least I want it to be a large part of my life."*

Cast and Crew

Director: Leah Handforth and Freya Elizabeth

Quinn: Played by Igor Tiago Ventura

Denton: Played by Edward Edekobi

Police Officer 1: Played by Charlie Johnson

Police Officer 2: Played by Dec Kelly

Drowning Lessons

A play about growing up with the pressure of proving success in impossible circumstances

Playwright

Jessinna Dash, 22



"Jessinna Dashi is a graduate of the University of Leeds where she studied English Literature with Creative Writing. She is passionate about storytelling and has explored it in many forms; prose, poetry, journalism, screenwriting and even through running sessions of Dungeons and Dragons. Her stories are often set in worlds that look like our own just a little to the left. Magical realism, fantasy and surrealism can't help but find their way in so you can guarantee that, if it's a story written by Jessinna, things are gonna get a little weird."

Cast and Crew

Director: Alexandria Crystal

Evie: Played by Paris Buchanan

Leandra: Played by Kaitlen Rose Blacker

Memory Evie: Played by Layla Allen



Enlightenment Library

Can feminism and northern pride overlap? A young girl rediscovers her hometown through the eyes of those before her. With the help of a patient librarian, Lauren learns that there's more to life than the stereotypes she has been surrounded with, exploring age, identity and aspirations at her local library.

Playwright

Olivia-Mae Butterfield, 17



"Hi, I'm Olivia-Mae Butterfield, a 17-year-old lover of the written word. Writing in any form has always been of interest to me, so the LitFest 2023 Playwright opportunity really allowed me to tap into something I have a true passion for. Besides playwriting I also write poetry and short stories, many of which have been inspired by my own experience growing up in the West Yorkshire region. I have an avid interest in history, which also shapes many of my creative pieces. My experience with Wakefield LitFest has encouraged me to really embrace all of this in culmination to produce 'Enlightenment Library'. When I'm not writing, I enjoy surrealist and vintage portrait photography, reading historical non-fiction, and eating cake."

Cast and Crew

Director: Paris Buchanan

Lauren: Played by Evalyn Sugden

Evie: Played by Wynn Crawshaw

From Here Until Heaven

A father and daughter struggle to decide what to do with a bad omen.

Playwright

Rochelle Asquith, 25



"My name is Rochelle, and I'm 25 years old, and I like writing about magical and macabre things."

Cast and Crew

Director: Jacob Dore

Emma: Played by Natasha Lunt

Father: Played by John Broadhead





The Worlds on the Wall

August 13th 1961. East German soldiers laid down more than 30 miles of barbed wire barrier through the heart of Berlin. Then the winter of 1969 shook, bringing the coldest and longest winter in memory. All hope seems lost for mother Ada as a food shortage breaks. "Worlds On The Wall" is an exploration of friendship, perspective, stories and mindset; told through Ada's dilemma of buying food from an Off cut market.

Playwright

Freya Elizibeth, 16

"Freya Elizibeth Cowburn is a 16 year old student currently attending CAPA College in Wakefield studying a Production Arts course. She enjoys many aspects of theatre and spends much of her time watching theatre productions and musicals. After College, she hopes to attend university to further her studies in Stage and Screen as well as perhaps continue her writing journey further. She is a huge Taylor Swift fan and enjoys live music. In any free time, Freya reads many books, listens to music and loves to settle down to watch a good film."



Cast and Crew

Director: Guy Hartley

Felix: Played by James Leslie

Ada: Played by Lucy Sharp

Peter/James: Played by Alfie Cowburn

Lorena: Played by Sarah Oldknow

Live June

An exploration of love, mates, music, and the human experience. Taking place over one summer's night - a familiar scene between two best mates as they talk the night away, confide in one another during a time of hardship, and pull apart what it means to carry on and be alive.

Playwright

Arwen Dale, 20



"Normally, when it comes to being creative, I stick to acting. Which is what I have done for the past 10 years. However this opportunity with Litfest has allowed me to "flip the script" and tackle the other side of the craft that I love. I've always written bits of poetry and monologues here and there, but to be able to sink my teeth into a short play and really understand the process behind it has been fantastic and very valuable. It's been great fun, a nice challenge, and some great development for me."

Cast and Crew

Director: John Broadhead

June Played by Charlie Johnson

Yorkie Played by Dec Kelly



Oology

There's no formula for dealing with grief. Even less so for dealing with thousands of eggs.

Playwright

John Broadhead, 25

"John likes to act, direct, and write. He's generally keen on telling stories, which is why this is his fifth bio he's submitted, and the first one that's true."



Cast and Crew

Director: Ellie Peters

Joe: Played by Alfie Cowburn

Mike: Played by James Leslie

Voiceless

Ver wants nothing more than to be invisible, but Bee thinks otherwise.

Playwright

Wynn Crawshaw, 23

"Wynn Crawshaw recently finished their studies at the University of York and is now starting the big journey into 'being an adult'. In their free time they enjoy crocheting and listening to audio books as well as playing, discussing and thinking about Dungeons and Dragons. You can usually find Wynn cradling a cup of tea and daydreaming about their next big adventure."



Cast and Crew

Director: Natasha Lunt

Ver: Played by Hayley Joy Irving

Bee: Played by Rae Corcoran

Mum/Teacher: Played by Brogan Rigby

Dad/Teacher: Played by Ellie Peters





TWO SIDES, ONE COIN

Written by Ehsan Musa

Characters

Quinn:

Rightfully cocky, kind of insufferable, strict and serious when necessary, Chemist, played by a male, 27 years old

Officer/Guard 1:

Extras, Can be played by anyone

Guard/Officer 2:

Extras, can be played by anyone.

Denton:

Anger issues, opposite of Quinn, Strict, serious, professional, ex- turned police, played by a male, 16 years old

Synopsis

Based on 19th century London and it's class system; where two people from opposite ends of the spectrum come to understand what it's like for both sides and the reality behind it.

PROLOGUE

{Knock on the Door. Quinn opens it- despite being in the middle of work}

Quinn What- Oh, How can I help you, Officers?

Officer 1 Are You Dr. A. L. Quinn?

Quinn Yes, I am.

Officer 2 You are under arrest on the suspicion of breaking and entering, Trespassing, Robbery, unethical and inappropriate use of gift among other charges. Please follow us calmly and we will not be using force, we wouldn't like to harm you, Doctor.

Quinn Hold on- *{He pauses when he sees the officers judging him and clears his throat}* Pardon me, but I have been working all week here in my home, I haven't left! You can ask anyone here! The guards, Chefs anyone! And you! *{He points to Officer 1}* I cured your daughter earlier this week!



Officer 1 First of all sir, I thank you greatly for helping my daughter, although it was last week, however: We must take you with us as it is our job. We sincerely apologize. Please come calmly so you don't lose face.

{Quinn sighs heavily}

Quinn Very well then. I'll follow you. Lead the way and make it quick.

Also

{He turns and yells inside his home}

Quinn Charlie! Tidy my work area and make sure nothing is lost or I'm deducting it from your pay!

Officer 2 This way, Sir.

SCENE ONE

Quinn is sat on the floor in his holding cell, he's extremely bored when Denton comes to get him

Denton Sir Quinn, please follow me I am Officer Denton and I will be escorting you to your trial. Please do not resist or I will have to resort to using force.

Quinn Tch, fine.... And it's Doctor.

{They walk in uncomfortable silence, on the 'officers' side- Quinn is nonchalant and dismissive.}

Quinn Hey um, Dectom? Debton? Whatever; Why am I here again? I'm quite possibly the most renowned Chemist in this area. I have everything I need therefore I have no reason to do anything I've been accused of.

Denton You will address me as Officer Denton; furthermore, You have been convicted of multiple suspected accounts of theft, vandalism, trespassing, breaking and entering, evasion of the law, unlicensed use of gift in an impractical or non-suitable manner, unethical use of gift among many other crimes.

Quinn *{Muttering and ranting to himself}* blah blah, I bet it was one of your people that reported this ridiculous accusation- actually it doesn't matter: who dare report me in the first place!?

Denton *{sighing}* remain silent until reaching the courtroom and do not speak unless you're spoken to, please allow your lawyer to do that for you- Also, have some sense of urgency. There's no chauffeur here to pick you up.

{He stops for Quinn, who remains walking leisurely, to catch up}

Quinn *{yawning}* I knew you had a stick up your ass but I thought that was all police things once training started, you look like you've had it there since you were caught and never had the balls to take it out. Such a predictable commoner you are, at least you're actually useful-

Denton Listen here you damn-

{He takes a deep breath}

.. Any. Further. Comments. and you will be forcefully detained.



Quinn Oh please, I care little for your preferences. Although we have a large age gap: my younger cousin is from a separate branch and isn't picky. I suppose I could introduce you but you'd owe me-

{Denton smacks Quinn upright the head}

Denton We have arrived!

{The guards open the doors and Denton motions for Quinn to go in}

{Quinn stops by Denton}

Quinn While we are here I'm suing. Fix your attitude and do your job and maybe I'll reconsider.

{Denton and Quinn exit}

SCENE TWO

{Denton and Quinn have just exited the court room- Things didn't go as well as planned for Quinn}

Quinn I know.... We are of vastly different status... But do you not have a single idea of what you just cost me!?

Denton Sir, I-

Quinn Doctor. You absolute imbecile, just shut up and listen.

Denton ... Fine then.

{Denton leads the other to a more private room, away from the guards}

Denton Listen here and listen well. I have not once cared about your stupid status.



{Denton starts backing Quinn into a wall}

Denton Unlike you, I actually get punished if I'm even suspected of lying. And Lord help me if I'm framed because even if the truth is uncovered- I will never get compensation for that punishment. Especially from you 'Elites'.

{Quinn pushes Denton back}

Quinn You think I'm Mister Perfect!? My reputation-

Denton It's always you Elites and your Goddamn reputation!

Quinn Shut up! You don't get it! Do you have any idea how much I've suffered because of this? I never asked for this! You're the lucky one!

Denton I'm sorry- Lucky!? I had to start looking for work when I was 10 because I couldn't have an education or play outside with friends! I couldn't even have friends because everything was a competition to survive! You have all the money in the world so buy yourself out!

Quinn Okay! I had the bare necessities! But at least you had an actual family! One that loves each other! My parents were married for political purposes and their idea of love was naming a factory after me! I never had any real friends because I was studying ever since I got my gift!

{They start yelling and overlapping each other}

Denton You elites are like leeches! You feed off of our hard work and we don't get anything for it! God you're pretentious-

Quinn Oh please- if you want to put the blame on someone like you always do, then do it! It's not even our faults-

{They speak at the same time}

Q&D You just don't get it!

Q&D

Quinn I'm leaving, I'd rather be in that cell then here with you.

{He tries the door. It's locked}

Denton God were you so pampered that you never had to open doors?

{He scoffs as he goes to try the door, only to realise it's actually locked}

Quinn You were saying?

Denton ...Tch, shut up...

{They sit in silence for a few seconds like sulking children}

Denton ...Was it really that hard? I mean even if ya parents didn't love each other they surely cared for you in some way?

Quinn Not that it's any of your business.., But my father was always away on a business trip or locked in his office. Mother was either handling our lands internal affairs or at social gatherings. Not that I was free to spend time with them, the people who knew me best were my tutors who were only there because they were paid to be.



Denton ... I weren't looking for that much 'f a detailed answer..

Quinn ... Suck it up- You asked.. what about you? Were you really working full time at 10?

Denton Might be younger. Village head messed around with different jobs. Changes Age requirements and such. At least the villages old man was on good terms with the head so he could sweet talk him into making things a touch easier f'r us.

Quinn Said the one complaining about 'detailed answers'

Quinn I.... Apologize, I suppose. I was upset because of the stupid Judge, I shouldn't have taken it out on you. This does not mean I think of you any more than what you are.

Denton Tch, guess I'm sorry too. Not your fault this stupid hierarchy is like this.

Quinn As much as I loathe the idea you're correct: What is honestly going on?

{Both look at each other in mild surprise which turns into a smirk}

{The both lightly laugh}

Denton Anyways, we should leave?

Quinn Yes, About time.

{They both go knock on the door to get someone's attention, after a few tries a guard opens the door and let's them out}

{Quinn starts heading towards the exit}

Denton Now where do you think you're going?

QuinnHome? I have actual work you know? Unlike some of you.

Denton Your trial was inconclusive- Back to the holding cell, sir.

{Quinn scoffs}

Quinn It's Doctor. It's almost unbelievable how much of a Meadowsweet you are.

*(**Meadowsweet-a flower that means uselessness.)*

Denton Oh please, as soon as you leave your home you're as useful as Geraniums.

*(**Geranium- A flower that means stupidity or folly)*

{Quinn snaps his head towards him as he completely stops}

Quinn ... I'll let you off the hook for that as a reward for your intelligence. I might be able to have a beneficial conversation with you, blue collar boy.

Denton Of course, Doctor. Now that I remember, I believe they set up a more comfortable room for you in the East Wing.

Quinn Is. That. So? Just lead the way, I'm sick of you.

{Denton and Quinn exit}

-End of Play-



DROWNING LESSONS

Written by Jessinna Dashi

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

The lighting is dim. We can't entirely see the set. What we can see is an old armchair, with a pile of letters on it. We can hear noise from outside the flat. It is loud and abrasive. A couple is arguing through the walls. We can also hear traffic, sirens and teenagers yelling on the streets.

Evie walks in, headphones around her neck, we can faintly hear the music from them. She's holding a beer in one hand. She picks up the pile of letters and drops them onto the ground. She sits down.

From her pocket, she pulls out a small packet filled with tiny pills. She pops one and then places on her headphones. The music immediately drowns out the rest of the noise. Projections of bright colours move past her face, the music starts to build and then it all stops. The colourful lights and music cut off, like they've broken down. It's completely silent. Evie has a relieved look - she knows what's happening.

Spotlight at the front of the stage. There's a birthday cake. Evie stands outside the light. Memory.E (this is a memory/past version of Evie) suddenly rushes past her and kneels behind the cake. Leandra, Evie's mother, follows behind her, sitting down next to her. Whenever a memory is playing, there will be a spotlight on them. Memory.E will change ages throughout the piece, here she is six years old.

Leandra Happy birthday, baby. Make a wish.

Memory.E squeezes her eyes shut.

Evie Just wish for money. Ten years we've not been to the dentist and I blame this moment.

Neither of them react to her speaking but as she finishes talking, Evie steps into the spotlight too. Leandra's head snaps towards her.

Leandra What are you doing here?

Evie, chastised, steps back and the memory continues like it was never disturbed.

Memory.E blows out her candles and then eagerly turns to Leandra.

Memory.E I wished for granny to move to England so that you'll be happy.

Leandra That's a lovely wish.

The scene changes. Different spotlight. Leandra is wearing rubber gloves and scrubbing the floor. Memory.E is twelve now. She brings a bucket of water over, struggling to carry it.

Leandra (CONT'D) How was school?

Memory.E (*shrugging*) Fine. Bit boring.



Leandra You see what I'm doing now, this isn't going to be you. I want you to find a good job. They're going to learn you a lot of important things, make sure you pay attention.

Memory.E (*rolling her eyes*) It's "teach", mum.

Leandra How many languages do you know?

Memory.E sulks and walks offstage. Evie joins the spotlight, sits beside Leandra and grabs a cloth. She begins helping scrub the floor.

Don't you have anything better to do?

Evie (*shrugging*) I've got a bit of time. Just wanted to hang out.

Leandra I don't want to.

Evie (*sarcastically*) And I love you too.

Leandra That's enough, you should leave.

Evie Ok yeah, I will.

She continues scrubbing the floor.

Leandra Why you'd even want to be here of all places, I don't know.

Evie Just feeling nostalgic.

Leandra Nostalgic? For this? This was not a good time in our lives. Don't you remember, we'd just moved to that horrible flat.

Evie What? The flat isn't horrible.

Leandra looks back at the flat in shock. She steps out of the spotlight and enters the space.

Leandra My god, please tell me you don't still live here.

Evie This was our home for so long, I didn't wanna leave.

Leandra It's a shit hole.

Evie Mum!

Leandra It is.

Evie No it's not. It's our home.

Memory.E (still twelve years old) runs in, holding up a dress to herself. It's not very expensive looking but Memory.E is ecstatic.

Memory.E Is this for me?

Leandra enters the spotlight and memory.

Leandra Who else? Granny sent it.

Memory.E It's so pretty! I love it! Tell her thank you so much!

Memory.E leaves. Leandra turns to Evie.

Leandra So this is how you plan on spending all your time? Do you know what I was doing at your age? I'd just had you and then I moved to a country where I didn't know a single word of the language. I spent every day hating where I was, all to give you a chance at a better life.

Evie (*taken aback*) I know that, IMemory.E appears from behind her, storming through the space. She is eighteen now. Spotlights reappear on the two of them, excluding Evie.

Memory.E I'm doing my best! It's not like I need A levels anyway.



Leandra How do you plan on going to University without them?

Evie is still outside the spotlights.

Evie This memory isn't important.

Memory.E I wanna be a writer, I don't need to study for that.

Leandra You're going and that's it.

Memory.E Would you please listen to me! I'm not an academic person, I'm just not.

Leandra Learn to be.

Memory.E There's no point. There's never any point in talking to you.

Memory.E puts headphones on and tries to block everything out.

Leandra I'm trying to give you a good life. Do you know what I went through to get to this country? You think I didn't have my own dreams? Things I wanted to accomplish? I put it all aside, for you.

Memory.E That was your choice! Leave me starving in the street if I'm that much of a burden!

Leandra I made sure you never once went to bed knowing hunger. But you're right, maybe that was a mistake. I made you lazy. Hunger has always been with me, it's been my drive to make sure that you do better.

Evie pulls Leandra out of the spotlight.

Memory.E freezes.

Evie This isn't what I came here for.

Leandra You don't get to cherry pick.

Evie It's my head so I kinda do.

Leandra But there's still time. You could still retake your exams. There are so many other ways you could-

Evie We're not having this argument again. I want a different memory. How about when I had my first choir solo?

Leandra No. I'm sorry but you sounded terrible.

Evie Oh yeah, I remember. You made a point of telling me how bad I was, even though I was only eight.

Leandra If I'm not honest with you, who else will be?

Evie turns away and gestures to the armchair.

Evie How about this? Remember when you'd sit here and do my hair.

With a chuckle, Leandra gives it a kick.

Leandra I can't believe you still have this.

Evie It's the first thing we bought when we moved here.

Spotlight. Memory.E (she's twenty, much closer to present Evie's age) sits down and Leandra begins plaiting her hair.

Leandra (playfully) Are you ever going to grow up? You still need me to do this for you.

Memory.E My arms get tired when I try. I wanna look nice.

Leandra Who's going to this party?



Memory.E Mum, I'm twenty.

Leandra Ok, you don't need me then.

Leandra drops Memory.E's hair out of the plait.

Memory.E No, please! I'm sorry. Literally only like ten people are gonna be there. It's Issy's party, you like Issy.

Leandra I do like Issy

(she continues doing her hair)

But still, make sure you behave. Don't be a...
What's that word?
Like Dennis.

Memory.E Who's Dennis?

Leandra No, like Dennis! With the little dog.

Memory.E The menace?

Leandra Yes! Don't be like him.

Evie and Memory.E both burst out laughing.

Memory.E I promise, I won't be like Dennis.

Leandra turns to Evie.

Leandra I'll pick the next one.

The scene changes. Memory.E is now the one doing Leandra's hair. She's very gentle.

Memory.E I love your hair. I've always wanted it. I've always wanted to look exactly like you.





Leandra You're beautiful. I wouldn't have an ugly daughter.

Memory.E When I was little, I tried really hard to make sure I'd look like you. I got really mad when I realised I was getting taller. I tried to will my body into shrinking.

Leandra's smile sinks.

Leandra Don't say that.

Memory.E What's wrong?

Leandra ...My mother was so small towards the end. She was always a small woman but then she just kept smaller...

Memory.E That's not gonna happen to you. You'll get better.

Leandra Evie, you need to be prepared for the worst-

Evie Let's go somewhere else.

Leandra looks at Evie.

Leandra Why do you keep coming back here? It's nothing but painful for you every time.

Evie And you make that perfectly clear to me every time. Let's go somewhere else.

The scene shifts and Memory.E and Leandra are on their feet arguing.

Memory.E You know, making me feel bad isn't going to help!

Leandra So this is all my fault?

Memory.E No, this isn't about you! I'm just figuring myself out. I'm trying my best.

Leandra I don't see you trying. You want to be a writer, fine, where's your book? Show me.

Evie No not this. Remember that day at the beach.

Memory.E becomes six again. She jumps up and down excitedly.

Memory.E Mummy, I found a starfish!

Leandra becomes a part of the memory, a grin on her face.

Leandra That's amazing, baby!

Leandra shakes her head and steps out of the spotlight.

(to Evie) I told you, you don't get to cherry pick.

Evie Let's go to my first day at school.

Memory.E runs up to Leandra and pulls her back into the spotlight.

Memory.E I made a best friend! I saw this girl sat by herself so I asked her to be my friend and she said yes!

Leandra grabs Memory.E by the shoulders.

Leandra Evie, listen to me. I'm not your mum. I'm an echo at best.

Memory.E doesn't react to Leandra's words, she continues with the memory.

Memory.E I can't believe she wanted to be my friend!



Leandra ...Remember the hospital visit.

Memory.E holds Leandra's arm. She's twenty again.

Memory.E You're gonna be alright.

Evie Stop it.

Leandra takes Memory.E's hand.

Leandra Do you remember the last hospital visit?

Leandra steps out of the spotlight, leaving Memory.E all alone. Memory.E looks around, as if waiting for Leandra to step back in.

Evie Why are you doing this?

Leandra You can't stay here.

Evie You said you're not her so why do you care?

Leandra Because even you know she wouldn't want this for you.

Evie There's nothing for me out there. She was my whole world. She did more for me than I ever deserved. And I never got the chance to show her that it was worth it.

Leandra So this is how you prove yourself?

Evie No, I just- I still need her but she's not out there anymore. I feel so untethered and so stuck at the same time. What should I do? Just be her and tell me what to do.

Leandra ...You shouldn't do drugs.

Evie You know, you're frustrating enough to be her.

Leandra What do you want from me? Do you want me to tell you everything's ok? That it doesn't matter you've not made anything of yourself yet because I'm proud of you anyway. Because fine, you're right, it's your head, I'll say whatever you want. Will that make you feel better?

Memory.E Why are you being so awful?

Leandra isn't looking at Evie anymore. She's back in a spotlight with Memory.E.

Leandra Because you make me so angry. I look at you and I think how unfair it is that you have so many opportunities waiting for you all because of me. Do you know what I would've done with your life? Why didn't I get these chances? Was I not worth making those sacrifices for? Was I not enough?

Leandra blinks back, surprised by the her own words.

(still addressing Memory.E) It doesn't matter. The point is, you should be out there in the world, not stuck here by my side.

Evie What if I'm not ready?

Leandra Learn to be.

Neither of them hear Evie. Leandra is still looking at Memory.E. The two exit and Evie is left alone.

The lights come back up and we're returned to reality. Evie takes off her headphones. The noise comes back. Evie sits and just listens to it. She pulls herself from the floor and onto the armchair and hugs herself.

-End of Play-



ENLIGHTENMENT LIBRARY

Written by Olivia-Mae Butterfield

Characters

Lauren:

Teenage student at a local school. She clearly has a strong sense of justice and independence that comes with her age, however there is also the sense that she views the world through a narrow lens of what she's been taught to know by her environment and the media. She expresses an attitude of subtle rebellion, but one which she is not willing to push too far. She is easily influenced, but at heart knows right from wrong. She carries herself in a small manner, tentative, but with an inner attempt at assertion. Much of Lauren's dialogue is in shorter sections of speech, reflecting her character's reserved and diffident nature. She struggles with motivation and work ethic, so her parents dropped her off at the library to encourage her to knuckle down and take an interest. She is bitter and reluctant at first, however she eventually opens up to the Librarian, who seems to strike a chord with her.

Librarian:

She's been at this job for some years now, and mainly as a small means of pay to get her through to retirement. She is in her early sixties, and has patience which comes from a gentle life and the accumulation of wisdom from her age. She is an intelligent woman, both intellectually and emotionally. She is very aware of the people in her environment, and has a certain attitude towards youths which is half-amused, half-interested. Even when minutely occupied she bares an expression of sincere involvement. Much of the Librarian's dialogue is in longer sections of speech, reflecting her nature as a figure of intelligence and patience. There is a sense of perseverance in her approach to Lauren, as she knows that the fate of the library rests in its ability to draw in younger people, and become a hub of enlightenment for the next generation. The Librarian has a strong passion for this cause. With no children of her own, she takes an interest in the occasional youths who wander into her library, and makes it her mission to form a connection with them, to encourage the library to young people.



Setting

The Library:

Inspiration taken from Wakefield library. It has the atmosphere of local knowing. The lighting is quite bright, although not overbearing. There are several shelves of books arranged towards the sides of the stage, so that the attention is drawn towards centre stage. The light should focus on the Librarian rather than Lauren, who sits slightly off centre, where the light is much less prominent.

SCENE ONE

Lauren sits at a desk in front of a computer. A copy of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' is laid out in front of her, as well as a couple of sheets of paper and a pen. Lauren looks perplexed and fed up as she watches the screen. The library contains several other people reading or typing at computers, and a Librarian, who sits working at her desk. She seems homely, but there is something about her demeanour which suggests inquisition into her library-goers, in a subtle way which connotes friendly amusement. The attention is focussed on the Librarian, who watches Lauren with serious interest.

Lauren *(slowly, in imitation)* Two castles...both alike in dignity... in fair Wakefield where we lay our scene... from ancient grudge break to new scrutiny... where civil war made civil hands unclean...from forth the fatal loins of these two library-goers....

Librarian *(interrupting, and gesturing at the other studiers)* Would you mind keeping it down a bit please?

Lauren pauses and resumes staring impatiently at the computer with thinly veiled irritancy. After some moments, she begins again.

Lauren *(quietly)* from forth the fatal...

The Librarian glances over at Character 1, and she stops speaking. There is another pause.

Librarian *(bemused)* Not a fan of Shakespeare, are we?

Lauren *(avoiding conversation)* No.

Librarian You studying him at school?

Lauren Yes, it's a project.

Librarian What sort of project?

Lauren lets out a large sigh and sits back. She looks fed up, but the Librarian's persistence has succeeded.

Lauren We've been told to think about how we can adapt literature of the past into our modern understanding of the local area. But no, not a fan of Shakespeare.

Librarian For any particular reason?

Lauren *(bluntly)* I just don't like him.

Librarian *(persisting)* Oh, come on! There's got to be some reason!

Lauren *(with a huffy passion)* Everybody knows Shakespeare. He's been done a million times. I'm sick of him. It's always the same stuff. We've been reading Romeo and Juliet for a while now. I'm the nurse. Nothing worse, if you ask me. Sappy romance? It's all been done before.

Librarian You know, we don't get many people your age coming in here anymore. I'm not entirely sure why, but it's certainly a shame.

Lauren looks up at the Librarian with a grimaced smile.



Librarian (*eagerly*) Should we brainstorm some ideas, for your project?

Lauren (*with difficulty hiding her displeasure*) No, no, that's alright thanks.

Librarian Well, if Shakespeare isn't for you I could give you some other ideas...

Lauren (*despondently*) It's due tomorrow. It's easy enough, I guess. Just change a few words, add stuff in. At this point I couldn't really care less. I'll be fine.

Librarian (*still pushing, but gently*) There are other playwrights, and novelists mind you. You know, other people to look into, besides Shakespeare. Some that actually are relevant to you. We've got a couple of David Storey's you could have a look at, if that might interest you better? (*the Librarian does not wait for a reply*) Just a sec, I'll show you.

The Librarian exits. Lauren waits with an expression of impatience and disinterest. Librarian re-enters holding a copy of 'Flight to Camden'

Lauren (*half-heartedly*): What's this about then?

Librarian Mainly a woman who comes from a mining town in the north. She wants to aspire to more than her family's expectations of her, she wants a successful career, opportunities and such. Though, it was written in the sixties, so some themes are probably a little bit dated for someone like yourself.

But on the whole, it's an interesting analysis for the time, the doors education can open and all that kind of thing. Bit of romance involved, but don't worry, nothing too 'soppy'. And language you'll be more familiar with than Shakespeare, I bet.

Lauren Probably.

There is an awkward pause, as Lauren looks deflated at the notes in front of her. The Librarian notices and calmy attempts to reconcile.

Librarian (*suddenly remembering*) Have you ever heard of George Gissing?

Lauren shakes her head solemnly.

Librarian He was quite interesting as well. Not as modern as Storey, but he looked into some similar themes you could say. You might like 'Odd Women', it's not a light read though. But in a good way. It focusses mainly on women's experiences in the late nineteenth century -

Lauren (*somewhat cutting the Librarian short*) There seems to be a bit of a pattern here...

Librarian (*to some degree slightly offended*) What do you mean?

Lauren (*with a hint of that previous passion returning*) Men, writing about women's experiences. Don't you think that's not great? Like taking over something that shouldn't be theirs to tell? I don't know.

Librarian (*considering*) Yes, I think you're right. It has definitely been a problem for a while, hasn't it? There is a playwright you might've heard of...John Godber? He doesn't specifically deal with women's' issues, but he is a local inspiration you might want to think about for your project?

Lauren (*subtly proud*) Oh yeah, I do know who he is. I went to see April in Paris not long since. It was good. My mum liked it.

Librarian Yes, I do like that one. He deals more with class than gender. I used to find it interesting when I was younger. My parents were never educated people, none of my friends' parents were. We liked John Godber in the early days because it seemed quite familiar to us in a sense.

There is a slight pause, enough for the Librarian to reflect in nostalgia, and for Lauren to evoke some thoughts.

Lauren Did you mind it?

Librarian Mind what?

Lauren Not growing up around academic people? Growing up here, rather than somewhere else?

Librarian I don't think I'd swap it. No, not at all. I've lived quite a happy life, and there are prospects here, if you're willing to go out and look for them. There always has been. Don't get it into your head that there isn't, or that there's anything wrong with it.

Lauren (*slightly subdued*) I didn't mean that. I just meant...

Librarian Do you mind it?

Lauren Well... I never really thought there were any prospects here. There isn't much to aspire to. There's not much – well, there's just not much point.

Librarian (*passionately*) What do you mean there's not much point? Of course there's a point.

Lauren (*mumbling in annoyance*) You sound like my mum.

Librarian In what way?

Lauren (*in imitation*) Oh, Lauren! You need to think about your future! You need to take care of your work, try a bit harder, have an interest!

Librarian And what's the matter with that?

Lauren She dropped me off here today. She thought it would do me good to be in a different work environment. Thought it might encourage me or something.

Librarian (*interrupting, but brightly*) You know what, I think I have something you might find interesting.

The Librarian now takes a seat at the desk with Lauren. She moves the paper towards her and begins to write. Lauren watches her with inquisitiveness, but veils it with a sunken posture and vague expression. There is some element of tension, however Lauren seems to be the only one feeling this. The Librarian looks at her briefly and smiles. The lighting becomes less harsh.

Librarian (*quietly to herself*) Florence Beaumont...

Lauren Who?



Librarian *(engaging but not forceful, still making notes on the paper)*
 Florence Beaumont. She was a suffragist from the late nineteenth century. She thought, at the time, that women having the right to vote was the most important reform the country needed. She did a lot of campaigns. Have you seen those blue plaques around? Well, she's got one of those now. Mind you, we need more info on the contributions of women around here. These plaques are ridiculously male dominated. But maybe if you wanted you could do some research and get some more stories heard.

The Librarian pauses, and checks Lauren's reaction. She still looks somewhat fed up, but there is a hint of interest on her face.

Librarian Anyway, Florence Beaumont did a lot here for women. And all at the same time, she took care of the house for her dad after her mum had died. It was in that house that she formed the Wakefield Women's Suffrage Society. She ended up helping to organise something called the Pilgrimage of Suffrage, where lots of people marched from all over the country to London. So, yeah, she would be an interesting figure to have a look at. Maybe some inspiration for your project. Not directly literature, but these women didn't exactly get the chance to tell the stories that their male counterparts did. Perhaps you could tell it for them? But it's also a pretty good example of someone local who did something quite big.

Lauren *(reflecting)* I mean I don't really see why not. She sounds pretty cool anyway.

She stops for a moment and glances at the notes the Librarian made. She hesitates before speaking again, but reluctantly gives way to her curiosity.

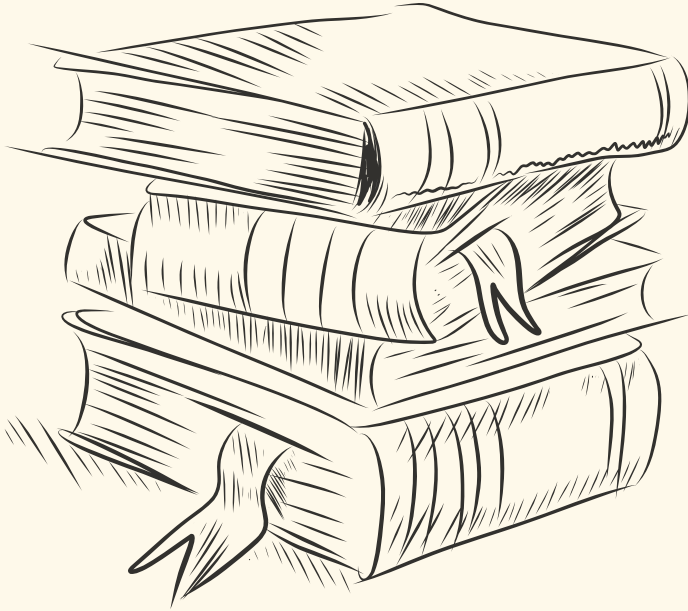
Lauren Do you think you would've been a suffragist?

Librarian *(with a little laugh)* Maybe. I don't know who I might have been. I would've tried my best, just as I do these days. Anyway, there were other educated women round here in the past too, around about when my grandma was a young woman. The days of the War.

Lauren *(now without any trace of suppressed interest)* Well, who were they?

Librarian There was a very intelligent woman by the name of Dame Elsie Marjorie Williamson. She was born at the time of the suffragists, but by the time she had grown up, women had gotten the vote. She was a physicist, and a respected academic. She was from Wakefield, and she ended up studying at Royal Holloway in London. Never say never.

Lauren My friend Charlie wants to go there. He's pretty smart, he's got the grades and everything. But I think he's worried about the money, and moving away.



Librarian And what is it that you want to do?

Lauren I don't really know what I'm good at. (*quickly changing the subject*) Why do you work here?

Librarian Well, for a few reasons. I've only got a few years left until I can retire, and it's decent pay for just me. I didn't want to stay at home all day by myself after my husband passed, and I've not really got any family besides him. So I thought, what can I do with myself that's quiet, but there's still people? The library. And I only live round the corner so it's got its perks. But I think the best thing about it is that I get to listen to people.

Lauren What do you mean?

Librarian I get to see new faces all the time, and old ones too. Yours is new, I don't think I've seen you here before. But I like getting to know people. You don't get many teenagers who come in to do their work that often these days, like you did. But you get older people coming in to use the computers. Sometimes you get people coming in who just want somewhere to go. And it's nice, I feel like I know the place. Plus, every now and then I get to talk to someone and tell them a few things I know.



Lauren Yeah, I guess that must be nice.

Librarian It is. So do you feel like you've got a bit more inspiration for your work?

Lauren Yes, I think I do. Thanks. I'll see how it goes. *(checking her phone)* I think it's about time I need to be heading back now.

Librarian *(brightly, but with a tinge of reluctancy)* Right, okay. It's been nice meeting you. I hope all goes well.

Lauren smiles at the Librarian as she gathers her notes and book. She exists, and the Librarian returns to her desk. The stage goes dark.

SCENE TWO

The stage brightens. It is several days later, and the Librarian is pottering around the shelves, a pile of books in her arms as she sorts through and completes small tasks. The library contains several other people. After some moments, Lauren enters. The Librarian turns, and notices she is there.

Librarian *(still continuing with her tasks)* Hello, stranger.

Lauren Hi. I just wanted to come and tell you about the project from the other day.

Librarian Oh yes!

Lauren I decided to take on the style of Storey and write a short narrative about a young girl from Yorkshire who wants to branch out from what she's known, and go on to do something big. So I took inspiration from Gissing's characters, and also from the real-life women you told me about. The girl goes on to be a professor, like Dame Williamson. I've set it a bit more modern though, you know to keep it relevant.

Librarian That all sounds fantastic.

Lauren And I linked it to the suffragists by having the girl be a modern feminist, who advocates for equality in education and the workplace.

Librarian *(with a sense of pride)* Very good! What did your teacher think?

Lauren I think he was quite impressed. I got a good mark. But I just wanted to say thanks for your help with it. I don't know what I would've done if you hadn't given me those suggestions.

Librarian I'm sure you would've got on just fine. I heard you playing about with the Shakespeare, it was clever, I liked it. But yes, you're welcome. Any time, you know where to find me now.

Lauren Absolutely. I'll definitely be back.

Lauren smiles and waves to the Librarian, who does the same in return. Lauren exits, and the Librarian resumes her tasks. The stage goes dark.

–End of Play–



FROM HERE UNTIL HEAVEN

Written by Rochelle Asquith

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Yorkshire, England, 1620.

Emma, 20, stands in a small room, sparsely decorated, but looks to be both a kitchen and living room. There's a large hearth with a fire, and a table in the middle of the room which Emma is stood by.

A neglected sweeping brush leans against the table, whilst she stands completely absorbed in a small twig sculpture she's been making for a while.

A man quietly walks through the door, Emma's father: a severe, ageing man.

Emma immediately drops the twig figure and starts sweeping, staying on her side of the table.

He stands at the other side of the table, wearily.

Emma Oh, hello. Did you have a good day?

Father Same as always. You been keeping up with the house?

Emma Yeah, course.

Father Hm. How was your day, then?

Emma It was fine, I suppose. One can never be too grateful. I wanted to go for a stroll in the woods but the rain didn't stop for hours, so I've been sat inside using the gift of my imagination for most of the day.

Father What would you have been getting up to in the woods, dearest daughter?

Emma Going for a walk. Collecting flowers. Starting a new branch of botany, I don't know. The type of aimless wandering a young woman must get up to.

Father It's dangerous being alone in the forest. There's dark magic out there.

Emma rolls her eyes at him.

Emma There's no such thing as dark magic.

Father Well, I was in the woods today.

Emma Oh? What were you doing?



Father Checking the traps. Have you been messing with them?

Emma Why would I do that? Did you catch anything?

Father walks up to the table and places three dead rabbits on it.

Emma leans the brush against the table.

Emma Three's a good catch. That'll be more than enough for a few days. Maybe we could bring something to the Johnson's-

Father Emma.

Emma Father!

Father Look closer.

Emma walks up to the table and grabs one of the rabbits. She has never been squeamish.

She holds the rabbit close to see what he's so worried about, and she's disgusted.

Emma Eurgh! Where did you find this? Did you kill it yourself?

Father They were in the forest this morning. All three. Tied up.

Emma All three? Like that?

Father Yeah.

Emma Really?

Father Listen, I don't cause the bad omens, I just pick them up.

Emma Its eyes are completely black.

Father Something, or someone, is toying with us. If not us, this village.

Emma It looks like it's filled with ink or something.

Emma's curiosity gets the better of her.

She opens the rabbit's mouth.

Black goo falls out.

Emma Ew! Did you hold onto these all day then?

Father Like hell. I hid them until I was on my way home. I was hoping they'd disappear somehow. You know what this means?

Emma Well... it means there's some sort of illness going round. I've never seen anything like this before. Actually, I had that weird evening that one time-

Father Now's not the time, Emma, this is serious!

Emma Are you sure you didn't see anything else like this? It is strange.

Father Have you seen the old woman who lives on the other side of the forest recently?

Emma is struck by this change of subject. She knows what he's getting at.

Emma Mrs Marsh is lovely, really. Even though she's looked 70 for what feels like 30 years.

Father How would you know anything about things like age? You're only just 20 years yourself.

Emma People talk. And I haven't seen her in a while.

Father Indeed, they do. They say all sorts of things about her, and what she's capable of.



Emma Yeah, it's easy to speak on someone you don't know. It's even easier to imagine someone's wrongdoing when you've never tried to see them do anything right.

Father Feeling eloquent, are we? Rushing to the defence of a known mad woman, are we?

Emma Rumours aren't facts. I know where you're going with this and we're not doing that.

Father Be that as it may, people talk. There's been a lot of bad luck recently.

Emma Oh, come on. Some bad weather. That's hardly a biblical event.

Father Actually, if you listened to Pastor Greg's sermons, you'd know full well that God tends to exact His revenge in the form of bad weather quite often.

Emma Well with all the hellfire and damnation, it's hard to keep on top of these things. What's a mortal sin to a mortal sinner?

Father Emma, please watch your tongue.

Emma I've never liked Pastor Greg. He looks like a real person, but he has this air about him, like he's a dog wearing a human skin suit.

Father I despair. How rude you are sometimes. It's like someone else appeared in the night and undid every politeness I tried to teach you.

Emma sulks.

Emma Other than these rabbits, did you catch anything else? Anything we can eat?

Father No.

Emma You know who'd help us right now...

Father We can't go to Mrs. Marsh, we might need her later.

Emma What?

Father Emma, you know what this looks like. It looks like...

He can't say it.

Emma Go on.

Father You know what I mean.

Emma What if I don't?

Father Please.

Emma Witchcraft?

Father Shh! What if someone hears?

Emma rolls her eyes again, and carries on looking at the rabbit, curious, comparing the three.

It's important to get one's story straight when dealing with such omens as these.

Emma The truth will out, father, as Pastor Greg always says.

Father There's no truth in these situations, only what's compelling. (beat.) I used to worry about you so much, Emma.

Emma What, how could someone so wonderful as me be born from such a grumpy old goat?



Father I still worry about you. The way your mind wanders...

Emma inspects the black goo, rubbing it between her fingers.

Emma Did you call on the Johnson's? With all this rain and that hole in their roof, God only knows how cold they'll be tonight.

Father There's been a lot of bad luck here, lately. And people are looking for someone to blame.

Emma Well, it's either bad luck, or their son drank too much ale and climbed on the roof because he reckoned he could fly and he fell through like a coin in a well. Sometimes it's bad luck, sometimes it's Joshua Johnson.

Father Are you evening listening to me?

Emma Either way, their roof still needs fixing and if you don't do it Mr. Johnson will try to marry me off to Joshua and I really do not want that because I've seen him picking his nose and not wiping his hands after.





Father Was it Joshua? Because this morning he told me you had something to do with it. But if we say it was Mrs. Marsh...

Emma is taken aback. She drops the rabbits on the table.

Emma I had nothing to do with that! He's a liar. And we're not accusing Mrs. Marsh of messing with anything! She's done nothing wrong and she is not a witch.

Father Watch your tongue, please.

Emma Between all the cooking, cleaning, sewing, and mending, when have I had the time to get up to anything like that? I've been here all day - all week - minding my own business. Darning your socks because of your horrible big toe.

Father Ah, you've been here all week! That's convenient, and an easy lie to tell.

Emma Are you trying to accuse me?

Father I'm trying to cover our backs!

Emma It doesn't sound like it.

Father You could be a... thingy... for all I know.

Emma Oh, come on! I'm clearly not!

Father That's what a thingy would say!

Emma When would I have time to be a witch? Have I not been here every morning, have you not come home every day and seen me, still here?

Father I'm trying to get to the truth.

Emma No you're not. You're debating who to fit up.

Father Well, one moment you've been doing all the housework, the next you've been using the gift of your imagination! Who knows what to believe!

Emma Believe me! Some rabbits got a weird sickness. It happens. It's not a big deal.

Father Emma it is a big deal - it's what it looks like! It looks like-

Emma Witchcraft.

Father Stop saying it! Look, people talk. And there are already too many stories about you.

Emma Like what?

Father When you were five, all my goats disappeared.

Emma Nothing to do with me. And we didn't starve. Do you remember that? Do you remember why? Do you remember me going all the way to the Hoopers' house and striking up a deal with them so we wouldn't starve to death? You're welcome, not like you ever thanked me in the first place.

Father A good daughter wouldn't be so vain.

Emma A good father wouldn't bring home nothing from a day's work.

Emma knows she's gone too far.

Father And when you were nine, that poor Thomas boy lost his mind after spending one afternoon with you.



Emma You are accusing me, aren't you? And when that happened, I said I was sorry! He just didn't like it when I flipped my eyelids inside out. I can still do it, look-

She stops herself, realising her hands aren't clean.

Father And then that very summer our roof caved in, just like the Johnson's.

Emma Nowhere near my fault! Father, look at me now, I have not killed three rabbits. And I don't get why it's such a big scary thing.

Father Look at them! This isn't normal! And yes, if you were known to be well behaved, one bad omen can be blown away.

Emma There's no such thing as an omen!

Father But what is it caving these rooves in? You, clumsily dancing with the devil? What defiled these rabbits? It's dark magic, I'm telling you.

Emma Oh, give over!

Father And just now today, you've been neglectful of your work in aide of your 'imagination'. Have you been keeping up with your daily prayers?

Emma Of course I have! Look I'll do one now: dear father in heaven-

Father Your mother and I, we tried to take this insolence, this evil from you. We trusted in the Lord's plan. We prayed and prayed for a resolution. Sometimes I wonder if all my praying - sometimes I wonder if this evil took her, too.

Emma Dear God, I am grateful for this day, and that I can sleep tonight knowing I haven't killed anyone or anything. Amen.

Father This evil that looms over our house.

Emma Get a grip, old fart. You can't possibly believe I'm a witch.

Father Shhh!

Emma I don't care what anyone says.

Father Emma, please tell me if you've done something.

Emma I haven't done a thing.

Father Are you sure? Because you're clever. Awfully clever, when you want to be.

Emma I'm clever all the time, you're just too daft to see it. I'm going to bed. I need to go into the main town tomorrow.

Father Emma, please. Please don't leave tomorrow.

Emma I want to see my aunt and uncle.

Father We need to come up with a plan. I'm going to put these on Mrs. Marsh's window sill tonight.

Emma You wouldn't dare.

Father People already know, Emma.

Emma What?

Father The rabbits. People saw. People saw me picking them up and trying to hide them. People are already talking.



Emma Who cares?

Father They know you have a history of mischief and lying and they'll connect the dots soon enough. So it's important-

Emma Who gives a roaring fu-

Father Don't use foul language! It's important that we get our story straight. I was hiding them because I know what this looks like.

Emma Oooh, witchcraft!

Father And I know you are friends with Mrs. Marsh, everyone knows you're friends with Mrs. Marsh. Do you remember what happened to her sister?

Emma How could I forget.

Father And you remember, then, how it was. How it smelled.

Emma Yes, but-

Father Those fires, Emma. I can't see you go through it.

Emma I can't do what you're asking-

Father We could leave these rabbits by her window, and say she left them for you, but I saw them first, foiling the evil witch's plan.

Emma But I like her! We're friends.

Father But such a young Emma was deceived. That's what we could say!

Emma I've not been deceived. It wasn't her, and it wasn't me. It was something else entirely, something boring and dull. A tedious little rabbit disease.

Father Tedious! That doesn't matter. We need to do something, and we need to do it soon.

Emma I'm not accusing Mrs. Marsh of witchcraft. I'd rather eat cowpats for a week than do that.

Father Please don't be so stubborn.

Emma A little stubbornness is hardly dancing with the devil, is it?

Father It is our faults that causes the devil to seek us out, Emma! He weasels his way in like a... like...

Emma Like a what?

Father I don't know! You know I'm not that good with words.

Emma If you're right about how wrong I am, then there's nothing I can do, is there? We're doomed! And we're not blaming Mrs. Marsh.

Father We have to blame someone. And if you're so clever, what do you think we should do?

Emma looks at the rabbits.

Father looks at the rabbits.

He lunges first and grabs them.

They run around the table.

They swap directions, running in circles – he tries to avoid her while she tries to catch him.



Emma kicks the broom to the floor.

Father trips over it and lands sprawled on the floor.

Emma snatches the rabbits and leaps over to the fire.

She holds them over the flames.

Father sits up.

Father Emma, NO!

Emma Yes!

Father No!

Emma Yes!

Father Emma, don't be stupid!

Emma I'm not stupid!

Father This is stupid!

Emma I'm not stupid! And I haven't done anything wrong!

Father I'm sorry!

Emma You expect me to believe that?

Father We'll work it out, together!

Emma There's nothing to work out! It's not real!

Father How many times – it is real!

Emma What's real is that I am not a liar!

She throws the rabbits into the fire.

Father No, why, oh Emma. Father in heaven, please shine your mercy on us, forgive my daughter, she doesn't understand-

Emma walks to the door. She stops.

Emma There's no turning back now!

She closes it properly.

Father -she doesn't understand what she's capable of. Please look over us, I beg of you, let your light shine on us, cast away this darkness, this evil that is plaguing our house. Show me, Lord, how to walk into the light. Please! Amen!

She walks around the room and eventually sits on the floor next to her Father.

Father What are we going to do now?

Emma There is no other way. I won't lie. Why Mrs. Marsh?

Father Because she's not you.

She puts her arm around him. He is defeated.

Emma Do you want to know something funny?

Father Go on.

Emma When the bad things happen, they always seem to happen all at once.

Father Don't they just.

Emma Are we in this together?

Father Of course we are.

Emma I am not a witch.

-End of Play-



LIVE JUNE

Written by Arwen Dale

Characters

June:

Early 20's, feminine presenting.
Reserved, short-tempered, thoughtful.

Yorkie:

Early 20's, masculine presenting.
Nonchalant, charming, thoughtful.

SCENE ONE - 10pm

[June's bedroom]

June sits on her bed crossed legged looking absent, she has a bottle of red wine next to her, she is slightly drunk. She clicks play on her phone - Francesca by Hozier begins to play.

Slowly June begins to move her body along to the song - but does not sing, only mouths along to little bits of the lyrics. She may get up from the bed and dance, her movements gradually become more passionate - it is completely intuitive.

During the dancing she sips straight from the bottle of wine, she often shows cracks in her emotion where she starts to cry but then stops herself and continues.

The song slowly quiets, it underscores June and the rest of the scene:

June

It's 10pm on a summer evening. I have learnt that infatuation is fun if it's light but desire will eat you alive if you let it. I am trying to survive.

I have also decided that if God is real, he has a lot to answer for. He has to answer to me.

I'd love to twat the bastard.

One door closes, another one opens. If something didn't work out it's because there is something better planned for you. There is no time-line to life. Things get removed from your life to make space for something even greater.

Etcetera etcetera.

I could let that shit carry me normally, but this is cruel. It's not fair. This is too much.

[Yorkie knocks on her bedroom door]

June Yeah man come in

Yorkie Hello love, you'll never guess who I just saw on the way over here

June What, who?

Yorkie Elliott



June Ew, gross. Did he say anything to you?

Yorkie Nah he didn't, I wish he would though I'm wanting a bit of a scrap. Anyways, thought I'd bring you a bottle of wine. I felt like you'd need it.

June Oh Yorkie you star, cheers mate, just drop your stuff over there. Come sit down.

[June's phone rings]

[June declines it]

June Huh, don't know that number

Yorkie They'll ring you back if it's important I guess

June It better not be, I can't be arsed talking to anyone

Yorkie Cheers mate

[June laughs]

June No apart from you! I only want to talk to you right now, I can't be bothered with anyone else

Yorkie That's cute... so do you want to start?

June Start what?

Yorkie Talking about it

June No, not really to be honest

Yorkie Are you sure? That's kinda why I came over love, that's why you rang me. You've just said -

June I can't, I don't know

Yorkie June, look at me. I want you to talk to me. I'm worried about you. Do you want to tell me about how you feel? At least?

June Does that mean I have to talk about it?

Yorkie I don't think so. You don't have to divulge, not until you're ready, just explain to me what you're feeling

June I think I can do that

Yorkie Okay, I'll understand whatever you say anyways

June You remember that time I stacked it outside of the pub in my massive wedged boots?

Yorkie Yes June, you only had three pints

June And you said that the scrape on my arm wouldn't scar, and said I was being a little bitch about it?

Yorkie Yes June, I stand by that

June And now I have that scar on my arm?

Yorkie June

June I'm really angry Yorkie

[beat]

June It's like a black, inky cloud swirling in my chest. But it's like white hot at the same time. It travels up my neck and down my arms. It keeps yelling at me to do something, to move.

Yorkie ...Sounds like a super villain does that

June Stop taking the piss, you wanted me to explain and I'm bloody well trying to

Yorkie No, no, carry on - ignore me. I'm just being daft.

June Yeah when are you not being daft?



- Yorkie** Hmmm, never - not that I can think of.
- June** Can we just come back to this please? Pass me your bottle of wine
- Yorkie** Oy, who do you think you are? Brought that for myself thank you very much
- June** Don't think you did love, sharing's caring thanks
- Yorkie** Fine, anything for you dear
- June** Thanks gorgeous
- Yorkie** Ew, gross. And yes, we can come back to this. Also pass me your phone, I want to queue up some of my own songs.

SCENE TWO - 12am

[Yorkie presses play on the phone - King by Florence + The Machine plays and underscores the scene]

- Yorkie** 12am. There can be a guilt in feeling better, in improving. It can feel like an injustice and something dishonourable to everything you've felt before, all that you've endured. I feel like I have no claim to be vulnerable without the fear of dismissal or indifference.
- Have you ever wanted to play a different role? Of course you'd still be you, but who could you become?
- We're laying on our backs across the bed, shoulder's touching - taking turns choosing songs. A timeless tradition for June and I.
- One that we share with other friends, lovers, siblings, strangers across the world.

June's stuck, she's going down a path that I can't follow. I can see it in the way she looks at me, she's torn between wanting to feel better, feel anything, and just giving up. For once, I don't know what she wants to do. I could never say any of this to her.

For now I want to stop thinking large, I want to focus on what's in front of me - It gets tiring after a while. There's magic in the mundane, all's still in this room, there's no world outside of here.

- June** So after that I told him you're a silly little prick, and your mum doesn't love you
- Yorkie** What a dickhead
- June** Right! That's what I've been saying man - I honestly can't stand him.
- Yorkie** He's got a stinky attitude
- June** So stinky, you can smell him from a mile off
- Yorkie** Not as stinky as you though
- June** I had a shower today thank you
- Yorkie** Doesn't smell like it
- June** Shut up, anyways what've you been up to?
- Yorkie** You saw me three days ago
- June** Yeah but a lot can happen in three days, what've you been up to?
- Yorkie** Not much mate to be honest with you, just been chilling at home - went on a nice walk yesterday, got a bit sunburnt. Read a bit more of my book, tidied my room up, did some journaling.



June Since when did you journal?

Yorkie I've done it on and off for a while, started to get back into it recently though

June This is new, I never knew you did that

Yorkie Yeah, just kinda felt like I needed to

June How come?

Yorkie Just had some shit on my mind recently that's all

June You wanna talk about it?

Yorkie You wanna talk about yours?

June That's not fair

Yorkie I'm all good June

June Yorkie love please know you can always chat shit to me, about anything - I want you to be okay. You always do it for me.

Yorkie God sake, I know

June Don't bring that bloke into this. Yorkie I've seen it all from you. I've seen you angry, a lot. I've seen you giddy and silly, stressed out, sad, and on top of the world like nothing could touch you. If you're feeling reserved right now that's fine, you don't owe anybody your best especially when you can't give yourself that. And actually, I've changed my mind, you don't have to talk to me, because you certainly don't owe me anything. I just want to sit, listen to music, and spend time with you.

[beat]

Yorkie June your phone's ringing again

[June declines it]

Yorkie That was my mum's number

June Oh was it? Shit I haven't saved it, I'll ring her back later

Yorkie Make sure you do

June I will...this wine is rank

Yorkie Tesco's finest for £6.50 right there. Look I'm even drinking red wine just for you, you know I'm a sauvignon girly at heart

June You're actually a middle aged woman Yorkie

Yorkie I can't win with you. Love you.

June Love you too.

SCENE THREE - 2am

[What once was by Her's plays and underscores the scene]

Yorkie June, it's 2am, I think you've had enough to drink now

June Only had two bottles, what're you on about?

Yorkie One bottle, and whisky, and rum, and whatever else you had before I arrived

June Don't think I really care to be honest

Yorkie June I care

[June takes another swig from the bottle of wine]

Yorkie Right that's enough man, you need to go to sleep. Come on, sleepy time

June See that would be a great idea if only I could. I can't sleep, I can't rest. I can't rest, I can't relax

Yorkie None of what your doing right now is going to help that

June Look I'm not being stupid with it am I?

Yorkie I'm aware, you have too much self-control for your own good

[June's phone starts to ring again]

June Oh my god, shut the fuck up! Leave me alone!

Yorkie June you need to answer her!

June Oh whatever, don't tell me what to do

Yorkie Are you being serious right now?

June I don't want to speak to anyone, I just want everyone to bloody leave me be, it's taking the piss - why can't people just get it into their heads that I don't want to be bothered right now

Yorkie I get your struggling love but it's not fair to treat other people like that when they're struggling too. You're going through the same thing. Answer my mum's fucking call!

June Piss off Yorkie, you're meant to be helping me here. Why did I bother asking you to come over in the first place, you can just leave me alone n'all. Fuck sake man.

[June begins to cry]

June Don't. No, don't. I didn't mean that. I didn't say that. Please, I don't want to argue

Yorkie I know love

June I don't want you to go. I want you to stay here. I can't be on my own. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Let's never do that again

Yorkie Oh June

June I miss you

Yorkie So you should, I'm a delight... I miss you too. I miss you. I wish I was with you.

June You weren't meant to leave man, it's not fucking fair. This shouldn't have happened. You weren't meant to leave. I need you here. I had plans.

Yorkie You still have those plans

June There's no point, I don't want to do them without you





Yorkie I want you to do them though. What was it you said to me once? I wrote this down. We're here in the same way that nature is here, simply to exist. If you go with me, you'll never see another sunrise again, nor any mountains, nor watch the seasons turn over. Never again. And you love all those things, they're all in your plans.

June You were in my plans. You loved those things.

Yorkie I loved you more. You're my best mate. I want you to live, not just survive. Even if that means I'm not here to do that with you. Live June.

[They embrace]

[Yorkie grabs their things]

June I don't know what to do

Yorkie Play your music, rest, be angry

June Can you stay a bit longer?

[Yorkie shakes their head]

June Okay. Are you okay?

Yorkie I'll see you later mate

June See you later man

Yorkie Love you

June I know

[Yorkie leaves the room]

SCENE FOUR - 4am

[June sits on her bed crossed legged looking out at the audience. She clicks play on her phone - Francesca by Hozier begins to play once more]

June I know as difficult as it is, and as it has been - I could never leave. I could never miss these moments.

It's 4am and I know what death is. Death will be waking up there in your home, under a heavy duvet with a floral print, under a warm summer's sunrise, the smell of the sea air breathing me back to life.

I will walk barefoot on the carpet, no teary eyed dreariness. I will open the door to face you - no longer needing to count.

I'll help you open the curtains, bringing the sunlight in. You'll make me a coffee, and I will tell you everything that's happened.

An old and familiar friend, and how you've watched me grow.

But life, my love.

Keep me in your home.

[June's phone rings once more, June answer it]

June Hiya, yeah I'm sorry it's just not been a good night. Yeah, I know I can, thank you. I'm trying. It's late for you too. You've got a date set? Next Tuesday? Yeah of course I can do a speech. Yeah Yorkie would have liked that. Okay, I'll come over tomorrow, I'll help you with that don't worry. Okay, get some sleep, he wouldn't like that. Love you too, bye.

[The song increases in volume and continues to play as June gets up and leaves her bedroom, and then slowly begins to fade out]

-The End-



OOLOGY

Written by John Broadhead

SCENE ONE

We open on a small, sparsely furnished but tidy living room. There are four large cardboard boxes neatly stacked on the sofa. They dominate the space. They're impossible to ignore. Distantly, in the background, we hear birdsong. The birdsong rises in pitch and intensity until-

Mike, a young, casually dressed man enters the room, carrying a fifth, slightly less unwieldy box. It isn't heavy, nor too large. The care with which Mike carries it betrays a sense of the value of the contents. He makes it over to the sofa, and gently places the box on the floor. For a moment, he contemplates where he's going to put it. There are likely bigger things on his mind.

Joe, an imperceptibly cleaner and more composed young man, pops a tentative head round the door frame, into the living room. He lingers for a second. He's baffled by the boxes.

Joe Thought you were back at work today.

Mike *(startled)* Fuck - sorry - no- no, phoned Matt this morning, he said I could take a couple more days-

Joe You alright mate?

Mike Yeah - no - bear with me a sec, I really need some water.

Mike slips through the door frame, past Joe. He heads for the kitchen.

Joe *(calling to Mike)* What are these?

Joe furtively slinks over to the box on the floor and looks. Mike enters the living room.

Mike I know what you're gonna ask-

Joe Yeah?

Mike You're gonna ask why is there a box of eggs on the-

Joe It would have been along those lines, yeah-

Mike It's five boxes of eggs, as it happens.

Joe They're all eggs?

Mike It's a long story, mate.

(beat)

Joe I have to say, I'm interested in hearing it.

Mike Went back to my grandma's after the wake on Monday. She said he had this collection that he wanted me to have, but I can't tell anyone. So I went to pick it up today. Wasn't actually that long.



Joe No, short and sweet. Has left a few open questions, granted.

Mike Like?

Joe (*stunned*) Like... I don't mean to sound rude here. I... (*beat*) Eggs? Five boxes of eggs?

Why did he have so many eggs? How do you even amass so many eggs? I'm not, y'know, I know he was your grandad, but - that's weird, right?

Mike Uh - yes, yep, I guess it was a hobby, I guess he was good at it. And yeah it's pretty fucking weird.

Joe Why can't you tell anyone? And why did he want you to have them?

Mike The Wildlife and Countryside Act. And he thought I would appreciate them, I suppose.

Joe An act?

Mike I googled it. They're illegal. As far as the law goes, he may as well have bequeathed me a live grenade. Or his lucky bag of heroin.

Joe Okay, I think I'm caught up. Actually no - sorry, they keep coming - what're you gonna do with them?

Mike I really don't know what to do. I only took them cause Grandma seemed dead keen on getting rid of them and I wasn't in a position to say no. But throwing them out seems, well, disrespectful. Thought I might sell them to someone who'd appreciate them or something, but, you know-

Joe Yeah, can't imagine there's much demand-

Mike Actually they could be worth thousands.

Joe What? Fuck off. Get your shoes on; we're off cash converters.

Mike Six months and an unlimited fine for selling 'em, Google says.

Joe People sell worse on Facebook.

Mike They might, but it looks like selling them is off the table, really. Unless you have connections in the underground oological community-

Joe Is that the study-

Mike Study of bird's eggs, yeah. Google again. I've basically been on Google since the wake, just trying to work out what they are and what to do with 'em. Asked mum if I could leave them in her attic but she won't even have pirate DVDs in case she gets raided by MI6.

Joe Could ask Nicky down the Crown if he knows anyone who'd be interested. Or Johnny Bikeman from school. I know he sells weed, and plants... birds... they're both - outside?

Mike smiles weakly

Joe That's as far as my criminal connections go. (*beat*) You sure you're alright? I know the funeral was tough and that-

Mike (*smiling weakly*) I never actually said I was alright.

Joe That's fair.

He gestures at the boxes

Joe He must have been really into it, eh? Feel bad for the birds.

Mike (*chuckling weakly*) I guess so. Christ, he must have been the devil to them.

Joe Bogeyman. Come to steal your kids. *(beat)* I'm surprised they kept all these years, you know. Remember at uni, the hard-boiled eggs that got left in the fridge over Easter?

Mike The ones you hid in Adam's room?

Joe That's why he started spending so much time with Sarah you know: cause he needed somewhere to sleep and I never told him where they were. Cleaners found 'em and he finally came back, but by then he was in love.

Mike *(laughing quietly)* They still together?

Joe Baby on the way. She should name it Joe. Or Egg.

(beat)

Mike They won't go bad. There's nothing in 'em. He blew them.

Joe He what?

Mike Yeah, good one. He blew the yolk out of them. Pinprick at both ends, blow into one, yolk comes out the other. So they don't go bad.

Joe Would have thought they'd break.

Mike Yeah, me too. It's actually hard to believe he didn't break them. Dead clumsy, and rough, too. When he stirred his tea you'd think the world was ending. But I guess he was careful with them. Gentle.

Mike smiles, and loses himself for a second.

Joe You gonna leave them here?

Mike My room's a box. No space.

Joe So you are gonna leave them here?

Mike If that's alright. 'Til I work out what else to do.

Joe Yeah. For a couple of days, yeah.

Mike A couple of days?

Joe 'Cause it's been going well with Sophie, she's coming round for the first time on Friday. And five boxes of eggshells in the front room? It's a little-

Mike It is a bit... serial-killer. Yeah. I get you. Couple of days, they'll be gone.

Joe I'm on my way out anyway mate. I'll see you later, and if there's anything I can do for you mate, just call.

Mike You wouldn't happen to be in the market for some eggs, would you?





Joe (laughs) No space in the fridge I'm afraid mate.

Joe leaves. Mike sits on the floor, facing the boxes. Birdsong fills the air again.

SCENE TWO

Some amount of time has passed. The room is a mess: pizza boxes with ketchup smears, dirty mugs on every surface. Mike is dishevelled, and staring dead-eyed at a television. There are a few feathers strewn around. It isn't clear if the television is on. We hear only birdsong.

Joe storms into the room. Mike barely reacts.

Joe There are feathers in the fucking kitchen.

Mike doesn't say anything, incensing Joe

Joe One or two in the hallway, that's fine, I'm not being unreasonable here but you're leaving feathers fucking everywhere and it's disgusting-

Joe sees the boxes.

Joe And the fucking eggs are still here. And this room is a fucking tip. I don't know what's going on with you, but you need to sort this ASAFP or you're gonna need a new housemate.

Mike (impassively, slurring slightly) I haven't left feathers anywhere.

Joe Are you drunk?

Mike No. I just, I told you, I haven't slept in a week.

Joe Then go to the fucking doctor!

Mike There's nothing wrong with me.

Joe Nothing wrong?

Joe gesticulates wildly at the room, and the eggs.

Joe Either go to the doctors, or get a grief counsellor or something because this is not okay.

Mike I'm fine. I'm sorry about all this. I'll clean it up when I can sleep. Honestly, it's nothing emotional, or chemical, or anything like that. It's just too noisy around here.

Joe I'm sleeping fine.

Mike Good for you, but that doesn't solve the problem does it?

Joe It means there's no problem.

Mike There is.

(beat)

Mike Ever since I brought these eggs here, every night, there have been birds sitting just outside my bedroom window and singing at me. And they sound like they want the eggs back.

There is a long pause.

Joe Go to the doctors.

Mike Why?

Joe Because you're hearing things. Seriously. I came in here angry and now I'm frankly just worried.

Mike I'm not-

Joe You are. Unless you actually think you're living in a Hitchcock film.

Mike What Hitchcock fil-

Joe The Birds. Where the birds start biting and chasing people. You must've seen it, you had a Hitchcock poster on your door at uni.

Mike Yeah. Yeah I remember, I watched it with him. Grandad. Used to love showing me old films.

Joe Well that's lovely, but just because he's dead doesn't mean you have to start living them.

He recognises that was too far, and softens slightly.

Joe Probably just sleep deprived, mate. I stayed up three nights straight on study pills back at college, I was hearing weirder things than birds towards the end.

Mike (*distantly*) Yeah.

Joe And the feathers - you're probably sleepwalking or something. That's why you're tired.

Mike I'm tired because I can't sleep.

Joe So what, the birds are leaving feathers around too?

Mike looks at Joe. Joe realises what he's insinuating, and moves to change the subject by gesturing at the eggs

Joe (*exasperated*) And what happened to getting rid of these?

Mike (*suddenly energetic*) You don't wanna know. I spent the whole of this morning ringing around trying to find somewhere that'd take them. Museums, the RSPB and that. Started dialling just as Lorraine came on the air, by the time I was done, Loose Women had finished.

Joe I don't know how long that is. Don't watch daytime TV-

Mike (*snapping*) Neither do I but it's a fucking long time! I tried the uni, natural history department. They told me to ring this museum, so I did, and they said they weren't interested without provenance, documents and that. So they told me to ring the RSPB, which makes sense, yeah? If anyone's gonna want them, the bird freaks will. Shit, I'm telling you, I may as well have put them on speakerphone and made them listen as strangled a pelican. Said I should destroy them. Can you believe that?

Joe Yeah, actually, I agree with them. Bin them.

Mike I'm not binning them.

Joe It's been more than a week, you can't just fucking leave them here!

Mike I'm not binning them!

Joe Why not?

Mike They're important!

(*beat*)

Mike They must have been, at least, to Grandad. Because he went to get them. He understood the - the romance of them. Of... It's this image in my mind: he was a big bloke. Tall, broad, sturdy. Proper Yorkshireman. "A'll sithee", "how's tha' do". Drank bitter, stank of roll-ups. Stoic, and gruff, and... not what you'd expect to see up a tree. Not in a million years. He was arthritic, and heavy-footed, and granted he was younger back then, but, the idea of this bloke spotting a bird's nest and his eyes just lighting up. Shambling his way up a tree with a giddy smile on his face, like a kid. Shambling his way back down with this fragile thing, cradled. It's...



(beat)

Mike He went to get them.

(pause)

Joe It's not healthy, mate. All this. The mess, and the seeing birds.

Mike I'm not seeing bird-

Joe Then get a cat. A big fucking mean one to get rid of them, and then sleep. And get rid of the eggs.

Mike I-

Joe No, listen to me. My grandma died last year, and I was heartbroken. Like, properly. I miss her, and grief's shit, but life goes on. Okay? I took a few days off and I went back to work. I didn't lock myself in a room, and surround myself with her bloody thimble collection like a slave buried with a pharaoh's jewels. When I miss her, I remember her. Christmas and the Queen's Speech. I don't pull out her cardigan and stare at it for hours; I don't obsess over her things. They're just things. These eggs are just things. And no amount of holding onto them and creepily obsessing over them is gonna bring him back. Okay? Sort yourself out.

He leaves. Mike sits on the floor, silently.

SCENE THREE

The birdsong returns. It is different, somehow. Not necessarily in pitch, or volume, or intensity, but somehow.

The lights go down, and come up again. As they return, Mike quickly folds up and removes four of the boxes, leaving the smallest hidden behind the sofa.

Joe enters.

Joe *(gesturing at the room)* This is a nice surprise.

Mike Yeah. Think I'm alright, now.

Joe *(gesturing at the lack of eggs)* You rid of them at last?

Mike Yeah. Well, I doubt they're coming back.

Joe Fill me in?

Mike Well, I thought I'd made up my mind. Nearly tripped over them trying to collect some mugs and - out of nowhere I lost it. Ranting, raving, effing and fuckin' blinding. Even cursing the old fella, a bit, for dropping these egg-shaped white elephants on me. So I stuck them in the car, and drove like an absolute maniac to my mum's. Honestly surprised I didn't get stopped. Sped the whole way. Didn't even have shoes on. Anyway, I let myself in, and she wasn't home, gone Slimming World or zumba or whatever. I decided I was gonna stick them in the loft cause she never goes up there anyway, perfect crime. At this point it's pissing it down, but I need to go to the garage and get the stepladder, so I sprint across the drive and the gravel cuts my feet to shreds. And if I've calmed down at all over the drive here, I'm angrier now, proper forehead vein-popping, Jack Nicholson, seeing red apoplectic. But as I get into the garage I see this lawnmower box full of old shit, books and that, from when I was a kid. And on top is a birdwatching journal. And I remembered him giving it to me. I just... collapsed.

Joe Brought back memories? Of... birdwatching with your grandad?

Mike *(smiling)* Nope. Never went. Not even once - every page as blank as it was the day he gave it to me. I still don't know one single thing about birds. Other than some are called tits.

Joe I don't-

Mike He gave it to me on my twelfth or thirteenth birthday. Which I figure is a difficult age to buy for, but either way, he was fucking dreadful at gifts and birthdays and all that. He bought my auntie coat hangers for christmas once. *(laughing)* Cheap ones too, from the market. Didn't even take the £1 price sticker off.

Joe I'm still a bit lost-

Mike He wasn't sentimental. Probably never thought twice about what he was gonna do with the eggs. He pissed off up trees for a laugh, or because a bird shat on his car, or something. It was a bit of fun. And there was other stuff in there, stuff he actually wanted me to have. Couple of books by Orwell, Beatles CDs. He used to give me these things and force me to read them or watch them or listen to them, and it was only ever 'cause he liked them and he wanted someone to talk to about them. And he liked that I liked them.

(beat)

Mike He's probably looking down on me, rolling around laughing, calling me a great big jessie.

Joe *(wincing slightly)* That's a bit ho-

Mike He was eighty. And a bit of a knob, sometimes. And he probably only gave the eggs to me cause he had to give them to someone.

Joe So what did you do with 'em?

Mike *(He pauses a moment before answering)* I got rid of 'em.

Joe smiles, pats Mike on the shoulder, and the sound of birdsong gently resumes as he leaves.

Mike allows himself to be lost in a memory. He doesn't fight it.

From behind the sofa, Mike retrieves the box. He carries it softly beyond the threshold of the room he has not left thus far. As he kneels, emotion flashes across his face, though it is not clear which emotion, nor why.

From the box he takes some leaves and twigs. He fashions, on the front of the stage, a small nest. The bird song reaches full intensity.

One-by-one, he produces eggs from the box, and nestles them reverently in the makeshift nest.

The birdsong relents. As it fades from hearing, the lights come down too.

-End of Play-



WORLDS ON THE WALL

Written by Freya Elizibeth

Synopsis

August 13th 1961. East German soldiers laid down more than 30 miles of barbed wire barrier through the heart of Berlin. Then the winter of 1969 shook, bringing the coldest and longest winter in memory. All hope seems lost for mother Ada as a food shortage breaks. "Worlds On The Wall" is an exploration of friendship, perspective, stories and mindset ; told through Ada's dilemma of buying food from an Off cut market.

Characters

Felix:

An elderly man, separated from his wife in West Berlin. Perhaps an oversharer, seems strong but is fragile inside. A sneaky individual who is against communism. Played by an older male.

Ada:

A pregnant woman, raising the baby alone. Financially unstable. Played by a woman.

Peter Muller:

Headstrong, German singer. Strong opposition to the Stasi and communism. Played by a male.

Lorena Muller:

Brave, resilient. A single mother. Played by a female.

James:

Ada's husband. Creative, free spirited. Played by a male. Can be multi rolled by Peter Mullers character.

Disclaimer: most characters do speak often in German language due to the play's location.

Prologue

A dingy light falls on the stage, a heavy drum beat plays.

All characters are seen in a state of hysterics running across the stage. Cries and screams are heard. Mirrors the day the Berlin wall was placed.

Felix appears in a pool of light isolated from the rest of the stage speaking through her tears with an established gloom.



Felix In Eastern Germany we inhabit the grey end of the spectrum ; grey buildings, grey trees, grey earth. They have broken us, just like fiction.

(volumes of voice raises) Taking away every inch of hope we had to spare. Surging us in its tide. *(pause)* The cries the day they placed barbed wire through the heart of our city - still hang with me.

The first one to fall was Rudolf Urban. August 19th 1961. Who jumped from a building in Bernauer Strasse - that - same - street. October 4th. Bernd Lunser. Leaped from the fourth story of *(points)* that building.

Forgot not that tyranny of this wall.

If our lives couldn't get any more miserable ; mother nature brings her cause of hate. With the winter of 1969. The longest and coldest in memory. Slashing the harvest far below expectations. Alongside most of our trade colluding, food was - limited. And if you thought those communists would help the issue, *(sighs)* you're wrong. Instead they capitalised it again for control. Making a one shop ban. So if your shop had no food. You had no food.

This is why I created this place. Home of the food. Underground trading routes, to smuggle the lost like coffee beans. If I was ever found out - let's just say I'd be more than 5 feet underground.

Lights fall.

SCENE ONE: Food Market

Lights reappear to show a makeshift basement. Boxes stacked high with food. Felix stands holding a clipboard seemingly checking items of the list.

Ada enters from stage left, holding an umbrella up, wincing in pain from seemingly hurting back pains. She lets down the umbrella, spotting Felix. Checking behind herself multiple times with paranoia. She moves slowly, Felix not taking his eye off the paper in front of him. Ada stands in front of him.

Felix What's it like up there?
(nodding towards upstage)

Ada Cold. But not too much ice.

Felix This ain't nothing yet

Ada shifts awkwardly in her seat, not sure what to say next.

Felix I have been here twenty one years, since 45' i have seen much worse than this.

Ada That's a long time

Felix Sure is. I've seen enough of the world in my time.

Ada does not respond, trying to move along the process as fast as possible.

Felix Right

Felix puts his clipboard down.

Felix My name is Felix. How can I be an assistant today?

Ada talks quietly and sheepishly.

Ada I heard from friends that you sell *(Gulps)* food here



Felix That would be correct...Anything in particular you want? Or should i just bag up some essentials.

Ada Whatever is quicker

Ada stares behind her shoulder ; watching the door. Felix takes notice, bagging up some items.

Felix Its protected

Ada snaps her head around to meet Felix's eyeline.

The only people walking through that door are people in the same boat as you.

Ada (coldly) I'd rather nobody know I have to sneak below the belt.

Felix It isn't shameful to need help

Ada Buts it wrong

Felix It's also wrong we don't have enough access to food, especially people in your situation (pointing towards her stomach)

Felix bags up the food. Bringing it towards Ada.

Felix That will be 26 please what was the currency in the GDR? Add for authenticity

Ada rummages through her pockets, picking out pennies and counting them in her hands.

Ada There.

She pushes the money towards him. Taking the bag forcefully. Felix shakes his head. Picking the clipboard up again and continuing the job at hand. Ada begins walking off, moving at a slow pace. Slumping in agony. Felix notices, watching her.

Felix Comrade why don't you take a seat?

Ada keeps walking, ignoring her . Felix walks towards her.

Felix I'm no doctor but i dont think walking up 6 flights of stairs is the best thing for your pain.

Ada keeps walking.

Ada If your no doctor please don't lecture me with medical advice

Felix shakes his head, brushing off her coldness. Felix lays a hand on her shoulder.

Felix Please. Just for 5 minutes. Then you can be on your way.

Ada sighs, taking a seat on the wooden chair beside her.

Ada Happy now?

Felix More than.

Felix goes back to the job at hand. Picking up his clipboard. There's a moment of awkwardness.

Felix How far along are you?

Ada 7 months.

Felix Not long yet. Mädchen oder Junge?

Ada pauses for a second, calculating her answer. She squints saying her response slowly with a sense of unsurity.

Ada Mädchen?

Felix Girl?

Ada sighs with relief.

Ada Phew. My German isn't quite so good.



- Felix** Not your mother tongue?
- Ada** (*scoffs*) No. No. My mothers English. She moved here for my father. We rarely spoke German growing up.
- Felix** So who taught you some German?
- Ada** Myself.

The conversation goes dead again. Ada made no moves to start up conversation again.

- Felix** Would you pass me that stack of paper beside you?

Ada takes a deep sigh, picking up the papers. Passing them towards him. Ada keeps staring at the door, the paranoia still present.

- Ada** Why do you do this?

Felix flicks his head up

- Felix** Do what? Tell pregnant women not to walk up 6 flights of stairs.
- Ada** NO. This food stand.
- Felix** Well because I don't believe in people not having enough. And I especially don't believe in our government using it for control.
- Ada** I don't believe it's for control. We want to margain what we do have.
- Felix** You believe that governments living off packet rice

Ada chuckles, leaning her head backwards against the chair. Closing her eyes.

- Ada** You sound like my father.
- Felix** I bet your father is an educated men

Ada scoffs, almost laughing out loud.

- Ada** He was far from it.
- Felix** I'm guessing he isn't around much longer
- Ada** No. NO.
- Felix** Well i'm sorry for your loss
- Ada** (*quickly*) Don't be. He died when I was 12. I can barely remember him.
- Felix** How'd he died?
- Ada** (*Ada chuckles*) What makes you think that's your business?
- Felix** Well you said I sound like him, I want to avoid any way of my inevitable end.
- Ada** Well I couldn't tell you. He ran away. Could have been the Stasi, could have been a suicide.
- Felix** Ignore the Stasi. Got it.
- Ada** You're not doing a very good job with this set up. Putting you on their payroll.
- Felix** I've been doing it for a year now. I'm still standing.
- Ada** What did you do before you started this plight? (*Ada pulls a disgusted look*)
- Felix** I spent a lot of time travelling, sailing through different jobs then eventually settled back down in Berlin.
- Ada** Different jobs? You've must have some good stories.
- Felix** Oh of course. I once met a prince.
- Ada** Of course you did



Ada rolls her eyes in sarcasm

Felix I'm not joking. I worked in a bar and he was over on a day trip from the west. I used to get quite a few westerners coming in, you know. After Talking to me for hours, he invited me to his palace. But of course i couldn't go.

Ada *(scoffs)* I think I might have said I was a princess after a few drinks as well.

Felix laughs

Felix You do make a good point

Felix picks up a box and places it on top of another

Ada Have you travelled since the wall laid down?

Felix Not yet. But I'd like to. Bulgaria.

Felix places his clipboard down.

Maybe even America. I'd like to see that white house of theres.

Ya know what i'd really like to see? That wall of china. See if it beats the one we have down here.

Ada Brave choice.

Felix They say everything's bigger in America

Ada Well I've never even touched our own wall

Felix Well back when you were a youth, you could get in touching distance of the wall

Ada So I've heard

Felix You're young and fit. Travelling?

Ada Oooh god no . I wouldn't have time.

Felix We all have time. I've had a few of them myself. *(Nodding down at Ada's baby bump)*

Ada strokes her stomach.

Ada How many?

Felix 2. My son will be 23. And my daughter is 21.

Ada They as hard work as everyone says.

Felix Thousand times more. But it is a comfort.

Ada stares at her stomach

Ada Your wife not involved in this?

Felix She doesn't live round here. I suppose she might if she did.

Ada She's smart for not partaking in the death trap

Felix She's living her greatest life in West Berlin.

Ada smiles fades to her mouth being open, gulping with realisation. Screwing her mouth with annoyance.

Ada I'm so -

Felix Oh no don't pity me. It's the detritus of life.

Gosh I don't come to work everyday to talk about myself. I'm interested in this father of yours.

Ada *(Ada laughs again)* Anyone ever told you you're quite nosy?

Felix chuckles



- Felix** Anyone ever told you you're quite guarded?
- Ada** Yes, more than a few times.
- Felix** It's only fair I told you about my life. And I shared one of my most fondest stories.
- Ada** He was a Rock N Roll singer. In the 50' before it really rose to fame in Germany.
- Felix** Would I know any of his songs?
- Ada scoffs.*
- Ada** Probably not
- He sang in bars and underground clubs. He didn't write much original material until 58'.
- Felix** I'm old, you know. I was in Germany in 58'.
- Ada** He wrote 'Stumme Schreie'? Silent Cries?
- Felix** Yeah no. Never heard of it.
- Ada Laughs, Felix too.*
- Ada** It basically inscribed all the ways communism was the breach of peace
- Felix's eyes widen.*
- Felix** Thought you was gonna say he wrote love songs, not the heavy duty stuff.
- Ada** I think my mum would have much rather appreciated love songs
- I was 9 when my mum caught wind of it.

SCENE TWO: The Story Of Peter Müller

Peter and Lorena Muller enter stage. The Light drifts to them.

- Lorena** Would you just let it go?
- Peter** Let it go? You're a fool if you think I'm letting it go.
- Lorena** We are about to raise a child Peter! A child! I've given up so much so I could stand by (Pressing her finger against his chest) your side! And I refuse to let that all burn so you can live out..some fantasy.
- Peter** Some fantasy?! I am doing this for us. For my people! Our people! Who no longer has a voice. Who have been stripped from their chests of hope.
- Lorena** Our time will come. But for now we have a life. A life you swore you wanted. They'll kill you. You know that?
- Peter** I'm willing to risk it for a stroke of freedom. With or without you by my side
- Lorena** Do I look insane to you? (Very coldly) Do I? You don't truly think i am going to stand by your side in suicide...thats what it is its suicide. Whilst our child sits at home? Do you? For that you had better find yourself another fool.

The lights fade back down to Ada and Felix, Felix has now sat himself in a chair near Ada. Sitting contently.

- Felix** Don't stop. I'm highly engaged.



Ada I'm afraid the stories are a bit blurred. My mum refused to talk to him. I know he sang the song... two days later (*Ada snaps her fingers*) he was taken.

Felix Stasi?

Ada We don't know. They hardly stopped for tea.

For months and months my mum waited and waited. Nothing. We heard nothing. Until 61, just after the wall laid down. He appeared at our downstep. Looking like a vision of terror. I was 12 and I-I remember staring into his eyes and feeling nothing.

Well then things took a turn for the worst. He swore to my mum he'd make things right. But he was prohibited from studying again. And he couldn't get any kind of job. Everything he applied for, the Stasi made sure he was turned down. Employers had to check his personal files and the instructions were always - not him!

He wasn't the man my mother loved. He wasn't the man she married. He was sort of useless to us. Useless to my mum. Who only saw him as a ghost of what he once was.

Felix Where did he go all these years?

Ada He refused to talk about it. But you could tell there was barbitary hiding behind his eyes.

Felix Jesus..

Ada Yeah. 2 years later me and my mum had come home from school. And he was nowhere to be seen. Just

like before. He'd gone. 2 times in my childhood he had disappeared. This time felt different. This time he'd left a note.

Lorena Muller enters the stage and the light drifts sideways. A sombre piano tune plays. She reads from a piece of paper, speaking through tears.

Lorena Dear my dearest love,

I tried to write a poem for you and realised I could not. I guess you've done a very good job about leaving me speechless.

From the moment you entered my life my world was shaken at its roots. Even more when you made me a father. This has been the hardest decision of life. But I cannot stand by and let you lay slave to my shadow any longer.

I hope you forgive me one day. One day when our world is much kinder and soft.

Peter steps into the light on the opposite end of the stage.

Peter I wish I could give you a glance into my brain and understand, let you see the demons that plague it. But I cannot.

Give our sweet Ada enough love for the both of us. Till we meet again.

Lorena Ich liebe dich.

Peter Peter.

Lorena cries. Peter exits the stage.



SCENE THREE: Felix's Story

The light fades back up to Ada and Felix. Felix wipes his eye with a handkerchief. Ada has a light tear wiping it away from her eyes.

Ada My mum read that letter to me every night

Felix I didn't have crying with a stranger to be on my checklist today

Ada I didn't mean to make you cry

Felix Oh no it's nice...It's nice. I have very few people to speak to anymore.

Felix passes Ada a tissue from his pocket. Ada takes.

They fix themselves up.

Ada I haven't told that story in a long time

Felix Your mothers a brave one. Raising you all on her own.

Ada She..I cannot begin to describe

Felix She reminds me very much of my Anna.

Ada shows a soft smile.

Ada Well your anna must been very wonderful.

Felix Ooo yes she was. Amiable. Beautiful.

Felix seems to go elsewhere for a moment, his mind drifting to better days. Ada seems to take notice.

Ada (Softly) Are you okay?

Felix Oh, I'm sorry dear. Old age seems to make my mind wonder.

Ada quickly changes the subject seeing how the mention of his wife upsets him.

Ada Did you grow up in Germany?

Felix No. No. Moved here for love, just like your mother.

Ada Anna?

Felix No my first wife

Ada scoffs.

Ada Man of many women

Felix Don't seem so surprised. I was a ladies man in my time. Only 2 wives. I was married young the first time.

Ada How young?

Felix 17

Ada Christ.

Felix laughs.

Felix I know...i know

Ada What was your first wife called?

Felix Adeline

Ada Where'd you two meet?

Felix Well I went to a private school and we took a trip to Antwerp to see the 1920 Olympics in Belgium..

Ada's eyes widened with surprise.

Ada I've always wanted to go see the olympics.

Felix It was fantastic. We were having



dinner one night at a fancy restaurant a few down blocks for the hostel we were staying at. And everyone who is in suits dresses and high heels. And I bumped into a girl, streaking water all down her red satin dress.

Felix chuckles and Ada smiles.

Oh well she ripped me a new one. Smack me even. But like everything when you're young, it doesn't last forever.

Ada Then you married Anna how many years later?

Felix I lived a little before I settled down again. In Fact that night I met that prince was the night I met Anna.

Ada nods her head.

Ada The prince overshadowing your future wife

Felix Must have been

Felix and Ada laugh

Ada How'd you meet her?

Felix You wouldn't believe it.

Ada (*mocks*) She was a princess?

Felix Not formally but in her own right. She spilled a drink on me.

Ada I'm sensing a pattern. Karma at its finest.

Felix Clearly it was catching me up. This time I got a dance. And then we got married. Had two kids. And now we're..surviving.

Ada I think it's beautiful your still holding together

Felix Human Nature

Ada I'm not sure I could love my husband across a wall.

Felix You'd be surprised by the power of love. Somewhere there are probably aliens who would be shocked to hear how high we value human relationships.

Ada How so?

Felix Well we find people who we learn to care for as much or arguably more then ourselves . Biologically we weren't meant to be, historically we've never been alone.

Ada looks taken back. Sighing.

Ada You have a beautiful brain

Felix Years of knowledge my dear

Ada reaches in to the bag of food. Taking a piece of bread and splitting it. Passing some to Felix which he dismisses letting Ada have it.

Felix Hungry ay?

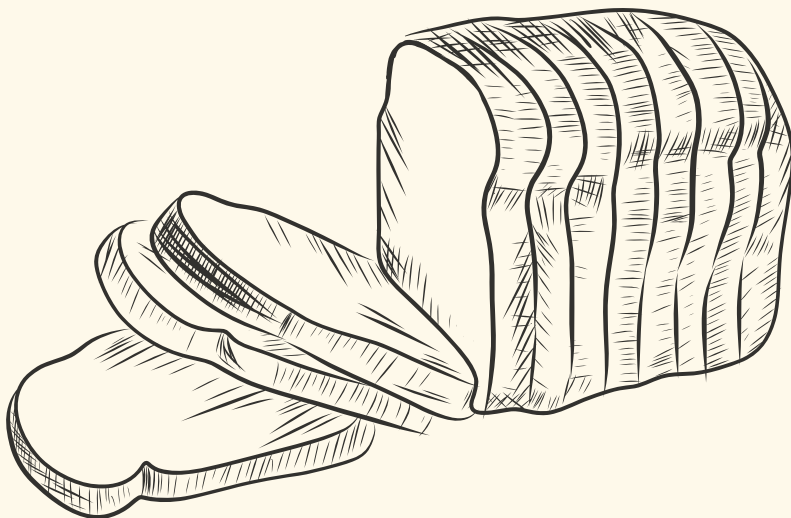
Ada You wouldn't believe it. She stuffs the bread in her mouth.

Can I ask you something? Might be a little bit personal

Felix Look who's become the nosy one?

Ada You don't have to.

Felix Ask it and I'll give it a go



Ada How come you and Anna are on different sides of Berlin?

Felix takes in a breath

Felix I knew it was coming. I guess I should sit back down for this one.

He sits again

Felix I'm not too sure we're going to start.

Ada You can take your time.

Felix Well you know, living in East Germany was never the greatest. So we planned to migrate during the 'Brain Drain' to West. Our son and daughter was living out there for university so we qualified for refugee.

Felix I told Anna to go out a week before me as we still had legal fees to pay and a few stuff to finish and she was becoming restless from stress. I said I'd grab a flight the week after. I'd sort it all out so we didn't have to come back. The lines were crossed.

2 days before my train. That knife slashed through the heart of Berlin.

I haven't seen my wife and kids since.

Ada struggles to speak.



Ada I-I I don't know what to say.

Felix We're the lucky ones. Least I know someday I'll come back to them. Least I know they're still alive.

Ada Your a very brave man

Felix No. I'm just human.

Do me a favour?

Ada Of course. Anything.

Felix If you go home to your husband tonight. Hold him. Tell him you love him. Forget about the rest of the day. Because your winning.

Ada smiles, holding back her tears.

Ada I promise.

A doorbell dings. Signalling for another costumer.

Felix That would be another

Ada wipes away her tears. Checking her watch.

Ada Jesus I should be going anyway.

Felix It was a pleasure to meet you Ada.

Ada holds her hand out for him to shake.

Ada Likewise.

They shake hands. Ada exits. Felix stares in awe. The lights fall. Felix exits.

SCENE FOUR: New Beginnings

James enters, carrying a newspaper. Reading. Ada enters. Dropping her bag and umbrella. She looks tired but also happy.

James I was getting worried.

Ada hugs him. Holding him. James laughs feeling confused by her tight grip.

James What's this for?

Ada I love you.

James I love you too?

Bad day at work.

Ada No a good day. I got some groceries.

James strokes her hair. Still holding her.

James Finally our shop has supplies.

Ada I guess it was good timing...

Ada I think I have the name.

James For what?

Ada Her.

She cradles her stomach.

Ada Anna.

James It's beautiful.

James kisses her forehead. The lights fall.

–End of Play–



VOICELESS

Written by Wynn Crawshaw

Characters

Ver: nonbinary teen

Bee: their friend

Teacher

Mum

Dad

Notes on the play: An original vision for this play was that Ver was the only one "on stage". The numbered scenes are spoken word poems. Slashes and dashes are interruptions.

ONE

Ver In the grand scheme of things
I am inconsequential
A grain of sand in a dust storm
And I don't want to be any more
than that

ONLINE

Ver, Bee. School.

Bee So what's this then?

Ver Oh it's nothing.

Bee Give it here.

Ver No Bee, please don't-

Bee So what is it?

Ver Please Bee, give me my book back.

Bee Hmmm, oh, let me just-

Ver Bee! Please!

Bee Not until I'm done.

Ver This isn't funny.

Bee Fine, fine whatever.

Ver Thank you.

Bee So what is it then?

Ver It's nothing really.

Bee Clearly it isn't just nothing, it seems pretty important to you.

Ver (*quiet*) It's some poems I've been writing.

Bee What?

Ver It's some poems I've been writing.

Bee That's ace! Can I read one? You pick one for me to read! Pretty please! Please! Ver! Please-



Ver Fine, just please be quieter. This one. It's not very good and I'm not sure if I like this edit and I don't know if it makes sense and-

Bee It's incredible.

Ver You sure?

Bee I don't even have words to describe how good this is. You planning on doing anything with it?

Ver No, not really-

Bee Not really? Come on, this really needs to be read or heard or something. You can't just keep it in a notebook forever.

Ver I mean I could-

Bee Ver, you cannot be serious. Wait, what about that newsletter thing that Sir/Miss was on about the other day. The like put yourself out there project-

Ver The Release Your Creativity Project?

Bee Yeah, that. Well, isn't this perfect for that?

Ver If I submit this poem for the newsletter and it gets published, it's not my poem anymore. Anyone who reads it will have their own opinions on it and what if they don't like it or if they interpret it wrong?

Bee If someone doesn't like it, sure it sucks but so what. Do their opinions even matter anyway? Don't answer that. It was rhetorical. Anyway, some people, like me, could really like it. They might feel seen by your words. And if someone interprets your poem differently maybe you could learn something new about it.

Ver Maybe. I don't know.

A look from Bee.

Ver I'll draft an email. But no promises on me pressing send.

Bee Sure, sure, I guess that's the best I can get from you. Can I snap a picture? So, I can read it again later?

Ver If you want, yeah.

Bee Thanks Ver! This is so cool. I never knew you had such a talent. This is so similar to realising that Chris Pine could sing.

TWO

Ver Trust once broken causes irreparable harm. A shattered pot with a missing piece.

OUT THERE

Ver. Bedroom. Frantic.

Ver No. No. No. How did this- I didn't- It wasn't.

Pause.

Ver It showed up in the newsletter. I didn't send it off, I wrote the email, but it was sitting unsent in my drafts folder. But I didn't send it. I just couldn't. It wasn't hard to figure out how my poem had ended up in the newsletter. After all, there was only one other person who had a copy of this poem.



THREE

Ver A deep breath. Two come together.
One falls apart.

ARGUING

Ver, Bee. School.

Bee It's fine/

Ver No, it's not fine, Bee. How could this
be fine! I didn't /want this.

Bee They really liked it/

Ver I don't care if they liked /it.

Bee It was anonymous - no one will
know it's yours /if you don't want it.

Ver That doesn't /matter.

Bee They published it on the first /page.

Ver This wasn't for you to do.

Pause.

Ver I don't understand why you would do
this. It should have been my choice to
submit this. To put my poem out there
into the world. I get really anxious just
thinking about what other people could
think about my work. I panic about
what they might say about it, whether
they like it or not. And you've just
taken all of my control out of this. Is
it because you think you know better?

Bee It's not like that-

Ver Then what is it like?

Bee You can't just hide your work for the
rest of forever. Your poem was great.

Ver I don't care. I didn't want this. I was
quite happy to just keep my writing

to myself. I let you read this poem
because I thought that maybe I could
trust you with this part of myself.

Bee You can trust me.

Ver What part of what you have done
tells me I can trust you?

Bee You don't know what people are
going to think about your work until
they read it. So, there's no point in
even worrying about it.

Ver That's not how worrying works-

Bee I did this cause your poem needs to
be read.

Ver Because you know best?

Bee Yes, because I know best.

Pause.

Bee I didn't mean that.

Ver No. I think you did. I think you
should go.

Bee Ver please, I'm/ sorry.

Ver Please go.

FOUR

Ver I sit in front of them,
right there,
invisible.
Talking about me, not to me.
As if I can't hear everything they
are saying.



PARENT'S EVENING

Ver, Teacher. School.

Teacher So Mrs Edgemon, Ver excels in this subject. They're a pleasure to teach. They never get distracted by their peers. Their attitude to learning is exemplary. However, they could contribute more in class discussions. Their personality shines through their writing but they never raise their hand, and they need to work on their self-confidence because it is clear they know the answers but will not share it with the class.

FIVE

Ver When I was younger, they would lift me up, high on their shoulders for the world to see. Now, locked in a closet I remain. Pushed to one side. An unhappy reminder.

PARENTS

Ver, Mum, Dad. Home, just after Parent's Evening. Ver is listening to their parents' conversation.

Dad Same as/ always.

Mum Yep.

Pause.

Mum I'd like them to spend more time with us. They're always in their room on that computer.

Dad It's hard being a teenager.

Mum No it isn't. It's not like teenagers have any real problems. What do they even have to stress about?

Dad There's a lot of pressure put on teens. Exams, moving schools-

Mum These are the best years of their life and they're wasting them. When I was their age, I was going out every evening to see people.

Dad We didn't have a computer to chat to friends online-

Mum I just don't get it. I don't know anything about them anymore.

Pause.

Ver I can hear you. Maybe I don't want to spend time with you. Every time I try to tell you about me, I get all these comments - "It was harder back in my day", "We do everything for you", "School isn't hard". When I leave my room it's always "Oh look who finally decided to join us". When I try telling you about my interests it's always "Not right now", "I'm very busy". Why would I want to spend more time with you?

But I can't tell you any of this. I can't say this to you.

I want to tell you what I'm doing. I do. But I need you to understand that I like being alone sometimes. I enjoy my own company. And I most definitely don't need to change. I don't need to push myself. I can stay right as I am.

SIX

Ver Solitude - a faithful companion. Comforting, rejuvenating, considerate.



SCHOOL

Ver, Teacher. School.

Teacher Okay Form E can we settle down please. Thank you. I have a few announcements to make. I am handing out your mock results, please give them a read and then put them somewhere to take home. Your parents need to sign the slip on the back and that slip needs to be handed back to me by Friday at the latest. No excuses.

Ver My mock results. I didn't do as well as I would like. Mum's going to have a rant when she sees this. Dad won't say anything - but his face. He will be disappointed.

Teacher We've been asked to remind you all that homework is an important part of your learning and should be completed to the highest standard and handed in on the due date. This is to help your learning and is very important.

Ver That one's fun. It feels like every teacher expects their homework to be your number one priority. They all give multiple homework tasks a week to be due in for the next lesson and they have to be completed fully or you haven't tried hard enough. And whilst doing your homework, which "really should be done at home not at school", you also should be revising for an hour a night for each subject and also you have to eat tea and sleep 8 hours a night. I mean, when's the time for me to do what I want to do?

Teacher And finally, the signup form for the Half-Term Charity Showcase is posted outside the Lunch Hall, if you have any questions about this you can talk to me or Miss Nelson. Have a wonderful day everyone.

SEVEN - MAYBE SWAP WITH EIGHT?

Ver One problem then another - they stack - one on top of the other - until I can't see round them. They teeter. And I know one day they will fall. Covering me. Crushing me. Unable to claw myself from the weight of my worries.

REQUEST

Ver, Teacher. School.

Teacher And that's the end of my announcements. If you have any signed slips, just put them on my desk before you leave. Have a great day.

Ver Miss/Sir.

Teacher Yes Ver?

Ver Can I talk to you?

Teacher Yes, of course.

Silence.

Teacher Ver? What is this about?

Ver The poem that was on the first page of the newsletter was mine.

Pause.

Teacher I know.

Silence.



Teacher Bee emailed just before the deadline with a wonderfully insightful poem. She asked - well demanded - for it to be published anonymously if it was chosen. She never said whose poem it was. Wouldn't budge even when I asked. But honestly, your written work can be quite distinctive.

Ver Oh.

Teacher I am very proud of you for telling me that you wrote the poem. I know it must have been very difficult for you to tell me. Why do you bring this up?

Ver I was wondering if maybe it could be taken down?

Teacher And why do you want to take it down?

Ver I don't think people will like it, and it wasn't very good, and I just don't want to know that people are reading it and hating it.

Teacher Have you read the comments under your poem on the website?

Shakes head.

Teacher Well, before I take down this poem, I think you should have a quick skim through some of the things people - students and staff alike - have written there. All I ask is you take a quick look at their comments, and we can discuss this again after that. Can you do that for me?

Ver I don't know. Maybe?

Teacher Look at it tonight, and we can talk again tomorrow. Have a lovely day Ver.

Ver You too Sir/Miss.

EIGHT

Ver The hardest part was saying - yes, this is mine. For that means I am seen.

PROBLEMS

Ver. Bedroom. Their phone chimes, a message.

Ver *(Typing)* I don't want to talk to you. Leave me alone.

It's Bee. She hasn't stopped messaging me since the fight. I don't want to talk to her.

Pause.

Ver Except I do want to talk to her. She's my friend and I miss her. She's the person that I talk to about the everything of my life. Well not everything. But we talk about our crushes, she's the first person I talked to when I started questioning my identity. Her support was what helped me come out.

I can't forgive her for submitting my poem to the newsletter. But I have looked at the online forum. People have been commenting and - Bee was right. People liked my poem and even those who didn't get what I was trying to say, well, they've commented things about my poem that are enlightening. There may have been people who didn't like my poem but those who did like it are louder.

Ver I'm re-evaluating. Because actually, yeah, maybe I don't need to keep all of my poems to myself. Maybe I could let other people read what I write.



NINE

Ver Change.
A frightening concept.
Or.
Maybe.
A novel idea.

CLAIMING

Ver, Teacher. School.

Ver Hi Sir/Miss.

Teacher Ver, good morning. Did you have time to look at the newsletter forum last night?

Ver I did, yeah.

Teacher And?

Ver Erm, yeah. It was quite... enlightening. There were some really nice messages and some... different interpretations.

Teacher One of the great things about poetry is hearing other people's interpretations. Does your request still stand?

Ver No. You can leave the poem there. It's not like anyone knows it's mine or anything.

Teacher Absolutely. I'll leave it up then.

Pause.

Teacher Is there something else Ver?

Ver I may have some more poems that I'd like people to read in the future. Like some stuff I've been working on, and I was wondering if you'd like to read anything or if there's something similar to the newsletter going to be happening. But like I don't want any pressure or anything?

Teacher I would love to read any work you have. I would be fascinated to see anything you have written, old or new. On the newsletter front, I do plan to collate things for another one for next term and I would be more than happy to include a contribution from you.

Ver Oh that's cool. Yeah, I would like to work on something for the next newsletter.

Teacher One thing that you may want to also consider is the showcase next week. Now there is absolutely no pressure here, but it would be an opportunity for you to present more of your work. You could read a poem from the wings, pre-record something, get someone else to read it for you, there are many options, and we could figure something out that could work for you.

Ver Oh, I don't know-

Teacher Have a think about it, let me know once you've made your mind up. You don't have to do this if you don't want but I think you should really take some time and consider this. Okay?

Ver Okay, I will think about it. Getting someone else to perform it could be a safe option.

Teacher Absolutely. I am very proud of you for even considering this. I know how anxious this all must be. But stepping out of your comfort zone is incredibly brave and will help you in the future.

Ver Maybe.



TEN

Ver I am who I am. Nothing can change that. But growth is not optional. It is a requirement.

RECONCILIATION

Ver, Bee. School.

Ver Hi.

Bee Hi.

Pause.

Ver /I was an idiot -

Bee /I'm so sorry -

Pause. Chuckles.

Ver You really don't have to apologise.

Bee I really do have to apologise, you were right, I never should have submitted your poem/ without your permission.

Ver I shouldn't have blown up on you like I did.

Bee You had every right to be mad at me. What I did was stupid and selfish. I really did think I knew what was best and I am so sorry.

Ver I accept your apology.

Pause.

Bee So what were you going to say?

Ver I wanted to tell you thanks for submitting my poem for the newsletter. You did not go about it the right way at all but having it out there isn't as world ending as I thought it was going to be.

Bee I'm glad that it didn't end the world.

Pause.

Bee Why did you blow up at me?

A breath.

Ver When I came out- school was really hard. I mean I was already the weird quiet kid and then I was the weird quiet kid with odd pronouns. For some people I had suddenly appeared on their radar, and they were so... mean. I've only really just managed to sink into the safety of obscurity again. Being in the newsletter, it was another thing that could have reminded people that I exist. I was really scared that I'd be noticed again.





Bee Why didn't you tell me about this?

Ver I thought you knew. And I really didn't want you to get dragged through it all with me-

Bee Ver, I'm your friend. I want to support you, back you up when you need help.

Ver Bee, I've never really been good at using my words.

Bee Yeah, that is true. At least out loud.

Pause.

Ver I might have something else to tell you actually.

Bee Go on.

Ver I want to know if you'd like to read some of my other poems.

Bee I would love to!

Ver Great. Erm- Well-

Bee What is it?

Ver Sir/Miss actually asked if I maybe wanted to have one of my poems performed at the showcase and I may or may not be considering it seriously.

Bee Oh my god! That is so exciting. Oh my god! You have to! Yes! Oh- wait-no- sorry- You should do this only if you want to.

Ver I think maybe I do. I don't think I'm at the stage where I could read it. But maybe you could.

Bee I would be honoured.

Ver I've not decided on it yet, it's still a massive maybe.

Bee It's your decision and I will support you - whichever way you decide to go.

Ver Thanks Bee. I've missed you.

Bee I've missed you too.

ELEVEN

Ver I was a drop in the ocean
Insignificant
My mission –
To never make a mark

I was a single blade of grass
One in a million
My mission –
To not stand out

I was me
But in lowercase

I am still me
But capitalised

I am the first drop of rain
On a dry street

I am a tree in a field
Strong and unmoving

I allow myself to stand out
I allow myself to speak

–End of Play–



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"We are delighted to support Litfest 2023.

We have always invested in the district's young people, helping them to achieve their creative aspirations and ambitions, and Litfest provides an excellent opportunity for this to happen. It offers young people the chance to explore creative industries and develop their imagination, through writing, directing and performing original works inspired by local culture. We hope this will inspire the next generation, to create and sustain confident creative communities within the Wakefield district."



Creative Minds

Thank you to Creative Minds for their support with the project



Illustrations by Alise Germova



Special Thanks

Thanks to
The Mechanics Theatre for hosting
 the festival and to **Hatch, Long Division,**
Theatre Royal Wakefield, Wakefield College,
Wakefield Libraries, Wakefield Museum and
Yew Tree Youth Theatre for inspiration.