

*As I Lay Dreaming*

*(Draft)*

*Our flesh is easily worn out: but in being so clearly subject to time and accident it reminds us of what we truly are.*

*John Gray  
Straw Dogs*

*On our planet, the presence of nature, the enchantment of being, and the feeling of transience all go together. Every day is precious because this earth goes through its seasons, and every season might be our last....*

*Czeslaw Milosz  
A Book of Luminous Things*

## Characters

### **Ghost Girl**

**Kate**

*Twenty-five*

**Seb**

*Seventeen*

**Tom**

*Twenty-six*

**Simon**

*Twenty-eight*

**Johnny**

*Twenty-eight*

**Temple**

*Nineteen*

**Ben**

*Nineteen*

**Tiff**

*Fifteen*

**Minnie**

*Fifteen*

**Beth**

*Fifteen*

**Lou**

*Thirties*

**Amy**

*Ten*

**Mia**

*Nineteen*

**Marco**

*Thirties*

**Josie**

*Thirties*

**Virgil**

*Twenty-six*

**Jack**

*Twenty-seven*

**Christian**

*Twenty-six*

*Suggested Doubling for a cast of nine – five women and four men.*

**Female**

Ghost Girl

Kate/Mia

Josie/Minnie

Temple/ Tiff/ Amy

Lou/ Beth

**Male**

Seb / Christian

Johnny / Jack

Ben / Simon / Virgil

Marco / Tom

*No punctuation at the end of the line means the thought is not finished or the dialogue is interrupted.*

*A slash ( / ) can mark the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue.*

*Pauses are active, allowing for the development of unspoken communication between characters.*

*Brackets ( ) around a word mean it is unspoken but thought.*

## 1 GHOST GIRL AS I WAS DYING

**Ghost Girl** *emerges from the darkness and speaks into a microphone.*

**Ghost Girl** As I was *dying*, I saw black bats twirling beneath the stars  
And a babe being born in a burnt out car  
As I was dying, I saw silver fish flapping on muddy banks  
While a woman stood singing on top of a tank  
As I was dying, I saw children holding guns steady above their  
heads  
Firing shots at a town lying quiet like the dead  
As I was dying, I saw a man walk air between two flaming trees  
And ten bloodied women falling to their knees  
As I was dying, I saw a thousands heads bend to a single bell  
And an old man dance rain in an concrete cell

All this I saw, on a dark night, in the moonlight  
From the banks of a river, on the banks of a river

*The characters step into light as they join **Ghost Girl**. As they speak **Ghost Girl** will join in with some words, or underscore with hum.*

**Seb** As I lay *sighing*, I heard a hundred twisted tongues chant words of  
doom

**Kate** I heard green reeds sing songs -

**Tom** - to an angry moon

**Minnie** As I lay *sighing*, I heard whispering words rise up in a dream

**Tiff** And a man run on glass with a silent scream

**Johnny** As I lay *sighing*, I heard the snap of change like a lightening blast

**Virgil&Jack  
&Christian** And the world break in two like a cracking mast

**Marco/Josie** As I lay *sighing*, I heard the past calling out like stampeding cattle

**Lou** While the future was chased by a skeleton rattle

**Temple** As I lay *sighing*, I heard atoms bump together and shoot across the  
sky  
And the sound of a kiss like the wind way up high

**All** All this I heard, on a dark night, in the moonlight  
From the banks of a river, on the banks of a river

**Amy** As I lay *dreaming*, I met a boobook on the hunt for mice and rats  
and my mother calling up dark forests from where she sat  
As I lay dreaming, I met two girls jumping through spotted trees  
And a boy who walked on by with a stick stirring leaves  
As I lay dreaming, I met a man who was reading from a  
windblown book  
And two others who were gutted like fresh fish on a hook  
As I lay dreaming, I met a friend who cried with tears of blood  
And another who wandered by wounded in love  
As I lay dreaming, I met two lovers who sang a star with crossed  
eyes  
And a ghost girl who smiled her dark drowning lies

**All** All these I met, on a dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of a river, on the banks of a river

## 2 DANISH GENES

*Lou, and her daughter, Amy, at the river. Lou drinks. Amy chases a moth.*

**Amy** You're not going to talk politics?

**Lou** No.  
Definitely not.  
But probably.

**Amy** Chloe will be bored.

**Lou** Chloe?

**Amy** This is for her, isn't it?  
She'll be bored.

**Lou** You're using the present tense?

**Amy** Mrs Tetch / says I'm not supposed to know my tenses yet.

**Lou** At least past, present and future, at your age, some sense of the basic order, at / least that.

**Amy** No one else in my class knows.

**Lou** The current educational system is down the tube.  
Fucked.  
Pardon my French.  
I don't want you to come out - not dumbed down.  
Don't want that - I'll fight that.

*Lou drinks.*

**Lou** Besides - I've told you how much Chloe was obsessed by politics, so I think who will be bored, is / someone

**Amy** Are you glad you had me?

**Lou** Of course - I wouldn't be without your – *I'm bored, I'm bored* – it's like airport music, constantly there, constantly annoying, but without it the noise of the big bad world would come crashing in.

**Amy** What?

**Lou** That was me being witty.

**Amy** Oh.

**Lou** Wit is a family trait.

**Amy** Was my Dad witty?

**Lou** You know what I know.

**Amy** Danish student.

**Lou** Yes.

**Amy** I need more than Danish student.  
Danish student is nothing.

**Lou** We've discussed this how / many times?

**Amy** Tell me, Lou.

**Lou** According to the data he was brilliant at sport.

**Amy** And?

**Lou** I thought it wouldn't hurt you to have sporty genes.  
But the Danes are not known for their wit, so that's from me.

**Amy** About him.

**Lou** Your drawing doesn't come from me – he's given you that.  
You probably have good chair designing genes, along with the sporty ones.

**Amy** Will I be able to look him up one day?

**Lou** If they change the laws.

**Amy** What do you think he'd be doing right now?

**Lou** Right now, he'd be in a little wooden hut by a lake.  
Elk Lake it would be called.  
He'd be having a sauna - he'd be getting hot and he'd be thinking,  
any moment now and I'll run out and jump into the lake.  
The weather is minus 30, the lake is iced over, but a hole has been  
cut in it, and your father is thinking I'll run out there and jump in  
and then get out and beat my chest a bit, ha, ha, good Danish plan.

And then I'll go donate my sperm to make a hundred more babies.

**Amy** Mrs Tetch says you're frightened to make my father human.

**Lou** Why would you be talking to Mrs Tetch about your father?

**Amy** Because I'm the only IV in the class and the class is interested in my case.

**Lou** No – she's not to do that – she's not to turn you into a / specimen.

**Amy** I don't mind.  
There are five in the year below but I'm the only one in / my year.

**Lou** You wait until I talk to Mrs / Tetch.

**Amy** No - please no.

**Lou** I'm going to / talk to

**Amy** If you do I won't tell you anything ever / again.

**Lou** Don't.

**Amy** You have to promise not  
You're not to talk to / Mrs Tetch.

**Lou** I'm not going to / promise.

**Amy** If you don't I'll - what I'll - this is what I'll - NO / LOU!

**Lou** Okay – Okay! - but if I promise, then you have to promise to steer her off the topic of your father.

**Amy** Why?

**Lou** I don't like her making you into a specimen.

**Amy** Why?

**Lou** Because it's complicated.

**Amy** Why is it complicated?

**Lou** Because Danish sperm cells are complicated.  
Although, it has to be said, Danish furniture is very uncomplicated.

### 3 AN ACCIDENT

*Virgil and Jack wait by the river.*

**Virgil**        The river looks like shit.

**Jack**         Yeah.

**Virgil**        Should clean it up.

**Jack**         Can't clean it up, this bit is at the end of the line, all the other bastards fuck it up and this is how it / ends up.

**Virgil**        Still should clean it up.

**Jack**         Every city has its dirty river.

**Virgil**        Ours isn't dirty.

**Jack**         Been down to our river lately?

**Virgil**        No.

**Jack**         Ours is just as dirty.

**Virgil**        -

**Jack**         -

**Virgil**        Where the fuck is he?

**Jack**         He's always / late.

**Virgil**        I don't like the way he does / business.

**Jack**         Don't start.

**Virgil**        I'm not / starting.

**Jack**         We get the money /and go.

**Virgil**        I'm not disagreeing.

**Jack**         -

**Virgil** -

**Virgil** So when do you go?

**Jack** Go?

**Virgil** Down to our river?

**Jack** Fishing.

**Virgil** Fishing? You never said?

**Jack** No.

**Virgil** You're not the fishing type.

**Jack** Apparently I am.

**Virgil** I'll look at you anew now ... fishing!

**Jack** Since I was a boy - with my grandfather - he'd take me.

**Virgil** Yeah?

**Jack** Now I go on my own.

**Virgil** Must enjoy it.

**Jack** I do.

**Virgil** I've never heard you talk about it – not once.

**Jack** You know I like fish.

**Virgil** Eating fish.

**Jack** It's a solitary thing, fishing.  
I always think of him - I guess that's part of it.

**Virgil** I like that - respect.

**Jack** Not ... he meant a lot to me.

**Virgil** -

**Jack** -

**Jack**           What?

**Virgil**           Nothing.

**Jack**           -

**Virgil**           -

**Virgil**           See, but respect, that's why I can't get my head around what / he got us to do.

**Jack**           An envelope in the safe that's all I knew.

**Virgil**           He never told you / whose place it was?

**Jack**           It's a job – we get paid.

**Virgil**           But it's wrong, to do that, to set that up, when it's / your own -

**Jack**           No one was meant to be / home.

**Virgil**           But someone was home.

**Jack**           Don't / start.

**Virgil**           He should have told us about *her* - informed us of the/ variables.

**Jack**           To him it's a detail we don't / need to know.

**Virgil**           How can it be a *detail*?

**Jack**           He doesn't think like other - that man is ice - colder than the artic.

**Virgil**           It's fundamental / information.

**Jack**           Don't make it worse / than it -

**Virgil**           I'm not making it *worse* than - what just happened, that / was -

**Jack**           An accident.

**Virgil**           Can't get any *worse* / than that, this is a nightmare, as of thirty-two minutes ago we are walking around in a nightmare - don't you think – straight?

**Jack**            Straight?  
**Virgil**           Straight.  
**Jack**            -  
**Virgil**            -  
**Jack**            This is a nightmare.

#### 4 REMEMBERING CHLOE

*Josie and Marco, walking down different paths, see each other.*

**Josie**            You're here.

**Marco**            Yes.

**Josie**            But I thought you / weren't?

**Marco**            I thought you / weren't.

**Josie**            Do you want me / to -

**Marco**            No, I'll -

**Josie**            No.

**Marco**            No?

**Josie**            It should be me.

**Marco**            Okay.

**Josie**            But see, this is, why did this happen, when I said not the two of us, we can't both go, not this year, and then you said you weren't?

**Marco**            I said that?

**Josie**            Yes.

**Marco**            Oh yeah, I said that but then you said, *I thought you'd be keen*, and so I thought, yeah, okay, maybe I will go.

**Josie**            You came because I said I thought you'd be keen?

**Marco**            Yeah.

**Josie**            -

**Marco**            -

**Josie**            -

**Marco**            Does it matter?  
Now we're here we might as well both go.

**Josie** -

**Marco** We could just be adult about this.

**Josie** Don't you think you'd find that difficult?

**Marco** -

**Josie** I'll go.

**Marco** I'm leaving at ten if that makes a difference.

**Josie** How come?

**Marco** I'm meeting my new – Mia, I'm meeting her here.  
Not here here.  
We're going out with her sisters – it's a family thing.

**Josie** -

**Marco** But not until later - after ten.

**Josie** This night is, this is for Lou and us to remember / Chloe.

**Marco** I / know.

**Josie** Mia shouldn't even / be -

**Marco** She's not coming, she's not / joining.

**Josie** It's for those who knew / Chloe.

**Marco** She's phoning me at ten, I'm meeting her at the / bridge.

**Josie** Mia didn't know Chloe.  
Mia was like ten or twelve when / Chloe -

**Marco** Josie, you win over Mia any day.

**Josie** Why did you say that?

**Marco** It's true.

**Josie** You can't say stuff like / that.

**Marco** But you're glad I said it?

**Josie** Bet you haven't told her that.

**Marco** No.

**Josie** You can't - this is - just don't - you keep blurring everything.

**Marco** Sorry.

**Josie** And you're going to a family / whatever, you can't say things like that and then be going to / a family whatever.

**Marco** I left you a message.

**Josie** What message?

**Marco** You didn't get it?

**Josie** What message?

**Marco** I've left you at least five in the last two weeks.

**Josie** *Five?*

**Marco** On your mobile.

**Josie** -

**Marco** It'll be your mother.

**Josie** It won't be my mother.

**Marco** Yes.

**Josie** No - she wouldn't touch my mobile.  
It'll be -I don't know what / it'll be.

**Marco** I don't know why you went back home to live.

**Josie** You're not bullshitting me?

**Marco** No.

**Josie** -

**Marco**      Do you want me to go?

## 5 THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

*Kate and Seb are walking to the river. Kate has a paint bag filled with large white stones.*

- Kate**           Fucking / shit!
- Seb**             Stop.
- Kate**            You can't just walk out - not onto a / road.
- Seb**             I didn't mean -
- Kate**            What happened back there - dead, you should be /dead!
- Seb**             Can we forget / it?
- Kate**            Going out with you/ is dangerous.
- Seb**             This is not *out*, this is not what I call / *going out*.
- Kate**            You call me unstable but / you're
- Seb**             Because I don't know why.
- Kate**            (*She begins to lay stones in a ring.*) To burn, I told you.
- Seb**             See, yes, only, this is it, because you were the *one*, not / him.
- Kate**            I was not - I was / not the *one*.
- Seb**             He said / you -
- Kate**            He wants to own - possess, he said - actual words - you can't / possess.
- Seb**             He says that but does he mean - people say things they don't / mean.
- Kate**            Of course he / means -
- Seb**             It's what they *do* / that -
- Kate**            You an expert on relationships now?
- Seb**             I like him - he's the / first one of your boyfriends that -

**Kate** Like?

**Seb** You can trust / him.

**Kate** Trust someone who gets jealous of a person that is not real.

**Seb** That / was -

**Kate** And he walked out in the middle of an argument.

**Seb** He was upset / maybe.

**Kate** I'm not going to talk about - you wanted to come with me, do / something!

**Seb** Do something, yes, interesting, I meant - grab dinner, maybe, a / movie, maybe.

**Kate** Can't eat - except bananas, I can eat bananas.

**Seb** We haven't had Thai in ages - something strange about a person who suddenly stops eating food cooked by / anyone but themselves.

**Kate** You could have killed us back there - it's not just you, you know. There are other people in this world with you.

**Seb** What?

**Kate** So start looking - one way, then the other - year one they teach that - or you'll end up a quadriplegic.

**Seb** And if that ever happens I want you to finish it for me.  
A needle - or if not a needle, smother - actually smother is better but dope me up first.

**Kate** Don't talk rubbish.

**Seb** No, I mean it - if I become a quadriplegic, I'm asking you.

**Kate** Fuck off.

**Seb** What?

**Kate** Ask someone / else.

**Seb** You're the only one I can rely on.

**Kate** Mum, you can rely / on mum.

**Seb** Not for something like / that.

**Kate** It's me for murder is it, me / reliable for murder?

**Seb** It's not murder.

**Kate** Because if it is, you don't know me at all.

**Seb** If I want it, it's / not -

**Kate** What you just asked me - it's life we're talking about - life / is something -

**Seb** Death, actually.

**Kate** If a quadriplegic person heard you say / that, they'd feel -

**Seb** So what would you want, if you / became -

**Kate** Being disabled isn't the worst - Stephen Hawking.

**Seb** That is so - that's not in the real world - he's a genius.

**Kate** I'm a genius.

**Seb** No.

**Kate** Might be - soon.

**Seb** What if Dad became a quad?

**Kate** Dad?  
I don't have a Dad - Dad died, remember?

**Seb** He came into the pub.  
Dad came / into -

**Kate** You mean our mother's ex husband?

**Seb** He came on a night I was / rostered off.

**Kate** Get too hot for him up in tropical paradise?

**Seb** He was asking questions about / me.

**Kate** How does he, *fuck*, how does he know where you work?

**Seb** Mum.

**Kate** Why did she tell him where / you - we've told her not to.

**Seb** He left me a note – he wants to / meet up.

**Kate** Handwritten?

**Seb** What?

**Kate** Must have taken it out of him – all / that effort.

**Seb** He wants to meet both of / us.

**Kate** No.

**Seb** Kate.

**Kate** What gives him the - he can't just disappear for all / that -

**Seb** I know but -

**Kate** - without a word, and then turn up and expect - fuck no.

**Seb** Did you burn all your photos of him too?

**Kate** You're going to meet him, aren't you?

**Seb** Haven't decided.

**Kate** If you do, I don't want to know.  
He'll want money - he's worked out you're earning.

**Seb** Part-time.

**Kate** Does he care?

**Seb** Maybe he wants to see me.

**Kate** You wish.

## 6 THE FORBIDDEN

*Tiff and Minnie, in school uniform, in the park. They've been running.*

**Tiff**           And Leah told me.  
                  Straight out.  
                  No blinks.  
                  So she wasn't lying.  
                  No looking down.  
                  She said he was -  
                  You know.  
                  Both of them.

**Minnie**       And you believe her?

**Tiff**           No blinks.  
                  No look down.  
                  She said it while we were in line, waiting to go into the hall.  
                  Straight between the eyes.  
                  Her eyes, my / eyes.

**Minnie**       I can't / believe  
                  So Leah knows about Beth but Beth / doesn't -

**Tiff**           That's it.

**Minnie**       Beth.  
                  I can't believe she'd / even -

**Tiff**           Ssh.  
                  I think.  
                  That could be her / now.

**Minnie**       No, her solo remember, it's not until the second half.  
                  She can't leave until / then.

**Tiff**           Why can't she just nick off like we do?  
                  She always has to have an excuse.  
                  *"Sister Alphonsis I am so ill."*

*Tiff makes gagging noises.*

**Tiff**           Miss I-Am-Good.

**Minnie**       That's just it.  
                  Beth is good.

*Tiff gets out a cigarette and lights it.*

**Tiff** She acts good - like she's so pure.

**Minnie** She is though, not pure but -  
Are you going to tell her about him and Leah?

**Tiff** Are you mad?

**Minnie** I think you have to tell Beth about him and Leah.

**Tiff** I can't.

**Minnie** You do - have to.

**Tiff** Beth doesn't know that we know about him and her, so how can I  
tell her about him and Leah?

**Minnie** Oh.

**Tiff** See.

**Minnie** Forgot.

**Tiff** Major flip out from her if she finds out we know.  
Miss Private - Miss I-Never-Gossip-About-Anyone.

**Minnie** She doesn't.

**Tiff** -

**Minnie** -

**Minnie** Not to trust us - that's - that's / disappointing.

**Tiff** Would you trust / us?

**Minnie** Yes.  
I would.  
I keep secrets / really well.

**Tiff** I wouldn't keep that secret.

**Minnie** You would if she / asked.

**Tiff** I wouldn't want to know.

**Minnie** But you do know.

**Tiff** If I had a choice I wouldn't want to know.  
It's too sordid.

**Minnie** Is it sordid?

**Tiff** More than sordid.  
Think what it must be like.

**Minnie** -

**Tiff** -

**Minnie** Do you think he's told her he loves her?

*They burst into laughter.*

**Tiff** She's been lying to everyone, not / just us.

**Minnie** I don't mind the lying to others, more the not telling, to / us.

**Tiff** I mind the lying.  
Absolutely, I mind the lying.  
You have to mind the lying.

**Minnie** But why did it - how did it - that's what I want to know.

**Tiff** Doesn't matter how, doesn't / matter why.

**Minnie** I think it does / matter.

**Tiff** We can't say anything.  
We can't get involved.  
It's not - you're not to say anything.

**Minnie** I won't.

**Tiff** No, but promise.

**Minnie** So we just / act -

**Tiff** Like we don't know anything.

## 7 THE NIGHT SKY

*Temple and Ben lying on the grass drinking from a bottle of ouzo. They're both a little bit tipsy.*

**Temple** How different would it feel if we slept outside every night?  
If we saw that sky last thing before we slept and first thing before  
we woke.

**Ben** Different.  
It would feel very -

**Temple** I used to sleep at the end of my bed.  
When I was a kid.  
I'd turn around.  
With my head like this.  
With the window open.  
To see the stars.  
Warm nights, with the breeze blowing.  
Cold nights too.  
I'd pull the doona up so my face was mostly covered, and I'd peer  
up.  
To see the universe.  
It / was -

**Ben** You don't do that now?

**Temple** Different room.  
Different house.

**Ben** Oh.

**Temple** I can't see the stars from my window now, there's a verandah in  
the / way.

**Ben** I was /thinking -

**Temple** It's a nice room but, sorry what?

**Ben** I was.  
Um.  
I - yeah, I can't see the stars from my window either.

**Temple** What can you see?

**Ben**            Trees.  
All these trees, just the trunks of them, like they are waiting  
outside for me.  
Or sometimes I think of them as soldiers standing guard over me.  
Friendly soldiers.  
I like them.

**Temple**        Trees are good.

**Ben**            So what's outside your window now?

**Temple**        My frog pond.  
I have this pond with turtles and frogs.  
I hear more than I see.  
*Croak, croak.*

*Temple stares up at the sky again.*

**Temple**        Look at that.

**Ben**            You know people in the northern hemisphere see more of one side  
of the sky and we see more of the other.

**Temple**        This is news in the literary world?

**Ben**            So it can't be some universal symbol because it depends on where  
we are.  
Context.  
How we see.

**Temple**        It's good to get that established.

**Ben**            But even when we do see the same thing, we don't, because we see  
this same thing *differently*.  
If I look at you I see Temple, someone else looks at you and sees a  
different Temple.

**Temple**        You know, I worry for you.

**Ben**            We think we know people but we don't - not ever – not really.

**Temple**        I do worry for you.

**Ben**            Why?

**Temple** You're the type that in a year or two you'll do something that will surprise us all.

**Ben** Such as?

**Temple** Something unexpected but not good maybe.

**Ben** What?

**Temple** You'll get some illness where your mind worries over something obscure, something netted up in human nature, a problem that can't be solved, or doesn't need to even be a problem.

**Ben** I'm not saying it's a problem, I'm just making an observation about how we assume we see the same, so often, but we don't see the same.

**Temple** What do you see now?

**Ben** I see you.

**Temple** No, but what do you see?  
Tell me.  
We all see *differently* but what do *you* see?

**Ben** I see brightness.  
I see aliveness.  
I see a little scar above your right eye.  
A fine line.  
And beneath it eyes that are earth and tree mixed together.  
I see trust.  
I see wilfulness.

**Temple** That's too much already.

**Ben** Why?

**Temple** You can't see all that.  
It's fiction.

**Ben** No.

**Temple** Not so soon.

**Ben** Sooner.

**8 GHOST GIRL**  
**A CHILL IN THE AIR**

*Ghost Girl speaks into a microphone.*

**Ghost Girl** In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

And one will stay with me tonight  
One will leave this life tonight

In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

So now they are met, or still on their way  
Some wishing to go, one certain to stay  
Nine twenty-seven is still far away  
At nine twenty-seven I'll have my say  
All we have now is a chill in the air  
All we have now is a sigh and a dare  
But all is not set, for no one can see  
The way ahead, of what will be

And one will stay with me tonight  
One will leave this life tonight

In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

*Ben, Tiff, Josie, and Seb walk out and stand with Ghost Girl*

**Josie** At nine twenty-seven, I see dark water, I know the danger  
**Ben** At nine twenty-seven, I'm in the river, the mysterious river  
**Seb** At nine twenty-seven, I hear black bats, screaming out overhead  
**Tiff** At nine twenty-seven, I smell the earth, and it smells of the dead

**Ghost Girl** But it's not time yet, it's only eight-thirty

In the dark night in the moon light  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

## 9 DO YOU FEEL IT?

*Seb carries some sticks in his arms.*

**Johnny** Don't see any.  
You're right.  
None here.

**Seb** This is all I've been able to get.

**Johnny** Gardeners.  
Clean up.

**Seb** The gardeners here, they do a good - I don't know them, personally  
I don't know them, but from what I can see, they do a good - they  
clean up really well.

**Johnny** I guess they do.

**Seb** It's to have a fire.  
I'm not an arsonist.  
I wouldn't want you to think - not to get that impression.

**Johnny** It's summer?  
Hot?

**Seb** She - it's not my fire.  
Not my fire at all.  
She likes burning things.  
My sister.  
Actually, she's the arsonist.  
Except she burns people.

**Johnny** I can relate to that.  
Family.

**Seb** I mean family, right.  
You love them.  
But sometimes when they do - when they go off the deep end -  
they say things and those things they might not be true.  
They often aren't true.  
And - anyway I don't want to think about family.

**Johnny** Sometimes you just need to let go of the shit.  
Know what I mean.

**Seb** I do.  
I really do.  
I really do know what you mean.

**Johnny** Yeah?

**Seb** Yeah.

10 THE UNRELIABLE PAST

*Lou, Marco, Amy, Josie. The adults have been drinking.*

- Josie** (To Amy.) Chloe, your mum and Marco.  
Three.  
Like that.  
Tight knit.  
No one could break them apart.
- Amy** Except you?
- Josie** No, not me.  
Not then.  
I was uncool.
- Lou** You were not.  
She was not.
- Josie** I was from the country.  
I knew how to ride a horse and how drive a truck.
- Amy** Cool.
- Josie** But stuff like that was very uncool.
- Marco** Don't believe her, she is completely unreliable when it comes to remembering the past.
- Josie** I remember the important things.
- Marco** The first day I noticed Josie, she was asking Chloe which one of the Marx brothers Karl was?
- Josie** You always bring that up.
- Marco** Because /it's funny.
- Lou** I've never heard that.
- Amy** Which one / is he?
- Josie** Yes, you have.  
Because it makes me look dumb.  
That's why you love / that story.

**Lou** Chloe made everyone look dumb.

**Amy** Lou?

**Marco** Not dumb, innocent.

**Josie** Passive then.

**Amy** Lou!

**Lou** Marx Brothers - funny men on film, before your time - and Karl Marx, political philosopher, someone the liberal voting Mrs Tetch would / hate, despise actually, so you won't learn about him for many years yet.

**Amy** She voted greenpeace, Lou.

**Josie** Who is Mrs Tetch?

**Lou** Her teacher who is insisting on talking about her conception -

**Josie** Really?

**Amy** Not *really*.

**Lou** - even though the school specifically made it a rule that issues like adoption and IVF were not to be discussed without / parental approval.

**Amy** It's not like that.  
Lou, I'm not a specimen remember.

*Amy gets up and walks away.*

**Josie** Actually Chloe was sweet.

**Lou** That's difficult to imagine.

**Josie** She sat me down and gave me a biographical run down of Karl Marx, and then went on to talk about his ideas, and then went on to give me a biographical run down of the Marx Brothers, and then went on to talk about how their humour was revolutionary.

**Lou** That's so Chloe, that's funny.

**Marco** Not passive, innocent.

We were all like that once.  
It's just that I got to see you lose your innocence.

**Josie** Not see, you were an integral part of the process.

*Mia enters. Lou sees her first, but hasn't met her, so is looking at her expectantly, waiting to see what she wants. One by one, the other three turn around.*

**Mia** I'm early.  
Sorry, but - the bus got in early and I thought - I was walking and then I thought I might just - am I interrupting?

**Lou** Mia?

**Mia** Yes.

**Lou** Mia.  
Hello.  
I didn't / know -

**Marco** We were going to meet up later.

**Mia** I was going to ring but then my battery is flat.  
And so I just - I walked along thinking if I found you I found you.

## 11 WHY HERE?

*Tom and Kate.*

**Tom** What is this?

**Kate** I can't believe he told / you.

**Tom** 'Had enough.'  
That's what he said.  
You baby / him.

**Kate** He's his own man.

**Tom** Manhood is about -

**Kate** What?

**Tom** Not being babied for one.

**Kate** He didn't say that - you say that.

**Tom** He's had enough madness - that's what he said.

**Kate** -

**Tom** Took me a while to find you.  
Then I remembered here.

**Kate** -

**Tom** -

**Kate** I told him about -

**Tom** Us?

**Kate** Us?

**Tom** Freudian / slip.

**Kate** I know.

**Tom** Think you know -

**Kate** We're going to have a fire.

**Tom** See, this is what I mean, you get him in on your crazy / schemes.

**Kate** Don't say crazy.

**Tom** But it's true, yeah?

**Kate** Why did you / come?

**Tom** Enjoy arguing, enjoy trying to stop you breaking the / law.

**Kate** I've never read that you can't have a fire in a park.

**Tom** You can't.

**Kate** I don't see a sign.

**Tom** Everyone knows you can't.  
It's a known / law.

**Kate** I don't know it.  
In a forest, yes, don't light a fire, bushfire danger, I've seen signs.  
But in a city park, I've never seen a sign.  
Do you see a / sign?

**Tom** It's common sense - don't light a fire in a / park.  
If everyone -

**Kate** But not everyone wants to.

**Tom** Why are we?  
This is stupid.  
This is what I / mean.

**Kate** Sorry, were you busy?

**Tom** Stop it.

**Kate** No, you stop it - I didn't ask you to come.  
You don't even know what I'm burning.

**Tom** What?

**Kate** I can make the future work - I can.

**Tom** Why did you choose here?

**Kate** You know why.

## 12 IF THERE HAD BEEN A DOG

*Virgil and Jack.*

**Jack** I've got you a sandwich.

**Virgil** A sandwich?

**Jack** From the train station.

**Virgil** I can't eat.

**Jack** You haven't eaten all day.

**Virgil** I can't eat.

**Jack** -

**Virgil** He'll find out anyway.  
Does it matter / when?

**Jack** We give him his envelope, get the money and / go.

**Virgil** You think it's over?

**Jack** Yes.

**Virgil** This is not over.

**Jack** -

**Virgil** -

**Jack** I think you should go away.

**Virgil** Me?  
Why me?  
What about him?

**Jack** I'll tell him it will cost more now.  
I'll tell him accidents weren't part of / the plan.

**Virgil** I don't want to / go away.

**Jack** Have a holiday.  
Thailand.

**Virgil** How can I have a holiday with this on my mind?  
She was just sitting there.  
A ghost.

**Jack** She'll be all / right.

**Virgil** There was so much blood.  
I've never seen - well I have seen.  
But not in someone like - not in someone as -  
Do you think they've found / her?

**Jack** We gave them the address.

**Virgil** Should we have stayed?

**Jack** What and said, yeah, we were just here, walking past, door was open, and we came in, for no particular reason, and this accident occurred, oops, and / we're sorry.

**Virgil** I feel like we should have waited with / her.

**Jack** How could we?

**Virgil** This is worse than a nightmare.

**Jack** They will have come by now - they will have taken her to hospital.  
She'll be okay.

**Virgil** But what if she's not?

**Jack** -

**Virgil** What happened back there – that wasn't me.  
I don't do things like that - I have rules about things like that.  
She was just sitting in the dark.

**Jack** All blind people must sit in the dark.  
Besides, she wasn't meant to be home.

**Virgil** Where was her dog?  
All blind people have a dog.  
I can't believe she didn't have a dog- then we would have known someone was home.  
Everyone needs a dog, especially blind people.  
Dogs protect you from things - from accidents.

If there had been a dog none of this would have happened.

### 13 TREE CAVE

*Johnny and Seb enter into a place enclosed by the branches and leaves of a fig tree.*

**Seb** This is amazing, it's like a room, all these branches and leaves.

**Johnny** Wild isn't it.  
You don't ever get wet in here when it rains.

**Seb** Never?

**Johnny** Never.

**Seb** So how did you find it?  
Do other people know?

**Johnny** A few.  
Not many.  
Only one, actually.

**Seb** Wow.

**Johnny** It's a secret place so you have to keep the secret.

**Seb** I'm with the force, or equivalent thereof.

**Johnny** I used to come here when I - but not for a long time now.  
I think it's okay - I think it's okay we're here now.

**Seb** You're sure?

**Johnny** Sure.

*They both start unzipping each other. Johnny stops.*

**Johnny** Shit, how old are you?

**Seb** Wow, you are so excited.

**Johnny** Tell me.

**Seb** Old enough.

**Johnny** Stop that and tell me.

**Seb**           Seventeen.

**Johnny**        Seriously?

**Seb**           Eighteen.

**Johnny**        Seriously.  
And please be more than sixteen, but don't lie to me.

**Seb**           I'm eighteen in about three hours, but I'm seventeen now.  
And this is the best birthday present I can think of.

## 14 NAVIGATING

*Temple and Ben.*

- Temple** We know certain things, like we know that the moon does not generate its own light.
- Ben** But we say moonlight.
- Temple** We think of the moon as being a light source, we know that the sun does not set, we know it doesn't rise.
- Ben** But we say sunrise and sunset.
- Temple** Yes.
- Ben** So, yes, like I said, how we experience the world, despite facts, is deep in our psyche, it's deep in our language.
- Temple** Yes, like you said.  
Okay, so Bohr said, we had to fuck off the old ideas.  
Once quantum got the atom right, then it was like, we have to change, objects don't have definite properties.  
Not until we measure them.
- Ben** Yeah, but we just don't know enough - that was my point.
- Temple** Einstein's point - not your point.
- Ben** Okay, Einstein's point.
- Temple** He said find the hidden variables and quantum theory might make common sense.  
But beyond Bohr, it's true to say that how we measure influences results.
- Ben** Okay, that's what I was saying, about seeing.
- Temple** Or were you saying Einstein thought we could know the universe, like eventually we'll discover what there is to know and *know*, but Bohr is saying, we will only *know* dependent on how we measure?
- Ben** I would love to say that I was saying that - it sounds brilliant - but I can't honestly say that I was.  
Let's go back to the star and moon thing again.  
You like that stars are just hot gas and plasma, you really like that.

**Temple** Because stars are magical, but they are just hot gas and plasma. I like that the magical is not - that the magical is hot gas and plasma.

**Ben** I like that.

**Temple** And the star holds all this information in the particles that make it up – but if the star collapses to form a black hole, all those atoms are sucked into the hole, and all that information vanishes.

**Ben** Nothingness - that's the bit people get so wound up about.

**Temple** As a system loses information, the number of states you need to describe it diminishes, wait long enough and the system reaches a point where no more states can be lost.  
Speaking mathematically -

**Ben** A language I don't speak.

**Temple** - this subset of states is called an invariant set.  
Once a state lies in this subset, it is there forever.  
But thinking about fractals and invariant sets can change the idea that Bohr and Einstein are on opposite sides.

**Ben** I like that idea.  
I don't like conflict.

**Temple** Complex systems are affected by chaos, which means that their behaviour can be influenced greatly by tiny changes.  
According to mathematics the invariant set of a chaotic system is a fractal.

**Ben** And a river system is a fractal?

**Temple** In nature- an example of one.  
The fractal nature of the invariant set matters because if you are just a little bit out, like you might be out when you are navigating to get to a spot on the coastline, then you won't get an answer.  
You have to understand the fractal nature of it all.

**Ben** What does that mean though?

**Temple** We can't predict everything for one.  
The idea of knowing.

**Ben** Wait - isn't that like, obvious?  
We can't know everything - life is mystery.

**Temple** But also, are we asking the right questions?

**Ben** And, are we able to accept mystery?

**Temple** Yes, yes, yes!

**Ben** Because we don't want that, we like to pretend we do, leap of faith, god and all that goes with god, but deep down we think we should *know* stuff.

**Temple** Like the weather – we can predict the tides, so we think we should be able to predict the weather.  
Why the fuck can't the weatherman get that right.

**Ben** Why the fuck can't he?  
I always think that.

**Temple** But the point is we understand the variables of tide prediction better than we understand the variables of the weather.  
We may never be able to predict the variables of the weather.  
What we can say is that it is a system that has random behaviour.  
Randomness, that is what we can predict – all we can predict.

**Ben** I like that - I feel - this feels – random.

**Temple** You didn't predict / this.

**Ben** No / but -

**Temple** You said you knew.

**Ben** I knew those things about you but I didn't predict this.

**Temple** What this?

**Ben** How everything is alive.

**Temple** How everything is tingling.

**Ben** How everything is a smile.

**Temple** How everything is a (kiss.)

15 WE KNOW!

*Tiff, Minnie and Beth, sit on the grass. Tiff and Minnie are smoking.*

**Minnie** (To Tiff.) I love it when your mum comes down Sunday mornings, just in her nightdress, and tells us all that stuff about her friends, like she's one of us.  
It's psychedelic - it's better than TV.

**Beth** She's funny.

**Tiff** What way funny?

**Beth** Good funny.

**Tiff** She tells it like it is.

**Minnie** She does.  
Every detail.  
I'd never be able to get any of that from my mum.  
If it was up to her I'd enter adulthood a complete nun.

**Beth** She says everything, like, straight out.

**Tiff** That's good isn't it?

*Beth breaks off a piece of chocolate and eats it.*

**Minnie** Definitely.  
I wish my mum said things straight out.  
She's like, don't tell your father but...  
That's how she starts every line.  
Don't tell your father, but.  
Don't tell your brother, but.

**Beth** Everyone is different, I guess.

**Minnie** I liked when she told us about your Dad, how they met.  
Love at first sight, that is so -

**Tiff** I hope it works that way for me, that it just happens.  
Why are you looking at me that way?

**Beth** What way?

**Tiff** Like I'm a baby or / something.

**Beth** It's not that.  
Not a baby.  
But you are a romantic.

**Tiff** And you're not?

**Beth** It's not - I don't know.

**Tiff** No, go on.

**Beth** Love - we all believe in love.

**Tiff** Do we?

**Beth** Yes, we do, of course we / do.

**Tiff** You sound like you know *all* about / it.

**Beth** I don't *know*.

**Minnie** She wouldn't / *know*.

**Beth** A feeling, an unknowable feeling.

**Tiff** So you do know?

**Beth** (*To Tiff.*) What about you - do you / know?

**Minnie** I don't - I don't love / anyone.

**Tiff** So, love at first sight - you don't believe in it?

**Beth** I didn't say that.  
But maybe it won't happen that way.

**Tiff** For some people it happens.

**Beth** But when people talk about details - every single detail  
Then I don't - do you believe them?  
(*She laughs.*) It's like they're making up a story for themselves to believe.

**Tiff** -

**Beth** Tiff, I didn't mean your mum.

**Tiff** So you prefer a sordid affair?

**Beth** What?

**Tiff** Sordid and with /subterfuge?

**Minnie** Tiff.

**Beth** No - I didn't / mean.

**Minnie** She's upset.

**Beth** Tiff, I didn't mean to offend you - I'm sorry.

**Tiff** You make out like you're so good - so knowledgeable.  
Don't do that - it's not - that is so / hypocritical.

**Beth** I - I don't know anything, and I'm sorry, I really/ am.

**Tiff** You use sorry as a cover.

**Minnie** Tiff.

**Tiff** We know about Mr P, Beth.  
Or do you call him / Zac?

**Minnie** Tiff.

**Tiff** -

**Beth** -

**Minnie** Beth, we know.  
That's all - we know.

**Beth** What do you know?  
There's nothing to know.

**Tiff** See, even now.

**Beth** No.

**Minnie** Beth, we do know.

**Beth** Know what?

**Tiff** Leah told me all about her and Zac.  
But there is this other someone in Zac's life and she wanted to know about this other someone.  
Quiet Mouse she called you.

**Beth** Leah?

**Tiff** So she knows about you but you don't know about her.

**Beth** This is stupid.  
I don't know what you - this is really stupid.  
Just gossip.

*Beth gets up and walks away.*

**Minnie** What happened to not saying anything?

**Tiff** Hypocritical attitude, that's what happened.

**Minnie** But what if Leah was lying?

**Tiff** -

**Minnie** -

**Tiff** Yeah, well, she certainly is weird enough make up a story like that.  
Fuck.

**16 GHOST GIRL**  
**AN UNEXPECTED CURRENT**

*Ghost Girl speaks into a microphone.*

**Ghost Girl** In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

And one will stay with me tonight  
One will leave this life tonight

On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

The night drifts on in an unexpected way  
Some fearful, some tearful, some still at play  
Nine twenty-seven, I'll have something to say  
Nine twenty-seven is still far away  
When an unexpected current will be sent  
An unexpected current and destiny is bent  
But all is not set and no one can see  
The way ahead of what will be

In the dark night, in the moon light  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

*Marco, Lou, Minnie and Virgil/Jack walk out and stand with Ghost Girl.*

**Marco** At nine twenty-seven the shadows feel like a watery grave

**Lou** At nine twenty-seven the past sounds like rain in a cave

**Minnie** At nine twenty-seven I taste all the wrong that I've done

**Virgil/Jack** At nine twenty-seven I face a world that is a black sun

**Ghost Girl** But it's not that time yet, it's only nine o'clock

In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

17      **UNDRESSING**

*Temple and Ben are running naked through the trees. Temple catches Ben. Then he turns to chase her. A girl in a school uniform, (Tiff), enters. They both stop when they see her. Tiff stares, then she turns and walks away. Ben and Temple stand there.*

**Ben**            We should put / some -

**Temple**        She seemed -

**Ben**            Yes.

**Temple**        But surely she's seen bits / before.

**Ben**            What if she -  
I don't know if / she -

**Temple**        Look at you.  
Don't worry.  
She'll recover.  
Right now, somewhere, elsewhere, people are starving, running  
from bombs.  
Two boobs and a penis can be survived.

**Ben**            When you put it like that.

**Temple**        For a moment civilization seemed so far away.

**Ben**            And all the time it was there, where that light is.

**Temple**        But we could imagine.

**Ben**            Yes.

**Temple**        I'm hot now.

*(She takes a sip of ouzo then passes the bottle to Ben.)*

**Temple**        I hope she wasn't some kind of religious nut that hasn't ever seen  
two frogs copulating.

**Ben**            I haven't seen two frogs copulating.

**Temple**        Then you must come to my place sometime.

**Ben** Is that an invitation?

**Temple** It is.

**Ben** -

**Temple** -

**Ben** Do you ever wonder about living a different life?

**Temple** What kind of different?

**Ben** As in, go back to nature.

**Temple** As in, doing without *things*.

**Ben** Yes.

**Temple** People say, go back to nature, what do they mean?  
What do you / mean?

**Ben** Live a simpler life, no consumerism.

**Temple** So, no books?  
No learning?

**Ben** Definitely not.  
Books are a / must.

**Temple** But you know how people do that, say, go back to nature, not you -

**Ben** Yes, me.

**Temple** Okay, yes you, but also people, generally, say it like it's some ideal, some vision of what life used to be like.  
But when?  
What time are they thinking of?

**Ben** I / wasn't -

**Temple** And what was it like?

**Ben** Busy getting food, I imagine.  
If we're talking simpler.  
Growing things / takes -

**Temple** No, but really like?  
Recreating the past isn't easy.

**Ben** Not recreating the past – not that - but creating the future.

**Temple** Ah – okay – good - because in the past there were different variables.  
I don't want the past.  
What would it have been like for a woman?  
I don't want to go back in time ever.

**Ben** People talk generally but they have something specific / that -

**Temple** Yes, but it's fuzzy thinking.  
Romantic.  
They -

**Ben** Me.

**Temple** No, because you clarified.  
But they, as in the fuzzy ones, don't want to think it through.  
Don't want the logic.

**Ben** Then you don't want to come and live with me in the wilds?  
That's a no.

**Temple** I didn't say that.  
But I'd need some things.

**Ben** Ah.

**Temple** But a book is a thing you buy.  
It's a product.

**Ben** Yes.  
But a good one.

**Temple** It's about being clear.

**Ben** It's about balance.

**Temple** Is it?

**Ben** Balance is not contemplated enough.

**Temple** -

**Ben** -

**Temple** I might do better than you.

**Ben** At what?

**Temple** Living wild.  
Living free.

**Ben** Want to bet?

**Temple** I would do better than you.

**Ben** This is definitely on now.

**Temple** Is it?

**Ben** Definitely.

## 18 NAMING THE PAST

*Seb and Johnny lie looking up through the trees.*

**Seb** This tree's been here for six - from seed, I guess, till now - six hundred years.

**Johnny** How do you -

**Seb** I know trees.

**Johnny** That's impressive.

**Seb** No - I read the plaque in front there.

*Johnny bursts out laughing. Seb does too.*

**Johnny** I know this tree but I didn't know that.

**Seb** Don't you read?

**Johnny** Don't read plaques.

**Seb** White man's legacy?

*Johnny bursts out laughing again.*

**Seb** Was that really -

**Johnny** No.  
Yes.  
Forget it.

**Seb** -

**Johnny** There are signs everywhere now.  
Signs to tell you a bridge is coming up.  
Signs to tell you, you're now crossing the bridge.  
It's assumed that people can't see.  
Can't think for themselves.  
And it drives / me -

**Seb** But you wouldn't have - or maybe you would? - but you said you didn't - know, that the tree is six hundred years old.

**Johnny**        Wouldn't know that maybe, but would know it's old, I can *see* that by looking at it.  
 Would know that I'm about to cross a bridge, definitely would know that.

**Seb**            Too many signs – a Nanna culture.

**Johnny**        That's it.

**Seb**            So when I -  
 I don't know why I said that.  
 It's plaques and things.  
 When I go to the country I see all these plaques.  
 Sturt fought natives.  
 And it.  
 Why does Sturt get the name?

**Johnny**        What do they teach at uni?  
 Because everyone I meet that goes to a uni is so not present.

**Seb**            Sorry?

**Johnny**        Everything is a thing.  
 Something to be put under a microscope.  
 Just be.

**Seb**            Yeah.

**Johnny**        But?

**Seb**            Sorry again.

**Johnny**        I've got to go - I am so late.

**Seb**            Yes, yes, yes - of course.

**Johnny**        Your sister - you must have to - were you celebrating?

**Seb**            Ah, not celebrating - she might call it celebrating but it's so far from celebrating that I can't even get the word out - ce – ce.

**Johnny**        Won't / she -

**Seb**            Worry – yes - she's the best worrier I know.  
 She worries about everything: the world economy, war, past present and future, as has happened, is happening or will happen,

in every country, on a macro level, on a micro level, or in every family.

She worries about American dominance, carrots that taste like celery, Imperial England in post colonial Australia, the farmers in Uzbekistan, the Wilcannia gorge, the ocean everywhere, the bears in Alaska, preservatives in tinned food, the identity of the minority, the wealth of the few, the water currents that affect the weather, the melting glacier, the dismal state of alternative music, the capitalist system and art, the meaning of art, the warming of Siberia and its effects elsewhere, whether I eat lemons and limes in winter.

You get the picture.

It's hard to keep up with what she worries about.

**Johnny** I see.

**Seb** You probably don't but go, you have to go - so go walk into the world and be free.

**Johnny** -

**Seb** -

**Johnny** I'm very pleased to have met you Sebastian - happy birthday.

**Seb** Thank you - I still have two and a half hours before the big event can truly be celebrated.

I think I might stretch out here for a bit and savour my first -

**Johnny** No.

**Seb** What?

**Johnny** This wasn't your first?

**Seb** Yes.

**Johnny** You knew exactly what -

**Seb** I've researched it all - I've just never done it.

It was good though - nothing like I expected.

But what about you?

I didn't ask because you seemed - you were -

**Johnny** Yes, I was.

**Seb** -

**Johnny** -

**Johnny** I've got a confession.

**Seb** Yes, good.  
I love confessions.

**Johnny** I saw you.  
Before.

**Seb** Before where?

**Johnny** You had a stick, but only one stick.

**Seb** Oh.

**Johnny** And when you came along, after, with more sticks, I was  
I didn't know what to think.

**Seb** Nothing to think.  
Best not to think too -  
Just be.  
Someone very wise told me that.

**Johnny** But are you okay?

**Seb** Absolutely.

**Johnny** No, I'm asking.

**Seb** You have to go.

**Johnny** I do have to go, but I want to know before I go, because of what I  
saw.  
You, with that stick, just whacking that tree and then -

**Seb** I can't believe I didn't see you.

**Johnny** So you're okay?

**Seb** More than okay.  
You've cheered me up and chased away all the dark clouds.  
Now piss off, and I mean that in a friendly way, and let me  
ruminate.

**Johnny**

Yes.  
I'm glad.  
Happy Birthday.

19 AMY AND GHOST GIRL

*Amy and Ghost Girl.*

**Amy** But why are you nervous?

**Ghost Girl** Because it's nearly time.

**Amy** Time for what?

**Ghost Girl** Ssh.  
I can't say.  
At nine twenty-seven we'll know.  
Now listen.

*They both listen.*

**Amy** (*Whispering.*) What are we listening for?

**Ghost Girl** A clue.

**Amy** A clue to what?

**Ghost Girl** I can't say.

*The both listen.*

**Amy** (*Whispering.*) I know anyway.

**Ghost Girl** What do you know?

**Amy** I can't say.

**Ghost Girl** Really?  
Do you know?

**Amy** It's something to do with Lou, isn't it?

**Ghost Girl** I didn't think of that.  
Could be.  
Nah – not Lou – she's depressed but she wants to drag it out.

**Amy** -

**Ghost Girl** -

**Amy** How come you're talking to me?

**Ghost Girl** Some rule or other about children and the dead.

**Amy** Even when you are dead there are rules?

**Ghost Girl** Oh yes - rules everywhere - all the time - the universe is obsessed with rules.  
However, the key thing to remember is that there are always things that don't comply.

**Amy** Are you one of those?

**Ghost Girl** Those what?

**Amy** Things that don't comply.

**Ghost Girl** I am.

**Amy** Is that why you're talking to me, because I don't comply either?

**Ghost Girl** Good theory.

**Amy** Is that why you're here - for me?

*Ghost Girl stares at Amy.*

**Ghost Girl** It could be - is it?  
Do you know?

**Amy** I'm not sure I do know.

**Ghost Girl** You may not know, but you might sense.

**Amy** Sense?

**Ghost Girl** You might smell something different on the breeze - sweet.  
Or hear someone calling - softly calling.  
Or you might touch something hard that becomes soft.  
And you'll know that things are in transition.  
You'll know it's time to cross.

**Amy** Cross?

**Ghost Girl** Tonight is the night that someone will cross to be my friend.

**Amy** But you have friends.

**Ghost Girl** Amongst the living, yes, but not amongst the dead.

**Amy** Why not?

**Ghost Girl** Because - because they're all quite depressed - at least the ones on this riverbank.  
Sure, I've been there and I know how they feel - but just because we're dead doesn't mean we can't keep changing.  
I've become a very good listener but as far as friendship goes, for me, it's a two-way thing, not me listening to someone all the time.  
That's not friendship, and then - and then there's the baby.

**Amy** What baby?

**Ghost Girl** She fell in the river.  
Her grandmother stopped to get out a tissue and the pram rolled.  
An accident.  
She cries a lot - the baby.

**Amy** I could come and help.

**Ghost Girl** You could?

**Amy** Would you like that?

**Ghost Girl** Would you like that?

**Amy** I asked first.

**Ghost Girl** -

**Amy** -

**Ghost Girl** Here's a way to find out - think carefully.  
If you could have one thing, like one wish, but only one, what would it be?

**Amy** Does it have to be a thing?

**Ghost Girl** No, it could be a state.  
Like tranquillity for instance.

**Amy** I've got it.  
I've got my one thing.

But if I tell you, you're not to say I'm stupid for wanting it.

**Ghost Girl** Deal.

*Virgil, Jack and Christian.*

- Virgil** Unprofessional, that's all.
- Christian** What difference?
- Virgil** A difference – a big difference.
- Christian** Did you get it?
- Jack** You should have told us who she was.
- Christian** I told you - get the envelope from the safe.  
I told you check it had "Will" written on it.  
All you needed to know.
- Jack** We saw a photo of you on the mantelpiece.
- Christian** A photo?
- Virgil** Several photos in fact.  
It wasn't one, Jack.  
She loves this boy.  
He is loved by this woman.
- Christian** Can I have the envelope.
- Jack** It's an interesting street you used to live in.
- Virgil** Fantastic.  
All those trees.
- Jack** We liked the trees.
- Virgil** Imagine growing up with those outside your door.  
Like a park.
- Christian** Lovely.  
It was lovely.  
Hand it over.
- Jack** The cost of getting it, is what we agreed on.  
But the cost of handing it over, has gone up.

**Virgil** Has gone up.

**Jack** Way up.

**Christian** We had an agreement.

**Virgil** What we encountered - that wasn't in the agreement.

**Christian** Stop fucking around.

**Jack** Something went wrong.

**Virgil** Wrong - I don't think you could say wrong.  
Wrong is like a wrong turn.  
Wrong is like something pissy and little, like when you are a kid  
and you come late for school, or wet your bed or get whacked for  
doing something.  
What happened tonight, wrong doesn't cover it.

**Jack** I'm talking right and wrong - that kind of wrong.  
Something happened that wasn't right.

**Christian** What /happened?

**Virgil** But wrong still doesn't explain it.

**Jack** What would you say?

**Virgil** I'd say something went fucking arse over tit, catastrophically out  
of the atmosphere shit-fuck crazy.

*Virgil walks away.*

**Christian** What the - he didn't touch her, did he?

**Jack** You should have told us she might be home.

**Christian** She's never home.  
Not at that time.  
It's church.

**Jack** You should have told us it was your fucking grandmother whose  
place / we were -

**Christian** I said a woman / lives there.

**Jack** You said woman, but you didn't say old woman.  
You didn't say blind woman.  
You didn't say she's an OLD blind woman, my OLD BLIND GRANDMOTHER and she doesn't have a fucking guide dog, so watch out for that in case she's not at church like she always is.  
You didn't say she sometimes sits in the dark like a ghost.  
So now, if you want the envelope, you are going to have to pay more.

**Christian** Is she alive?

**Jack** You need to pay more.

**Christian** Is she fucking ALIVE?

**Jack** She got a fright.  
That's all.  
A fright.  
And it upset Virgil's sensitive nature.  
And mine.  
We don't like scaring old ladies.  
And we're having trouble getting over your impoverished morals.

**Christian** My - fuck you!

**Virgil** She was in the lounge room, she was in the fucking lounge room sitting in the dark.

**Christian** But the cost of the job doesn't change because she was in the lounge room sitting in the dark.

**Virgil** The whole event is placed in a different context.  
This is all about context.  
We were not aware of the family context.  
We were not aware of the blind context.  
We were not aware of the age context.

**Christian** You are not telling me some - what are you not telling me?

**Jack** She's in hospital.

## 21 TRUTH

*Minnie and Beth by the river.*

**Beth**            It's not true.

**Minnie**        Okay.

**Beth**            There is nothing to -

**Minnie**        Beth?

**Beth**            No.

**Minnie**        But this is me.  
So if you -

**Beth**            No.

**Minnie**        Good.

**Beth**            Good.

**Minnie**        I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry I doubted you.  
I really am sorry.

**Beth**            -

**Minnie**        Definitely no?

**Beth**            Definitely no.

**Minnie**        Have you / ever -

**Beth**            What did I say?

**Minnie**        No.

**Beth**            So no.

**Minnie**        So no.

**Beth**            Okay.  
Yes.  
Okay.

True.

**Minnie** Oh.

**Beth** You do see why I couldn't tell?

**Minnie** Maybe.

**Beth** If I had and it got out.  
Not you /but -

**Minnie** So Leah?  
All that stuff about / Leah?  
All that stuff that Tiff said, is that true?

**Beth** I rang him.

**Minnie** What did he say?

**Beth** It can't be true.

**Minnie** Did he tell you it was?

**Beth** -

**Minnie** -

**Beth** Yes.

*Tiff comes in and stands at a distance.*

**Tiff** Minnie, we have to go.

**Minnie** Come on, Beth.

**Beth** No, you go.

**Minnie** Come on.

**Beth** I'm not going with her.

**Tiff** Minnie – my mum is picking us up at the bridge like now.

*Tiff goes.*

**Minnie** He's a bastard.

Just think of him like that.  
He's a two-timing bastard.

**Beth** I guess everyone at school will know now.

**Minnie** I won't tell.

**Beth** But -

**Minnie** Tiff won't tell.  
I promise Tiff won't tell.  
Leah.  
Only through Leah.  
It doesn't matter.

**Beth** Yes, it does.  
It really does.

**Minnie** He's not worth worrying about.

**Beth** She couldn't be more different than me.

**Minnie** She's a bitch, you're not.

**Beth** I think it was the time I said I didn't want to -  
And then I cried.  
I think he felt I was a baby.

**Minnie** It might not have been that.  
Don't upset / yourself.

**Beth** I was acting like a baby.  
That's what he said.

**Minnie** If you don't get a lift with Tiff how will you get home?

**Beth** I can get a taxi.

**Minnie** Shall I get a taxi with you?

**Beth** No.  
I'll be okay.

**Minnie** -

**Beth** -

**Minnie**        How did it?

**Beth**            What?

**Minnie**        The first time?

**Beth**            Winter.  
I slipped over.  
Remember.

**Minnie**        Your leg.

**Beth**            And he took me to the sick bay.  
No one was there.  
He was so gentle.

**Minnie**        He's a bastard.  
Say it.

**Beth**            He's a bastard.  
Say it.

**Minnie**        No.  
Mean it.

**Beth**            He is a bastard.

**Minnie**        I've got to go.  
Tiff is

**Beth**            So do you see?  
Can you see?

**Minnie**        Yes.  
Okay, yes.  
I'll call you tomorrow.

*Minnie goes.*

*Beth stares at the river.*

22 A TURNING

*Simon and Johnny.*

**Simon** We've missed / the -

**Johnny** No.

**Simon** Yes.

**Johnny** It doesn't start / until -

**Simon** Nine.

**Johnny** We've missed it.

**Simon** So relax.  
No rush now.  
Can't get in.

**Johnny** We must be able / to -

**Simon** Latecomers not admitted.

**Johnny** Simon.

**Simon** Why do you always make me wait.  
I could have gone in on my  
Wasted tickets.

**Johnny** -

**Simon** A hundred different things go through my mind when you do this.  
Are you okay?  
Did something happen to you on the way?  
Will he be one of the 'bashed.'

**Johnny** Something happened.

**Simon** Something always / happens.

**Johnny** Something serious.

**Simon** What?

**Johnny** I was walking here.

**Simon** Unusual.

**Johnny** And there was this guy following / me.

**Simon** Is this true confessions?

**Johnny** He was behind me walking through the park, so I ducked off the path - he went past - and then *I* followed him.

**Simon** Where is / this -

**Johnny** He picked up a stick and started whacking a tree.

**Simon** Maybe he was a fan -

**Johnny** Whacking violently – really violently.  
I went past without him seeing me.  
But then I - I walked back and -

**Simon** Walked back?

**Johnny** I saw him crying.  
He was sitting down and -  
I saw him and then, and then something spooked me, and / I left.

**Simon** Spooked you.  
Since when have you been / spooked?

**Johnny** I felt some – I was so -

**Simon** I'll tell that to Robby.

**Johnny** Don't tell / Robby.

**Simon** He'll love it.  
The operation has given his hero feelings.

**Johnny** Don't tell Robby.  
He'll put something stupid -  
He'll write something in his column.

**Simon** 'Johnny's knee op has turned him soft.'  
Don't worry.  
He'd never write that.

He wants to fuck you.

**Johnny** He doesn't.

**Simon** He does.

**Johnny** Believe me, the football community is -

**Simon** He's a journalist.

**Johnny** But sport.  
The football community is far more conservative than your  
politicians.  
It's not going to / happen.

**Simon** Spooked - what you come up with to weave out of a confrontation.

**Johnny** You're the spin-doctor.

**Simon** Was any of that true?

**Johnny** I didn't make lying my career.

**Simon** Look at what the cat let out.  
But very good.  
Good duck and weave from the master.

**Johnny** No.  
I'm not -  
I'm trying / to -

**Simon** What?

**Johnny** It's just we live -  
We don't notice -  
We're not just being.  
Too busy working out how to turn everything into a presentable  
picture.

**Simon** You know it kills me, doing what I do.

**Johnny** Then don't do it.

**Simon** I've promised Jennings that I'll stick with him until the election.

**Johnny** Fuck Jennings.

Or you know, don't.  
But I think the way we are going -

**Simon** Hold on.  
Are you?  
Fuck - I'm not sure how we got here?

**Johnny** No.

**Simon** -

**Johnny** I'm going back.

**Simon** What?

**Johnny** I've got a bad feeling.  
I have to go back.

**Simon** Spooky.

**Johnny** It's not funny.  
I've just got this strong feeling.  
I'll meet you at the bar.

**Simon** No, I want to see what happens when you have a feeling.  
This is new territory.

*Tom and Kate.*

**Kate** Did I hurt you?

**Tom** Yes.

**Kate** I didn't know that for sure.  
I had hoped.  
But I didn't know for sure.

**Tom** Now you know.

**Kate** -

**Tom** -

**Kate** The night we broke up you said something.

**Tom** Do I get applause for speaking now.

**Kate** You / said -

**Tom** Say a lot of things.

**Kate** You said you loved me.

**Tom** That was wise.

**Kate** No, it / was -

**Tom** Look what happened.  
I say I love you and we break up.

**Kate** But your timing.

**Tom** Timing - what about your timing?

**Kate** Because I said I thought that guy was cute.

**Tom** Yes.

**Kate** But - he's not real.  
He's a fictional character.

**Tom** He is real.  
He's an actor.

**Kate** But it was just / a -

**Tom** It's not the kind of thing you say when someone says I love you.

**Kate** I didn't know you meant it.

**Tom** What?

**Kate** You never say stuff like that.

**Tom** So.

**Kate** And you said it in the same voice you say pass the salt.  
Pass me a beer.  
I love you.  
So I thought, oh, he's being funny.  
And then you said possess – what was that meant to mean?  
And I said, that guy is cute.

**Tom** I was saying something important – the most important thing I've ever said – and you are just this flippant – and possess, not just me possess, we both – it was possess each other – what you were saying, basically was, go shove your - you were saying, you, meaning me, I'm not the one, not what you want, I don't want you, I want this cute man here / and -

**Kate** We're having a baby.

**Tom** We're having -  
What?

**Kate** Don't say pass the salt.

**Tom** We're -

**Kate** Yes.

**Tom** When did / this -

**Kate** Two weeks ago.  
Pregnancy test.  
Then today, doctor.

**Tom** Me - it's me - and you - it's us.

**Kate** What?

**Tom** Does this mean – are you telling me because – Kate, do you love me or what are you saying?

**Kate** I guess.

**Tom** Kate, I guess is not -  
I guess is pass the salt.

**Kate** Yes.

**Tom** Say it.

**Kate** I love you.

**Tom** Say it again.

**Kate** I love you.

**Tom** And we're having a baby.

## 24 IRRATIONAL AND RATIONAL

*Marco, Mia, Josie, Lou. They have all had a fair bit to drink.*

- Marco** It was a necessary - he was a dictator – a monster - end of story.
- Josie** There are dictators everywhere - why aren't we attacking all the other / dictators?
- Mia** Because it was all about oil.
- Josie** That's / right.
- Marco** No, it was not only about oil - the oil fields may be useful but there was a moral imperative.
- Mia** Moral imperative?
- Marco** The motive was to try and bring some order to chaos.  
That is what stable / governments do.
- Josie** How do you know the motive was to try to bring order to chaos?  
You don't know / that.
- Marco** You may not always like it.  
But that's because you're in a safe country.  
Lou back me up.
- Lou** Why Lou?  
I never -
- Marco** You said at the time, he / was a -
- Lou** I said, yes, about him, he was a, but not about the war.  
War is war everywhere.  
The motive is irrelevant, the motive is supposed to justify but I don't believe it can / be justified.
- Marco** He was a dictator that murdered people every day.  
I just happen to think that it's perfectly rational to say that yes,  
here, we have a dictator that is murdering innocent /people -
- Josie** You love that word / innocent.
- Marco** - and we go in and help, we get rid of the dictator.

Tough choice, but someone has to do it.

**Mia** But weren't we doing the same thing by going in.  
We murdered people - we murdered the / innocent.

**Marco** You don't murder the innocent in / war.  
You declare war - the enemy has time to prepare their defence.

**Mia** But we do - we did.

**Marco** And as it happens, it was one of the quickest, cleanest wars in history.

**Josie** I can't believe you said / that.

**Mia** What was clean about it?

**Lou** They used a lot of White King.

**Marco** In terms of war, the amount of soldiers every country lost was nebulous, even now, it's / nebulous.

**Mia** Dirty water - that's what I want to talk about.  
And civilians.

**Marco** In terms of wars that occurred last century – compared - the amount of civilian life lost, overall, was not / huge.

**Mia** There was, for a long time after the cease-fire, contaminated water.  
Dirty water.  
It was not a clean war.  
Hundreds, thousands, died / from dirty water.

**Marco** Stick to the facts / Mia.

**Mia** They are the /facts.

**Marco** It can't be hundreds, thousands.  
That's not a fact.  
They took time solving infrastructure problems, yes.  
But you are not looking at it in context.

**Mia** What context?  
The context that a lot of people / died?

**Marco** A lot - there you go again.

What is a lot?  
What number?  
What you're saying is not rational.

**Josie** Why is it not rational?

**Marco** Because she's not sticking to facts.  
She's being emotive.

**Mia** They are the facts, I don't know the numbers, but I read it today on the internet.

**Marco** The internet is full of all sorts of claims.

**Mia** It was there, in one of the papers, in one of the respected / papers.

**Marco** You need to back up claims with reliable facts.

**Lou** That's very true.

**Josie** Why are you backing him up?

**Lou** Just keeping it interesting.

**Mia** A war isn't just bombs.  
It's about contaminated water, it's about medicines not getting through, it's about people being displaced, it's about chaos, but chaos that we have / created.

**Marco** You're being emotive.

**Josie** Don't be such a bully, she's working from a / series of known facts to discuss an idea about how many people die from the chaos of war.

**Marco** I'm not being a bully.  
She shouldn't enter arguments if she can't hold her own.  
The thing I stick to, through thick and thin in this life, is that we need to remain rational when discussing these kinds of things.

**Josie** Sometimes it's the irrational that gets us where we want to go.

**Marco** Countries need laws - rational laws - the rule of law.  
It brings relative peace and harmony.  
It doesn't even have to be perfect law but it has to apply to everyone.

That's key - everyone agrees and understands the law.

**Lou** I'm with Josie now.  
Irrationality rules.

**Marco** Stop being provocative.  
Give me an example of where being irrational has ever done any good – it just leads to messy arguments – it leads to chaos.

**Josie** You are being too black and white.  
You're saying it has to be this or that.  
But you don't act like that yourself.  
You are not so black and white.  
You're grey, grey, grey.

**Marco** It's rational thought that brings about order.

**Josie** You think you are being rational, you say you are, but -

**Marco** I'm talking about systems.

**Josie** Systems are not independent of people.

**Marco** And they need rational thought – we need rational / thought.

**Josie** Our rationality is based on so much that is irrational.

**Marco** Not when it's for the good – for the common / good.

**Josie** For good, for bad, I'm not sure it's that clear.

**Marco** Give me one example where being irrational has ever done any good, or has been for the good.

**Josie** Love is irrational.

*Marco stares at her.*

**Josie** Hate can be irrational too.  
War - war is always irrational unless you're thinking here's a quick way to solve the overpopulation crisis.  
But if you want an example of where it's good, I don't know if good is the right word, but it's good to be in love, and love is always irrational.

*Marco gets up and walks away.*

**Josie** Oh, so you have lost the argument, so you walk away.  
You are pathetic Marco.

**Mia** Marco?

**Lou** No, Marco - don't – stop - I want you to STOP.

*Marco turns around.*

**Lou** Remember - remember what happened?

**Marco** Lou - that is not connected to this at all.

**Lou** Isn't it?

**Marco** Come on - way back then.

**Lou** You cause a stir and then you walk off when it gets too difficult.

**Marco** No - not always.

**Lou** You stir things up so that everyone is on edge – its like an explosion could happen at any moment – and then you walk off – and then something does happen – it might seem like an accident – but if you hadn't stirred it up – and that night, the night Chloe, you did that, you stirred things up and then you went off in a temper and you weren't there / to – you -

**Marco** I couldn't know what would happen, now you're being / irrational.

**Lou** You were / so full of your own -

**Josie** Lou, you can't blame Marco for Chloe.

**Marco** Me full of – me, stir things - what about you?

**Josie** Okay, he is a pain but it's irrational to blame Marco.

**Lou** Both of us.

**Mia** Can you see that?

*Mia points to something in the river.*

**Marco** Get over it Lou - she was a strong personality.

She was her / own person.

**Mia** See - can you see there?

**Marco** This is irrational - how long ago did this happen, Lou?

**Josie** This is irrational, I / agree.

**Lou** I don't think it's irrational - so what if it was a long time ago.  
You keep doing the same thing so nothing changes.

**Mia** Shut up - see there - see there.

*They all turn.*

**Josie** Is that someone in the water?

**Mia** Are they  
Do you think they

**Lou** Where's Amy?

**25 GHOST GIRL  
BLACK WATER QUIVERS**

*Ghost Girl speaks into the microphone.*

**Ghost Girl** In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

And one will stay with me tonight  
One will leave this life tonight

On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

The black water quivers and sweeps apart  
Nine twenty-seven, is now soon to start  
The water is cold, the river is dark  
Now the current is ready to leave its mark  
The winds whisper, it's nine twenty-seven  
The reeds murmur, it's nine twenty-seven  
A twisting, a turning, the vision is dim  
All that is seen, is a hand and a limb

And one will stay with me tonight  
One will leave this life tonight

In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

*Kate, Mia, Jack, Seb and Johnny, walk out and stand with Ghost Girl.*

**Kate** Nine twenty-seven, I hear a crying from the river

**Jack** Nine twenty-seven, I see a hand lost in water

**Mia** Nine twenty-seven, I see a life quickly passing

**Seb** Nine twenty-seven, I breathe like I am drowning

**Johnny** Nine twenty-seven, I see the future, it's me to blame

**Amy** Nine twenty-seven, for me it's still a game

**Ghost Girl** In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

## 26 A WARNING

*Virgil and Christian sit on the bank. They are soaked through. Jack enters.*

- Virgil** I don't believe this / night.
- Christian** Neither do / I.
- Jack** I don't know why you two went in the river.  
It was clear we were too / late.
- Virgil** Had to do something.
- Jack** But there were already others out there.
- Christian** I'm a fast swimmer - I / thought -
- Jack** Yeah, well, now the police want statements.
- Virgil** Shit.
- Christian** Fuck.
- Jack** They're busy with the others.  
I said we'd be over shortly.  
Now is the time for us to quietly fade away.  
While you were practicing for your lifesaving certificate I phoned  
the hospital - made enquiries - your grandmother, she's fine.
- Christian** She is?
- Virgil** Straight?
- Jack** Straight.  
And now we best be paying up and parting / ways.
- Virgil** I can't / believe
- Jack** Bruised but okay.
- Christian** How did you find / out?
- Jack** Said I was you, didn't I.

*Jack hands the envelope to Christian. Christian gets out his wallet, takes out some wet money. Jack snatches it from his hand. Christian looks at him, begins to walk away, but suddenly stops.*

**Christian**     What hospital?

**Jack**            What?

**Christian**     What hospital is she in?

**Jack**            The religious one.

**Christian**     Calvary?

**Jack**            Calvary.  
And mate, let this be a warning to you.

**Christian**     What warning?

**Jack**            If you don't know mate, then, what can I say.

*Christian goes.*

**Virgil**          What warning?

**Jack**            I don't know.  
Something my grandfather used to say whenever I did something wrong.  
Let this be a warning to you.

**Virgil**          I know what warning.  
Don't piss in your own pocket.  
Shit, fuck, tell you what, I'm just wrapped the old lady is okay.  
She looked like -

*Virgil stares at Jack.*

**Virgil**          It is true?  
What you said, is it true?

*Jack goes.*

*Virgil follows.*

## 27 BIG SHIFTS, LITTLE SHIFTS

*Josie and Marco, wet, have blankets wrapped around them. Police lights flash nearby.*

**Josie**           Where's Mia?

**Marco**           She's gone.  
She decided she didn't want me to come to her family get-together  
after all.

**Josie**           I'm sorry.

**Marco**           No you're not.

**Josie**           -

**Marco**           *(Looking at river.)* Do you think she was trying / to -

**Josie**           Don't know.

**Marco**           No, I don't / think -

**Josie**           Can we ever know?

**Marco**           No.

**Josie**           No.

**Marco**           Like Chloe.

**Josie**           A mystery.

**Marco**           -

**Josie**           -

**Marco**           What I said earlier.  
I meant it.  
About you being -  
Josie, I still -

**Josie**           If we'd been here the night that Chloe -  
Because I've thought this before -  
If we'd been here everything would be different.  
Sometimes that makes me go all shivery.

**Marco**           What kind of different?

**Josie**            It's like a sequence of random events.  
If we'd been here who knows what would have happened.  
Probably, no, I think definitely, Chloe wouldn't have -  
And then you and I wouldn't have -

**Marco**            You don't know that.

**Josie**            I do know that.  
Lou was so furious with us.

**Marco**            And where did all that come from tonight?  
That woman is so -

**Josie**            Contrary?

**Marco**            Contrary, exactly.

**Josie**            She was strange when Chloe -  
Feeling guilty, we said.

**Marco**            We felt guilty too.

**Josie**            Consoling each other.  
That's when we fell in love.

**Marco**            And wasn't that  
That was such a beautiful thing.

**Josie**            Everything turned one way, but it so easily could have turned  
another.

**Marco**            I know what you're saying and I don't agree.

**Josie**            No - it's not in your nature to agree.

**Marco**            Because we don't know what would have happened.  
You were so -

**Josie**            Innocent?

**Marco**            Not innocent.

**Josie**            I didn't see you lose your innocence.

I mean, I must have seen it, but I don't remember a moment when things turned.  
I didn't realise that until tonight.  
I'm not talking about sexual whatever.  
You think so differently now.

**Marco** I'm wiser.

**Josie** Some of the things you said tonight – wow.  
And Mia.  
The way you laid into her.  
Marco, that was -  
If that was for me, to prove something to me about her, I didn't like it.

**Marco** I was stating my case.

**Josie** Oh.

**Marco** You were all ganging up on me.

**Josie** And we are all so scary.

**Marco** -

**Josie** Maybe none of us are wiser.

**Marco** Tonight.  
This is -  
Can we talk?  
Can we go somewhere and talk about us?  
Now?

**Josie** I can talk but I can't promise.

**Marco** Just to talk.

**Josie** That's all I promise.  
Talking.

## 28 LET GO OF THE PAST

*Lou and Ghost Girl. Amy is asleep in Lou's arms.*

**Ghost Girl** No point blaming him.

**Lou** He got you upset then he walked away.

**Ghost Girl** He was always getting me upset.

**Lou** That's what I mean.

**Ghost Girl** You know that had nothing to do with it.  
Besides, he wasn't there when it happened, you were.  
Except you got drunk and fell asleep.

**Lou** I can't help that I (fell asleep.)

**Ghost Girl** So gurgle, gurgle, down I went, but Lou, it wasn't an accident.

**Lou** Of course it was.

**Ghost Girl** I made a decision.  
Not the best decision I've ever made, but it was my decision.

**Lou** -

**Ghost Girl** -

**Lou** Did you even think about how - how it might - how others might be affected?

**Ghost Girl** I wasn't exactly in a cause and effect frame of mind.  
So, give yourself a break.  
Not your fault.  
By the way you look terrible.  
You need to cut down on the drinking.  
What's going to happen to Amy if you don't pull yourself together?

**Lou** I thought it was Amy.  
I ran, Josie was ahead of me. And then - and then - I saw Amy lying here.

**Ghost Girl** Yes.

**Lou** I don't know.  
I feel like I should thank some higher being.

**Ghost Girl** Thank you accepted.

**Lou** I don't mean you.  
I don't believe in a higher being.

**Ghost Girl** You don't mean me, but there you go.  
Maybe I am the higher being.  
Maybe I am lots of tiny atoms drifting through the air forming and reforming.  
Or maybe you are going mad, Lou, and I am a figment of your wild imagination.  
Goodbye Lou.  
I have someone to meet.

*Ghost Girl starts to walk away but then turns back.*

**Ghost Girl** Oh, and it's about time you told her who her father really is.  
It's important to her.  
She knows, deep down she knows, it's not Danish Genes.

## 29 BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

*Simon and Johnny are walking back from the river. In the distance police and ambulance lights flashing. Seb walks towards them carrying sticks. He also has in his hand a small branch from the tree cave, a fig tree branch with lots of leaves.*

**Johnny** I /thought -

**Seb** Didn't you have / to -

**Johnny** I was late.

**Simon** Very late.

**Seb** Oh.

**Johnny** I'm so -  
It's just great to see you breathing.

**Seb** Yeah.  
Likewise.  
It's really good that I can breathe.

**Johnny** -

**Simon** I'm Simon.  
Stood up.  
Almost.  
But not quite.

*Seb realises he has the branch in his hand.*

**Simon** Are you in boy scouts / or -

**Seb** Oh this.  
No.  
But that's funny.

**Johnny** Did you see what happened?

**Seb** No.

**Johnny** Someone drowned.

**Seb**           Someone drowned?

**Johnny**        I thought -  
For a moment I thought -

**Seb**            Was it a woman?

**Johnny**        Was / it a -

**Simon**         Yes, it was a woman.

*Seb starts to run in the direction of the flashing lights.*

**Johnny**        *(Calling.)* I'm -  
It's so good that you -  
I was worried.

**Seb**            *(calling.)* It could be -  
I've got to -

*Seb keeps going.*

**Johnny**        That's -  
That's just so -  
I'm relieved he is okay.  
It just feels good to know that he is okay.

*Simon stares at Johnny.*

**Simon**        You should have told me.  
Where you took him.  
You should have told me the truth.

*Simon walks away.*

### 30 TOM AND KATE

*Tom and Kate sit by the river.*

**Kate** He was going on about Dad.  
He doesn't even remember Dad.  
He was just a baby when Dad left.  
So I told him, I told him who our Dad was.

**Tom** And?

**Kate** Even you, I haven't told you this.

**Tom** What did / you

**Kate** I'm a bad person, a really bad person  
I - I'm not a good person.  
People around me are / good.

**Tom** That's not true, don't tell yourself that -  
Because it's not -  
If you were bad in the way you're talking about -  
You're bad in a funny way, but not bad in a - you're not bad.

**Kate** When they broke up, Mum and Dad, Dad said, I want Kate.  
He said to mum - you can have Sebastian, I can't manage Seb, don't want Seb, but I want Kate.  
And mum said - no way, don't split the kids up, you can visit, I won't stop that, I want them to know their father.  
He leaves and for a couple of weeks we don't see him, then one day, Mum's out, a neighbour is babysitting, but sitting inside watching television, and I'm playing in the garden and Dad walks into the backyard and he says - come on Katy, we're going out, I've told your mum and she says it's okay.  
And I go to run inside the house and put on my shoes, because I didn't have shoes on, and he says - oh, don't worry about shoes I'm taking you to buy some, so we hop in the car and we go to a beach hotel and he buys me some bathers and ice-cream and that night we watch television and he tells me a story as I fall asleep.  
And I have two great, really great days with him - because he could be a good father ... but he's weak.  
So after a couple of days he needs to have a drink, he goes to the pub and he comes back late and he's drunk - he's been like that before, so fine.

And the next day we go to the beach for a walk, I'm asking about mum and he says - Katy, your mum had to go to hospital, she's going to be well, but we have to give her time to get well, you're not to worry, about hospital, it's just one of those things that happen to women.

And I say - am I getting another brother?

And he says - that's it, you're getting another brother.

And I don't worry.

So the week goes on and Dad starts going to the pub more and more often and for longer and longer times, but he always comes back, so I'm not too worried, a bit, but not too much.

And then one night he doesn't come back, and I do get worried, and I don't know what to do.

I'm waking up in the night looking at the clock and worrying - three o'clock, four-thirty, five-thirty.

And in the morning, seven-thirty, eight, I go looking for him on the street, and on the beach, and I go looking in the pub, there are cleaners in there, and I ask if they've seen my dad, and they say no, and they ask where my mum is, and I say on the beach, because I don't want my dad to get into trouble.

And I go back to the motel and I don't tell anyone, because we've had this code of silence about his drinking bouts, not just us, mum too, we don't tell neighbours, we don't tell anyone.

And I'm there for another night - two whole nights on my own.

And the next day I go looking for him everywhere and I'm really panicking now, thinking what has happened, and when I see a policewoman on the street, I go and tell her my dad is missing and she takes me to the police station, asks me lots of questions, and then takes me home.

When Mum finds out Dad left me alone in the motel for two days she packs up our things and we move, and she writes dad a letter and says, he can see his kids but only with her there.

So he knew he could see us - he knew - but he never contacted us again, he never told me where he went for those two days, he never said sorry Katy for abandoning you, nothing until two years ago when he got in contact with mum and said he wanted to see us - fuck that.

And tonight I told that story to Seb, because he didn't know, because when we were young mum said not to damage his opinion of his father because it could have consequences.

But he's old enough now.

And I said, he didn't want you back then so I don't think he'll want you now.

*(Pause.)*

I shouldn't have said it - but I did.

Because I'm not like mum.

I can't forgive Dad.

## 31 BETH

*Beth stands alone.*

**Beth** I was there when they pulled her out of the water.  
I watched.  
She -  
She looked so peaceful.  
Beautiful.  
She was beautiful.  
And even that didn't help her.  
At least it was over for her.  
All the hurt.  
All the pain.  
It was over.

*(Pause.)*

He was like the wind, all around me.  
I couldn't hear anything else when he was near.  
I couldn't feel anything else.  
No pain.  
And that was good.  
Like I was a cloud.  
A cloud on a sunny day.  
I could drift anywhere.  
Just being me.  
No matter what happened in the day nothing hurt me.  
Not when I was with him.  
And I didn't guess at the change.  
I didn't know.  
I don't even know when -  
How that could have happened.  
All I feel now is hurt.  
All I feel now is pain.  
Like it's all coming back at me.  
All that I didn't feel then, when I was with him.  
It didn't go away.  
It was just stored up until now.  
Now I feel it all.

## 32 AMY

*Amy stands alone.*

**Amy** As I lay dreaming I saw the moon race across the sky.  
Some stars got brighter.  
Some dimmed.  
And a wombat came out from its burrow to scratch for food.  
It kept away from the light.  
And a black swan landed on the river and drifted with the current.  
And people did all sorts of things that I can't remember now.  
Only it seemed to me that they did wonderful things.  
Or mostly wonderful.  
As I lay dreaming  
My heart stopped and then it started again.

### 33 BEN

*Ben is wet. He has a blanket wrapped around him.*

**Ben** We were hot.  
And she said, come on, I'll beat you at swimming, at being wild.  
That was it.  
Simple.  
I couldn't stop laughing.  
I saw the future.  
I was nearly there, so nearly -  
We were in the water.  
We raced.  
It was fun.  
She won.  
And then we were just swimming around.  
I was floating on my back.  
She called.  
She was calling.  
Because she was in trouble  
Something must have.  
I don't know.  
She was a good swimmer.  
And I started swimming towards her and I was calling.  
I was saying, hang on.  
And then  
Then she was gone.  
I dived down.  
I couldn't see  
It was murky.  
I felt -  
My hands feeling for her  
I didn't -  
I couldn't find her -  
No where -  
She was gone.  
Everything.  
She was everything.  
And she's gone.  
Not meant to happen.  
Not to her.  
Not to someone like her.

### 34      TEMPLE AND GHOST GIRL

*Ghost Girl and Temple speak into microphones.*

*Temple wet, dripping. Ghost Girl stands with her.*

**Temple**      Just before I ran into the water I saw a circle of white stones.  
And near it was a leaf, on its side.  
The leaf was a brilliant red.  
And the white stones shone in the night light.  
Beautiful.  
Then, in the river.  
Me and Ben.  
The world was a dream.  
And, as I floated, two dragonflies buzzed above the water, one on  
top of the other.  
Copulating.  
It was hot.  
So hot.  
And I thought, this is it.  
No other moment this perfect.  
And too much to drink.  
And exhausted from showing off.  
From winning.  
My feet got tangled.  
I was pulled down.  
And I swam, but I swam the wrong way.  
And I panicked.  
Unlike me.  
Not something I would have predicted.

#### **GHOST GIRL RISING AND FALLING**

**Ghost Girl**    In the dark night, in the moonlight  
On the banks of the river, in the banks of the river  
  
She has left this life tonight  
She will stay with me tonight  
  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river

**Cast**            That is all that we have for you tonight  
A dream that ends in darkness and in light

A dream full of comings and goings  
And all kinds of showings  
A dream full of callings and soarings  
of singing and drinking, and all kinds of thinking  
A dream full of woundings and mendings  
Of rising and falling, of reeling and lying, and all kinds of sighing

In the dark night in the moon light  
On the banks of the river, on the banks of the river