

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

THE LONG FLOOD

Jay Sharpe

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARACTERS:

CHARLIE is lonely (they/them)

JOAN is ignorant (she/her)

~~MICHAEL~~ and ~~JESS~~ are not real (it/its)

NOTES ON THE PLAY

The sound of distant rain is heard throughout the play. When the doors to the flats are open, the sound of rain against a window is heard as well. When the roof door is open the sound of rain is much louder.

The recordings heard from the Dictaphone and journal entries are not taking place at the same time as the events on stage unless stated otherwise.

CHARLIE is a nonbinary character, and should therefore be played by a nonbinary actor.

~~MICHAEL~~ and ~~JESS~~ should appear onstage like apparitions.

‘...’ in dialogue indicates a pause or trailing off.

‘/’ in dialogue indicates being cut off.

Comment [CS(1): Need to decide whether to have all of the recordings and journal entries performed live or have some remain as audio – how will this impact the rest of the dramaturgy and the stagecraft?

Comment [CS(2): Keep the journal entry of JOAN while going upstairs with MICHAEL, and one of the Dictaphone recordings from CHARLIE pre-recorded, and find a way to make the rest of them performed live.

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SCENE ONE

Silence.

Then rain. A drizzle. A downpour. A flooding. Alarms whirr.

The world becomes cut off, far away.

A barren, windowless hallway, with two sets of stairs on either side. One up, one down.

Two identical doors on opposite sides lead into flats.

CHARLIE leaves the right flat.

They walk across the hallway to reach the left set of stairs. They descend.

CHARLIE stands at the bottom of the left set of stairs, looking downwards.

They think for a while. And eventually leave, ascending back up the stairs.

CHARLIE enters the hallway and enters their flat.

CHARLIE enters the hallway.

JOAN pokes her head out of the left door.

JOAN

Oh, going out for a walk, I see?

CHARLIE

No, I'm just...

JOAN

Can't spend all day inside, can we?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Are you?

JOAN

The weather looks nice outside.

CHARLIE

It's rain /

JOAN

I hope you enjoy yourself.

CHARLIE

...Cheers.

CHARLIE leaves.

JOAN closes her door.

CHARLIE descends the stairs and looks downwards.

They think in silence for longer than is comfortable.

They ascend.

They enter the hallway.

They enter their flat.

JOAN leaves her flat, dragging two chairs, setting them down on the left side.

She sits and waits.

CHARLIE leaves their flat.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Oh, hello. Would you like to sit?

CHARLIE

I'm good.

JOAN

Surely, we both need the company.

CHARLIE

I told you, I'm alright.

JOAN

Only for a little while.

CHARLIE

You don't even know /

JOAN

Please would you sit down with me.

CHARLIE

Only for a couple minutes.

CHARLIE sits with JOAN.

JOAN

So where do you go?

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I just go up and down the st /

JOAN

The park is nice this time of year.

CHARLIE

Sure.

Are you okay?

JOAN

I'm as good as I ever have been. Why do you ask?

CHARLIE

You do know that it's rain /

JOAN

The flowers should be blooming soon.

CHARLIE

Sure they will, with all this water they've been getting.

JOAN

Absolutely beautiful.

CHARLIE

Are you...unless I'm mistaken...were you at the square a couple months ago? For the
announcement?

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I never heard of it.

CHARLIE

Everyone did.

How did /

JOAN

Are *you* okay?

CHARLIE

Um...yeah.

Are *you*?

JOAN

Are you...implying...that /

CHARLIE

I never said /

JOAN

No, you did. You think that I'm crazy.

CHARLIE

How can you not know that there's a flood?

JOAN

Stop it.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

We can't leave.

JOAN

Stop it.

CHARLIE

We're going to /

JOAN

Please leave.

Come back when you are feeling better.

CHARLIE

I never said you're crazy.

CHARLIE leaves and descends the left stairs.

JOAN sits alone.

SCENE TWO

JOAN retreats into her flat.

CHARLIE ascends the left stairs and enters the hallway, and then their flat.

JOAN leaves her flat and sits on a chair.

CHARLIE leaves their flat.

The two exchange a brief wave and an obligatory smile.

CHARLIE descends the left stairs. They take out a Dictaphone.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN sips at a cold coffee.

CHARLIE

...

...

Alright...

Okay...

I guess I can talk to you about the weather. It's raining. No sun for a while now, and no sign of it coming back. Sorry if you can hear it. I closed the window.

I found this in the pocket of my suitcase. I remember, my old flatmate gave it over cus she was paranoid it was possessed and recording her while it was off, or something. I might be exaggerating. Anyway, I forgot about it and now I have it in my hands. Or feet. Or I'm currently naked in the bath with a bubble beard, you'll never know.

...

They pause the Dictaphone.

After a couple of seconds, they unpause the Dictaphone.

Anyway, I hope you're good. Actually, I just hope you're not bad. Or that things aren't bad, at least manageable, you know what I mean. But then again what seems manageable can end up being a clusterfuck of problems that never get solved and keep piling and piling (*they realize that they are rambling*) ...

Pause.

Unpause.

You know what I mean.

Things are alright.

A bit.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

The neighbour keeps trying to get me to sit down and have chats with her. It's a little pathetic, but it's something to do I guess. She could talk herself to death for all I care.

Reminds me a little of your mum, but more unbearably clingy.

You remember when she literally refused to give you a key to make sure you came home

before curfew, else she wouldn't let you back in. And how we went back to mine instead and wrapped ourselves in blankets and old curtains, and we did our own Paris runway? Your mum went livid, grounded a 20 year old for sleeping warm. She was awful.

Oh, the neighbour says I think she's crazy.

Fucking crazy.

Am I the crazy one?

She's making me crazy.

She's so miserable.

No, not *miserable*. Shi /

Pause.

Unpause.

Sorry, that was mean.

Now that she's on her own, I can understand why she's so unhappy, if she is. But I don't

know why she's stayed.

At least she's easy to deal with.

I guess the company is good for me.

...

Pause.

Unpause.

Jess...if you're...

Pause.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Unpause.

I...

Hi honey. I wanted to tell you that you finally rubbed off on me. You'll be happy to know I can't stand bending the pages of books anymore. I just can't bring myself to do it. Spines will never be free from my torment though. Sorry to disappoint babe. Your books are safe though, I promise.

Pause.

Static over the sound of rain. Alarms. Flickering lightbulbs. Crumbling walls. Waves bashing into buildings.

Unpause.

The rain won't stop.

When I see you again, we can go swimming.

I promise I can wait. I think.

I fucking hope so.

Finish recording.

The loop continues, taking longer than before.

Sometimes, when CHARLIE re-enters the hallway from the stairs, they are carrying tins or jars of food or water bottles with them.

We hear a voice-over of JOAN's journal entry. She is upbeat.

We also hear the scratching of a pen on paper. The sloshing of ink. The quiet ringing of a hearing aid.

JOAN

Today has been a fantastic day.

I saw the one that lives opposite me again, and had a lovely chat with them. It was very short, but I hope that one day we will have time to sit down and talk for hours. You know how I

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always could once a good topic came up. I remember, with your brother, we got onto the topic of antique dealership and before I knew it 4 hours had passed. I didn't even finish my drink I was so absorbed!

The ringing of the hearing aid becomes louder.

In other news, I ran out of bottled sparkling water this morning. No more bubbles for me unless I can find some somewhere. But I'm sure that I will be reuniting with my bubbles soon enough.

From here onwards, the exchange between CHARLIE and JOAN lasts substantially longer.

Oh, I know. I will ask the neighbour to go shopping with me. It's not that far, and I'm sure we both need supplies here at camp.

Without you here, the home is tidier than it has ever been! You always used to leave your dirty mugs all over the shop, and I remember well how you always folded the towels wrong. I must be going crazy, because now I am folding them like you. It feels so incorrect but I know it makes you happier.

Not really anything else to report here, I'm afraid. But slow living has its charms. Just like you.

A pause. JOAN clears her throat to get rid of the swelling sadness.

On the final loop of this scene, CHARLIE leaves a tin and bottle on the table for JOAN as they go towards their flat.

I'm missing my colleagues. You remember Hannah, how she once dropped our sugar jar and spent a week repairing it? I still have it. She didn't get rid of the cracks but that makes it more beautiful. Age makes it more endearing.

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Anyway, I'm just rambling now.

I love you, darling. See you soon.

SCENE THREE

A hallway. Two chairs sit to the left.

The light flickers quicker above the left staircase.

JOAN enters from her flat. She knocks on CHARLIE's door.

She tries again.

Again.

CHARLIE (*inside*)

Coming!

CHARLIE opens their door.

CHARLIE

It's ... you.

JOAN

Hello neighbour!

CHARLIE

Yes?

JOAN

Well, I'm in a bit of a pickle. See I need to go shopping but I dread going alone.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

You asking for company?

JOAN

Yes, just so I don't get lonely.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

JOAN

What makes you say that?

CHARLIE

You just ... never mind.

JOAN

I'm ready to leave now.

CHARLIE

What are you going for?

JOAN

Oh, I ran out of sparkling water yesterday and need some more. I'm also in need of some dry
shampoo, I think.

CHARLIE

I don't need anything.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Yes, but the company would be lovely.

You can show me where you've been going on those walks of yours. Oh, I would love to see what you've been up to.

CHARLIE

It's nothing exciting.

And don't talk to me like I'm a child.

JOAN

Was I?

You must be getting lonely. I hear you talking to yourself all the time in there.

CHARLIE

Can I have five?

JOAN

Of course. I'll wait right here.

CHARLIE

I mean, might as well use the chairs.

JOAN

Good idea.

CHARLIE retreats into their flat.

JOAN sits down on the closest chair.

The light above the left stairs flickers more quickly.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE comes out of their flat now with shoes and a different top.

CHARLIE

Where are you planning on going?

JOAN

Oh it's not far. Maybe just down a couple?

It's not much I'm after.

CHARLIE

Okay.

JOAN

Is that alright?

CHARLIE

How long do you think we'll be?

JOAN

Oh, just a quick down and up.

CHARLIE

That's fine then.

Do I need anything else?

JOAN

I have my bag.

Let's go.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

And I don't talk to myself. I'm...recording something.

JOAN

What for?

CHARLIE

I'll tell you later.

They both approach the left stairs.

CHARLIE

Do you want a hand?

JOAN

Oh, you think I'm old?

CHARLIE

No. I just ... I got you.

JOAN

Take care of yourself first.

CHARLIE

I go down here all the time. I would have noticed if something was wrong.

JOAN

I'll believe that once you stop doubting my ability to walk down a step.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

I never got your name.

JOAN

It's Joan. Or Jo.

CHARLIE

I'm Charlie.

JOAN

Nice to meet you Charlie.

We really must try and fix this light.

They both descend the left stairs.

The light flickers more and more until it goes out.

It comes back on with CHARLIE and JOAN ascending the stairs.

JOAN's bag is full and she has a lamp over her shoulder.

CHARLIE has their arms full of small décor items.

CHARLIE

You know, I would have stopped at the third random oddity.

JOAN

Excuse me, I made quite the good find in that place down on the 3rd floor.

CHARLIE

Of course you did.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

And we can finally liven up this drab old hallway, here. Bring it back to life.

CHARLIE

They could have bothered to at least put some boring art on the walls.

But apparently beige with a dash of off-white screams sophistication.

You sure we didn't forget anything?

JOAN

Now, don't hate on the beige so much.

And no, I'm sure we got everything for now.

CHARLIE

Where do you want this stuff putting down?

JOAN

Just by the wall. I'll sort it out later.

CHARLIE

You gonna be alright with your bag?

JOAN

Oh yes. It's just water and fruit, it won't kill me.

Oh, put the vase right here for me.

CHARLIE

Oh, um, I have some fake flowers we can put in it. Maybe?

Comment [CS(3)]: From JESS. She got them for CHARLIE as they are terrible keeping plants alive, and wanted the flowers to be a symbol of undying love. CHARLIE thinks it just means it is artificial, but only as a joke and to annoy JESS.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Wonderful idea!

CHARLIE

I'll bring them out when I find them.

JOAN

Thank you, dear.

CHARLIE

Am I okay to go then?

JOAN

Sure.

It was very nice of you to join me. I enjoyed today.

CHARLIE

Glad you did.

I'll see you later.

JOAN

Bye, Charlie.

CHARLIE

See-ya.

CHARLIE goes into their flat.

JOAN goes into her flat, and soon comes back out carrying a small table.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

She places it in between the two chairs, then places the vase on top.

She places some art on the walls, mugs on the floor, a cushion on a chair.

JOAN

Much better.

All of the lights shut off.

The left stairwell weakly flickers.

JOAN

Oh, we forgot to get candles.

SCENE FOUR

A messy hallway.

The light above the left stairs is near constantly flickering.

CHARLIE is heard recording a Dictaphone message through their closed door. They stop and start, repeat phrases and words, make sounds of frustration.

JOAN enters and lights many candles.

She sits and starts to write in her journal. She pauses. She stops.

JOAN gets up and knocks loudly on CHARLIE's door.

CHARLIE immediately stops recording on the Dictaphone.

CHARLIE opens their door.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Yes?

JOAN

Do you want to help me decorate?

CHARLIE

You doing it now?

JOAN

Yes, now.

CHARLIE

You're gonna have to tell me where you want stuff, I'm no interior designer.

JOAN

Well, I have quite the good eye.

And I want this space to feel like it belongs to you as well.

CHARLIE

(pointing at the pile) What first?

JOAN

Get out those mugs and coasters first.

CHARLIE

Your flat?

JOAN

No, no. On the table.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

What's that?

JOAN

It's going in the corner. Covers this mould.

CHARLIE

I think this...might look good over here.

JOAN

See, you're getting into it.

CHARLIE

(unsure) Yeah.

You sure you need me?

JOAN

You always try to leave as soon as you can. What is so important that it can't wait? Your walks can certainly wait.

CHARLIE

I just like routine.

JOAN joins in properly with the decorating.

CHARLIE follows her lead.

JOAN

I get the feeling that you like to hide, and that you're stuck.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I know how you feel.

But now is the perfect time to think on the past, and reflect.

CHARLIE

I'm finding that hard.

But you're kinda right, Jo.

JOAN

Try. Do you want to with me?

CHARLIE

What good does it do?

Do you want this anywhere specific?

JOAN

You decide.

Trust it . Things will be better again.

Oh...I wouldn't have...doesn't really fit with the rest but...okay, I like it.

CHARLIE

We've been thinking that for a long, long time.

Thank you, me too.

JOAN

Pessimism never got anything done.

We wouldn't be decorating if we thought it was going to be destroyed.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Is ignorance the same as pessimism then?

JOAN

What?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

It's a nice distraction.

JOAN

Yes.

JOAN picks up a water bottle from by her chair.

You want a sip of this?

CHARLIE

Please.

JOAN passes a bottle to CHARLIE. They enjoy the drink together. A short rest.

Pass us that lamp. Green.

CHARLIE

Where do you want it?

JOAN

Next to this chair.

Now, take a look.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

They both sit in the chairs and look around them.

The hallway is now decorated. It is mismatched, but homier.

CHARLIE and JOAN are happy.

JOAN

All we need is a painter for this portrait.

CHARLIE

I like it.

JOAN

These mugs don't match.

CHARLIE

This is why you're the interior designer.

And...they're both blue. They kind of match.

JOAN

I'm no...

CHARLIE

(laughing) Admit it, you are.

SCENE FIVE

A decorated hallway.

Some new pieces have been added to the table (frames/a fruit bowl/more candles).

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

There is a shelf unit filled with mismatched water bottles.

The light above the left stairs is flickering more than ever.

JOAN comes out of her flat and lights the candles.

She sits on a chair.

She takes out an embroidery kit.

CHARLIE comes out of their flat and sits on a chair.

CHARLIE

I found some squash yesterday.

Artificial Summer Fruits tastes more like sadness.

JOAN

It better not be off.

CHARLIE

You want some?

JOAN

Go on.

CHARLIE takes out two water bottles and prepares the squash.

CHARLIE

What you making?

JOAN

This is going to be of the scene. I want to capture the other chair and the wall behind it.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

It looks weird without you in it, though.

CHARLIE

I'm barely ever here.

How long you been doing it for?

JOAN

I was taught as a child by my grandmother.

I've already made a start, want to see?

CHARLIE does so.

JOAN

It's just an outline, and the lines are messier than I'd like but I feel once I have more time with it, once I invest some colour into it, some more attention, it will be beautiful. I think you should put something on it as well.

CHARLIE

Messy and unfinished...

JOAN

Like this hallway, I guess.

CHARLIE

I feel that way sometimes.

JOAN

There's nothing wrong be being unfinished, now. Or messy.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I feel like I haven't finished anything I needed to, and I've been around for a while.

CHARLIE

That's...reassuring.

JOAN

Anyway, we're the ones who made this mess.

Documenting it is all we can do now.

CHARLIE

What about cleaning it up?

What about a new project?

JOAN

I like the composition. Let me get the colours drafted then we'll tidy.

CHARLIE

How long?

JOAN

Hopefully not long.

CHARLIE

I was thinking we could go down later...I ran out of coffee and batteries yesterday.

JOAN

I'd love to.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

(smiling) Thank you.

JOAN looks perplexed at the decorations on the wall.

She inspects her embroidery.

JOAN

Did you move that?

CHARLIE

Last night. I was bored.

JOAN

Move it back.

CHARLIE

But I think /

JOAN

Put it back. I would like to finish this before stuff gets moved around.

CHARLIE

What's the point? It's not going to last.

JOAN

I'll make it. It will. I couldn't bare see this place destroyed.

CHARLIE

Have you seen it?

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

The bottom floors?

CHARLIE

You were...

JOAN

No.

Never.

CHARLIE

It's actually ...

JOAN

I am living in the now for a future I want.

CHARLIE

I see.

I wish we could just ... step outside.

I think a new project will really help us.

Can you sew?

JOAN

Very well.

CHARLIE rushes into their flat, and soon comes back out dragging a large tarp behind them.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I was thinking...it might be stupid...but...we could make something...that can protect us
while we're outside?

JOAN looks up from her embroidery, and is at first confused, then struck with realisation.

JOAN

Oh...I see. I didn't think you had it in you.

CHARLIE

You want to live more than me.

JOAN

I'll help you as much as I can. But I would like to finish this hoop first.

It'll be hard making something that can withstand terrible weather.

CHARLIE

So you do know the flo /

JOAN

If we work together it'll be done in no time.

What can you do?

CHARLIE

I can do a terrible running stitch.

JOAN

Your parents never teach you how to use a needle?

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Nope.

JOAN

Then I will.

We will need more coats, or this stuff, or whatever looks waterproof.

CHARLIE

I have an air pump.

JOAN

Oh excellent!

CHARLIE

You sure we can do this?

JOAN

I'm sure.

Don't doubt me, little man...oh...little...one.

CHARLIE

(laughs) No, absolutely not Joan.

JOAN

We go shopping again tomorrow. Time to get hustling.

SCENE SIX

A messy decorated hallway.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

The light above the left stairs is pulsing, rather than flickering.

Waterproof coats and materials lay cut up on the floor.

A large panel of waterproof material hangs over the table.

JOAN is hand sewing a new panel onto the side.

CHARLIE is cutting apart coats into large squares.

Comment [CS(4): This is where the hope for escape and departure becomes strongest in the first half. I need to establish the unhealthy, damaging and isolating nature of staying in the building more in order to contrast the two situations more strongly.

JOAN

Come give me a hand with this.

Hold this.

CHARLIE

Here?

JOAN

Hold it together while I...

Thank you.

CHARLIE

How big is this thing going to be?

JOAN

A bit more than this. Comfortable for a few.

CHARLIE

There's no one else we're taking, right?

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

What if we pick someone up while we're out?

CHARLIE

You think?

JOAN

I'm sure.

CHARLIE

You're not hiding a stowaway are you?

JOAN

What?

No.

Why would I be?

CHARLIE

A secret hideaway waiting for an opportunity to pounce and /

JOAN

Are you done?

...With that?

CHARLIE

Almost.

JOAN

How much longer can you stay?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Not long.

JOAN

Still working on your recordings, I see.

CHARLIE

What?

JOAN

I can hear you doing them. Over and over again, I heard you getting stuck on the same sentence for about an hour last time.

How are you recording them anyway?

CHARLIE

I have a Dictaphone.

JOAN

Who are they to?

CHARLIE

No one in particular. It's not important.

JOAN

Did you forget that I can hear you?

I know how you feel about whoever it is.

CHARLIE

Comment [CS(5): Add in a little bit about where CHARLIE is recording them – how does JOAN breach the reveal of knowledge that she knows CHARLIE goes downstairs to record them? How does JOAN know?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

It's my girlfriend. I haven't seen her for about a month now.

JOAN

What happened?

CHARLIE

... We had a fight.

I wish I could talk to her, clear things up, apologise. We were both so horrible to each other.

It got nasty.

JOAN

Must have been if you haven't talked for a month.

I'm sorry for whatever's making it difficult for you.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I wonder what it is.

JOAN

Recent times just seem to be a strain on everyone.

CHARLIE

And you refuse to acknowledge it.

JOAN

I am not ignoring it. I am refusing to let it rule my life and bring me down.

CHARLIE

You think everything is so normal.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

It was and it will be.

CHARLIE

Nothing is normal. Everyone is suffering apart from you. What makes you so special?

JOAN

Let me tell you, darling, you're not the only one who has lost someone.

CHARLIE

I never said...

JOAN

My husband, he died next to me in our bed.

CHARLIE

I'm /

JOAN

Just before people even thought about leaving. Natural causes. Don't pity me.

CHARLIE

I won't.

JOAN

Good.

CHARLIE

Do you want to see him again?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

I don't...the time felt...correct.

CHARLIE

So no?

JOAN

Sure.

CHARLIE

Is there...any advice...the only thing I want is to see Jess.

JOAN

Okay.

CHARLIE

How do you feel? How do you not feel as bad as me?

JOAN

Your girlfriend might not be dead.

CHARLIE

When we we're...'shopping' downstairs you told me that you do better on your own.

JOAN

I wasn't lying.

But Michael added a pillar of support I didn't have before.

I think you like being with other people.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Why?

I'm...I like being alone.

JOAN

Then why did you agree to come shopping with me all that time ago?

After all you tried to avoid me?

CHARLIE

Something to do.

I haven't been able to clear things up and it is making me miserable.

I want to be with her more than I want to be with you. I can't help missing her. Despite the
send-off.

How do I stop feeling so shit about it, though?

JOAN

Okay.

I know it's hard to let go of things, I know. People are even harder.

You won't stop feeling bad. You'll get used to it, and it will become easier to handle.

My advice is to not linger in it now. We have things to do. Once we are done, then you can
settle into it and be in your pain for as long as you need.

CHARLIE

It's hard to think about anything else.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Can you try?

CHARLIE

(deadpan) What jobs need doing, neighbour?

JOAN

(small laugh) Can you help me with this?

CHARLIE

I'm not good.

JOAN

You don't need to be.

Grab this bit.

Hold it taught.

So it's straight.

Right...

It's about 3 metres...then we'll need another 3 here...and one /

CHARLIE

Can you explain what you're doing?

JOAN

I'm sorting out the bottom side, and trying to figure out how big everything needs to be for the sides.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I don't have my bloody metre stick here so guessing is all we have.

CHARLIE

Where is it?

I can go get it.

JOAN

It's at my work.

CHARLIE

Oh...

You're a seamstress?

JOAN

Oh no, wish I was that good.

No, I restore old furniture. The only thing I know how to sew properly is upholstery.

Clothes are an enigma.

CHARLIE

Let me help you sew.

JOAN

Do you know what you're doing?

CHARLIE

Not really...

You can teach me.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN does not look too enthusiastic at this. CHARLIE notices.

CHARLIE

Maybe I can just watch you and try to copy.

I'll do the smaller bits so if they end up bad...it won't be that big of a redo.

I'll stay out of your way.

I'll /

JOAN

Pick up a needle over there and bring it here.

Do you know any stitches?

CHARLIE

I know that one where you just ... you go in a straight line and go in ... out ... in ... out...

JOAN

Running stitch?

CHARLIE

Maybe?

JOAN

That'll do for now.

See that corner over there?

Go over it twice with the running stitch.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Okay.

JOAN

Let me know when you're done.

JOAN and CHARLIE work on their sewing.

CHARLIE is invested and quiet.

JOAN starts humming in time with her stitching.

CHARLIE

Thank you for letting me help.

JOAN

No, I appreciated the offer.

Thank *you* for the help.

They continue.

JOAN starts humming a different song.

CHARLIE recognizes it and they start humming together, perfectly in time and tune.

CHARLIE eventually finishes their edge and holds it up for JOAN to see.

CHARLIE

I'm going to this one now.

JOAN

Wait a sec, I'm on the opposite of that one, see?

If you go this side there's a raw edge on the other corner.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

I'll try.

You managed to find any umbrellas?

JOAN

Oh, plenty. I found a right massive one upstairs, it's basically a tent.

CHARLIE

I found three downstairs, but they're all small.

JOAN

They're still useful. Thank you for finding them.

Hey, the big one may be shite with fragile poles and a broken handle.

CHARLIE

You found the best one.

JOAN

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Do we have enough candles for the next couple of days?

JOAN

Nothing to worry about.

Speaking of upstairs, there must have been some kind of hippie commune on the top floor
because they had triple what we have here in one room alone!

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Peace, love and candles.

I hope they had extinguishers.

SCENE SEVEN

A decorated hallway.

Sewing supplies are tidily kept to the edges of the room.

Canned fruit is piled underneath the table.

The left staircase light is flickering. The light above the hallway flickers on occasionally.

JOAN is sat sewing contently.

CHARLIE enters, looking exhausted. Ill-rested.

JOAN

Charlie? Darling?

CHARLIE

Huh?

JOAN

Careful.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

CHARLIE begins sewing as well. It does not go well.

Comment [CS(6): A scene needs to be added as 6.5 to make the conflict in seven less abrupt and seemingly more motivated for the both of them.

Comment [CS(7): Put SX as 6.5

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

You want help over there?

CHARLIE

I've got it.

The sewing continues in tense silence for a short time, until CHARLIE drops the needle on the floor.

CHARLIE

Shit.

JOAN

What is /

CHARLIE

Fucking needle.

JOAN

Here.

CHARLIE

I'll find it, no.

JOAN

...How are you this morning?

CHARLIE

I...just slept really bad.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Any reason why?

CHARLIE

Yeah. The rain.

JOAN

Well, have you tried shutting the windows? Or pulling the curtains? Or moving your bed away? Oh, I know you can get these /

CHARLIE

That won't help, I'm sorry.

JOAN

Charlie?

CHARLIE, holding the already sewn fabric, rips it in anger. They don't notice immediately.

CHARLIE

You know it's more than just hearing it against the window.

You must know. Isn't your bed right by the window as well?

JOAN

Oh I like the ambience. Very relaxing, actually.

CHARLIE

Are you being serious?

...I'm sorry...I need a minute...

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE leaves towards the left stairs.

JOAN hesitantly starts sewing again.

CHARLIE descends the left stairs and sits at the bottom. They stare at something below.

JOAN eventually becomes restless and follows CHARLIE.

She slowly descends the left stairs.

JOAN

Darling? Come back upstairs. It's /

CHARLIE

It's fine.

JOAN

You said you wanted to get better at sewing, and it's not a linear journey, it never is. You get better then worse then better then worse and all over again until you finally become comfortable.

It'll take time but if you just keep at it /

CHARLIE

It's not the sewing.

Sorry.

JOAN

Well...what is it?

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Can I ask you something?

JOAN

Of course.

CHARLIE

Can I get a serious answer?

JOAN

...Yes.

CHARLIE

When times were getting shit, like really shit, what were you doing?

Were you in denial like you are now? Or were you out in the streets with the rest of us?

JOAN

I'm not made for a protest.

CHARLIE

Did you boost anything? Watch and respond to the news? Anything?

JOAN

I never paid it much mind. It wasn't my problem to fix.

CHARLIE

Okay.

JOAN

Why the questions?

Comment [CS(8): I think this is one of the sections that makes readers interpret this as a climate change play rather than one about loneliness. I still want to have this commentary – frame it in a conversation about how JO having learned helplessness due to loneliness? JO feeling left out of the fight? How does JO's manifestation of loneliness play into her doxastic anxiety and lack of willingness towards activism?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Just curious.

You know, when I go down and look at the water I see all the mistakes we made. Everything that led up to this *shit* and what I tried to stop it. But nothing worked.

I tried so hard to stop something like this from happening, and you did nothing, and we ended up in the same spot. And you seem a lot more cheerful about it.

JOAN

Charlie, the reason I didn't do anything was because I was powerless. I couldn't have done anything to stop it, I wasn't a politician or business woman or famous.

CHARLIE

You didn't need to be.

How can you miss it all?

I...missed one night...and I can't stop blaming myself for why we're now *fucked*. Maybe

Jess was right.

Listen, Joan, I'm trying to not get angry, I promise.

I have a hard time understanding people like you.

JOAN

I admit, I feel the same.

CHARLIE

But, surely now...now that you've seen it and heard it. Can you finally admit that we are indeed fucked?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

I won't.

CHARLIE

You're not even phased.

What's wrong with you?

JOAN

Absolutely nothing.

As CHARLIE becomes more aggravated the lights in all rooms flicker, gradually becoming stronger and faster.

The low moan of a distant fire alarm sounds.

CHARLIE

That's the problem. You just sit here and wait for nothing. You act and talk like nothing is even happening right now when it's right outside your window.

We were two floors above it yesterday and you didn't *feel* it?

It pulls at you into its maw. It hates us. You know that? It wants us dead, all of us, and there is nothing we can do but wait for it to happen or we do it ourselves.

JOAN

Char /

CHARLIE

You can't have kept your bloody curtains closed for this long. Are you too deaf to hear the pounding and the fucking screaming?

Comment [CS(9): This entire interaction has the same commentary as the above comment – this is a conversation worth having – JO's ignorance does not need to be connected to or justified by her loneliness, but they can interact with each other in interesting ways. Is she the kind of person to blame her ignorance on her loneliness and using self-victimisation?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

It screams at me. Did you know that?

Every day, all night. It clings to my window above my bed. It drips into the corners of my room and spreads like mould.

And you are here. Clinging to something that will never come back.

What the fuck is wrong with you, Joan?

JOAN

You just need to calm down.

CHARLIE

Like you?

JOAN

No. Have a nap. You want my sofa? It's not near a window.

CHARLIE

Stop trying to help me when you won't even admit that we're going to die here, Joan.

JOAN

...If I do...

CHARLIE

You'll finally realise that all this bullshit, all this crap that we have collected, it'll all be debris and mess floating in a flood in a couple weeks. And we won't even be able to see its beauty.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

(hurt) We are happy here.

Don't say otherwise. How dare you.

CHARLIE

You are happy here.

JOAN

Please ... don't leave.

CHARLIE

You think I even wanted to start hanging out with you?

JOAN

I like your company.

CHARLIE

...I don't.

JOAN

Just take care of yourself.

CHARLIE

Don't worry about that, Joan.

I'm sorry I gave you the wrong impression.

The flickering stops and the lights fully brighten, then snap to black. The fire alarm cuts out.

The candles in the hallway are the only remaining light.

JOAN rushes back upstairs.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE does not follow her.

SCENE EIGHT

The light above the left stairs begins to flicker again.

The low moan of a distant fire alarms and electric static.

Mechanical whirring comes from the left stairs.

JOAN

Today has been a good day.

A good day.

A productive day.

Nothing is wrong at all.

What are you talking about?

Nothing is wrong.

Nothing is happening.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing.

JOAN takes the fake flowers out of the vase.

She goes towards the right set of stairs.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Do you want me to come see you?

Are you lonely?

JOAN makes her way up the right stairs to the top. She has been travelling for a long time.

She is out of breath.

The roof door is locked.

JOAN

Where are you?

JOAN pats herself down and finds a pen and paper.

She sits on the top step, leaning against the door. She begins to write a journal entry.

CHARLIE descends the left set of stairs. They have been travelling for a long time. They are heavy footed.

There is now water at the bottom of the stairs where there wasn't before.

CHARLIE gets down to the water and sits on the bottom step.

The light starts slowing pulsing like a beacon.

JOAN and CHARLIE are very far away from each other.

JOAN reads out her journal to Michael.

JOAN

Today... has been a good day.

As all days should be.

Good...good.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I'm...going to come see you soon. After this poor weather has passed. Your door is in my thoughts constantly, and I long for the day that I can open it and send you off properly.

My sole purpose right now is you. I promised you that I would never let anything bad happen to you, and this is what I must do.

JOAN keeps looking at the handle of the door, and the lock underneath it.

When I am strong enough, and when the weather permits, I will take you down and bury you in the earth by your favourite tree. You remember it? I wish I could spend one more evening ... sitting under it with you ... talking about nothing and everything until it gets too dark to see.

I wanted to apologise, Michael. I was considering the possibility that I may never be able to bury you at all and resigning to that fact. I lost hope, which I promised I never would do.

Charlie is lovely, they are, but they are so obsessed with the weather that its concerning.

I have to write it down, what they told me. They called it a 'maw'. They spoke like it was alive. Like it was never going to end.

It will.

I know it will.

If I write it here then it has to come true. Conviction written in ink on paper.

It will end. It has to.

Rain starts battering the other side of the roof door.

JOAN becomes even more uneasy.

I've started sewing together a raft with Charlie. Made out of rain coats and anything we can find that's water proof. Worst job I've ever done, it's so ugly. But I can't help but love it.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

It is something me and Charlie have made together and I wish that Charlie could see that I am
not the enemy.

I'm not. And the weather can't be, it's not evil.

It can't feel, or speak, or scream. That's another thing Charlie says.

I hate to say it makes some sense though.

Anyway, I love you. I'll be coming to see you soon.

JOAN carefully places the fake flowers by the door.

She says a prayer, an honouring, a promise.

CHARLIE looks up at the light and stares.

We hear a poor quality Dictaphone recording from CHARLIE.

Meanwhile, CHARLIE alternates between staring at the light, and at the water.

Eventually, JOAN will come back downstairs to the hallway and enter her flat.

CHARLIE

She is fucking crazy. Fucking crazy and I don't know what to do. She won't leave me alone,
keeps telling me that I am 'stuck in the present' and won't even give me the privacy of being
able to sit in my flat without fear of visitors.

I hate her.

...

Usually these take me ages to record. I thought you should know that.

...

Comment [CS(10): This feels justified for CH due to JO's ignorance and negligence. Is there an implied point to forgiving or continuing connection at such a significant conflict point? I think not. Which is not what I intend.

Comment [CS(11): Have someone read it and ask them whether their reconnection after the fight and the encounter with JESS/MICHAEL seems justified and worth it?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Pause.

Unpause.

I told her, my neighbour, about how we left things off.

It felt good to finally tell someone. To tell them that it was nasty because it was and it hurt.

It hurts.

I missed one night and you threw it back in my face like the bitch you are.

I'm sorry.

Pause.

Unpause.

I told you about how... the water... it calls me.

It's waving all I want right in front of me. Including you. All the time.

Are you real? Or are you just something the water made up to make me feel like shit?

I just know that I want you here. To talk. Get back to what we were.

I want you to come to me, to hold me and kiss me and love me like never before, and hate me
and fight me and leave me whimpering again until I clamber back to you.

Pause.

Unpause.

Did you know, even though my mum almost drowned as a teen, she never taught me how to
swim?

Like, what was going through her mind when she thought that was a good idea?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I hate so many things right now. Fuck I need you here.

I think.

I think I mentioned how I really want to go swimming soon.

Well, I want to go now.

Why not?

You're not here to stop me.

I'm sorry. I hope you died peacefully.

The Dictaphone recording ends.

The light above the left staircases flickering becomes quicker and quicker until it strobes.

The light in the hallway weakly flickers.

SCENE NINE

A crash comes from up the left stairs. Breaking glass. Like a wave crashing against a wall.

The flickering of the light above the left stairs slows.

CHARLIE stands up to investigate. They drag themselves up the stairs.

Mechanical whirring. Flickering. Wires sparking and popping. From CHARLIE's flat, we here a microwave, TV static, a humming Dictaphone, a ringtone.

It all sounds symphonic. A distorted song.

CHARLIE comes running into the hallway from the left stairs. All of the candles are still lit.

They bang on JOAN's door.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

Joan! Open the door! Joan!

CHARLIE keeps banging.

CHARLIE

She's here! Joan!

Open up.

JOAN (*inside*)

Who?

JOAN opens the door, pushing CHARLIE away.

CHARLIE

Jess. My girlfriend. She's downstairs, she made it!

JOAN

Didn't you two have a fight?

CHARLIE

Does that matter?

It was forever ago, who cares?

JOAN

Are you two alright?

CHARLIE

There's no raft or anything but I don't care. She's here.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Charlie, love, think for a second.

Are you alright?

CHARLIE

Why wouldn't I be?

Come with me. Come see her.

JOAN

She doesn't know me.

CHARLIE

You'll see her eventually. We can't get rid of her.

JOAN

How can she be here without a raft?

CHARLIE

I don't care. Maybe it got broken, swept away, plucked away by a giant in the sky, I don't care.

(pleading) Come see her.

JOAN

I'll see her when she comes up.

Have your reunion.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

How are you still miserable?

CHARLIE runs back down the left stairs.

JOAN's hearing aid rings.

From the direction of the right staircase enters ~~MICHAEL~~.

Everything it says is a voiceover sounding like it is coming through an broken radio, but ~~MICHAEL~~ only mimes to it. The voiceover glitches randomly.

~~MICHAEL~~

Huh.

JOAN

Michael...What?

You can't be...here.

~~MICHAEL~~

Huh.

JOAN

(a little scared) Excuse me?

~~MICHAEL~~

Coo...mmme

JOAN

No.

~~MICHAEL~~

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Nnnnn...ooow.

JOAN

You're fucking with me right? Charlie?

Did Charlie put you up to this?

Are you being funny?

No. No. Why?

~~MICHAEL~~

He...rrrrrrree.

~~MICHAEL~~ rushes at her and stands over her.

It lifts up it's left hand. It is wearing Michael's wedding ring.

JOAN

Take that off. That's not yours. He's outside.

~~MICHAEL~~

Hhhhaaaa...

Nnnnoooo.

JOAN

Put it back. Put it back.

Please.

That's not yours.

~~MICHAEL~~ opens up it's arms. Wet wedding photographs and confetti fall out of its jacket.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Water drips slowly from the corners of the ceiling.

JOAN

Why, are you?

~~MICHAEL~~

Aaaaahhhhhaaaaaa.

Uuuuhhh...hhuuuuhhh.

~~MICHAEL~~ walks JOAN into her flat.

The door closes.

CHARLIE and ~~JESS~~ come down the left staircase, holding hands.

CHARLIE is uncharacteristically chipper.

~~JESS~~ communicates in the same way ~~MICHAEL~~ does.

CHARLIE

The neighbour hates it down here. She gets scared like a dog in a thunderstorm.

~~JESS~~

Nnnnnoooooo.

CHARLIE

I think you might like it here though. I'm so glad you made it, you have no idea.

There's a bunch of recordings I made to you, but they are really depressing and kind of cringey. We can laugh at them later. They make me sound like a teenager again.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

You'll meet the neighbour eventually, she's so insistent on being sociable and having 'outings' all the time so she isn't stuck being miserable in her room. Honestly, I find her a little irritating, but at least it gets me doing something. The hallway upstairs actually is getting nice.

JESS

Nnnnniiiiiiii...sssssss.

CHARLIE

Ugh, I'm sorry. I'm rambling again. No, I know I don't need to apologise.

You are always so patient with me and I love you for that. I missed you.

JESS

SSssssaa...mmmmeee.

CHARLIE

Anyway, let's go and see the water. It's beautiful.

JESS

Yyy...esssss.

CHARLIE

Shall we dip our feet in? It's not as cold as you think.

~~JESS~~ reaches it's hand towards CHARLIE as they go to take their shoes off.

CHARLIE

Ah, I'm coming babe.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE rushes getting their shoes off.

They descend to meet JESS and stand ankle-deep in the water.

CHARLIE

I missed you so much, babe.

JESS

Mmmiiii...ssssss.

CHARLIE

Come here.

CHARLIE pulls in JESS for a hug. It is not reciprocated, but CHARLIE thinks it is.

They loosen the hug.

CHARLIE give JESS a long kiss on the mouth.

CHARLIE

Do you want my shirt? You're freezing.

JESS

Gooo...ooodddd.

CHARLIE

Do you want to head upstairs?

JESS

Noooo.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Alright.

JESS starts to walk deeper into the water, still in the arms of CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

This water really is beautiful. I'm glad you agree.

The way it moves and sways to itself is ... musical...it has a music that is beyond me. Sometimes when I come down here you can see fish, just wondering how they ended up in such a strange place with flat coral and wooden sand beds. You missed them, I haven't seen one in days. They started getting skittish when Joan first came down from upstairs to take me 'shopping'. Maybe I should have listened to them and known that she was trouble.

I wish they took me with them sometimes.

But now I have you.

JESS

Hhhhaaaahhaaaaa.

CHARLIE

I love you.

JESS and CHARLIE walk together into the water until they cannot be seen anymore.

SCENE TEN

A messy decorated hallway.

Water slowly drips from the ceiling. It puts some of the candles out.

All of the lights in the hallway and above the stairs are flickering.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

The door to JOAN's flat opens.

A recording of JOAN's journal entry is heard.

JOAN

You should see what we have done to the hallway.

I really wish my camera was still working so you could see it.

~~MICHAEL~~ *comes out, leading JOAN by the hand.*

~~MICHAEL~~ *leads JOAN towards the right set of stairs.*

I'll paint you a picture: we have some floral art on the walls, a wooden table with mismatching but comfortable chairs, I found a mug that would be just to your taste, we also found some wonderful candles that I think you would love the smell of.

I have had an idea that is really rather exciting.

~~MICHAEL~~ *and JOAN ascend the stairs to the top.*

Me and Charlie have decided that staying here might not be the most productive course of action and that we should try finding something else out there. The outside is ... scary. I have been ignoring it and I can tell it is making those around me angry. I don't want that.

~~MICHAEL~~ *begins banging on the locked roof door.*

JOAN stands, watching.

Charlie, the neighbour, doesn't know it but I am taking you with me. You're stowaway. I'm sorry I've left you up there for so long but it will be over soon. I hope the rain hasn't been too abrasive to you.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I'm not too sure about this person that Charlie is making these recordings for. They speak like it hurts, and it takes them ages to find the right words for anything. Sometimes, I just want to tear them away from that recorder. I hope we never find her. It'll be for the best. For Charlie.

Sorry to end on a bad note. I need to get back to work.

I love you, Michael. Soon.

MICHAEL manages to throw the door open and disappears through it.

The sound of rain gets louder.

~~MICHAEL~~

WWii...tthhhh.

Mmmmeeeeee.

JOAN approaches the door and looks beyond it.

She sees MICHAEL.

JOAN

Oh fucking hell.

Put his ring back.

~~MICHAEL~~

Wwwaaaavveee...ssssss

The Flood picks up, we hear waves down in the distance.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

No, fucking put it back now.

Get away from my husband.

Get the fuck away from my husband.

JOAN runs outside leaving the door open.

Water begins to lightly run down the stairs.

The sound of the slapping of water. Waves growing stronger. Rain getting heavier. Angrier.

The lights flicker faster and faster until they go out.

Something is heard coming through the roof door.

The shutting of the roof door is heard. It being locked.

The rain no longer comes through the door. The water stops trailing down the stairs.

JOAN positions something heavy against a wall.

JOAN

I'm sorry for leaving you out there, my darling.

The rain slams the other side of the door.

JOAN

Soon. I'll come back with help.

I promise.

JOAN runs down the stairs.

SCENE ELEVEN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN enters the hallway.

She finds a fresh candle from the table, and lights it.

She runs across the hallway to the left staircase and exits.

JOAN descends the left staircase.

JOAN

Oh...

JOAN goes down to the water, but not wanting to touch it.

She looks for CHARLIE.

JOAN puts down the candle on a higher stair.

She finds a rotted section of wood and pulls it free.

She pokes around in the water with it.

She searches for CHARLIE.

Something grabs the plank.

JOAN

I've got you.

JOAN pulls on the plank.

A hand comes above the water near the plank and grabs at the walls.

JOAN pulls harder. She pulls the plank fully out of the water, and another hand is holding it.

CHARLIE appears above the water.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I've got you.

With your other hand, grab that pipe.

CHARLIE does so.

JOAN gets CHARLIE out of the water without touching it.

CHARLIE crouches in a ball on the stair, shivering, panting, trying to not let themselves back into the water.

CHARLIE

I...I saw her. It was...her.

Jess.

We went...swimming...swimming...so cold.

JOAN

Here.

JOAN gives CHARLIE her jumper.

This'll keep you from freezing.

CHARLIE

Thank...you.

It was...

I saw...

There's nothing...down there. It's wiped away...clean...I...

CHARLIE is hysterical and frightened.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

It...it...fuck...

FUCK.

CHARLIE lets out a primal cry. JOAN lets them.

CHARLIE falls into tears, JOAN wraps an arm around them.

JOAN

Look at me.

You see this damn skirt I'm wearing.

I made this when I first started my job at the conservation studio.

Can you tell me the colour?

CHARLIE

...This really...ugly green.

JOAN

(laughing) Yes, it is rather ugly. It's laundry day.

Now, have you ever made any clothes?

CHARLIE

A pillow case. It fell apart after a week.

JOAN

What fabric?

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

This cheap blue cotton.

JOAN

Sounds nice. Did you hand sew it?

CHARLIE

(giggling) Do I look like I can hand sew?

JOAN

You showed me you could.

CHARLIE

Not well.

JOAN

I can teach you more.

CHARLIE

Now?

JOAN

Later.

Can you stand?

CHARLIE

Help.

JOAN stands and offers CHARLIE an arm.

CHARLIE takes it and stumbles to standing.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Keep looking at me, okay?

We are going upstairs and you are going on my sofa for tonight.

CHARLIE

Bu /

JOAN

No.

Have it.

Get rest.

CHARLIE

Sure.

Thank you.

JOAN and CHARLIE slowly climb the stairs and disappear.

The water undulates and grows darker with anger.

A drip of water from the ceiling puts out the candle.

SCENE TWELVE

A messy decorated hallway, full to the brim with lit candles.

It is a bubble of light in a sea of darkness that tries to press in, but ultimately fails.

The sound of rain is louder than ever.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN comes out of her flat, dragging a hand-made raft behind her.

CHARLIE follows behind, carrying the other end.

JOAN drops it in the nearest free spot.

CHARLIE

Good thing I found that air pump in that 10th floor flat yesterday, we would have been fucked
after mine broke yesterday.

JOAN

You were digging through everything, it's like you knew it was there.

CHARLIE

They had a blow up bed and inflatable bath toys. Can you imagine what you'd get like after
blowing all those things up yourself every time you needed them?

JOAN

Strong lungs.

CHARLIE

(giggling) And a bed and bath toys. And very tired lungs.

JOAN

Here, help us with this bit.

CHARLIE

Any coats left?

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

An arm and a pocket.

CHARLIE

Can you make it work?

JOAN

Of course I can.

I'm not completely clueless.

CHARLIE

I have them here.

JOAN

Oh, you angel.

CHARLIE

Gotta be useful somehow.

JOAN

Thank you.

CHARLIE slowly gets lost in the sound of rain.

CHARLIE

She was everything I thought I wanted her to be. She appeared, sounded, said all of the things

I wanted to hear. It was perfect.

JOAN

Jess?

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE

She let me kiss her for far too long. Jess never liked it being longer than a second. Fuck.

JOAN

It's okay.

I saw Michael, but not the real one. He was evil.

CHARLIE

I never saw him.

JOAN

Good.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

JOAN

(holding back sadness) It...shook me up a lot. He both was and wasn't...he was like a demon.

CHARLIE

You want a hug?

JOAN

Yeah.

Hey. Uh... can you also pass me those scissors?

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Theses?

JOAN

Yeah, chuck 'em.

CHARLIE

Scissors? Are you sure?

JOAN

They're closed.

CHARLIE

I'll walk them over.

CHARLIE gives JOAN that hug. They enjoy it together, then CHARLIE lets go again.

JOAN begins gliding the scissors, cutting swiftly at the fabric.

CHARLIE

You cut really well.

JOAN

Want me to teach you?

CHARLIE

Is there time?

JOAN

Now is the best time.

Here.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN places the scissors in CHARLIE's hand, and places her own over it.

JOAN

Get it quick and smooth.

And... (a swift gliding of the scissors, cutting fabric) like so.

CHARLIE

I keep seeing it.

JOAN

I promise you, it's not...

CHARLIE

Nothing blocks it out.

Nothing keeps it away, I see it sometimes outside the window.

JOAN

Through my curtains?

CHARLIE

It never feels like it's gone. It's waiting for me.

JOAN

Now listen to me.

It is not her, you know that.

You have me, and we are working together.

We need to be stronger together.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I love who you are, and I'm glad that of all people, you stayed behind.

Even if you didn't want me here for a while.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry about that.

Can you show me how to whip stitch?

JOAN

Grab a needle.

CHARLIE

This one?

JOAN

See if there's a smaller one.

Get it threaded and take this side.

CHARLIE

Can I watch for a sec?

JOAN

So, you are just sealing down a raw edge. You go under, catch the top layer, pull through...and keep it diagonal while you're going through the fabric.

CHARLIE

I don't think I can get it that neat.

JOAN

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

You don't have to.

You'll get the hang of it.

CHARLIE

Thank you for not letting me slip away.

Um...can you show me one more time?

JOAN teaches CHARLIE with care.

CHARLIE is tentative but is very invested in getting it right.

They are in their own safe bubble together.

The lights above both sets of stairs flicker aggressively.

Alarms ring in the distance. Radios and televisions produce static. Electricity sparks from plugs.

While listening to the following recordings, CHARLIE and JOAN continue to help each other construct the raft and keep each other from leaving the safe bubble.

A poor quality Dictaphone recording from CHARLIE is heard.

CHARLIE

I don't really know where we're going.

Somewhere, out there, hopefully without any water.

The mountains can't be under just yet surely.

Um...Jess...you have about three days to get here and find these and then we're gone.

I haven't seen anyone but Joan since the rain started.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Isn't that crazy?

I look down out my window and see fish, cars just floating, debris everywhere ... Sorry to be morbid, but I expected to at least see a dead body or two. Maybe even a figure in a far off window...but nothing.

I have almost nothing, but I'm glad Joan makes everything less lonely.

Jess...please find these messages.

I don't care if I never find out you did.

Pause.

Unpause.

The Flood...

...It...fuck...it speaks...

Spoke to me.

It came as you...I think.

It was so much like you...it spoke and looked like you but it got all of the details wrong.

And...it felt dark.

Wrong.

I hope it wasn't you...my mind keeps thinking that it took your dead body and used it to pretend to be you to torment me and have me join you so the Flood can use me against Joan but I know that's stupid because Michael isn't anywhere near the Flood and he appeared for Joan so it's just our imagination or the Flood filling in a Jess and Michael shaped hole.

(out of breath) Fuck.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Pause.

Unpause.

Maybe I'll find you out there.

Pause.

Unpause.

Pause.

Unpause.

I should be helping Joan.

Pause.

Unpause.

(crying) I really should be helping Joan.

Pause.

Unpause.

We need to find some matches.

Pause.

Unpause.

A small part of me hopes you never find these.

The sound of a fridge opening.

End recording.

The darkness, flickering and technological noise is more desperate to break through.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE and JOAN continue to sew. CHARLIE seems more confident in their stitching without the help of JOAN.

A voice-over of JOAN's journal entry is heard.

Her hearing aid is quietly whistling in the background of the voice-over.

JOAN

I keep thinking about this tree in the park we used to go to in the summer.

I has the most beautiful blooms and we would always bring a picnic basket and blanket with us when we went.

It was one of those days when you proposed to me. Hid the ring in the bloody chocolate tub.

You big softie.

We never did renew our vows, did we?

I never thought you wouldn't be a part of my life. You were always healthier, more sensible, more careful than I was. You kept every odd drug you could get over the counter 'just in case' we ever needed it.

And yet here I am. Without you.

But not alone.

At this, JOAN gets up from sewing with CHARLIE.

She pats CHARLIE on the back, then goes into her flat.

You have probably moved on now. Sick of that rooftop, I'm sure.

Me and Charlie have been collecting tonnes of wood, and have found the perfect open space.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

Turns out one of the top floor flats has no walls because it was designed originally as a conference space but the landlords gave that up when they found that no business wanted to hold meetings on the top floor of a low rate block of flats.

Whoever lived there must have been one of them minimalists, you know. So it wasn't a pain moving things around and out.

You're there now, as I'm writing this.

JOAN comes out of her flat, journal and pen in hand.

She goes toward the right set of stairs and exits.

CHARLIE does not respond. They know where she is going.

I ... want you to know that ... this isn't what I wanted for you. It was meant to be in the crematorium with the nice garden and the receptionist that looks a bit like that lady who won that cooking show last year.

There were meant to be family and playing your favourite songs and happy tears.

This is the best I can do. I've waited long enough to know that this is all I can do for you.

I'm leaving this journal with you, for you to read and to hold onto until I join you. In the back is our renewal vows, the ones we wrote before you got sick.

I'll see you eventually.

I'll tell you all about Charlie, and the hallway, and the raft.

About the Charlie's fish in the stair way, the awful mould, and the copy of you.

Now, you rest.

JOAN is heard crying quietly off-stage.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

CHARLIE raises their head but only briefly.

The crying stops, and JOAN enters looking surprisingly collected.

CHARLIE gets up and embraces her. JOAN begins to cry again and takes comfort in the embrace.

SCENE THIRTEEN

A very messy hallway.

An almost completed raft made out of water proof materials lies in the centre of the floor.

Sewing materials and equipment are scattered all around.

A large bag full of food and bottles lies near the left exit.

All lights apart from the ceiling lamp directly above the centre are flickering aggressively.

The hallway is lit with more candles than ever before.

The rain can be heard through the closed doors of the flats, and becomes deafeningly loud when they are open.

CHARLIE and JOAN are still sewing, invested and working fast.

CHARLIE

You got the stuff you need ... for Michael? Your stowaway?

JOAN

Already there...ready.

CHARLIE

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

I found some spare lighters.

JOAN

Thank you, darling.

They continue working.

They start humming the same song from last time, again perfectly in time and tune.

Time passes.

JOAN

I'm done here.

CHARLIE

You going up?

JOAN

I might be a while.

CHARLIE

I'll finish up here.

I'm almost done as well.

JOAN

You've done a good job.

CHARLIE

We've done a good job.

Be careful.

TW: implied suicide, intense loneliness.

JOAN

Finish what you're doing. Then meet me on the launch point.

CHARLIE

As planned.

Don't burn yourself.

JOAN leaves to the right to go upstairs.

Time passes.

CHARLIE continues humming the song.

Eventually, CHARLIE finishes their sewing job.

The makeshift raft is complete. CHARLIE gathers the air pump, and grabs onto the raft.

CHARLIE drags it towards the left set of stairs. They stare at it for a long second, then exit.

A fire can be heard crackling in the far distance. The bottom of the right set of stairs lights up.

JOAN emerges from the right.

She picks up the umbrellas and the bag then makes her leave towards the left set of stairs.

The fire expands and expands, finding its way closer to the roof but avoiding the floors below.

The rain tries to fight it off, but it is not strong enough.

End.