

I Know What You're Going to Say

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Characters

***JACK JUNIOR/LUKE**, mid-twenties, frail, scruffy, sickly, but a tough kid.*

***JACK SENIOR/DOMINIC WENSLEY**, mid-fifties, grubby, sleazy, at death's door.*

***AUDIENCE MEMBER #1**, any race, any gender, could be anyone. For the purposes of the script shall be referred to as female.*

***AUDIENCE MEMBER #2**, same as #1*

Setting

A narrow bedsit, laid out perpendicular to the audience, so that there is empty space onstage right and left of the L-shaped walls, which are marked by some graffiti.

The bedsit is a bleak affair; narrow and cramped. Upstage lies the front door, with a small partition stage left, which leads to the bathroom, unseen. In front of the partition lies the 'kitchen' - a small fridge, microwave on top, a washing machine, a small bin, a sink, a hob, a toaster, a kettle, a cup. A single bed flanks the wall stage right, a few books scattered across it. There is virtually nothing in the way of homely touches. Downstage is the invisible wall with the invisible window through which Jack Senior can see the "street" below.

At the beginning of the play #1 sits in the second front row three seats in. In front of #1 is the empty seat that #2 will take upon arrival.

Note

If at any point a real audience member interacts with #1 or #2 - for example by telling them to shut up - the actors should improvise around it, quickly returning to the script as written.

Friday night in November.

Muffled noises of angry shouts, sirens and drunks can be heard. A toilet FLUSHES. JACK SENIOR comes out from behind the partition, leans a hand on it while he wipes his mouth, breathing heavily.

#1 (whispered). Ew.

He straightens up and bins a barely eaten sandwich and puts the plate in the sink. He notices the noise outside, and moves to the window, opening it. The noise sharpens. He leans out, smiling as he looks down. He hacks up a great loogie in his throat, and “spits” out the window.

#1. Ew!

FOOTSTEPS.

Someone in the hall outside the door. Getting closer. SR. turns slowly as the steps get louder. He tentatively makes his way to the door.

KNOCK KNOCK. SR. sinks to the floor, terrified. He covers his mouth to suppress any noise, and stares at the handle. A pause. SLOW FOOTSTEPS, getting fainter this time. He gets to his feet, relieved - but the FOOTSTEPS return, and there is a second KNOCK.

JR. (off). Jack.

SR. Jack?

JR (off). Yeah... it’s me.

SR. Oh. It’s you. Oh.

SR returns to the window. He surveys all before him, and doesn’t appear to find anything he likes.

JR (off). Jack?

Apparently resolved, SR. makes his way back to the door, pausing to smooth his duvet. He lifts from it a small plastic bottle. It RATTLES as he chucks it under

his pillow. He opens the door - no one there. He sticks his head out and looks left, then right.

SR. Oi.

Eventually JACK JUNIOR appears. SR. gestures for him to come in. He closes the door and they stare at each other.

SR. Hello.

Dead silence. #2 comes in and makes her way awkwardly to her seat. #1 TUTS loudly.

#2. Sorry. Sorry. Is this me? Sorry. Shit.

JR. looks unsure of what to do with himself. He looks around the tiny room, rubbing his hands together. A small cough escapes his mouth. SR. stares at him

JR. So this is it. SR. Have a seat, won't you?

JR. Sorry? Oh.

JR. seems about to, then thinks better of it.

JR. No thank you. Please won't you sit.

SR. Yes, I'll sit, I think. Fancy a tea?

JR. No.

SR. sits on the bed.

SR. I'll have tea, I think. Kettle's just behind you.

Instinctively JR. turns to switch the kettle on. SR. waits until he does.

SR. It's just boiled.

JR. Oh, sor- SR. That's okay.

JR. No, I... teabags?

SR. Behind you.

JR. Mug? SR. Everything's behind you.

JR. grabs milk from the fridge and makes tea.

#1 (*leaning in*). Excuse me. I can't see past you.

#2 *agreeably slouches in her seat. JR. hands the tea over.*

JR. I didn't mean I was sorry, just now.

SR. Eh?

JR (*rambling*). I started saying sorry for switching your kettle on, but not like "sorry" sorry, just that sorry you say sometimes without thinking about it, like the way you'd say it in the shop, when you reach past someone's shoulder for something, and you don't even touch them but you feel you should say something so they know that you know that they're there.

SR. Touch more milk in there, eh.

JR. Sorry.

SR. That's alright.

JR. No, not-- SR. How'd you find me?

JR. That's not why I'm here.

SR. Come again?

JR. I'm not here to answer your questions. I'm here for me.

SR. Alright. Go on.

JR. I will. Not because you said “go on”, I was gonna go on.

SR. I know you were. Please do.

JR (*pauses, looks around, looks at door*). So this is where you live?

SR. It is.

JR. Not very airy.

SR. Enough to breathe, I guess. Tell you what though, some view. Really something. Go look, take a look out there.

JR. I’m alright here.

SR. gets up, and returns to the window.

SR. It’s my favourite thing to do. After another long day alone in this matchbox there’s nothing like a good look at the rest of the species to make you feel grateful for your lot. Friday night. Look at them all. It’s - how cold is it out there?

JR. They’re saying single digits tonight.

SR. Try telling these animals. Christmas present from a one armed toddler’s better wrapped than these girls.

While SR. stares out the window, JR. sags, forced to lean against the partition to stay standing.

SR. They’re funny, really. People. Hilarious actually. Nest of drunken spiders scut-scut-scuttling across the floor hoping not to get squished. And occasionally they eat each other. Everyone is so hysterically ugly.

#1 (*mumbled*). Who’s he talking about?

SR. turns. JR. straightens up, but not in time.

SR. What’s wrong?

JR. Nothing.

SR. Nothing?

JR. There's nothing! What do you mean?

SR. That wall wasn't there you'd be on the floor now. Let me look at you.

JR. You're fine where you are, thank you.

SR. You don't look well.

JR. I'm fine.

SR. No, you look like death, you should eat something.

SR. opens the fridge door and roots around.

SR. Not much here, really. I go shopping on a Sunday.

JR. I said I'm fine.

SR. Don't be a tough guy now, you should eat. I'm assuming you're in no rush. Was quite a journey for you, I'm sure.

JR. sits on the bed, exhausted.

SR. Oh I've got some beans, you still like beans on toast? *(beat)* Junior?

JR. Don't.

SR. Sorry?

JR. That's not my name. I changed it. By deed poll.

SR. That right?

JR. Yes it is right.

SR. Well?

JR. It's Luke.

SR. Very Christian. But no - "well", do you or don't you still like beans on toast's what I mean.

JR. I don't want anything.

SR. I'll stick some in and you can have it if you want.

He puts two slices in the toaster, and puts a bowl of beans in the microwave, which HUMS noisily.

JR. I won't.

SR. Of course you will, it'll do you good.

JR. You're an expert on what does me good, are you?

SR. I'm the same, you know.

JR. I - what?

SR. Changed my name too.

JR. Yes, I know.

SR. Dominic Wensley.

JR. I knew that already.

SR. We're both new men.

JR. I've always been this man. No one's called me Jack since I was a boy.

SR. I'm sure.

A pause. JR tries to retake the reins of the conversation.

JR. So I guess you're wondering why I'm--

The microwave DINGS. SR plates up some beans on toast and offers it to JR.

JR. How many times do I have to tell you I don't bloody want any?

SR. But you do really, don't you? You're mad if you don't. Never turn down a free meal.

JR. I think I'll survive.

SR. I'm not so sure. Look at you. You're like a pasty coat hanger with eyes.

JR. I'm absolutely fi--*(breaks off for a COUGHING FIT)*

SR. You're not at all well, Luke.

JR. Yes, well I've had a few, uhm, health issues over the years since...

SR. No shit.

JR. I'm always tired, almost always. I get headaches, stomachaches. And I had an, uhm, eating... thing. Disorder.

SR. Well, proves you're not to be trusted to say you're not hungry, doesn't it?

JR. heaves himself up off the bed, grabbing the plate and clattering it into the sink.

JR. I'd have thought it quite obvious I didn't come here for a catch up.

SR. I know that. You're here for you.

JR. Right.

SR. So go on - how did you find me?

JR. Easy, really.

SR. Easy?

JR. Remember Linda Yates?

SR. Mm. Social worker.

JR. She remembers you, too. Turned out that Linda was quite happy to point me in the right direction. She hooked me up with an officer. He gave me Detective Superintendent Baird, remember him? Then the lawyers, and the judge, too. It was surprisingly straightforward.

SR. All happy to help. Fair enough. To be expected, really.

JR. They didn't want to get in my way. I imagine they felt I'd already been through enough.

SR. Maybe they deemed it in the Public Interest for you to find me. Freedom of Information and all that. I thought it would be a good idea to brush up on that stuff when I got here.

JR. My support worker didn't think this was a good idea. Finding you.

SR. Your support worker?

JR. Michaela.

SR. I see.

JR. But that didn't stop me.

SR. gets up and makes his way to the partition.

SR. Surprised you still feel that you require such supervision. It's been long enough.

This last remark leaves JR. rattled, disheartened. When SR. shuts the bathroom door, JR. makes up his mind - he exits out the front door.

Before it's completely shut he has a change of heart and returns. He sits, tries to compose himself; he's shaking, from sickness or fear we don't know. #2 giggles, and #1 tuts in response. JR. looks up to see he has not shut the front door. He does so now, just as SR. returns. He notices JR.'s hand on the door knob.

SR. That you off?

JR. No I -

SR. Wouldn't blame you, I really wouldn't. I get it. Like I say, it's been a long time.

JR. I'm not off. I'm not done yet.

SR. No I suppose not. Sit dow- oh, never mind.

SR. sits.

JR. You don't get it, by the way. You don't get to get it.

SR. How is she?

JR. Who?

SR. Who do you think?

JR. She's gone.

SR. Oh. Where'd she run off to?

JR. She's dead.

SR. freezes. #2 GIGGLES again. #1 glares at the back of her head.

#1. How's that funny?

SR. When?

JR. Last year.

SR. Oh... oh. I, uhm... don't know what to say.

JR. *(quietly)* No.

SR. What happened?

JR. Well she wasn't ill. Not any way a doctor could fix. Your anniversary was coming up.

SR. I presume you blame me.

JR. I don't need to. It was because of you. I know that. But that's not the same as blaming you.

SR. Isn't it?

JR. I am not blaming you.

SR. I guess it's semantics innit.

JR. What?

SR. Doesn't matter. Sure you won't have a look out there?

JR. No.

SR. Sure. Me neither. I've seen enough. I'm actually rather tired.

JR. Me too.

SR. I'm sure. Let's just get this over with.

JR. Get what over with?

SR. This.

JR. You don't know what this is.

SR. Sure I do. And it's okay. Like I say, I get it. I'm ready. Didn't realise I was until I heard your wee voice at the door, but I am.

JR. What are you talking about?

SR. This.

JR. What is this? What do you think this is?

SR. What, you want me to spell it out? You want a whole big discussion before we get to it? Not me. To business. Where d'you want me? I can lie on the bed and you can just take a pillow, that could work.

JR. Pillow?

SR. You had something else in mind? You bring something along for the job? It's up to you, I suppose. What is it? A gun? Knife? Big stick?

JR. A gun?

SR. I just - it's not for me to say, but - I really think you're better off with the pillow. Quiet, less obvious, you've a chance of getting away with it.

JR. Jesus, what the hell are you saying?

SR. I - well. You're here to...

JR. What, what, fucking what?

SR. Kill me.

JR. Kill you.

SR. That's why you're here, isn't it?

JR. stares, shocked.

JR. You think I'm here to kill you.

SR. Yes I do. You are. Aren't you?

JR. You thought I was here... and you let me in.

SR. Looks that way. Wait, so... you're not?

JR. You thought I could kill. You thought that was something I wanted?

SR. Yes.

JR. You thought that was something... I was capable of?

SR. Everyone is. Having said that, well, when you came in looking all nervous and nauseous I thought you might bottle it. Thought I'd give you a chance to back out.

JR. Oh you gave me a chance? Oh that was good of you. Cheers for that, Dominic, you're a real sport.

SR. But you're not here for that.

JR. Fucking no! I mean... Jesus... that's mad... I mean that's just silly... you really thought... well you're mistaken. Totally mistaken. You're way wrong.

SR. Yes, I guess I was.

JR (*chuckling*). You really thought... I mean... just, fuc-king moron.

SR. You enjoying this?

JR. No I, well, it's just such a ridiculous... I'm here to - (*stops laughing*) hang on.

SR. Don't tell me you've changed your mind.

JR. A pillow?

SR. Eh?

JR. You thought I was here to... and your response... was to tell me how to go about it?

SR. No, not--

JR. Yes, yes, that's exactly what you did! You were going to give me instructions on how to murder you! Even, even in what you thought were your final moments you had to have that. Everything on your terms. You're sick!

SR. You're one to talk. Anyway, forget that.

JR. Oh, yeah, I'll just forget it, shall I?

SR. Spill, will you? Why did you come here if not for... that?

JR. I was just going to... (*paces*) Give me a second, you've really thrown me for a loop.

SR. How d'you think I feel? I'm all over the shop here. I'm all up and down.

JR. Okay, okay. I'm... I'm here to... to...

SR. Yes?

JR. Can't pace in here.

SR. Well, yes?

JR. I'm here... I wanna tell you... that I forgive you.

#1. Oh, you're joking...

Dead silence again. Father and son stare at each other.

SR. Forgive me?

JR (*takes deep breath*). Yes.

SR (*beat*). For what?

#1 gasps, annoyingly loud. #2 snorts into her hand, trying to keep it together. #1 shoots her daggers.

JR. What?

SR. What?

JR. What did you say?

SR. For what?

JR. What am I forgiving you for?

SR. What have I done?

JR. Are you serious? Are you making fun of me?

SR. You'd be able to tell if I was making fun of you, surely?

JR. So you're serious.

SR. Well, I'm just going off of what you've already told me. You said you don't blame me for anything. So what is there to forgive?

JR. That's not the point.

SR. I think there's some inconsistency in your rationale there.

JR. I'm not forgiving you for your sake. It's for me. I'm doing this for myself. I don't care if you deem it to be logically flawed. That's not the point.

SR. It certainly is logically flawed. Explain yourself.

JR. Don't fucking tell me what to do.

SR. I'm sorry. But please. I'd like to know. Luke.

JR. I don't... I don't have to explain my actions to you.

SR. I know.

JR. I don't have to explain my actions to anyone.

SR. I know.

JR. Stop saying that! You don't know. You don't know a fucking thing in this world!

SR. But I'd like to. Don't you want to tell me?

JR. I will, I'm just saying I don't have to. It's up to me what I do. It's about me.

SR. I understand, it's about you.

JR (*composing himself*). It was Michaela's idea. They often suggest it in cases like mine at the Project.

SR. What project?

JR. The Innocence Project. They work with... people like me.

SR. Okay.

JR. She gave me a pen and some paper one day and asked if I would like to write anything down. She said it was my choice, of course. But it might help me to think, to figure out what was happening, you know, inside my head. I wrote a couple of things, and she asked if I would like her to read it. I didn't have to, but I said yes I would. She told me I was a good writer. Then she gave me some more paper and asked if there was anything I'd say to you if I could, and to write that down too. So I wrote. I let her read that as well. Then she asked me if seeing it in writing made me feel better. I said I wasn't sure. That night I slept for six straight hours. I never did that before. At my next appointment I rushed in to tell her about it. She was so happy for me. She's got a real nice smile, it's like she's smiling from her feet all the way to her lips. Michaela says there's all kinds of health benefits associated with processing our feelings on paper. She gave me some more, and said to me, "Now, Luke, this might seem like a big step, but I

think you're ready for it, and I think it will help you. Now you've written to him, like you were talking to him right here in this office. You can look at the words you've written and face the truth about what he did to you. Now, do you think you could find a way to forgive him?" (#1 *SNORTS*) I didn't understand. She explained to me that everything she read, everything I wrote, everything you did; it was all about power. You took power from me because you are weak and you are broken. But if I can forgive you, she said, even just on paper, for my eyes only, then you lose all that power, and it comes to me.

SR. Sounds like a smart girl.

JR. She is.

SR. I bet she's got all kinds of qualifications and fancy certificates in New-Age-Hugs-and-Kisses-Psych-Theory-for-Jittery-Underachievers-ology.

#2 laughs again.

#1. Hey. You shouldn't laugh.

#2. What's it to you?

#1. I actually relate to this story quite a fucking lot if you must know.

JR. You're trying to undermine me to dominate our discourse. It's a typical abusive behaviour pattern.

SR. And in English?

JR. You're still doing it. It makes you feel in control.

SR. Well, thank you, Dr Phil. Michelle will be impressed, won't she?

JR. Michaela. Her name's Michaela.

SR. But, you said, she didn't think it was a very good idea for you to actually find me and tell me of your emotional emancipation in person. Aren't you worried Michaela will be upset?

JR. She said it's not necessary, because it's a personal process -

SR. A process, of course, a personal process.

JR. - about making a decision not to allow you to control me.

JR. But I'm my own man.

SR. There's no stopping you.

JR. Right.

SR. Maybe you should've listened. Just saying. You don't seem at ease.

JR. I do listen to her. I like her. She's helped - she's helped me a lot.

SR. Good.

JR. I'm going to ask her on a date when I get back.

SR. Think she'll say yes?

#2 laughs.

#1. What's her problem?

JR. I don't know. That's up to her. I hope she will.

SR. You should do it. It'd be good for you.

JR ignores him. He sticks a hand in his pocket and pulls out an envelope.

SR. What's that?

JR. My letter.

SR. You actually wrote a letter?

JR. That's how the process works.

SR. What a vacuous buzzword that truly is.

JR. I'm going to read it to you. You will not interrupt. You will not comment, query or criticize while I read. You will remain silent and listen to what I have to say. When I'm finished I will put the letter back in the envelope and put the envelope back in my pocket. Then I'm leaving. I won't wait for your response, and you will refrain from speaking until I'm gone. Understood?

SR. Entirely and utterly.

JR. removes the letter from the envelope. He takes a deep breath.

SR. Are you sure this is a good idea?

JR. Fu- what?

SR. I mean, I can see this is a big moment for you. You should have brought someone along. For, you know, emotional support.

JR. You should stop telling me what I "should" be doing. You have zero authority on the question of "should". Now shut up.

SR. puts his hands up, yielding.

SR. Go ahead.

JR. Okay. Here goes. (*reads*) I was nine years old, and you were my entire world--

SR. Is this a God thing?

JR. Fucking hell!

#2 laughs.

SR. Are you one of those born-again types? You know, like the way washed out actors carry on once the comedowns get a bit too rich for them? You got a Bible quote

#1. I just want you to know, every time you laugh at him, you're laughing at me.

tattooed somewhere? Is that you?

#2. This isn't about
you, mate.

JR. Is what me?

SR. Rudderless. Lost. In such desperate need for direction that you accept, as an adult, a belief system into which most folk are indoctrinated as children, and soon after reject as the manic, fifth-witted, schizophrenic bullshit that it really is.

JR. I'm not lost.

SR. Yeah? Are you certain about that? Well, all I'll say--

JR. Wish I could believe that.

SR. All I'll say is I never heard about anyone finding God when they were feeling just tickety-fuck about themselves. Tends to be more of a last resort kind of thing. Sorry - last resort kind of "process".

JR. I never said I was religious.

SR. Are you?

JR. None of your fucking business!

SR. I see...

JR. No, no, no, don't "I see" me. I have no obligation to share anything about myself with you.

SR. Oh, here we go again.

JR. If it's about me, it's about-

SR. It's about you, yeah?

JR. Yes.

SR. Do you know what solipsistic means?

JR. You a lecturer now?

SR (*chuckling*). No, I'm not a lecturer, Junior - sorry, Luke. Saint Luke... I do read a lot though. Never used to, back when I lived with you and your... your mother. I don't really go out much at all now. I read, and I look out the window. That's enough for me these days. In fact it's a life of luxury.

JR. Sounds as good as it looks.

SR. I understand that it might not seem like much to you. But to me it's a considerable step up. Looking out a window was not an option inside. Boy, was I glad to get out. It was a long three years, I don't mind telling you.

SR. stares at JR. who looks away, trying not to rise to the bait.

#1. Did he say three?

#2. Shh.

#1. Eh, excuse me?

SR. Yep. Three long years. You hear me, boy?

JR. No. I'm not listening. I don't want to listen to your voice. And I don't want to be in this sad, sorry, shitty little bedsit a second longer than I need to.

SR. I guess it could've been worse. I was down for seven. You know why they let me out early? "Good behaviour". That's funny, isn't it? Don't you think?

JR. Do you reckon you're clever?

SR. Sorry?

JR. You're so fucking transparent. It's embarrassing.

SR. Don't be embarrassed.

JR. You're trying to provoke me. Like a wee schoolboy pulling pigtailed on the playground. You'll happily be a bastard as long as it keeps everything on your terms. Like Michaela says, it's all about power, all of the time.

SR. Christ, you are obsessed! You keep telling me all I want is "power", whatever the fuck that means, but it's you what keeps bringing the shit up!

JR. I don't want power over anyone else, Mr Wensley. That's the difference between us. I'm here to get my own power back.

SR. Sounds like something out of Oprah fucking Winfrey. Book of the fucking month, "Get your Power Back" by Saint Luke, only eleven ninety-fucking-nine.

JR. You're getting angry.

SR. I'm getting bored. This was your plan all along, was it? Bore me to death with all this hippie wank. You are making no sense.

JR. I don't expect you to understand.

SR. No I think it's you that doesn't understand, son. Your new friends have fed you a pack of lies, dangerous ones. "Your own power"? What does it even mean? That's not how the world works. No, let me say something. You see you've got two options in this life, just two. You can have all the "power", as you put it, which I take to mean, I don't know, freedom? Let's say that's what you mean. You can have it, over everything and everyone. Or you can have none. Zilch. Zero. Nil. That's it. There's no gradient. No compromises. No self-containment. That's the real difference between us. Come here. (*JR. doesn't move*) Come here, for God's sake, I want to show you something. Please!

JR. cautiously moves with SR. to the window.

SR. Welcome to the front row. The best seat in the house to see this shitshow we call society play out. There, upstage, the young lads laugh at the tramp lying face down in that puddle. And look, downstage left, we have the typical young lovers taking up most of the pavement. See, he's striding away from her with all that dramatic anger and hurt of a man caught red handed in - let's call them nefarious activities- yet still he's proudly going down with his ship. He'll be damned if he's letting this mad, screeching bitch lead him through a symposium

on right and wrong after the way she conducted herself tonight, I tell you. There's no way she's catching up, not in those daft shoes, not with all that cheap rosé sloshing around inside her.

JR. He looks pretty drunk too.

SR. Aye he's zigzagging all over like a stunned bumblebee. He's a big lad though, he can handle it. He doesn't have to be sober to win here, he just has to stay less blitzed than her. Look, see! She's calming down now. It doesn't take long. She's all out of puff. Now he can turn around. She'll walk to him. Yes, there she goes. She tries to put her arms around him, let's see, will he push her away - yes! She'll keep trying, until she can't take it anymore. She'll apologize for shouting at him. She'll probably ride him tonight for good measure. And so, order is resumed. Them's the two options.

JR. What are you saying?

SR. You don't know them.

JR. No.

SR. I don't know them either. I don't know what they were arguing about, not precisely. I could have a good guess, but that's all it would be. If I were to ask them, they would tell me two very different stories.

JR. So one of them's lying.

SR. That so? I don't know. I don't think so. But that's besides the point. Who won?

JR. What?

SR. Who won? Who apologized?

JR. She did.

SR. That's right she did. So she was wrong. Why else would you apologize? She shouldn't have screamed like that, she now accepts. Why? Because he's willing to walk away. Because she is not free, and he is. You told me earlier that I have

no authority on what anyone “should” do. That’s another one of those nothing words. There is no authority on what we should do. “Should” means nothing more than “my way”. And we, everyone, all of us, are stuck. *(beat)* In an eternal and bloody terrible fight for the freedom to decide what that way is. What everyone else “should” do.

JR. Got a lot of time on your hands, don’t you.

SR. I’ve only ever had time.

JR. You are so fucked up. How can you live, thinking the way you do. What the fuck does the world look like through your eyes?

SR *(gesturing through window)*. You’re looking at it. It’s the same world as yours.

JR. You’re so fucked.

SR. You think so? Is there something else I should be seeing?

JR. Fuck this.

JR. turns to leave. He gets to the door.

SR. Don’t you want to read your letter?

JR. No.

SR. Why not?

JR. What’s the point? What was I hoping for, coming here? You know I took two trains and a bus to get to this fucking town?

SR. I can square you up for it if you like. I’ve plenty spare cash these days.

JR. Fuck yourself! Why did I do it? Why did I think I should see you ever again? Did I hope something had changed? I’m starting to think, maybe, what... what I really wanted was to help you in some way. Imagine that - me helping you! After... I must be cracked, I don’t need this shit.

SR. You didn't come to help me. This was for you, remember? Finish it.

JR. *(beat)* No.

SR. It's what you wanted.

JR. I don't anymore.

SR. Are you just saying that? Did this old man's wee rant sway your own judgement? You gonna let that happen?

JR. stops at the door. He turns around.

JR. Alright. I want done with this. Shot of this. Shot of you. Standing this close to you makes me queasy. Not scared, not angry. Get that right. More like I'm being poisoned. Bitten by a snake. So this time, this last time, you will stay quiet. Your mouth stays closed. You don't want to see what happens should you open it. Stop nodding! Don't even nod. This requires no response or acknowledgment on your part. So don't give me any indication that you understand. Because you don't, alright? You never will. You can't. Okay.... *(holds up letter)* I was nine years old and... and you... you opened the door.

SR. looks at him, remaining silent.

JR. You thought I was going to kill you. You opened the door anyway. You want to die.

SR. points at his mouth. Jr. nods.

SR. No. Not particularly.

JR. Why did you let me in?

SR. Well, I guess I don't have a strong inclination to carry on living either.

JR. You're suicidal.

SR. I don't think so. No. Look, son, I'm under no illusion about the danger I live in. It wouldn't take much for someone to find out who I am. Your presence here can attest to that. A nanosecond of carelessness, I get lonely and think I make a friend, I tell him my real name - that's curtains. People are dying to expose me. My name gets out there, and it's not just you who would like to come knocking at my door. The mob, in all their righteous fury, people who never met me, don't know me, don't know you, they'd find me. And they'd kill me. "Justice", yeah? So you see, I've just considered the possibility, indeed the probability of my sudden cessation so many times that I've grown rather cavalier about the whole thing.

#1. Aye, right, you were shitting yourself.

#2. Shh.

#1. You shh.

JR. So why did it take you so long to answer the door?

#1. Exactly.

SR. Did it? I don't know. No wait - I remember. I heard your voice. I recognised it immediately, of course. It's with me always. I knew that second I was done. So I went to the window. I had one last look. And that settled it. There's nothing here worth sticking around for.

JR. Jesus.

SR. But nevermind, eh, all a moot point now. If we're asking questions I've got one for you - when I opened the door, why were you halfway down the hall like some scamp playing knock-knock ginger?

JR. I was scared.

SR. Oh.

JR. You really think I could've killed you?

SR. You asked me that already.

JR. You didn't answer.

SR. Yes I did. We're all capable of extreme actions.

JR. But do you think I'm capable?

SR. If I told you yes. That would please you wouldn't it?

JR. I suppose.

SR. Of course it would. Yes, you're more than capable. Frankly, that makes a lot more sense than this pardon you're so magnanimously granting me now.

JR. Not pardoning.

SR. No, not pardoning. No need is there? Her Majesty's Court Service has saved you the trouble.

JR. What do you mean?

SR. Well, that this whole enterprise of yours is, you know, pretty redundant.

JR. Redundant.

SR. Not required.

JR. I know what it means.

SR. But you asked--

JR. Not what redundant means, what do you mean?

SR. Well, exactly that. There's no need to forgive me. I've been forgiven. I went to jail, and then I left. I left early, no less, that's how forgiven I was. In the eyes of the courts, the law, the state, the nation, I have served the time I owed for my alleged crimes. I am already pardoned. Even Stevens. And that is just.

#1. What a load of shit, man.

JR. Alleged?

SR. looks around, avoiding Jr's eyes.

JR. Look at me. The bruises on my body were not allegations. Look at me. Look here (*pulls up sleeve to show Sr. forearm*) These aren't allegations, are they? I only stopped doing that a year ago. The photos on your phone. Were they alleged? Vicious lies? Chinese whispers? Hundreds, they found. Literally hundreds. I bet we could still find them on some fucking website. At least bruises heal, eh? And-and the accuracy... and the detail... with which I can describe the taste of your penis. (*#1 GASPS*) Is that an allegation too? It's a strange sensation. To have, like, a smell but it's in your mouth. You know?

SR. Okay--

JR. I could not give a lone fuck what you think society has forgiven you. I couldn't give a fuck. This is mine. This is now. It's only now and it's only mine and it's only for me to forgive you for raping me.

A long silence.

SR. I never raped you.

#1. Oh my God.

Jr. What?

SR. You deaf?

JR. runs a hand through his hair, distressed.

JR. How? How can you... you stand there... how can you say... why did you say that?

SR. Hey, hey, it's okay, don't get all... you know I'm no good with tears.

JR. You're evil.

SR. Hear me out.

JR. You're scum. You destroyed me. Why did you say that?

SR. Just listen will you? I know what you're going to say, it's just that technically, technically--

JR. rushes at Sr. and pins him to the wall.

JR. You piece of shit!

SR. Junior-

JR. I'll kill you!

SR. Yeah, yeah, do it, I double-fucking-dare you! JR. I don't give a f-- shut up!

SR. I don't give a fuck either! I don't give a fuck either! Go on! I don't care, watch what happens. You know what happens? You get caught, you go to jail, and you stay there till you're old. You'll be in there longer than I was ever even supposed to be. Now come on. Don't you find that just a little funny?

JR. I fucking hate you! I fucking hate you!

SR. Now Jr--

JR. Admit you raped me! You fucking raped me! You killed my mum!

#1. Fucking do it.

SR. I know what you're going to say--

JR. No you don't!

SR. I understand--

JR. NO YOU DON--

The men break away from each other as both fall about in fits of coughing. SR. coughs so violently that it sends him to the floor. JR. recovers and looks down at SR. in shock. After a long time, SR. goes quiet. He pivots to sit facing JR. He looks at the ground, panting.

SR. That wasn't an impressive display, was it?

JR. You're sick.

SR. Yeah. Doctor's last week. They gave me a whole new medical record, you know. Amazing what they'll do for you.

JR. What have you got?

SR. Everything.

JR. Are you alright?

SR. Stupid question. I stand by it, by the way.

JR. What?

SR. I am forgiven. The law has forgiven me. You, jury's out, you may yet, you might not, I don't know. Looks like God hasn't though. He is pissed off.

JR. You don't believe in God.

SR. You don't know.

JR. It was smoking did this to you, not God. Used to stink of them.

SR. I quit a long time ago. New man, remember? I think that's why I'm not afraid.

JR. Of what?

SR. Of dying. I've done it already you see. Jack died a long time ago. Now it's Dominic's turn.

JR. You looking for pity?

SR. Yes.

#1. Tough.

#2. Will you please be quiet?

#1. Fuck him.

Jr. I died too, you know. Hundreds of times.

#1. Exactly. Exactly.

SR. Yeah.

A PHONE RINGS. JR. pulls it out of his pocket and turns away to answer it.

JR. Hey. How are you? Fine. Not yet. No, I'll call you when I get back. Thanks. Hey listen, I'm sorry if you were worried. I know you didn't want me to come. I just needed - okay, bye.

SR. Michaela?

JR. Yeah.

SR. Nice of her to check in on you.

JR. Yeah, she's nice.

SR. You really are a new man too, aren't you?

JR. Yeah.

SR. Far better one than me.

JR. looks around, uncomfortable.

JR. Get off the floor, will you?

JR. lifts Sr. under his arms and drags him to sit on the bed.

SR. Thank you. So... yeah, I do ask that you pity me. Like you would a stray dog, or a drunk, or a child. Can I ask you something?

JR. Sure.

SR (*tearing up*). Will you forgive me? Please? That... that'll be something. Before the end. I'm scared. I'm scared of dying. Everyone is. Even monsters. Please read to me.

#1. No way.

JR. You don't care.

SR. I'm sorry. Forgive me.

JR. Why? You said yourself--

SR. I want to hear it from you. I do.

JR. (*beat*) Okay.

JR. picks up the letter again.

#1. Fuck this. Sorry.

#1 stands, disgusted, and makes her way out of the audience and exits.

SR. Okay. Be sure to speak up. You're an awful mumblor.

JR. I was nine years old, and you were my whole world. To this day, you still might be, but not the same. I find it difficult to look at the journey of my life up till now and not see you at every stop. Every thought, every word, every hurt is a ripple across the water you dropped a rock in. You were my world. My teacher and my friend. But, of course, you were really none of these things. You lied to me. You lied about who you were, and you lied about who I am. You lied every day until they took you. And even then I was not sure what the truth was. Can

you imagine what that was like? Everything was broken forever. I never knew what you were doing to me, not really. I didn't like it, and I thought that was my fault. It was yours. It was wrong of you. I didn't deserve it, and I can't undo it. It is with me, it is me - like an arm or a leg, it's part of me wherever I go. You hurt me so much. You have no idea. I am not capable of describing. But I am capable of much more. My arms and my legs do not control me, I control them. This is no different. I speak to you today not to reassure you, as you did to me, that everything is fine. That it was all going to be okay. That it will stay just between us. This is between me and myself. It's about me. And for that reason alone... I forg--

As JR. reads, #1 marches up stage right, concealed from JR. and SR. by the wall. She drags the wall to the ground and lunges for SR. She grabs him and drags him behind the partition. JR. breaking character, follows after them to break them up. SHOUTS and SCREAMS follow from behind the partition, eventually fading to silence.

#2 stands and turns to face the audience.

#2. Not to worry ladies and gentlemen. Everything is fine. I'm sure the actors are going to be okay. I apologise for all that you have seen tonight, but must ask, for reasons I hope are clear, that you keep what you have witnessed just between us. Once again I apologise for any distress caused. We hope you can forgive us.

THE END.