

THE FINAL CUT

A One Act Play



Lee Moore

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By

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SETTING

The play is set in the present and against a backdrop of political discord around the national deficit, heavy financial cuts to public services and welfare benefits that affects Terry and this family.

The play focuses on discords of four lives, they're not consciously presented to the world, and therefore they are revealing. The discord are in what remain in the house after 24 years of this family living in it, doing the same things at the same times of day, saying the same words, the same pattern of words, thinking the same things, dreaming private dreams, for all that time.

The events are not happening in Terry's head, or anyone else's, some of the words have actually been said, some of them have remained unspoken, some they have not dared to say, but they are all real. I call them discords because the characters appear to be talking, to be answering each other, but in fact each phrase just skids off the next, each person deflects the words of the others with heartbreaking, unthinking skill.

CHARACTERS

Terry - A man of 24. Severely physically disabled, Autistic, unable to feed or tend to himself, to walk or pick anything up even. We don't know how intelligent Terry is, but we know he uses language internally and his communication with others is very limited.

John - Terry's father. Aged about 60. A well educated man, middle class, used to be a middle manager in an engineering business and took early retirement to help look after Terry.

Mary - Terry's mother. Aged about 55. A pleasant, capable woman who has not had a career other than looking after Terry and the rest of her family.

Lucy - Terry's sister. 23 years old. Living away from home at university. She went to university late after working in an office for a couple of years and caught up with her A level exams at evening school. John always believed that she would go to university and it was to please him, to 'make up' for Terry that she persevered and finally got there. A bright, apparently loving but immature woman.

Barnaby—Terry's social worker. Earnest to help yet frustrated by the constraints of the social care organization he works for and the entrenched reluctance from the family to change, or at least see his concerns about Terry. This in turn renders Barnaby with a professional sense of helplessness.

SCENE ONE

First Discord (Terry's)

Terry, alone, in his wheelchair. Dark, growing gradually lighter but still dim until John draws the curtains.

Terry Terry's here. Terry's here. Juddering Terry. Dancing Terry. jerking, juddering Terry. Terry sore bones. Bones. Bones aching in secret places. Bones boning in boney places. Razor bones on paper skin. Terry. Terry's here. Here. Daybreak Terry. Moonlight. Terry just Terry.

(We hear a noise in the distance. Terry is quiet for a moment.)

Daddy! Daddy! Dark. Dark as Daddy. Dark. Dark. Father. (Exploring the word.) Father. Father? Dad. Daddy. Daddy father. Daddy! How many thoughts to morning? Sore bones, sore skin, sore, sore. juddering-jerking, splaying, twisting, sore. Cold, dry, empty sore. Dry. Terry dry, dying for a cold wet gasping grabbing gulp. Terry. Poor Terry. Terry's cup. My cup. Sing-a-song, Terry, my cup. See Barnaby-here-to-help-you, Terry's cup.

Lucy (off coming on, stepping out from the shadows) Look, He's reaching for his cup. (Terry looks around, straining his neck, his eyes rolling backwards his head lolls back and he strains to reach the cup, his movements tiny but laden with effort.)

Lucy He's stretching for his cup.

Mary (off coming on, stepping out from the shadows) No good telling me dear, I can't hear you. Can't hear you.

Lucy Look! Look!

Mary I can't hear you dear, no good telling me.

Lucy Terry! Yay! Terry!

(Terry laughs on the intake of a breath.)

Mary It's no good, dear, he can't hear you. Can't hear you.

Lucy Stretching, straining, looking.

Mary Jerking.

Lucy Trying.

Mary I meant to change his jumper.

Lucy He's trying to pick up his bloody cup!

Terry Terry's cup Lucy! (He jerks back in frustration, a wordless yell.)

Lucy I like him to look nice.

John (off coming on) He looks nice.

Lucy Don't you see? Don't you see?

John He looks alright. He is alright!

Lucy He's reaching for his cup, are you blind?

Mary I can't hear you, dear. I can't see. I choose not to listen, dear. I like to keep him respectable.

 (Terry, exhausted, allows his fingers to droop. Suddenly, cruelly, full light floods in, as John wrenches back the curtains. Terry screws up his eyes in protest, his fingers splay again.)

John We do keep him respectable. (He goes to Terry and smiles down at him. His fingers play with Terry's, tip to tip. He leans over and rubs Terry's stubble playfully.) Pushing the razor firmly over and up under the chin pull his nose to get that bit there

 (Terry snorts with laughter.)

Mary Than bit there.

John I know. On the humps of his jaw bones, little circles.

Mary Oh, yes, he does look nice.

John (admiring Terry's jumper) Good colour that.

Mary Royal blue.

John Uniform blue. Smart and clean. (He briskly mimes putting a jumper on Terry, practised in the task, crisp and efficient.) Take his hand and push the sleeve on so. Take the neck, hold it open, ease it over his head. Lolling, sad head. The other hand so. Pull it all down. . .

Mary There! That's it! Smart as a pin.

John (smiling into Terry's face) Clean as a whistle.

Mary Bright as a button.

Lucy Mad as a hatter. Daft as a brush. Silent as the grave.

(She looks at Terry and pulls a face. He shouts, a sudden happy shout.)

Mary We like to keep him respectable. We'll always keep him respectable.

John For ever and ever.

Lucy Amen.

(They look at Terry and he looks back, anxious. His fingers and his head move in concern. They move nearer, peering at him. He closes his eyes.)

SCENE TWO

Terry's Room. While this scene is going on Mary bustles around the room tidying up, getting rid of the talcum, the brush, flannel etc. John watches her, a bone china tea cup and saucer in his hand. He is absentmindedly dunking a biscuit.

Mary I wish you wouldn't wander around with that cup in your hands, John.

John What do you want me to do with it? I tried balancing it on my head, but I can't see where I'm dunking my biscuits.

Mary And that's a disgusting habit, anyway.

John I know. It gives you crumbs down your parting. Shall I give Terry a drink before I go?

Mary It's too hot.

John I'm in no hurry.

Mary I'll do it.

John Don't forget.

Mary I don't forget. I never forget. What do you mean? (She goes to a low table and moves a vase of flowers so that they are exactly central.)

John Nothing. Another of those bloody letters this morning. Wasting rate payer's money.

Mary What was it this time?

John Some damn council letter. (He sees that she isn't watching and moves the flowers a couple of inches so that Terry can see them from his chair.) Wanting Terry to come in for an interview to talk about work. I don't know. It said his benefit would stop if he didn't attend. Didn't make any sense. They're all the same.

Mary You'd think that they'd have realised by now he's never going to be able to. There must be people who need jobs, people who'd be glad of being employed. People who need assistance to get them.

John We're on the list, see. Once you're on the list. . . remember how The Reader's Digest was calling my dad a most valued customer when he'd been dead twelve years? They get your name and that's it.

Mary Oh yes, them. But you'd think that social services had more sense.

John Charities. Half the time it's charities. There's a charity for everything these days. And self-help groups.

Mary (going to Terry, as if to lift up the rug around his legs) Did you do his bag?

John I'll do it. My job. Leave it alone.

Mary (she lifts the bag anyway and then drops it back down) There's hardly anything in it.

John I know. Self—help groups and discussion groups, support groups, associations. You can't get a boil on your bum without half a dozen committees standing around you, looking at it, and giving out information sheets.

Mary (stopping and enjoying the joke) And people knocking on the door, wanting to tell you how big their boils are!

John 'Giving mutual support' they call it.

Mary Crying on each other's shoulders, more like.

John That's how minorities are born, Mary. 'Civil rights for bum boils!' 'Positive discrimination for bum boils!'

Mary 'Jobs for bum boils!'

(They are silent for a split second.)

John Ah, yes, Jobs.

Mary (bustling on) I wish they'd leave us alone, I do. We're alright aren't we? What does Terry want with a Job?

John Nothing. (takes a deep breath) I'd better be off. Meals on wheels don't wait, and you know what the oldies are like if the stuff isn't actually on the boil.

Mary Go carefully then.

John Always. (He goes to Terry and looks at him fondly.)

Mary And wear your jacket.

John Be a good boy for Mum, eh? (He gives Terry's cheek a little pat. It's too sharp and Terry jerks.

(John touches him, gentler.)

Mary (watching this small exchange but then turning away) I'll get his drink.

(John and Mary exit. Mary returns almost immediately with the drink in a baby cup. She sits to the side of him, shakes out a pink bib, puts it around his neck. Notices the flowers and moves them back so that they are central again but out of Terry's vision. She smiles into his face.)

Mary

There! That's better, isn't it? Now. A nice cup of tea.

SCENE THREE

Barnaby is working a stenciling machine, watching the copies as they come off the strenuous movement of turning the handle mirroring his thoughts. We can hear the buzz of conversation, typewriters, laughter and phones ringing in the distance.

Barnaby I find myself thinking about him all the time. In a meeting about someone else, some other problem, thinking about him. I look at strangers in the street, and I think of Terry. I go to a case meeting for someone entirely different. Different person. Different needs. Different and my thoughts are all on Terry. Wondering what he's doing. What they're doing. They always put his chair in the same place. Facing the same way, seeing the same things, looking at the same patch of carpet. The same strip of wallpaper.

Whenever I visit, there he is. I turned his chair around once, and showed him the open window, the curtains fluttering in the summer breeze, but she came back in, his mother, and with a deft flick of the wrist she had him back to where he always sits. A quick flick. Like that.

Mary (sitting by Terry, still, smiling over at Barnaby) The sun. The sun hurts his eyes.

Barnaby 'The garden,' I said, 'so that he can see the garden.'

Mary Goodness Barnaby?

Barnaby In that bright, cheerful, patent leather, Marks and Spencers voice 'He can't see everything'. Picking up his foot, which had dared to slip sideways, and slamming it down on the metal rest. (Slam)

Mary Goodness me, dear. There's bound to be something he can't see. (She exits)

Barnaby Only the world. Only the whole damn world.

SCENE FOUR

Terry's Room. Terry is dozing in his chair. Room pristine as before. We can hear the front door open and John enters the room, goes over Terry who is awake now, grinning at him, mild spasm.

John (calling) I'm back! (He touches Terry's hand and then takes off his outdoor clothes.)

Mary (off) I'm just mincing Terry's dinner.

John (hanging his clothes up in the hall) Any visitors? (He comes back into the room and calls again) Any visitors?

Mary (entering) Of course not.

John I thought that Barnaby bloke might call today.

Mary (putting a bib on Terry)

John No. He was a nice enough young man. (Takes the dinner, to Mary's mild annoyance, pulls a chair up and sits down to feed Terry.) Course , they all are. Nice and young.

Mary (mischief making) I had the feeling that he was criticising.

John Criticising?

Mary Looking. And thinking. You know. And when he went he said he hoped he'd see a lot of us.

John They've all said that, love. I'll believe it when I see it. There was that bloke, oh, a couple of years back....we were going to see him every day, remember?

Mary Oh, yes, that psychologist. What was his name?

John He was going to work bloody miracles. Come here every day, assess this, assess that, measure every damn thing. How often did we see him?

Mary I think he got disheartened: that great pile of forms to fill in, thousands of little ticks-

John In thousands of little boxes!

Mary And Terry couldn't do anything. Terry couldn't do a single thing.

(To her this is a simple statement, to John it is a cause of terrible sadness which, his back to her, she doesn't see.) I think he lost heart.

John. They all lose heart, love. Same as this one will, this Barnaby.

Mary (indignant) He said he couldn't see the garden.

John Barnaby did?

Mary I came in and he'd moved Terry's chair.

John (Pulling a small face at Terry) Well, never mind.

Mary And his eyes. They look him up and down. Barnaby looks up and down Terry and seems to take everything in. You can see him thinking.

John (more interested, less patronising) What do you mean?

Mary I came in from the kitchen and that Barnaby was holding Terry's hand, sort of rubbing it with his thumb, and then he pushed the sleeve up and looked at his wrist.

John (stopping abruptly) He's had enough. What did he say?

Mary (looking at the food remaining) Who?

John Barnaby! What did he say?

Mary When?

John When he was stroking Terry's hand – what did he say?

Mary (turning to go, taking the food dish) Nothing. He didn't say anything. I'll put our lunch in the sitting room.

John I'll be right there. Terry's just about ready for a little nap. Aren't you Terry?

(Taking Terry's bib and wiping Terry's mouth with a damp flannel, with restrained violence.) Aren't you, Terry? Ready for a 'little nap'.

(Struggling to keep his temper.) These bloody social workers. What do you make of them, Terry? Do you like them, Terry? These bloody social workers?

(Slamming about now, pushing Terry's footrests up, putting Terry's feet on a stool, placing a cushion under them, all caring tasks performed angrily.)

At the end of the day, though, where are they? At meal times where are they? These precious bloody experts, eh? Where's precious bloody Barnaby now? Now, when you need feeding. Now, when you need changing? God! (Face thrust into Terry's.) You stink! I said where is he now? Now that you're stinking? Bloody stinking? Don't look at me! Don't you look at me! (Takes Terry's head and pushes it to one side so that Terry's looking at the wall.) Don't you fucking look at me!

(Aghast at his own behaviour but unable to stop, John strides to the back of the chair, trying to leave Terry alone. Unable to, he shoves his face up against Terry's again.)

Useless! Useless! Senseless, fucking useless!

(During the last three words Mary has come to the doorway.)

Mary (brightly, smoothly) Come on, you boys. Our sandwiches are curling up and dying. And I thought Terry was going to have a nap?

(Drawing the curtains.) I don't know, I really don't.

John (going) I'll wash my hands.

Mary Well, don't be long. (She takes a long look at Terry on the way out.)

(Terry sits alone, crying.)

SCENE FIVE

Barnaby is standing, looking at Terry in the distance.

Barnaby The first time I saw him, with his hair about his face, like sea weed on a drowned man, and his John The Baptist eyes, he caught me. Caught me with the eyes and the face of a prophet. They were getting him out of the bath, his long thin body, Christ's body, taken down from the cross and washed for burial. His Mother, like Mary Magdalen, no idea who the hell he was, saint or sinner, Messiah or man. And his father, shirt sleeves rolled up, red faced and sweating in the steam. Nightmare. Just another client. Nightmare.

Silence. First discord ends.

SCENE SIX

All are standing at a distance from Terry.

Lucy Mad as a hatter. Daft as a brush. Silent as the grave.

Mary We like to keep him respectable. We'll always keep him respectable.

John For ever and ever.

Lucy Amen.

Mary He's not in bed! (She goes up to Terry.) He's not in bed and the news half done. The weather soon.

John After the news.

Mary But he's not in bed!

John Just for tonight. He's alright. Just for tonight. (Mary takes hold of Terry's legs, waits for John to take his body. Unwillingly, he does. They lift him onto the bed.)

Lucy Oh, listen to me. He's trying to reach.

Mary Not a good idea, John.

Lucy He's doing.

Mary Bed sores.

John Just for tonight, no soap and flannel and one two three . . .

Terry Sore bones.

(They stop for an instant, then carry on.)

John Just for tonight?

Mary First time ever. Thin end of the wedge. Thin end of the slippery slope, I say.

John After twenty four years — a breather.

Barnaby I thought they'd jump at the chance. A week away from it all. Not much, but still, a breather. I thought they'd grab at it, but she said.

Mary We'd worry about him so much.

Barnaby And he gave his tight little smile-

John Thanks all the same.

Barnaby And my words hang in the air between us all, "Well, if you change your minds . . . have second thoughts", and she smooths an imagined crease in the curtains.

Barnaby (together) "Oh, no, we'd miss Terry."

(Pause.)

Barnaby (small shrug) Helpless.

SCENE SEVEN

Daytime. Terry's Room. We hear the front door open, slam back on its hinges.

Lucy (Off) Yoo hoo! It's me! (Terry crows with delight, slight spasm. We hear a bag being dumped.)

John Lucinda? Mary it's Lucinda!

Lucy Hang on . . .

(Lucy enters like a whirlwind. Runs straight to the bed.)

Terry! Terry! Oh Terry my Terry. Here I am! (Terry is screaming with laughter now. She takes his hands and kisses his face, gives him a little shake, laughing back.)

Hello, you bugger. Here I am. Sort you out!

Sort you out once and for all. Shake you up.

(He screams again. She hugs him.) Oh, it's good to see you.

(Singing and playing with Terry.)

It is good to see you. Missed me? Missed me? Shall I sing? Shall I?

(Sings) "Oh, soldier, soldier, will you marry me, With your musket fife and drum?" "Oh, no, sweet maid, I canna marry you, For I have no clothes to put on." "So, off she went, to her Grandfather's chest, and she brought him some clothes of the very very best. And the soldier put them on. OOOOOh, soldier, soldier . . . will you marry me? (She turns it into a mix—type song, repeating it, jumping up and 'moon walking'.) Will you. Will you. Will you. Oh, soldier. Soldier. Marry me? Marry me? Marry me? (He is laughing and now she joins in, falling clown to rock him in time to her song.) With your musket fife and drum? Oh, no, sweet maid, I cannot marry you, for I have a wife of my own.

There. That was a lullaby. Darling Terry. As handsome as ever. Have you missed me? I bet you have. I bet, if you could manage it, you'd give me such a hug and you'd say, Lucinda! God, I have missed you!' Wouldn't you?

Barnaby I want to get him away from there.

Lucy Oh, I want to get you away.

Barnaby Out into the world.

Lucy Wheel you along the road.

Barnaby Let him feel the rain on his cheeks.

Lucy Take you to a disco.

Barnaby Lay on the beach.

Lucy So you can smell the sweat and the stale beer.

Barnaby So that he feels the wind in his hair and the salt on his lips. I do.

Lucy I do. (She hugs Terry again)

Barnaby But it's easier to lie awake at night worrying about that tight little home than it is to visit I sense something. And it stops me. It stops me in mid breath. I can't go in and snatch him out. And I can't stand by and mutely observe. And I can't get him out of my mind.

(John enters with Terry's meal on a tray)

John Off the bed, Lucinda. I wish you wouldn't do that.

Lucy Me? Do what, Dad?

John You know full well what. We've told you often enough. Mauling him.

Lucy Mauling him? Is that what I was doing? I was just saying hello, after being away for weeks and weeks.

John Sisters don't greet their brothers like that.

Lucy Oh, God.

John It's not healthy.

Lucy Bearing in mind that he's totally immobile, spastic, epileptic, and incontinent — oh, and aphasic — that's bloody funny, Dad. Really pertinent, that is.

John You know what I mean.

Lucy Yes. I know what you mean. I'll go and unpack.

John How does he look, Terry?

Lucy Frail. Frailer than I'd remembered.

John He's been poorly. He chokes a lot now, and he's losing weight. At night he shouts. Suddenly yells.

Lucy Why?

John Who knows? With Terry, who knows? I think he's weary it all.

Lucy And you. Dad, are you weary of it all?

John What?

Lucy What do you think of retirement?

John I don't think of it, love. I just live it. It's not so bad. I've got my greenhouse.

Lucy And what about all your plans? The holidays in Scotland, the evenings out, the chess club? You were going to be so busy.

John We can't leave Terry. I thought that we could, but, when it comes down to it — we can't.

Lucy Dad, the social services said that they'd take care of him, didn't they? Just an evening or two evenings a week.

John I can't hand him over to a 'they'. I thought you were going to unpack?

 (Lucy starts to go out but hesitates.)

Lucy Are you undressing him?

John We always undress him. You know that. Would you like to go to bed in all your clothes?

Lucy I just thought. You always had him ready for bed so early.

John Yes, well, I always went to bed so early too, didn't I? So I could get up again at five o'clock to get Terry washed and dressed and in his chair before I left for work at seven o'clock. But I don't have to do that any more, do I? So now I sit with your Mother and watch TV for a while, OK? And after tea I lie him on his bed so that he gets a rest from that damn chair. And at supper time we heave him onto his bean bag so that he gets another little change. OK? Is that alright?

Lucy Dad! Don't be so bloody touchy! I mean, I'm glad he stays up a bit longer . . . I only wondered, that's all — and I get a bloody lecture! (She stomps off)

John When she was born, Terry, your sister, you were thirteen months old. We'd just been told about you, your Mother and me. Well, told as much as they knew, which wasn't much. Your Mother couldn't stop crying. She held Lucinda in her arms and cried for you. And I was angry. So bloody angry. We couldn't welcome her for grieving for you, and we couldn't grieve for you for welcoming her. Guilty on all bloody counts.

 I took you in to see her on the day that she was born. You weren't much bigger than her. It gave us a shock to see that. We laid you side by side on the bed. Introduced you.

Same hair. Same features. Same perfect little hands. And I thought my heart would break. I thought my heart would break, Terry. Like a sword had been plunged through me. Agony. Agony so bad I wanted to scream and cry out and clutch myself together, clutch myself together. Scream and cry and shit. It clawed at my stomach and twisted my bowels, so that I wanted to shit. Grabbed my bowels, wrenched the heart from me, wrung me out. There's no pain like that, Terry, not in this world.

To look at the two of you, lying there, there's no grief like that. It's not to be endured. Even now, it's not to be endured, even now. And it doesn't go away. Ever. Like a sword had been plunged through me. "And a sword will pierce your own heart, too." That's the bloody word you sent to your handmaiden. That's the message you sent to Mary. A sword to pierce her heart. And mine! God! At least she saw her son 'grow in stature'. She saw him walk, she saw him run, she heard him talk. Words from his lips. I'd let them crucify you for that, Terry. Oh, God, I'd let them crucify you for that. I'd drive the nails in for that! For one bloody word. Here! Give me the hammer, the nails, the cross! Give them to me! I'll do it! I'll bloody do it! For just one word, I'll crucify my Terry. I offer him to you. For just one word. I offer him. My son. My son. My beloved son. My beloved son.

(He rests exhausted. Terry smiles uncertainly.)

SCENE EIGHT

John slowly recovers and feeds Terry his meal, spooning in the food with great patience, his back to Lucy who has entered and is slouched in Terry's wheelchair, rocking it. She puts her foot up on it piece of furniture, watching John critically. Now and then John gives Terry a small smile.

Lucy Why don't you ever talk to him?

John What sort of a question is that?

Lucy A simple one. You never talk to him.

John If you say so.

Lucy Oh, God!

John If you say so, it must be true mustn't it? Who could deny the truth of your words? Fresh from Olympus. (Seeing her foot.) Foot down.

Lucy (automatically obeying) If he was a dog you'd talk to him.

John (tidying the tray, the meal finished) If he was a dog he'd feed himself. If he was a dog he'd go for walks. If he was a dog he'd bring me the bloody paper. As it is . . . it doesn't matter.

Lucy It does matter. It matters that you think less of my brother than you would of a dog-

John I didn't say that.

Lucy I heard that.

John I can't help what you heard. (He starts to lift the rug on Terry's leg but then stops.) If you could just pop out for a moment?

Lucy Oh, God, here we go. The ritual of the bag. For God's sake, Dad, it's not incestuous for me to see my brother's piss.

John Lucinda!

Lucy Sor—ry. Ur—ine. But we both know you're going to empty his bag. I've done it thousands of times. Me and Mum.

John Thank you. Thank you for that reminder, Lucinda. That 'In case you've forgotten, you senile old fool'. Do you think that I don't know? Do you think that I don't know how often you and your Mother have tipped away his urine? I courted her once, to the sounds of Glenn Miller. I promised her the earth, to love and to cherish, to hold and to

protect and to love, to the sounds of Glenn Miller. Do you really think that I don't know how many times she's tipped away my son's urine? Alright! here it is! (He lifts s the rug, and brandishes the catheter bag.) A bag full of piss, as you bright, bloody young things would say. The total achievement of Terry's young life. The end result of every day and night, every day and night for the last twenty four years. Not much, some would say, but you can't fault his consistency. Can't do a lot, our Terry, but by God you should see him pee! We could get up coach parties! Fantastic peeing record holder! Pees all day long in the privacy of his own room! Steadily, stealthily, while you all think he's wasting his time, he's secretly peeing!

Mind you, he's not the man he was. Time was, he didn't have a piss bag. Time was, you'd go into him at ten-to-six in the morning, and you'd find the bed all nice and warm and dry and you'd offer up a silent prayer, and creep over for the bottle, and creek buck again, and try to carefully, ever so carefully, ease the bottle in, ease him into the bottle, and then . . . just as it was nearly . . . ever so nearly . . . there, he'd open his eyes, look straight at you, and let out a bloody bucketful. All over the place. Bloody gallons. But now, of course, he has a bag. And on dull days, when you're away at university, learning how bloody stupid the rest of us are, we sit around in here watching him pee.

(Pause.)

Lucy I'm sorry.

John I talk to him. Sometimes. After twenty four years there's not a hell of a lot I haven't already told him. There's not a hell of a lot I can do for him, either, but at least I can give him some degree of dignity, privacy. At least I can do that much. Oh, I can't give him the sort of love you give him. I can't discount the years, the deadly routine, the tons of mush I've spooned into him, the tons of muck I've coaxed out, the rivers of urine I've tipped away. I can't discount it. All the weight and warmth and stink of it for all his life. So be a good girl and humour your old Dad, would you? Bugger off while I empty this bloody bag.

(Lucy goes slowly, thoughtfully, while John empties the bag into a plastic jug. Terry gurgles at him.)

John (smiling at TERRY) 'Pisssssssssss.'

(At the end of the hiss he pulls a face at Terry. Terry laughs but almost immediately his eyelids droop. John looks at him for a moment, stoney faced.)

SCENE NINE

Second Discord (Lucy's)

Everything John and Mary say here is a cliché, a phrase Terry's heard perhaps a hundred times. Everything Lucy says has been whispered to him alone. And so John and Mary speak out while Lucy tends to speak quietly, just to Terry until John and Mary are drawn into it.

Lucy At night I dream of him. In the day I think of him. Little things remind me.

Mary That's nice.

Lucy Little things. The smell of a soap. The curve of a man's chin. Hairs on an arm.

Mary It's nice to think of him.

Lucy The man smell of a young man.

John I choose not to hear that.

Lucy The man smell of a young man. I choose to say it.

Mary Goodness.

Lucy Harmless things. The smell of soap.

Terry Lucy. (They don't hear)

Lucy And I can't stop the thoughts.

John Lucinda!

Mary Least said soonest mended.

John Best left unsaid.

Mary Such a pretty name, Lucinda.

Terry Lucy chatterbox. (They don't hear.)

Lucy The curve of a man's chin, hairs on an arm, the smell of a man, the smell of his soap, the tang of his sweat.

John Lucy.

Lucy Reminders. The feel of him. The flesh of him.

Mary We chose that name because it was so sweet. Lucy And the man who fills me, prods me, sweats on me, the man who holds me, breathes beer on me, pierces me, lies on me too long and whose skin melts onto mine in cold and sweaty union, becomes Terry.

John You know I don't like you doing that.

Lucy When he's lain on me too long, and the pleasure has been shot, and our bodies are replete with the sameness of it all, I feel as if I have no strength, no breath, and as if the body crushing mine is Terry.

 (John has been combing Terry's hair and lets Terry's head fall back.)

John You know I don't like you doing that.

Lucy (close) As if it is Terry who saps all my strength.

Mary A nasty dream.

Terry My dream.

Lucy A harmless dream.

John Off the bed, Lucinda.

Terry Into bed, Lucinda.

Mary I thought we'd have such fun.

Lucy I only want to comfort him.

John Or yourself.

Lucy Him.

Mary He's alright.

Lucy I love him.

John Or yourself.

Lucy Him. I bring the world to him.

Mary Your world.

John Not our world.

Lucy A peck of dirt —

John Before he dies?

Mary He's alright.

Lucy But me . . .

Mary She was always fond of him.

Lucy I'm not alright.

John Bright.

Mary We always said so.

Lucy I'm not alright.

Terry Poor Lucy. Poor Terry. Poor. Piteous.

Lucy Listen. You have to listen.

John I choose not to hear that.

Mary I choose not to.

Lucy (a cry) Terry.

Terry (a shout) Lucy.

 (Mary and John exit.)

SCENE TEN

Lucy is looking down on Terry who is on his bean bag.

Lucy Right, Terry. Time for an update. Update time. Star date . . . Where did we get to? I told you about the river . . . and the bridges . . . now, let's see. People.

Where will I start? Well, there's Sheila. She's, oh, I dunno, about thirty five, forty . . . old I anyway. She wears black overalls from Milletts and she drinks real ale and cries into it because none of the men fancy her! Then she gets pissed and she sits in the corner glaring at the men and muttering 'castrate the bastards!' and 'Ireland for the Irish' and all that sort of stuff. Anyway, she's sex mad. Permanently randy.

Bernadette says she had a transplant and they made a terrible mistake and gave her fully functioning monkey glands. You'd like Bernadette. She's only there at weekends. She's a Catholic. She works in a steakhouse and she's in love with this horrible old married man. Manager of a cut price supermarket. Really gross. To add insult to injury she turned vegan last week. Can you believe it, Terry? A sinning Catholic vegan serving up bloody steaks all day long. My God, it's pure lunacy!

And the town! Oh, God, I wish I could show you the town, Terry. I walk around it, saying to myself, "You're here, Lucy. Here. Look. Look and remember." I don't want to forget any of it, not one bit of it! And the gigs! Oh, no, I was telling you about the town. Remind me about the bands, eh? This is me, going out to a lecture. Slam the door, scramble past the bikes in the passage, bloody things. Down the steps, one, two, three. There! And the street's so narrow — a back street in any other town, and God! There's loads of us, some in a rush, some strolling, great gangs all talking together, no one looking where they're going, like some big noisy crab, sideways. Some riding bikes. Millions riding bikes! Here comes one now — looking back over his shoulder calling to someone — he hasn't seen me, damn man!

(She flattens herself against an imaginary wall and flops down with relief at his passing)

Phew! He's gone!

(She laughs and caresses Terry's face, then grows suddenly quiet, reflective.)

And it's all so lonely. I sit in my room and I think of you, Terry. I think of you and wonder about you. It's nothing like I'd imagined. And I can't tell Dad, can I? You're doing it for all of us, Lucinda, consolation for how things are. Consolation prize. Oh, Terry. Twenty four years old and stuck here with Mum and Dad. You're looking at me, Terry and I haven't a bloody clue what you're making of all this. If you're making anything of it at all. Are you with me, Terry? Are you?

Talcum powdered and combed and laid to rest on a clean and comfy bean bag . . .

(He laughs apparently involuntarily as a baby laughs with wind, and this suddenly angers her)

Do you give a damn what happens to me? Do you? Wasting my time. Wasting my time, because you don't care, do you? You don't give a damn if I'm here or there or dead or bloody gone, do you? I'm sorry, Terry. I'm sorry. You do care, don't you? You do listen.

It's our bargain, isn't it? If I talk, you'll listen. It's them that make me like this. Them with all their 'Off the bed, Lucinda' and 'You know we don't like you doing that', so prissy and shut-off and we—can-cope—ish. And they want to shut you off, too. As if you're some timid little baby needing total protection in a sealed bloody unit. Well, you're not. You're a man. A fully grown, fully blown man. Look at your beard, Terry. Feel it!

(She puts his hand to his chin.)

If it wasn't for some senseless accident of, God knows what, a long labour, sloppy nurses at a slow delivery — God knows, you'd be down at the pub right now, out there with the rest of them — fornicating with the best of them. And you're in working order, Terry, I know that, too. See, there are no secrets between us. Remember how I helped Mum to get you up, sometimes?

(She nuzzles into Terry's neck and puts her arm around him. After a short time Lucy draws back from Terry, looking down at him, loving him. She slowly takes off her shirt, watching him all the time. His head jerks away and she slowly, gently, moves into his eye line again.)

Barnaby When you walk up the path you're struck by the order of it all. Regimental. I can just see her now, slaughtering each weed as it pokes its little head above the ground. Him, relentlessly advancing on the ranks of grass with his grinding ravenous mower. "We like to keep busy". A small and shining house. A credit to them all. Enough to make you weep.

(Barnaby draws nearer to the area where Terry and Lucy lie. Lucy is astride Terry now, bare breasted, trying to make him look at her. Wherever she moves he twists away, in the start of an epileptic fit. She doesn't recognise that this is happening, so involved with her own emotions. She takes his stiff splayed hand and places it on her breast. Terry convulses, she scrambles off him, automatically moves something out of his way, and then she sits, watching. Terry is groaning now as he thrashes around. She starts to cry and pulls her shirt on, all the time watching Terry. Soon she is openly weeping. After a moment she goes to Terry and wipes his mouth. Barnaby appears behind her.)

Barnaby Erm.

(Lucy spins around and almost slips.)

Barnaby I'm sorry.

Lucy (afraid) What do you want?

Barnaby Barnaby. Terry's social worker. I'm sorry, I rang twice. Then, when I saw the back door standing open like that, I wondered if anything was wrong.

Lucy Wrong? Why should anything be wrong?

Barnaby Look. Can we start again? I'm Barnaby. Terry's social worker. Well, the family's. And you must be Lucinda.

Lucy I must be, mustn't I?

Barnaby Are you alright?

Lucy I've been having a bit of a weep, actually. Put it down to hormones.

Barnaby We all need a weep from time to time.

Lucy Do we? (Relenting)

You've missed Mum and Dad. They've gone out shopping. As soon as I walk in one door they grab their bags and run out of the other. Only chance they get to go together. Have a walk around and a cup of coffee like any other couple.

Barnaby Yes.

(He goes to crouch down by Terry.)

Hello, Terry. It's Barnaby.

(Terry snores gently, post seizure)

Barnaby (louder) It's Barnaby, here to help you.

(to Lucy) How is he?

Lucy I don't know.

Barnaby Hello, Terry. Hello.

Lucy They shouldn't be long.

Barnaby (still looking at Terry) Right.

Lucy Sit down.

Barnaby (not doing so) Do you see any changes in him?

Lucy Changes?

Barnaby Going away as you do. You know.

Lucy Should I? He's a bit thinner. More frail. (Pause. Barnaby is still gazing at Terry.) I wish you'd sit down.

Barnaby I'm very glad to have this chance to talk to you, actually. Do you mind if we talk ? About the family?

Lucy If we must.

Barnaby It's just that I don't seem to be getting anywhere with your parents.

Lucy No?

Barnaby And they seem edgy.

Lucy Do they?

Barnaby More worried, tense . . . even than they usually are. From what I've seen of them, that is.

Lucy (bored) Yes.

Barnaby Please. Lucinda.

Lucy Lucy. I'm more than Terry's sister, you know. I like to be called Lucy.

Barnaby I'm sorry. I didn't know.

Lucy Not in your files, that bit? I do have a personality all of my own.

Barnaby Of course.

Lucy There's no 'of course' about it.

Barnaby God, this is so hard.

Lucy Yes. Isn't it?

Barnaby (plunging in) I'm worried about Terry.

Lucy (her animosity begins to ease) Worried?

Barnaby Concerned.

Lucy Go on.

Barnaby I don't quite know how to put it into words. Terry. He's got something special. Some power. There's something powerful about him. Compelling. As if there's a real, hard intelligence there. I really feel as if there's a real intelligence there.

Lucy And? It doesn't do him much good saying that. Or anyone else.

Barnaby It's a start.

Lucy Don't fool yourself. A start to nothing. Others have seen what you've seen. Me, for a start. Then there was the district nurse, and some sort of education official, and when he got pneumonia one year there was the whole bloody staff of the medical ward. All charmed by Terry Davies. There's been all sorts.

(She takes Terry's leg and waves a foot at Barnaby.)

Wave a leg at him, Terry. Yoo hoo! Here we are! Go to the back of the queue. You've actually joined rather a large body of opinion.

Barnaby But they treat him as if . . .

Lucy And how should they treat him?

Barnaby I don't know.

Lucy What exactly do you want them to do?

Barnaby I just don't know but . . . Widen his experience, change their attitudes-

Lucy Sounds good. Be specific. (Looks at Terry, still snoring.) Tell him to be specific, Terry.

Barnaby That would need discussion.

Lucy 'Discussion' — What, as in 'options' and 'alternatives'?

Barnaby They won't discuss anything.

Lucy They pride themselves on managing. Standing on their own two feet. Four feet.

Barnaby Is it so terrible, accepting a helping hand?

Lucy You don't have to convert me. I'm just the piggy in the middle, I am. Look, twenty four years ago there was no help to be had. They've got into the habit. And now the government is going back to those days? Isn't it?

Barnaby There's still some help, if they'll take it. I'll push for them if they'll let me.

Lucy (over him) just a cup of tea in the ward sister's office and the advice to put the baby into a home. They never quite got over that.

Barnaby (desperately trying to get through to her) I'm afraid that they'll leave it too late. I saw marks on his wrist.

Lucy What?

Barnaby Marks. On his wrist. Eight days ago.
(Lucy goes to look.) Oh, they'll have faded by now.

Lucy What sort of marks?

Barnaby I don't know! Marks where they lifted him or held him in the bath or — I don't know. Perhaps he marks easily.

Lucy I should have locked the back door. You could have been anyone. Gave me a start.

Barnaby Does he mark easily?
(She turns away and begins to fiddle with Terry.)
Lucy? Please?

Lucy No. No. He doesn't mark easily.

Barnaby Thank you.

Lucy Don't thank me!

Barnaby It's just another piece in the jigsaw. I only want to help them.
(Standing up)
I'll try to get back tonight.

Lucy They think the world of him.

Barnaby I know that. I only want to make things better.

Lucy No one ever does.

Barnaby (bending down to Terry) I'll be back, Terry. I will. Look at me, Terry. (He takes Terry's head gently in his hands.) Look at me.

Lucy Leave him alone!

Barnaby I only —

Lucy Don't move his head like that. Your will is ruling his. Don't do it.

Barnaby I'm sorry.

Lucy Everyone making him look at things. Man handling him.

Barnaby Lucy . . .

Lucy Mauling him. just because you have the power.

Barnaby Mauling? I was only saying goodbye.

Lucy You don't say 'goodbye' like that. You don't grab my head and make me look at you. Perhaps he doesn't want to look at you! To be your flawed mirror! An image of what you could have been, an image of what he should have been! Perhaps that hurts him.

Barnaby (exiting) I'm sorry.

Lucy (fighting back tears) It hurts me. It really hurts me.

SCENE ELEVEN

Later. John enters and he and Lucy tend to Terry.

Lucy Dad . . . Dad, Mum said something on the phone last week, about you moving.

John Moving?

Lucy Said you'd looked at some of the new houses over at Princeton.

John She looked. I went along with her.

Lucy They any good?

John Lovely, for gerbils.

Lucy You're not going, then?

John Your Mum gets a bit fed up from time to time. She sees these lovely new show houses and they've all got shining kitchens and brand new carpets, and there are no wheelchairs and cramped back rooms, and commodes, and she just gets a bit . . . unsettled. `

Lucy Poor Mum.

John We're alright, Lucy. We don't want you worrying about us. Or about Terry. He's our responsibility.

Lucy And my brother. But I wasn't worried about him.

John Your Mother mentioned the vague possibility to moving at some vague time in the distant future and you panicked. Panicked that Terry might get taken into care.

Lucy No. No, I didn't. Not really.

John Not really. I don't want you worrying about your brother. I don't want you limiting your horizons because of him.

Lucy But I don't Dad.

John When you have a handicapped child the whole family is handicapped. . . and I don't want you carrying your handicap through your whole life. Listen to me, Lucy. Terry's here. Please God, he'll always be here, well, as long as we are and as long as he lives. Leave him here. Leave him here and get on with your own life.

Lucy You don't.

John I can't.

Lucy Perhaps I can't either —
(As the words leave her mouth John grabs her arm)
Look at this place! Look at it! Look at it!

Lucy Dad, you're hurting.

John This is where your fine feelings will get you! Right here! Do you think that I could bear to see you going down a road that ended up here? Turning into someone like me? Is this what you want for your fresh young life, is it?

Lucy Dad, calm down.

John Nowhere. Nothing. Going nowhere doing nothing. I don't want that for you. A lifetime of keeping Terry respectable. But this is where you'll end up, and the more interest you take in him now, the stronger a hold he'll have on you. He has the grip of a drowning man.
(Pause)
No. Don't worry about them taking Terry away. We'll never let them do that. Don't worry about anything changing. Nothing's going to change. If they were to take him away, what would be left for us? There's only Terry for us. The Terry that is, the Terry that was, the Terry that ever will be.

Lucy Oh, Daddy, what will you do?

John Do? Oh, we'll carry on for a bit. For a bit longer.
(Lucy exits. John fills a medicine funnel with bright pink medicine.)

John Here we are, Terry. Before all that lovely tea leaves your tummy.
(He puts the funnel to Terry's lips. Terry is in a small spasm. John waits patiently for it to pass and then tries again. It is so thick that it wells up on Terry's lips.)
Bloody stuff. Come on, get it in, old man. Come on, for sweet Jesus sake . . . You stupid bloody . . .
(He twists the funnel so that it is forced between Terry's lips. Terry appears to take it all and, just as John is straightening up, satisfied, he spits it all back out again in a convulsive, choking cough.)

John Shit!

(Pink medicine everywhere. John mops it up, disgusted. Watches Terry warily. Terry calms as John starts to go but then Terry starts to choke again)

John Oh, God.

(He pulls Terry off the bean bag and rolls him onto his side. Panicking, he thumps between Terry's shoulder blades wildly, as the choking is turning into a whoop, his face congesting)

Mary (runs in and tries to help) Oh, God!

John I'll do it! I'll do it!

Mary Just rub between his shoulders, don't thump him.

John I know! I know! Just leave me alone . . . leave me.

(Gradually, as he thumps and rubs the choking dies down. Terry takes a big shuddering gulp of fresh air)

John There. See. I could manage.

Mary It's all over your sleeve. I'll get a damp cloth.

(John looks at his cuff with distaste.)

John I'll see to it. You sort him out.

(Mary goes to Terry and with infinite patience wipes his face. She makes little soothing noises to relax him)

SCENE TWELVE

Third Discord (Mary's)

John enters. Mary gets up and goes to busy herself in the kitchen, a place that has become her refuge.

John (sitting down) Come and sit down Mary.

Mary I cannot sit. You know that. I can't just sit.

John Then come and talk.

Lucy (entering) Come and talk, Mother.

Mary What could I talk about?

Lucy Your thoughts, Mum. Your thoughts at the kitchen sink.

Mary It's a small house, dear. No room for thoughts. Just wheelchairs and lifting aids and beds.

John Come and sit.

Mary (holding back emotions) I must be doing.

Lucy Come and listen, then.

Mary I cannot hear.

John Ah, come. .

Mary When I was a child I could not bear to share the Penny Arrow bar my mother used to buy for me.

John Come.

Mary My thoughts are without words. They have no form.

Lucy Blind foetus, curled up away from the light.

Mary Yes. Yes . . . Suckling puppies, blind and groping.

Lucy Suckling?

Mary I have no will to move away.

John Then come here.

Mary At my mother's house there was always a dog, and she was always called Meg.

John (himself becoming emotional) Come and sit beside me and let me hide my eyes against your body.

Mary Always a Meg at the fireside. Two litters a year. Always the same.

John Let me nuzzle into your flattened breasts and the deep dark parts of you.

Mary And I felt sorry for all those Megs when their pups were grown, but still greedy for her milk. Sharp teeth.

Lucy She has no more milk to give.

Mary All those Megs and all those teeth. Her back would arch as she tried to step away from their strong and angry little jaws, her tail tucked between her legs, and I thought, 'How cruel. How cruel they all are.'

John Only needing comfort.

Lucy Bed warm bodies.

John Finding the tit.

Lucy She has no more milk to give.

John I'll find her tit. Coax from it a blessing, a warm sweet blessing, take it in my mouth, her blessing.

Mary She had a wooden box in the dark corner, by the range. Warm and quiet. "Shush now. Meg has her pups."

John A drop. A trickle.

Mary All those generations of Megs. In her dark corner. And I thought, "How cruel they all are."

Lucy How cruel you all are.

John How cruel you are.

Mary How cruel.

(They all exit, except Terry)

Terry Steeephen. Steeeeephen. Barnaby-here-to-help-you. At the end of the day Barnaby. When I smell of fear and shit and love, Barnaby. What, then? What then? Nothing. Dark nothing. And Father man. Father! Bloody fucking Father! Father fucker! Fuck!

(The words strangle into a yell)

SCENE THIRTEEN

Night. John enters.

John (calling to Mary) It's alright. He's just having a shout. I'll settle him down. Won't be long.

(Terry is moaning, showing discomfort. John moves his head, settles him down again on his pillows.)

John Better?

(Terry moans again, screws his face up, ready for a shout)

Alright, alright, hang on.

(He moves Terry's head again. Terry is silent. After a moment John turns to go but as soon as his back is turned Terry moans again. John turns back, impatient now)

Shut up! Shut up!

(Terry shouts at him, battle declared.)

Shut up, you bloody bastard! Shut. . . I know what you shout. I know. After twenty four years, I bloody know.

(Glaring at each other. Terry gives a bark. A defiant shout. John lifts his head from the pillow and bangs it back clown again)

Bloody . . . bloody . . .

(John looks around and sees a bib, grabs it and rams it into Terry's mouth. Terry roars all the more, his face congested, limbs flailing. The sight incenses John even further and he digs his fingers into Terry's belly. Stands back, crying now. Terry still moans and thrashes. John grabs his head and pushes his face right into Terry's and makes a vicious face, and an angry choking noise. He grabs a towel and beats Terry with it, but mostly the bed, until he is exhausted and Terry is crying. He drops the towel and slumps onto the bed.)

See. See what you've done to me. Christ. Oh, Christ.

(Takes the bib from Terry's mouth)

Alright, Son. All done. There now. It's all done.

(After a few moments Terry is quiet, just an occasional sob)

Round and round the garden . . . like a teddy bear . . . One step . . Two step . . .

(Anticipating the line, Terry takes a sharp breath in, delighted to be part of the game. John sees the laughter welling in Terry and suddenly hugs him, rocking backwards and forwards, weeping. After a moment John is calm. Terry is dozing. John sit at his side, watching)

SCENE FOURTEEN

Mary enters in with a tray with a coffee for John and a feeder cup for Terry.

Mary Look at you, you're nearly asleep.

John No I'm not. I was just telling Terry about the EEC.

Mary Fat lot he wants to know about that. Or me for that matter... that Barnaby phoned. He's coming over.

John Fair enough.

Mary Very particular that we'd both be here.

John Well, we will be. When's he coming?

Mary Before lunch. Sounded very mysterious. Will you give him his milk or will I?

John You can if you like.

Mary Something about — oh, I don't know, Terry's rights to something or other.

John To what?

Mary County council something or other. I had the washing machine spinning in my ear.

John Bloody hell. that's all we need isn't it ? Someone telling us about Terry's rights. Where's Lucinda?

Mary Out. Meeting some of her old school pals, I think.

John It would be today. Terry and me shattered. Well, I'm not taking any old nonsense from him.

Mary He means no harm.

John Oh, God, I wonder what it's all about.

Mary Well, it can't be anything to worry about, can it?

John No.

(Mary exits)

SCENE FIFTEEN I

Barnaby enters. John greets him with a strained, polite nod.

John All very mysterious. All this.

Barnaby Not really, not really mysterious. Erm . . .

John She's just coming.

Barnaby (in anticipation) And Lucinda?

John Oh, no. We try to keep her uninvolved. Free

Barnaby Are you alright, Mr Davies?

John Tired. I get a bit tired.

Barnaby Of course.

John Not over tired, you understand, just tired.

(Mary enters and sits down, expectantly)

Mary There we are then, all present and correct.

Barnaby I hope I'm not holding up your lunch?

Mary Not to worry.

Barnaby I'll try to be quick, then. The thing is, I know what sort of pressure you're both under. Well, you must be under a certain amount strain.

John We haven't said so, have we?

Barnaby No. But I can see. Looking after Terry for so long. Looking after him so well.

John He's our boy.

Barnaby A man now. I mean, he doesn't get any easier, does he? Lighter? And you don't get any younger either.

(They don't give him any help, only regard him steadily)

Barnaby Anyway, first thing this morning I went to the County Offices on his behalf-

John His behalf?

Barnaby Looking at the possibilities. What's available. To help you. How we could ease the problem of -

John Problem? Who's talking about problems?

Barnaby Your life. Terry's life —

John (getting angrier) Terry's life? What do you know about Terry's life?

Barnaby It's my job to know about Terry's life. To know something about it. And yours. To assist you —

John (defiantly) We don't want any 'assistance'.

Mary (now stepping in) Barnaby, we've never asked for help. Never.

Barnaby I felt that I had gone as far as I could go. Here. I mean, there's only so much help you can get in this environment and-

John We don't want strangers traipsing in and out.

Barnaby No. That's what I mean. I thought that if Terry had a new environment. Freeing you —
(He holds Out a form which John disregards but Mary looks at)

John (incensed) Freeing? Freeing?

Barnaby I filled in this form, took it to the office. Got agreement in principle.

John Agreement? What form? What's he talking about Mary?

Barnaby We can take Terry. We can-

John You little bastard!

Barnaby Mr Davies!

Mary (keeping calm) Oh, Barnaby, I don't think so, dear.

John Filling in forms! At County Offices! Forms with our names on! You had no right!

Barnaby Terry! Terry has rights, Mr Davies. .

(John moves towards him and Mary restrains him)

 It's Terry's welfare and his rights that are my prime concern.

John You little bastard. So, you're going to tell me about Terry's rights, are you? You with your big red diary? You're going to be his advocate now, are you?

Barnaby Couldn't we please just sit back down and talk about this?

John Are you really arrogant enough to believe that anything you say could be more eloquent than the pleading that I see in my son's eyes?

Barnaby Pleading?

John Eyes that I've looked into for twenty four years? Do you?

Barnaby (very still) Why is he pleading, Mr Davies?

John My god! The arrogance of the little bastard! Eh, Mary?

Mary (warning him, realising that Barnaby is aware) John

John Go on, then. Make your accusations.

Barnaby Mr Davies?

John Just make bloody sure that you can substantiate them. . . just be bloody sure!

Mary John! Stop it!

John Because, if you can't find one mark on his body, if you can't come up with the marks, the proof, I'll have you! By God, I'll have you.

Mary (pleading) John! A job! A day centre!

 (She grabs the form and shakes it at him)

 That's what he's on about. Going to a day centre for work experience!

 (There is a silence. John begins to laugh. The others look at him. They exit)

SCENE SIXTEEN

Lucy enters and sits on the bed, plays with Terry's hands.

Lucy (patting one of his hands against the other) My mother said — I never should — Play with the gypsies - In the wood —

(Mary comes to the doorway.)

And if I did my mother would say —

Mary There you are, Lucinda. I thought I heard the front door. Wondered where you'd got to

Lucy I'm here.

Mary Well, I can see that now, can't I? I hope you're not over tiring him?

Lucy Over tiring him? What exactly is he saving his strength for, then? A marathon? The entrance exam to The Royal School Of Music? Or perhaps a one man trip around the world on a bloody ripple bed?

Mary That's enough.

Lucy Where's Dad?

Mary Lying down. That social worker came.

Lucy Dad, lying down?

Mary That young man upset your Father.

Lucy Why? What did he say?

Mary He wants us to let Terry go to into a day centre.

Lucy My God. No wonder Dad had the vapours.

Mary It wasn't very nice. It wasn't a very nice conversation. Your Father stormed off.

Lucy Well, I don't know why you don't grab at the chance. You need a break, Mum.

Mary (defiantly) We need nothing.

Lucy They could look after Terry.

Mary Oh, yes, I'm sure.

Lucy They'll give him someone to help him. Mum. . . I wish you'd give it a go.

Mary Anyway, it's not up to me.

Lucy Of course it is. He'd listen to you.

Mary What, be another voice nagging in his ear? No, thank you.

Lucy What is it you're so afraid of, you two?

 (Mary reacts to this.)

 You are, aren't you? You're afraid of something.

Mary Don't be so silly. I wonder if your Father did his bag?

Lucy Are you afraid that someone will be able look after Terry as well as you do? Or better? Is that it? It is, isn't it? You want to be the only ones. The holy ones. Dedicated angels. Don't you? You make me sick.

Mary (stung by this) Why are you so angry? What have we done to deserve such anger from you?

Lucy You smooth the bed.

 (She grabs it from under Mary's hands and yanks the covers so that they rumple.)

Lucy Lucinda!

Lucy You hang flowered wallpaper in his room. You feed him mush when the doctor told you years ago to let him chew.

Mary We don't want him to choke. We care about him-

Lucy I'm angry because you leave him in here while you watch the TV in there —

Mary His epilepsy!

Lucy Because all he ever gets at Christmas is a pair of socks. One year a towel. A towel! All wrapped up in Santa Claus paper. But most of all I'm angry because you never, ever kiss him! I have never seen you kiss him. Or hold him. In all the years — never! Oh, not now so much, not now when he's a grown man, but then. I remember kissing him. How I used to sneak into his room and slide into bed with him, and whisper to him, silly jokes and childish stories. We grew up together but I got all the kisses and he got, what? Soapy flannels? Passive exercises?

Mary He needed those things!

Lucy Not only! Not only!

(Sobbing)

Oh, how could you not kiss him? His soft, sleeping body. His long, thin limbs. The curve of his eyelashes against his bed-warmed cheeks. For Christ's sake, Mum, whatever happened to him it happened inside you. That should draw you together, shouldn't it? He looks at you as if you were a God. A shining, breathtaking vision of love. You know he does, don't you?

Mary

You're so good with words, madam!

(Lucy flounces out. Mary smooths the bedclothes, sits down with Terry)

A litany of despair, that's what she wants. Carefully fitted into the daily timetable. She doesn't look for tears and kisses and carryings on when there are sheets to be sluiced out and the smell to be expelled in great clouds of lemon aerosol. No. She's nowhere to be seen, then, when the tears are there. Each night brings with it the dull stale promise of what is waiting, and the cruel bright echoes of what could have been. You don't miss much, do you, love? You and I eat and sleep and keep our silence and they believe themselves to be the only ones to suffer. Only them.

(Slowly kisses him, tears running down her cheek)

Time enough for that when the years are over, Terry. Time enough for that when the suffering's done. Handsome boy. Lovely child. Precious darling heart.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Last discord (John's)

John Everyone gets tired, don't they?

Lucy No room for me here any more.

John Don't they?

Mary A perfectly natural thing.

Lucy So crowded.

Mary Phenomena. A perfectly natural phenomena. I read that in the Reader's Digest somewhere.

John I just get so bloody tired.

Mary He looks him up and down, and you can see him thinking!

John He's twenty five next week.

Mary Twenty five!

John Quarter of a century!

Lucy (sarcastically) All dressed up and nowhere to go.

Mary A round cake this year.

Lucy A slice for Terry.

Mary A small slice.

John A long time.

Lucy On your back.

Mary Ten candles, I'd thought. Round figure.

John Twenty five to go. Piece of cake.

Mary And butter icing. Pink and blue mixed. No writing, I'd thought.

John Like a nursery rhyme. Over and over.

Lucy (whispers) Happy birthday Terry.

John To the power of twenty five.

Mary (smiling) Twenty Eve years old!

Lucy Like a red brick university.

John Pushing the razor up —

Mary That bit there.

John I know.

Terry Terry!

Lucy My world.

Mary Goodness, he can't see everything.

John My father died at seventy five.

Lucy A peck of dirt.

Mary We like to keep him respectable.

Lucy Neat and tidy.

Mary Safe and sound.

John Snug as a bug.

Lucy Mutt and Jeff.

John (with more anguish) My father died at seventy five.

Lucy And his father died at seventy five.

Mary Downhill all the way!

John Brakes off, then!

Mary He always made me laugh.

John To the sounds of Glenn Miller.

Mary Oh, what times we had.

John I just get so bloody tired at the end of the day.

Mary Slippery slope I say. Thin end of the very thin wedge.

Terry Terry!

Mary Hardly a good idea, Dear.

John I'll do his drink, shall I?

Lucy Empty his bag.

John My job, that.

Mary Comb his hair.

Lucy Flannel and soap and one . . .

John Two

Mary Three . . .

John Get it in, old man.

Mary His blue today, or his green, what do you think, Daddy?

Lucy Out there with the rest of them. Fornicating with the best of them.

Mary Off the bed, Lucy.

Terry Into bed Lucy.

Mary (pretending she didn't hear) Pass me that bib, John.

John Another fit.

Mary A damp wipe, I think.

Lucy Cotton bud.

Terry Terry!

(Their actions mirror their words from now on, more and more frantic, nightmarish.)

Lucy Like a teddy bear.

John His poor head.

Lucy One step. Two step.

John Tickle under there!

Lucy The curve of his chin.

Mary The hollow of his neck.

Lucy White talcum in a pink tub.

John (angrily moving away from her) How cruel you are.

Mary Three times a day.

Lucy After meals.

Terry Terry!

John A sister's love-

Lucy Never enough.

Terry Terry!

Lucy Terry!

Terry Lucy!

John Wipe.

Mary And wash.

John Dry.

Terry Terry!

Mary Powder. Spoon. Wipe.

John And wash.

Lucy And powder.

John And spoon. Spoon the years one at a time. Twenty five.

Mary Fancy that. Twenty five years!

Lucy Doesn't time fly when you're —

Mary Enjoying yourself!

(John screams. The women look at him, mildly surprised, and then walks off. As the scream dies away he grabs the wheelchair and wheels Terry to one side of the area)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

The garden. John enters with a deckchair which he sets up and sits in next to Terry.

John She'll complain. She'll tell me why she left you there and ask me why I put you here. And I'll say 'Because he's light sensitive, dear. And she'll huff and puff for a bit and say something about the vitamins in sunshine, and 'You could have told me, dear' and I'll say that I just have and she'll tell me not to snap. And I'll say I wasn't. And we'll have another frozen bloody pizza in frozen bloody silence.

(Quieter) I can't bear her petty thoughtless cruelties. Her bright and breezey tortures. Her blitheness. Her blindness. I will protect you from her.

(To himself) I can't bear her petty cruelties, but, by God, I will jealously guard my own.

Mary (entering) Oh! I put him there!

John He asked me to take him in to the shade, dear.

Mary I put him there to soak up some sun.

John He did, dear. Enough to take away what little sight he has.

Mary The doctor said that he must have —

John His eyes burned out?

Mary If you're going to be nasty then I think you'd better go for a walk.

John Not much point in going for a walk if I'm going to be nasty. If I'm going to be really nasty I might as well stay here, where I can put my soul and heart into it.

Mary I'll do the lunch, then.

John I think I'll have my pizza unfrozen for a change.

Mary You're in a very funny mood. (She starts to go)

John I punish him

(She stops but doesn't look at him.)

I pull his hair and twist his skin. Chinese burns, I think they call them. I pull his head back and shout in his face right in his face. I pinch him. I take an ear in each hand and I squeeze, and I squeeze, hard. And his eyes stare and his legs thrash and I loathe him. Loathe him.

(Mary breaks the stem of a daffodil)

But I never leave a mark. I don't think that I have ever left a mark. But I can't be sure. Never absolutely sure. I'm afraid that one day I'll kill him. I dig my nails into his sweet white flesh when I lift him.

(Mary crushes the flower)

He'll be back, that young man, that Barnaby. He said that he'll be back. He looked at me, Mary, this morning he looked at me, and he knew. Mary. He knew.

Mary Actually I thought I'd give the pizza a rest today. Scrambled eggs. I'd thought.

(She drops the flower and makes as if to go but then stops)

I'm not a Jesuit, John. A father confessor. And I'm not a fool, either. And I won't let you treat me like one. Not you, not Lucinda. No one's going to do that to me. I've learned to cope with what we've got. I get on with it and cope. I don't whine and I don't moan, I just cope. And I don't want to know, John. Do you understand me? I don't want to know.

John I can't stop myself.

Mary It's a small house, John. And a stale confession.

John And there's no one else to stop me. Oh, God. Sometimes I think I'll leave him. Not go in to him. But then, the thought of him, sitting awake, waiting. Waiting in the harsh electric light, waiting in the dark, sitting there all night long with his poor back aching and his poor head lolling, waiting for a father who will not come. And so, because I love him, I go in to him and —

Mary I like to watch the ballet on TV, John. I like the precision. Every step planned, every glance weighed, considered. That's how I think of this family. Finely choreographed, around Terry. There are some steps that I must take and some that I must not take. Some things I may see and some that I must never see. In order that the ballet may go on.

(Pause)

I can cope with that. I'm numbed to that. My guilty knowledge. My guilt. I don't want yours around my neck. It's not fair, John, it's not fair to tie that around my neck.

(She goes)

John All the weight and warmth and stink of it.

(John remains sitting, gazing at the garden, toying with the crushed flower. Barnaby enters and walks up to John and looks out at the garden with him.)

Barnaby Your garden is lovely.

John Isn't it? Everything in the garden is lovely, except this.

(Holds up the flower)

Not quite lovely, not quite perfect. Easily crushed, so she crushed it, and went to clear up shit with cheerful precision. And now the question is, did she crush it because it was imperfect? Or is it imperfect because she crushed it? What do you think?

Barnaby I think we need to talk.

John *'Why should the aged eagle spread its wings?'*

Do you know poetry?

Barnaby A bit.

John 'A bit'!

Poetry is the assurance we need that we are not the fools or the monsters we think ourselves to be. That we are a part of the human condition.

'Because I do not hope to turn desiring this man's gift and that man's scope I no longer strive towards such things. Why should the eagle spread its wings? Why should I mourn the vanished power of the usual reign?'

Not that I ever flew very high.

'For what is done, not to be done again, may the judgement not be too heavy upon us.'

T.S. Eliot.

Barnaby It's beautiful.

John It is, isn't it? The melody of it is a comfort. An aesthetically pleasing way of saying 'Do your worst. I'm past caring.'

(Pause)

Barnaby There is nothing I can do. Like you said, there is no proof. And I haven't come to pass judgement.

John No. You wouldn't. We've seen them come and go, Terry and me. Twenty odd years of professional carers. That's what you're called now, isn't it? 'Carers'. You care and you care and then you care some more.

Barnaby Somehow we've ended up on different sides, how did that happen?

John And then you care a bit more. Relentlessly caring. Unremittingly caring. Caring and caring until we're ready to cry out for mercy and lay down our arms and shamble along behind you, defeated.

Barnaby No!

John Dragging us to our knees.

Barnaby Christ!

John And still you care! Leave us alone! For Christ's sake, leave us alone. Twenty five years ago there were no social workers. Welfare officers we had then. And district nurses and almoners. Look at your records. See all the names. You've worn out our carpets with your Hush Puppies, trekking back and forth over all the years. And now you! There has to be some sort of victory in life, there has to be. And they told us, your lot did, when we were sick of the screaming and the fits and the wet bed and the bloody awfulness of it all, that we were doing so well. So well! My God, they'd have done better putting a gun in our hands —

Barnaby Mr Davies, this isn't doing you any good-

John But if you're tired enough, and desperate enough, and Terry doesn't respond in any way, in any bloody way at all, day after sodding day, you don't just need the praise. You don't just need it, you get to bloody believe it. You start to believe all that shit. And if people stop saying it, if ever they stop saying it, for any reason, if they stop saying it, then all those years become . . . futile. And the stupid thing, the funny thing, the bloody tragedy of it all, is that it's all lies.

Barnaby We can help you.

John Your job scheme, I suppose.

Barnaby Among other things.

John Why stop at a day centre?

Barnaby Start with a day centre —

John Why not a frontal lobotomy? Why not the total removal of all memory? Here, inject my veins with morphine . . . cut his bloody throat . . . why stop at that?

Barnaby We could start with a day centre.

John Why are you so terrified at the prospect of a bit of heartbreak? Life is heartbreaking. Has always been. You can't change that. You and your lot. So bloody petrified at the very idea of a bit of unhappiness that anything is preferable . . . treachery, cowardice, abandonment.

Barnaby It's not abandonment. It's not any of those things!

John To me. Me and Terry.

(John gets up and strides away to stand by Terry looking down at him.)

John How could you explain to him that he hadn't been abandoned?

Barnaby For three days a week.

John For five minutes. He cries at night. I sit with him. How could I leave him for three days a week?

Barnaby That isn't why.

John What?

Barnaby I know why you won't leave him. The marks you spoke of.

John There are no marks!

Barnaby Not now, no. But tomorrow? If we agreed to take him tomorrow? Would there be no marks then? You're afraid that there would be, aren't you?

(John is staring at him, horrified)

Barnaby You don't know what you'll do to him between now and Tomorrow, now and next week. You just don't know, do you?

John (recovering composure) What game is this? Cat and mouse? Hobson's choice? Well, whatever game it is, you can stuff it!

Barnaby Are you hurting your son, Mr Davies? John, are you ill treating Terry?

John We have looked after him for so long.

Barnaby If we can be honest now we can make some good come of all this —

John And if not?

Barnaby It would be a police matter.

John Police?

Barnaby But without proof . . . I don't know.

John (very calm now) Who else have you told?

Barnaby Told? Well, everyone.

John Everyone?

Barnaby It's not a game, Mr Davies. I've told everyone of my suspicions. All they are at the moment, isn't it? Legally.

John Who? Who have you told? The Doctor?

 (Barnaby nods)

 The Physio?

 (Nod)

 The hospital? My God! You bastard!

Barnaby Will you let us help you?

John Help? How? Watching me and watching Terry, examining Terry, talking to Lucinda, to Mary, earnest young men with understanding eyes? Help? With everyone knowing? Everyone understanding'? Everyone?

Barnaby I had no choice. What else could I do?

John Christ knows. So. Now the praise has finally stopped. The victory is . . . gone. The lies are seen. The bag has no cat in it. Please. Please. Go.

Barnaby May I just have a word with Terry?

John Just leave.

Barnaby John.

John Goodbye, Barnaby.

SCENE NINETEEN

The garden, evening. John goes off and returns wheeling Terry. He puts the chair next to the wheelchair. John goes off and comes back again with a bottle of whisky, a bottle of Terry's pink medicine and a glass. John sips his whisky, enjoying the evening sunshine. Terry is peaceful.

[N.B. This scene is not continuous; we slip in and out of it. As the scene goes on John becomes steadily drunker and more drugged, Terry becomes more and more restless, anxious.]

John So. Here we are, Terry. At the end of the day. Lucinda is on the train, rushing thankfully back to her friends, and your Mother is upstairs, with one of her heads, and we are here. So. Here we are. Father and son. But we're not alone, Terry. Never to be alone again if they have their way. From now on we'll know that they're there. That they know. Pushing back your sleeve and examining the flesh. Ghouls! Buggers! But the night's just as long as ever it was, and I'm still weary, and you still need to be changed, to be turned, to be fed, comforted. And I can't trust myself any more. Or her. And they can't stop me, and she won't stop me. Your nails need cutting. And, seeing the tension between us all, shimmering like heat on a long hard road, they treble it. Seeking to diminish it, they magnify it.

(Sings) 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

Mine doesn't. Mine bloody doesn't. Does yours? No? It's a bugger, isn't it? We should have sat like this more often. Father and son. God it's years since I had a skin-full. Medicine to make everything better. Every little thing.

(Pours some into his whisky tumbler, a little fuddled now)

Raw, bleeding, foul, noxious things; cured. Sins of omission and commission; mended. Dank hidden deeds; obliterated. Frantic, obscene thoughts — all made well again!

(Toasts Terry with the tumbler and takes a gulp.)

Christ! No wonder you shouted.

(He quickly sloshes some whisky into the tumbler and swigs it buck but the taste is still foul. He gets up and hands Terry's feeder cup, unscrews the top, pours whisky into it and takes a drink)

That's better.

(He places the whisky and medicine bottles together)

Quite a nice way to go, don't you think? Pink and amber. Boudoir colours. Oh, God. Regard this, Terry, as a confessional. Will you? Good lad. 'She has been forgiven much,

therefore she loves much.' Well, I'm the other side of the coin. I have loved much and therefore I need to be forgiven much. The other side of the coin. Tails I lose. I did love you, Terry. Christ, how I loved you. That's not right, I do love you. Christ how I do love you. See?

(He takes a gulp of medicine from the bottle and washes it down with whisky straight from the bottle)

No. Do it properly.

(Pours the whisky into the cup)

You are my life and my mind. You are in my waking and in my sleeping. You are in my gut and in my blood and I love you. Love you.

(Another big gulp of whisky. He retches. Terry is growing more and more agitated.)

It doesn't do you any good if it tastes nice. You're a good lad, Terry, you are.

(John shivers)

You cold? You cold, son? You shouldn't be out here in the cold. Here . . . Have this.

(Struggles out of the cardigan and drapes it over Terry clumsily. Terry is crying now.)

There you are, son. Tell you a secret? Your mother's pills . . . I took them all. One and all. Clever, eh? Not just a pretty face, your old Dad. If the booze doesn't get me the happy pills will. Pills will . . . pills will . . . pig's swill. Can't bear them knowing, see. Looking and seeing. All the years come to nothing. All the things they said, over all the years, come to nothing. I wanted to be such a good father, Terry. Such a good . . . Oh, Terry, don't cry. Don't cry. There's a good lad. Nothing to cry for, Terry. Lots and lots of people, Terry. All going to look after you . . . You'll be alright, you'll see. There now, there . . . shhh. Shush. Don't cry, son, don't cry. It's all over, Terry, all over.

(John appears to fall asleep. Terry is thrashing wildly now, he cries out. John stirs.)

All the weight and warmth and stink of it . . .

Terry (Terry shouts in anguish) Father. Fath-er. Need you. Need you, don't go. Don't go Daddy! Daddy!

Don't go Daddy! Daddy! God!

He manages to knock John's knee. John's head slumps. John begins his decent into sleep, deeper and deeper until he dies. Gradually Terry's screams calms down and his appearance is wide eyed with look of disbelief and grief.

(Slow fade)

The end

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