

# **THE CORRIGAN BROTHERS**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
FOR THE DEGREE OF M PHIL B PLAYWRITING STUDIES

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## **Abstract**

*The Corrigan Brothers* is a full-length naturalistic drama in nine scenes. The play is a personal exploration of the themes of alcoholism and its effects on a family. The style of the play is that of a dark comedy, the humour stems from bathos and trying to overcome a dark situation through use of humour.

A reflective essay accompanies the play. The essay sheds some light on the previously mentioned themes, but its main focus is a discussion of theatrical techniques used within *The Corrigan Brothers* and my own theatrical style. It also includes a discussion of the impact of other writers on the play and my theatrical voice, with emphasis placed on the plays of Harold Pinter and Eugene O'Neill and the novels of Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

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## **The Corrigan Brothers Reflective Essay**

### **Introduction**

The original idea for my play about three brothers and the death of their father came about in February 2010 whilst reading Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880). The blurb on the back of my copy of the book reads:

“As Fyodor Karamazov awaits an amorous encounter, he is violently done to death. The three sons of the debauchee are forced to confront their own guilt or complicity. Who will own to patricide?” (Dostoyevsky 2010 ii back cover)

In the novel it's two-thirds into the story before Fyodor Karamazov is murdered. I had expected something with more of a murder-mystery flavour. My initial idea for a play about three brothers was from an angle closer to murder-mystery than Dostoevsky's novel.

In March of that year I wrote 14 pages of the piece before abandoning it. This version started off with a detective on stage, interviewing the elder brother about his father's murder. Alongside the murder-mystery aspect the play was to be about alcoholism and the effect of it on the sons, whether or not they were doomed to take on their father's legacy or break the cycle. I decided to shelve the material with the idea of returning to it in a few years time, when I would be able to write about an unhappy family with a clearer eye. The play would have drawn on my own personal experiences; my father's alcoholism and the affect it had on the family unit and the effect on myself. This has given my access to an unwanted wealth of experience and stories to which has been previously untapped in my work.

The reason to return to (the then untitled) *Corrigan Brothers* was the death on my father at the beginning of October 2010. When not attending the Playwriting

lessons my life revolved around sorting out of the funeral and what to do next. I think it was a case that this play had to be written *now*, while events were still taking place and whilst the wounds were reopened.

Writing *The Corrigan Brothers* has been a two-pronged effort- writing a play that represents what I have learnt from the course over the past year; and writing a play that exorcises a few demons and, at least tries, to lay old ghosts to rest.

### O'Neill, Pinter and Dostoyevsky

For research I read as many plays about family as I could, ranging from older works such as Maxim Gorky's *The Last Ones* (1913), Tom Murphy's *A Whistle In The Dark* (1961), Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978) and *True West* (1980), to much more recent plays such as David Eldridge's adaptation of *Festen* (2004), Conor McPherson's *Dublin Carol* (2000), *Behsharam* (2001) by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti and the Pulitzer Prize winning *August: Osage County* (2007) by Tracy Letts. I'm sure these plays (and plenty others) had some kind of bearing or another on *The Corrigan Brothers*, but the playwrights to whom I feel I most owe a debt are Harold Pinter and Eugene O'Neill.

O'Neill regularly writes about dysfunctional families, from his comedy *Ah Wilderness!* (1933), too experimental drama such as the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) and too later work like *A Touch of the Poet* (1942). For his entire working career O'Neill dealt with the theme of family. He waited until much later in his life to deal with his own family, and this produced O'Neill's most famous play- *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1941). By writing about his own family he could "face [his] dead at last" (O'Neill 1990 5). In the play the family hide many secrets from each other- Mary's morphine addiction is hidden from Edmund (ibid 1 32-33);

Edmund's consumption is hidden from Mary (ibid 25-26). Of course, both are revealed before the play's end causing Mary's relapse into drug addiction. There is a certain degree of secret keeping in *The Corrigan Brothers*- nobody knows of Richard's failed career and descent into alcoholism, that Joe isn't quite the big success he makes himself out to be and Matt may have taken their father's life.

*Long Day's Journey Into Night* stands as the archetype for semi-autobiographical plays about family, but it is not without criticism. It has been called "great art" (Berlin 1998 91) and "America's greatest tragedy" (Manheim 1998 1), but it has been accused of "melodrama" (Wikander 1998 219), been "hysterical and overblown" (ibid 217) and having too much of a "novelistic impulse" (ibid 224) which "[taxes] audiences' powers of endurance" (ibid). In his semi-autobiography *Chronicles Vol.1*, Bob Dylan gives his view on seeing a production of the play, and sums up the criticism taxed against the play:

"The play was hard to bear, family life at its worst, self-centred morphine addicts [sic]. I was glad when it was over. I felt sorry for these people, but none of them touched me. ...[*Long Day's Journey Into Night* is a] dreary play....Sometimes you see things in life that make your heart turn rotten and your gut sick and nauseous" (Dylan 2004 167-168)

The play, to read or watch, is by no means a lighthearted affair. I imagine many people feel quite depressed after it, some maybe even sick and nauseous like Dylan. It can be very hard to empathise with any of the "four haunted Tyrones" (O'Neill 1990 5) because O'Neill's "fatalism and sense of doom" (Berkowitz 1992 31) is quite overwhelming. What I take from this is that I did not want *The Corrigan Brothers* to

be a dreary play. Yes, I wanted it to be a dark play but I did not want to make it as hard or as heavy going as *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. This is where another playwright's influence comes into play.

To fully explain the influence of Harold Pinter on my work would take an essay to itself. Reading his work had a profound and irreversible effect on my writing and made me want to become a playwright more than any other playwright I've yet read. The influence of Pinter is very much a core part of my writer's DNA. The play of his that has the most bearing on *The Corrigan Brothers* is *The Homecoming* (1964). When I first approached the play I had believed that Harold Pinter was one of those *very serious* playwrights (like O'Neill) and that *The Homecoming* would be a dry affair. I was surprised to find myself laughing out loud at the dialogue on the page. Nobody had told me just how funny Pinter was and how integral humour was to his style. The final scene has long been an influence on my work:

**Sam:** *(in one breath)* MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along.

*He croaks and collapses.*

*He lies still.*

*They look at him.*

**Max:** What's he done? Dropped dead?

**Lenny:** Yes.

[...]

*Joey bends over Sam.*

**Joey:** He's not dead.

**Lenny:** He probably was dead, for about thirty seconds.

*Lenny looks down at Sam.*



**Lenny:** Yes, there's still some breath here.

**Max:** You know what the man had?

**Lenny:** Has.

**Max:** Has! A diseased imagination!

[...]

*Teddy stands.*

*He looks down at Sam.*

**Teddy:** I was going to ask him to drive me to London airport. [...]

I'll just go up the road to the Underground. (Pinter 1997 2 86-87)

The scene can be riotously funny on stage. The Spartan dialogue and matter-of-factness of the scene makes the ending of *The Homecoming* more powerful because of the comedy employed. In *The Crafty Art Of Playmaking* (2004) by Alan Ayckbourn, he writes:

“The darker the drama the more you need to search for comedy. If you don't let the audience off the hook occasionally to laugh when you want them to, you'll find them roaring with laughter during moments you didn't intend” (Ayckbourn 2004 5)

While I don't think Alan Ayckbourn entirely sticks to this principle in his plays, it certainly can be applied to the early plays of Harold Pinter, both *The Birthday Party* (1958) and *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) are made much darker by making the audience laugh in the early scenes. I wanted Pinter's comic leanings to influence me in the same way Martin McDonagh was influenced (O'Toole 1999). McDonagh writes very dark, but hilarious plays. *The Corrigan Brothers* starts with Matt Corrigan informing

his older brother of the death of their father. I wanted this scene to be a funny scene, through Joe's slow realisation of what Matt has told him:

**Matt:** Dad's dead.

**Joe:** Who?

**Matt:** Dad. He's dead... Dad's dead.

**Joe:** Christ... Glad I had my breakfast before I came out...

It was a nice breakfast. Bacon, egg, toast, few sausages, tomato. Few mushrooms, beans, a proper breakfast. Where is he then?... You're sure he's dead? (1 25)

The description of the breakfast is an unexpected turn considering the original subject matter. The initial exchange comes from real life, when I went to see my sister to tell her of our father's death. Instead of talking about breakfast she offered me a Yorkshire pudding.

Before I explore comedy in *The Corrigan Brothers* I want to return to an influence previously mentioned- that of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and *The Brothers Karamazov*. As mentioned before, without reading that novel it is doubtful that the play would have come about. Like the work of Pinter is in my DNA as a writer, Dostoyevsky is very much a large part of DNA of this play. It is interesting to note that Dostoyevsky is noted as an influence on both Eugene O'Neill (Törnqvist 1998 17; Chothia 1998 197) and Harold Pinter (Billington 2007 10; *ibid* 18; Pinter 2004 viii-ix). This is perhaps due to a certain "theatrical technique in his novel[s]" (Camus 1960 5), which Albert Camus writes about in the forward to his stage adaptation *The Possessed* (1959)<sup>1</sup>. He writes:

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<sup>1</sup> The novel this is adapted from is infamous for it's hard to translate title; it's been published under *The Possessed*, *The Possessors*, *The Devils*, and *Demons*. I should like to make clear that when referring to *The Possessed* I am referring to Albert Camus' play, and when referring to *Devils* I am referring to the original novel.

“A man of the theatre – whether actor, producer, or author –  
always finds in him all the suggestions he need.” (ibid)

Perhaps then this is part of Dostoyevsky’s continuing appeal? Philosophers and psychologists as well as writers cite his works. I have always thought of Dostoyevsky as the dark heart of Russian literature. Despite his Christian beliefs, his works are very dark and full to the brim of despair. His novels explore the darker parts of the human psyche, more so than his noted contemporaries. What made an impact with me with *The Brothers Karamazov* was the drama of a family. In my memory of the novel I recalled a scene where the debauchee Fyodor Karamazov tell his youngest son, the novice monk, Alyosha, that despite been a monk, Fyodor recognises something in him, that perhaps Alyosha is more of a Karamazov than the others, more like his father than he would admit. But upon rereading the novel it turns out I’d made this scene up, that Fyodor had been in fact referring to another of his sons. I prefer my version. In relation to *The Corrigan Brother* I felt it would be interesting if the youngest sibling, the ‘good’ son, believed himself to be just like his father, if not worse.

The set-up of the three Corrigan brothers does owe a great debt to Dostoyevsky. In both the youngest sibling is perceived to be the ‘good’ son. Unlike Matt, Alyosha Karamazov never fully acknowledges the darker side of his personality except it a theoretical sense. As Matt had lived with his father, I wanted to play on his conflicting feelings between what he wanted and what was actually going on in his life, reflected in his viewing himself as been ‘Matthew’ and ‘Matt’.

Joe and Richard are a blend of the other Karamazov brothers. In the novel the eldest, Dmitri is passionate and reckless and Ivan is the cold intellectual. While Joe shares something of Dmitri’s passion, he lacks the self-destructive nature and his

affection for his younger brother. Both Richard and Joe have Ivan Karamazov's distance from his family. Ivan's cold behaviour and Dmitri's self-destructive leaning are present in Richard Corrigan; rather than the self-destruction coming from passion, it is for Richard a cold, logical choice to make.

In later drafts of the play I tried to see Richard Corrigan in the same mould as other characters from Dostoyevsky, such as Nickolai Stavrogin in *Devils* (1872), a man who buries his guilt so deeply he develops an almost sociopath nature. From the same novel the character of Kirilliov, who has accepted suicide as a logical conclusion- because there is no God, killing himself would make him God (Dostoyevsky 2010 i 227-231). The main character of *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, moves away from his family and self-destructs under the weight of their expectations and his own nihilistic leaning. These characters have been cited and referenced in the philosophical texts of Albert Camus and Søren Kierkegaard. They used those characters to explain and evaluate their theories. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Camus uses an epigram from *Devils* (Camus 2005 64), and has a chapter about the character of Kirilliov and the works of Dostoyevsky (ibid 101-109). He quotes Dostoyevsky's reasoning for 'logical suicide':

“I cannot be happy except in harmony with the great all,  
which I cannot conceive and shall never be in a position to  
conceive, it is evident...

‘Since, finally in this connection, I assume both the role of  
plaintiff and that of defendant, of accused and of the judge,  
and since I consider this comedy perpetrated by nature  
although stupid, and since I even deem it humiliating for  
me to deign to play it...

‘...I condemn that nature which, with such impudent nerve,  
brought me into being in order to suffer – I condemn it to  
be annihilated with me.’” (ibid 101-102)

Camus uses Kirilliov to expand on Dostoyevsky’s reasoning and position with an sustained argument against this. This helped me greatly in expanding the character of Richard. Holding no nihilistic views myself, I feared that Richard’s reasoning would sound false, but reading Camus, Dostoyevsky and Kierkegaard I managed to produce an argument that would seem both valid and logical in the mind of Richard.

The three novels *Devils*, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* are very dark novels, but the endings of the latter two show a glimmer of hope. Raskolnikov and Alyosha Karamazov both find meaning in religion, punishment and atonement. In Camus’ *The Possessed* he manages to find the meaning in Dostoyevsky’s convoluted novel, he focuses on the Bible quote that prefaces the novel that gives an ending that involves two deaths (one by suicide) some hope for the future. I took this on as influence because I did not want *The Corrigan Brothers* to end on a note of despair, as does O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. I did not want my play to end with the Corrigan’s stuck like the Tyrone family in the night’s fog. I had to find an ending that offered some hope without the religious inflection of Dostoyevsky. I felt it would be unfair to drag an audience through this dark, unhappy family without at least pointing them in the direction of the light at the end of the tunnel. The key to this, I felt at the beginning, was through Richard and Matt- that Richard manages to put aside this nihilistic impulses to be able to help his brother- even if it does mean covering up his father’s death. One thing I found as I was redrafting the play was that the mother is very rarely mentioned. I found that I, like the characters, was ignoring her influence. This to me became a revelation by

Richard- that the brothers weren't one hundred percent Corrigan- they were Hughes as well.

### Comedy

The tone of comedy in *The Corrigan Brothers* has been a difficult one to explain. In the two workshops for the play, both sets of actors (having already read the script) approached the material as 'serious' and did not initially find the comedy amongst the darkness. The initial rehearsed reading on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 went down successfully. In this version the comedy was played at a almost sit-com like tempo, with the actors improvising looks at the other characters before certain drop-lines. In that performance, Joe's line: "Well you can tell him that as far as I'm concerned you can bury him in the back garden. In a bin bag. It'll be cheaper that way" (1<sup>st</sup> Draft 1-4 21) got a laugh and an audible gasp from one audience member. It is that kind of reaction I had hoped to draw out occasionally. The comedy in *The Corrigan Brothers* is an uncomfortable one as it mostly plays on reversed expectations- Bill Corrigan has died and nobody seems to care. His sons seem to talk about everything else but their father's death, and Joe makes antagonistic remarks to just about everybody. This kind of uncomfortable comedy I felt would not sustain throughout the play, which is why, I feel, the character of George in the play is one audience seem to respond most well to.

The character of George is a friend of Bill Corrigan, a Welshman and alcoholic. Out of all of the characters he is the one that is closest to the 'comic relief'. In the 14<sup>th</sup> February rehearsed reading George got a laugh on his entrance line. His character gives the audience chance to laugh without guilt. It is George's cheery manner and idiosyncratic way of speaking that seem to endear him to audiences:

**George:** ... Manchester, who'd have thought you'd go all the way to Manchester. Always said, when you were a little one, always said, that one, that Richard, go far, he will, go far.

*Slight pause*

Manchester. Almost other side of the world, isn't it? (4 49)

It has been said in feedback that the character of George bears relation to the character of Davies from Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1960). It had not occurred to me at the time of writing the first draft the relation between the two. Mac Davies also creates comedy through his idiosyncratic language:

**Davies:** Can't wear shoes that don't fit. Nothing worse. I said to this monk, here, I said, look here, mister, he opened the door, big door, he opened it, look here, mister, I said, I come all the way down here, look, I said, I showed him these, I said, you haven't got a pair of shoes, have you, I said. (Pinter 1996 1 12)

Like Davies, George is making up this patter as he goes along, creating repetition as he moves back before he can press forward, this is related to both characters objectives, which will be dealt with later.

Some of the comedy in *The Corrigan Brothers* comes from bathos and the transition between subjects. In the first scene the obvious example is Joe going from hearing about his father's death to talking about his breakfast. These kinds of changes occur throughout my play. In the third scene this occurs when Joe and Richard awkwardly talk about Richard's mistakenly believing the woman he's seen Joe with is Joe's wife; this is followed by Matt's line 'It's the undertakers tomorrow.' (3 42) In

both performances this line has always been delivered in a cheery manner. Again, this is bathos because it is at odds with the previous subject and the delivery of something dark as cheery is unexpected.

### Dialogue and Pauses

An important part of the comedy is through the characters dialogue and their language. In *The Art of Writing Drama*, Michelene Wandor argues dialogue is: “the *most* important...because it is the *only* significant (and signifying) literary means whereby the dramatic text can be imagined and written” (Wandor 2007 126-127, *italic in original*). While I think that there may be a little more than *just* dialogue, I think the importance of it cannot be understated. Once again I seek to avoid writing O’Neillian dialogue- heavy-laden dialogue, frequent stage direction and often quoting from other sources, for example:

**Tyrone:** It’s true I’m a bad Catholic in the observance, god forgive me. But I believe! (*Angrily*) And you’re a liar! I may not go to church every night and morning of my life I get on my knees and pray!... I’ve prayed to God these many years for her.

**Edmund:** Then Nietzsche must be right (*Quotes from Thus Spake Zarathustra*) “God is dead: of His pity for man hath God died. (O’Neill 1990 2-2 66-67)

This makes complete sense in terms of *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* because it’s O’Neill style of writing, but it is not a style I embrace. I prefer dialogue that is short and sharp. My style of short dialogue is influenced by the short fiction of Ernest Hemingway, particularly the short story ‘Hills Like White Elephants’ (1927). The



story short is about an abortion, though the word ‘abortion’ is never mentioned once.

The dialogue is repetitious and the characters never seem to really hear each other:

“‘And we could have all this,’ she said. ‘And we could have

everything and every day we make it more impossible.’

‘What did you say?’

‘I said we could have everything.’

‘We can have everything.’

‘No, we can’t.’

‘We can have the whole world.’

‘No, we can’t.’

‘We can go everywhere.’

‘No, we can’t. It isn’t ours anymore.’” (Hemingway 2004

262)

Hemingway believed in a theory of omission in both prose and dialogue, he wrote that “the dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water” (Hemingway 1966 i 182). I am aware that prose dialogue and drama dialogue are different things- Hemingway’s one and only full-length play, *The Fifth Column* (1938) is lacklustre at best. I found out that Pinter was also influenced by Hemingway (Billington 2007 10; *ibid* 77; *ibid* 90; Pinter 2000 viii-ix). This influence is marked as one of the reasons behind Pinter’s rapid-fire dialogue, which is a great influence of mine. In Scene One of *The Corrigan Brothers* the dialogue starts off short and sharp, full of repetition:

**Joe:** ... You’re sure he’s dead?

**Matt:** He’s dead.

**Joe:** You’re sure?

**Matt:** He's dead.

**Joe:** Christ. (1 25)

The scene rattles on like this, with information emerging, been repeated and Matt slowly realises what to do next. The tempo changes with Joe's speech (1 3-4). This time the exposition is revealed- Joe's lack of contact with Bill and the alcoholism of Bill.

Each character has an individual tempo and rhythms. When Richard turns up in Scene Three his dialogue is monosyllabic and laden with pauses and hesitations:

**Mel:**... It's been a long time since you've seen each other,  
isn't it?

**Richard:** Yes.

*Pause*

**Mel:** Then I bet you haven't met Joe's daughter, Michelle,  
have you?

**Richard:** No.

**Mel:** She's only five, lovely little thing, she is.

*Pause (3<sup>rd</sup> Draft 3 15)*

This is due to his shock at return to his childhood home and a reversal of expectations- he does not come across as the positive, successful figure that Matt has painted him as. Only as the play goes on and his objectives change does his dialogue become more open and revealing. Richard's tempo of dialogue is in direct contrast to that of Joe. Joe takes what opportunities he can to make longer speeches than the other characters, mostly notably in Scene Three when he meets Richard again for the first time in years. This is, again, a reversal of expectation- there is no big greeting and Joe instead wants to tell Richard about his taxi firm and how successful it is.

The characters varying rhythms and tempos contribute to the sound created on stage. Like a musical score tempos can be increased and decreased to alter mood and atmosphere. One of the important elements of this then is silence through pauses. Of course the master of the pause is Harold Pinter. His uses of pauses and silences can be devastating. As Pinter is such a large influence I cannot help but to place far too many pauses and silences. The first draft of *The Corrigan Brothers* contained a total of 234 pauses, slight pauses and silences- an excessive amount, even by Pinter's standards. In the drafting and editing many of these went. I worked by the quote from Peter Hall about Pinter's silences:

“There are three very different kinds of pauses in Pinter: Three Dots is a sign of pressure point, a search for a word, a momentary incoherence. A Pause is longer interruption to the action, where the lack of speech becomes a form of speech itself. The Pause is a threat, a moment of non-verbal tension. A Silence- the third category- is longer still. It is an extreme crisis point. Often a character emerges from the Silence with his attitude completely changed. As members of the audience, we should *feel* what happens in a Pause; but we can and should frequently be surprised by the change in a character as he emerges from a Silence. The change in him is often unexpected and highly dramatic.” (Hall 1974 16 italics in original)

In my work, an ellipsis and a slight pause tend to cross over. In the redrafting process I replaced many of the slight pauses in characters dialogue with ellipses and it seemed to work for a stronger effect. The slight pauses I kept were ones in between different

characters speaking, or when a character changes topic, as in this extract from in Scene Three:

**Joe:** What? He's not us, is he?

*Slight pause*

*(To Richard)* Can smell [alcohol] on your breath. (3 43)

I try to use pauses also to break up rhythm in the scene and change the tone and pace, like in this extract from Scene One:

**Joe:** They'll take him away.

**Matt:** Do they?

**Joe:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I thought the undertaker did all that?

**Joe:** I don't know.

**Matt:** Should we call an undertaker?

**Joe:** I don't know.

**Matt:** I don't know any undertakers.

**Joe:** I don't know, Matthew. Christ! Just call the ambulance.

**Matt:** Will they take him away?

**Joe:** I don't know!

**Matt:** *(Nods)* Call the ambulance. He's upstairs, but I don't know if they'll take him away, he's dead.

*Pause*

**Joe:** He's upstairs?

**Matt:** Yeah.

*Pause*

Do you want to see him?

**Joe:** No....No. Christ, no. He's dead, the old bastard. (1 26)

This is a long extract but I believe it stands as an example of when all that I have been discussing has come together- the dialogue full of repetition of 'I don't know' and 'undertaker'. The dialogue goes along at a brisk pace- the lines themselves can be played comically with Joe's increased exasperation at Matt, as he only slowly begins to realise what his brother is asking of him. Then the first pause indicates the change of tone as Joe realises that the body of his father is still in the house. The pace brakes and the tone changes. The tone of 'Do you want to see him' is in direct contrast to the rat-a-tat dialogue that preceded it.

I am aware of the artificiality of the dialogue. Though before joining the Playwriting course I tried to make my dialogue reflected real speech as much as possible. This dialogue is a much more exaggerated style than that of in *The Corrigan Brothers*. This dialogue was filled with even more repetition and was even circular in nature; there were more stops and people not answering each other. With *The Corrigan Brothers* I sought to tone down this style and make something that was more able to hold an audiences attention than before. In a playwriting how-to guide, the author Steve Gooch declares war on such dialogue:

"Dialogue which reflects natural speech is often littered with little phrases, like grace-notes in music, which ease the playwright...into the meat of the line. 'Well' to start a line, is number one in the Useless Phrases Hit Parade. 'Oh' at the start of a line is number two. 'Really', 'just', 'you know', 'I mean', 'very', 'anyway', 'sort of' and 'tend to' make up the rest of the Top Ten. These are all words or phrases which slightly obscure the meat of a line, the real intention- or

gesture- behind it. Get rid of them.

The rest of the Top Twenty are all phrases like ‘haven’t you’, ‘didn’t I’, ‘shouldn’t we’, ‘can’t they’ and so on at the end of a line. Weed them out. Often they’re a sign that you’re not quite sure in your own mind the progression from one line to the next... Weeding them out makes you think about what the connection actually is. You may then find an alternative which express the intention and makes the connection more clearly” (Gooch 2001 99)

Despite the strong opinion I think such phrases can be found in many playwright’s work. I have used this as a slight editing guide, but I don’t give it one hundred percent precedence. I think that most of these ‘useless phrases’ (ibid) can be useful in a playwright’s toolbox. In this extract from Scene Five I use a couple of Steve Gooch’s useless phrases:

**Richard:** No. You’re human. I just... don’t think I would choose to be human.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** What? What’s the point if you’re not human? You want to be... a dog or something?

**Richard:** Maybe.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** You’ve spent too much time in Manchester, driven him loopy, hasn’t it?

**Matt:** Well... Dad just died, it’s got to affect us all somehow- (5 55)

The useless phrases of which Steve Gooch is so adamantly against are nearly all followed by an ellipsis. The useless phrase is the start of the character beginning to falter in what they say. In Richard's line: 'I just... don't think I would choose to be human', the useless phrase gives the line more character. Had Richard just said 'I wouldn't choose to be human' it would be too matter-of-fact. As Richard tries to avoid explaining his lack of conviction in the benefit of been human he follows this up with a 'Maybe'. On the surface a useless phrase and not a definite one, but given the reluctance in the previous line the 'maybe' becomes more of a resounding 'I don't want to talk about this'. The final useless phrase is Matt's 'Well...'. This is how Matt begins to turn the conversation to what he wants to talk about- their Father's death. The 'well' allows Matt a moment before changing the topic of conversation. I think Gooch's useless phrases, when employed in the right place can give a line more weight.

### Structure

When I started to write this play for the course I knew that the time frame of the play would take places of a couple of days, if it not weeks and that it would all take place in the living room of the Corrigan family home. In *How Plays Work* (2009) David Edgar defines this type of structure as 'single time cycle in one place' (Edgar 2009 100). *The Corrigan Brothers* only really obeys Aristotle's unity of place, a play that conforms the unities is called by Edgar a 'real-time' (ibid) play. One of the key texts for my research, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, manages successfully to conform to the unities but falls into the category of 'single time cycle in one place', because it "exploits the neoclassical loophole in Aristotles unity of time and place" (ibid) by taking place over twelve-hours, as opposed to continuous time, which would conform

to the unities. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* certainly feels like it is observing a more classical structure, perhaps due to its time frame of about twelve-hours. I wanted *The Corrigan Brothers* to be more like Pinter's *The Homecoming* in its structure as it takes place between 36 and 48 hours. The shorter timescale of O'Neill's play does make it feel more classical than Pinter. This shorter timescale does work in O'Neill's favour for *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; for all my misgivings about O'Neill's play, it cannot be denied that it's conformity to the unities gives it a lot of the power of the play- the audience are as trapped just as much as the characters are as the play goes on. But, this was O'Neill writing in the later stage of his career; he had many other plays (experimental and formal) behind him. Conformity to the unities is a tool I do not believe I have, and don't think I will have for many years. At this stage I am not a craftsman in the mould of Henrik Ibsen or O'Neill. With Ibsen the timescale of his plays do seem to get shorter as his career went on- *Hedda Gabler* (1891) takes place over a few days, and his penultimate play *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896) utilises a real-time structure.

I believe I write better when using the single time in one place structure, and I don't feel that *The Corrigan Brothers* would lend itself to a longer timescale and to have a shorter timescale is something I don't think I am yet capable of writing without it becoming too contrived.

Time in *The Corrigan Brothers* is linear. I felt no need to jump around in time or to use a non-linear timeframe. Perhaps this is, again, slightly more classical leaning on my behalf. It would have never occurred to me write the play using a non-linear narrative. I'm sure there are probably several interesting things that could happen with a non-linear structure to *The Corrigan Brothers*, but I am a very linear writer- I like to see things happen as they happen. The biggest 'plus' with a linear narrative is



that the audience receiving revelations as they happen to the characters; this allows something like Richard's return to have impact. I tried to delay Richard's arrival in the play for as long as I could. He is, quite possibly, the most important character in the play, so his late entry gives his appearance more impact. Also this allowed me to use a reversal of audience expectation. In the first two Scenes I have Matt present his idolised vision of his brother, Matt believes Richard a success and someone who will come and sort the family out. His monosyllabic and unresponsive appearance is in contrast to the image that Matt (and the audience) will have built up in their minds.

As mentioned previously, the only real unity that I completely conform to is the unity of place- the entire play takes place in the front room of the family home. This I chose because I wanted the family to come back to their original home and explore the effect that it has on them. In the first rehearsed reading in February some of the feedback that I got, was that people were interested in what happened when the brothers go to pub, The Black Sheep, without Mel. As the writer, I never saw that as of any interest. In my head what happened at the pub was simply the three of them having an awkward conversation that is dominated by Joe, and Richard and Matt would seldom speak for their own reasons. It surprised me that the audience would want to follow the characters to the pub, but I stand by my decision to not leave the house. When they do return in Scene 4, Richard begins to see that they are repeating the past. Again influence for this came from Pinter's *The Homecoming*; the play never leaves that front room either, all the 'action' in the play takes place there. Part of its impact is that we never see the outside world. This room is the domain of that family. In the film version (1973) we get to see Ruth and Teddy on the street before entering the house. For me, this lost some of the impact of the play, and why film versions of plays are not often as successful. The impact and power of plays is that

we are stuck in with the characters. But it does not have to also conform to the unity of time. Pinter's play also takes place over about thirty-six hours. Pinter does not use scene heading to divide them, but it is indicated through the stage direction that time has changed, often from morning to evening.

I'm sure that if a late-career Henrik Ibsen had my material he could construct a play that takes place in twenty-four hours, but I could not do that. I wanted to follow the characters from the death (which starts the play) to the wake at the end. I wanted to do this because of having been on the journey of going through funeral arrangements myself. I thought with a wake at the end of the play there would be a sense of liberation for Matt Corrigan.

### Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction of this essay, writing *The Corrigan Brothers* has been for me a two-pronged effort- writing a play which shall be judged and marked, and writing a play to channel my grief. Looking at *The Corrigan Brothers* through the filter of category one, I feel my play has strong elements but it is with its flaws. The female characters in the play are underwritten. The character of Mel has made a small journey between drafts, but she does not contribute much to the world of the play. The character of Mel was written as revenge on somebody; Mel's comment about Bill Corrigan ('People like that shouldn't have children') did come from the real-life source. The most successful thing about Mel is that I've drawn attention to the lack of thought from the real-life source. But that is only something that means something to me.

The play does have its strengths. The opening of the play, I feel, combines all that I have discussed throughout this essay- the bathos of the comedy and dark subject

matter. In this scene in particular I feel my style of dialogue and speech works the strongest. There is a strong sense of theatrical understanding in *The Corrigan Brothers* in moments such as Richard's arrival and the reading of the will. As a writer my sense of theatrical understanding is stronger than its ever been, but I still need to work at been a good enough playwright to fully translate this successfully into a play.

What gives *The Corrigan Brothers* its strength is the feeling that this play is of a personal nature. This is the first play that I have ever written that has a beating heart. It may be like Frankenstein's monster and move jerkily and be inarticulate- but it is alive. Even those who know nothing of my personal life have commented that there is a dark power to the play that can only have come from experience. Writing for me is part storytelling, sleight-of-hand trick, confession, exorcism, revenge, lie, apology and explanation; and that has never been truer than with the writing of this play. About eighteen months worth of unhappiness, anger and frustration have been the lifeblood of this play. But this second prong of the point of writing this play cannot be marked. Its effects can only be judged and measured by me. Measured by this, I feel I still have further to go with the Corrigan family. If this play has been one of hurt, the next one must be of forgiveness and understanding, if only for my benefit rather than an audience's.

# THE CORRIGAN BROTHERS

“All we Karamazovs are such insects, and, angel as you are, that insect blood lives in you too.”- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

“At one time or another everybody’s got to drive through the darkness on the edge of town.”- Bruce Springsteen

*Scene- The front room of a small house in Innsborough, a small town in the Midlands. The wallpaper and the carpet of the house have remained the same since the 80s. Centre Stage is a sofa that is covered in stains. Downstage Centre is a small coffee table that is covered in letters and newspapers. Also on the table is an empty can of beer and an overflowing ashtray. Centre Left is an armchair, that is in a likewise condition to the sofa; in one arm there is some padding poking through.*

*There is a set of stairs that go from Upstage Centre to Upstage Left. Underneath the stairs is a small alcove. In this alcove is a chest of drawers with a white phone on top of it. In the drawers are various loose sheets of paper and odd items (decks of cards, nail clippers, etc.). On top of the drawers is photo frame with an old photograph of Bill Corrigan with his parents; this photo was taken back in the mid 60s. Also on the drawers is also a small radio. Downstage Right is the front door to the house and it leads onto the street. There is a door leading to the kitchen Downstage Left.*

*Upstage Right, before the stairs is a large picture of Bill Corrigan on his wedding day. There is only half the photo in the frame- the half containing his wife has been cut off many years ago, leaving just Bill in the frame.*

**Scene One-** A morning in November

**Scene Two-** Afternoon of the following day

**Scene Three-** Afternoon of the next day

**Scene Four-** Later in the evening

**Scene Five-** Hours later

**Scene Six-** Early next morning

**Scene Seven-** An hour later

**Scene Eight-** Tuesday morning. Four days later.

**Scene Nine-** Afternoon

## Characters

Joe Corrigan

Richard Corrigan

Matt Corrigan

Mel

George

Karen

## **Scene One**

*A morning in November.*

*Darkness*

*Roy Orbison's 'Crying' plays.*

*Lights up*

*Sitting on the stairs, with his arms folded across his knees, is MATT CORRIGAN. He is 22 and the youngest of the brothers.*

*There is a knock from the front door. Matt looks up. Roy Orbison's ghostly voice fades away. Pause. The knocking comes again. Matt stands. He goes down the stairs and crosses to the front door. He opens the door. Standing outside is JOE CORRIGAN. Joe is 34 and the eldest brother. He wears a grey suit and has his tie on loosely.*

**Joe:** *(Entering)* Is he in?

*Pause*

I had to rush my breakfast because of you. I don't like to rush my breakfast. Where is the old man, then? ...What is it you want then? ...Well, what?

**Matt:** Dad's dead.

**Joe:** Who?

**Matt:** Dad. He's dead... Dad's dead.

**Joe:** Christ... Glad I had my breakfast before I came out... It was a nice breakfast. Bacon, egg, toast, few sausages, tomato. Few mushrooms, beans, a proper breakfast. Where is he then?... You're sure he's dead?

**Matt:** He's dead.

**Joe:** You're sure?

**Matt:** He's dead.

**Joe:** Christ.

*Slight pause*

Call the police.

**Matt:** He's dead, we don't need to call the police.

**Joe:** Alright then call the ambulance people.

**Matt:** But he's already dead, they can't do anything.

**Joe:** They'll take him away.

**Matt:** Do they?

**Joe:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I thought the undertaker did all that?

**Joe:** I don't know.

**Matt:** Should we call an undertaker?

**Joe:** I don't know.

**Matt:** I don't know any undertakers.

**Joe:** I don't know, Matthew, Christ! Just call the ambulance.

**Matt:** Will they take him away?

**Joe:** I don't know!

**Matt:** (*Nods*) Call the ambulance. He's upstairs, but I don't know if they'll take him away, he's dead.

*Pause*

**Joe:** He's upstairs?

**Matt:** Yeah.

*Pause*

Do you want to see him?

**Joe:** No.... No. Christ, no. He's dead, the old bastard.

*Slight pause*

Last time I saw him, must've been the last time, last week or something. Thursday, Thursday last week, week before, something like that. I was with 'Chelle, we were in the car, taking her to her Nan's. Saw the old bastard staggering down the road, Queens Street, on the opposite side to the post office. He was staggering down and he had fish and chips. Christ, he was drunk as a trout, dropping chips all over the place, chips going everywhere... I didn't want 'Chelle to know he was her Granddad. Didn't have the heart to tell her... Imagine what that'd do to a kid...I can't afford a funeral.

**Matt:** We should call Richard.

**Joe:** Let's call an ambulance first.

**Matt:** What about Richard?

**Joe:** He's in Manchester, what can he do?

**Matt:** He should know. His Dad too.

**Joe:** Get on with calling the ambulance first.

**Matt:** I should call the ambulance first.

**Joe:** You go and do that they'll take the old bastard away, alright?

**Matt:** And then we'll call Richard?

**Joe:** Just go and call the ambulance, Matthew.

**Matt:** Right. Right. (*Looks around*) I don't know where my phone is.

**Joe:** Christ, Matthew, just use the old one!

**Matt:** I know I had it upstairs, I called you and I called Mel to tell her I'd... it just went to voice mail.

**Joe:** Yeah, alright, alright, just call the ambulance, alright?

**Matt:** Right. Ambulance. Phone. Right.

*Matt goes over the phone and picks it up.*

**Joe:** Richard won't come down. He'll be too busy up there in Manchester, he'll be too busy, he won't come down.

**Matt:** It's ringing.

**Joe:** Talk to them, don't talk to me. I've got to be going to work.

**Matt:** (*Into the phone*) Hello? Hi. I, err....

The door opens and MEL enters. She is 24. She is about to go over to Matt and spots

Joe. Mel and Joe speak over Matt.

**Matt:** It's my dad, he's erm, erm-

**Mel:** Oh... Matt called you too?

**Joe:** I've got to be going to work, I'll let you sort it out.

**Matt:** Oh, yes, ambulance. Please.

**Mel:** Is he...

**Joe:** What?

**Mel:** Bill, is he... really...

**Joe:** Dead?

**Mel:** Well... yeah.

**Joe:** Matt says he is, so he probably is.

**Matt:** Hello? Hi, I, erm, it's, it's my Dad... you see...

**Mel:** Poor Matt.

**Joe:** Yeah, poor Matt.

**Mel:** You're not staying?

**Joe:** I've got to be going to work.

**Matt:** Well... he's dead.

**Mel:** When I got Matt's voicemail I told my manager what had happened and she let me leave-

**Matt:** No pulse, no.

**Joe:** See, I'm the manager, if I'm not there they won't have a clue.

**Matt:** No, he's not breathing.

**Mel:** Aren't you going to stay for Matt?

*Slight pause*

It's your Dad.

**Joe:** Yeah, and?

**Matt:** No, I, I went in this morning and he was just... there... and...

**Mel:** But... he's your Dad.

**Joe:** (*Sighs*) I've got to be going to work.

**Matt:** No, he's not moving he's... still...

**Mel:** If Matt called you it must mean he wants you here.

**Matt:** Erm, 25<sup>th</sup> June, nineteen-fifty...

**Joe:** He called you.

**Matt:** Eight?

*Pause*

**Mel:** Aren't you-

**Matt:** 46 Lancaster Street.



**Joe:** What?

**Mel:** Upset?

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Joe:** Why'd I be upset?

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Mel:** Your Dad just died.

**Matt:** Alright.

**Joe:** Yeah, and?

**Matt:** Alright, thank you.

**Mel:** (*Putting a hand on Joe's shoulder*) It's okay to be upset.

*Joe looks down at her hand and sneers. She lets go. Matt hangs up the phone.*

**Matt:** They're on the way. I wonder if it'll be anyone Dad used to drive the ambulances with.

**Joe:** I've got to be going to work.

*Joe moves past Mel.*

**Matt:** Aren't you going to-

**Joe:** Christ, some of us have got work.

*Joe opens the door and exits.*

**Mel:** Is he...

**Matt:** Upstairs.

**Mel:** What, what happened?

**Matt:** I asked him if he wanted a cup of tea. There wasn't any answer, I opened the door and... he didn't look asleep.

**Mel:** You didn't...

**Matt:** What?

*Pause*

No. No, how could-

**Mel:** After last week, I thought-

**Matt:** That I'd...

**Mel:** No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry... things will be better now, they will be better...

*Pause*

*She goes over to Matt and hugs him.*

*Blackout*

## **Scene Two**

*Afternoon of the following day.*

*Lights up*

*The mess that was on the table has begun to be cleared up, things are now in neater piles. Downstage Left are two black bin bags of rubbish. On the armchair is Mel's bag.*

*Matt is Up Centre going through the chest of drawers. Offstage are the sounds of bottles and cans going into a bin bag.*

**Matt:** I can't find them.

**Mel:** (*Offstage*) They're in the purple folder.

**Matt:** I can't find the purple folder.

*Mel enters. She enters carrying a bin bag. She puts the bin bag down by the others and crosses over to the chest of drawers.*

The purple folder isn't here, I don't know what he's done with it.

**Mel:** Let me have a look.

Mel begins to go through the paper in the drawers. Matt stands back and folds his arms.

**Matt:** *It's not there, I look- I called the undertaker.*

*Slight pause*

**Mel:** When are you going to see him?

**Matt:** Friday. Friday morning.

**Mel:** Will Richard and Joe come?

**Matt:** Yeah. Richard will. Richard will want to get it sorted.

**Mel:** Have you spoken to Richard?

**Matt:** Joe said he would.

**Mel:** You haven't spoken to him?

**Matt:** Richard's been busy.

**Mel:** Oh, okay.

**Matt:** I can't wait for him to come back.

**Mel:** (*Not listening*) Yeah?

**Matt:** He's done really well for himself up there in Manchester. When he comes back... it'll be us again. Like a... a family. Again.

**Mel:** Why don't you go and sort out the kitchen? There's a whole crate of beer in the fridge, go and get rid of that.

**Matt:** He bought that with George.

**Mel:** I don't like George. He's such a... an old crony, lurking round. At least you won't have much more to do with him now. Or any of those cronies from the pub. Urgh. Horrible people. Especially George.

**Matt:** I told Dad that Doctor told him he should be cutting down.

**Mel:** If we get time this afternoon we can drop his clothes off at the charity shop and let them take care of it, and that will be out of the way, then we can think about cleaning this place up and make it brighter, then we can think about...

*Slight pause. Mel crosses to the armchair, she opens her bag and takes out several sheets of paper. She then sits down on the sofa, next to Matt.*

I went down to the estate agents this morning and I picked up a couple of things you might like to look at.

*Matt takes the papers and looks at them confused.*

Just flats and things, apartments, for us.

**Matt:** I...

*Slight pause*

**Mel:** Not for just yet, to give you an idea of what's out there, and when you sell the house-

**Matt:** Sell the house?

**Mel:** Well there's no point having a big house to yourself. Now that your Dad's gone we can look for a place for ourselves, like we talked about.

*Slight pause*

There's no point in staying here, Matt. The only reason you wouldn't move is because you had your Dad to look after. You don't have to worry about that burden anymore more, Matt.

*Slight pause*

Well, look at this one, (*She points at one of the papers*) That's not far from the centre of town, not far from work for either of us...

**Matt:** (*Stands*) I hadn't thought-

**Mel:** You've got to start thinking about it soon, Matt. You can start thinking about us now. I've got some money saved up, with that and the sale from the house-

**Matt:** I-

**Mel:** Why would you want to stay here, Matt? You were only staying to look after your Dad.

**Matt:** I just... I don't know, it's weird...

**Mel:** Well how could you manage this house by yourself?

**Matt:** I haven't thought about it.

**Mel:** I'm just trying to make your options clear, Matt. This is your *Dad's* house, not yours.

*Mel picks up the papers and puts them on the table.*

I'll leave them there for you to look at later. Have a think about it later, okay?

**Matt:** Right. I just...

*Mel stands and goes back over to the drawer and starts looking through the papers.*

I feel lost Mel...

*Slight pause*

Richard will be back soon... it'll be like how it was. We were a family

Mel takes out a clear purple folder from the drawer.

**Mel:** There's nothing in it.

**Matt:** I don't want he's done with the papers.

**Mel:** He was suppose to keep his Will in the purple folder I got him?

**Matt:** (*Shrugs*) Maybe... he got rid of it? Feels weird, Mel. Like he isn't gone. Keep thinking, he'll come down the stairs, head for the fridge and get a can.

*There is a knocking at the front door.*

Richard won't be here, yet...

*Matt hurries to the front door and opens it. Joe is standing outside.*

**Joe:** What's the matter with you? (*Entering*) You've got a face like four pence. You sorting it all out?

**Mel:** It's gone to be done, might as well do it now. There's lots of bits and pieces, watches, rings, if you want anything-

**Joe:** No. I don't want anything. I don't want anything to do with his.

*Slight pause*

What you going to do with it all?

**Mel:** Well, the clothes can go the charity shop and... well, I suppose if anybody wants anything (*Mel opens a drawer*) I mean this is full of things. (*Mel pulls Bill's wallet from the chest of drawers.*) His wallet's here.

**Joe:** He's still using that old thing? Had that years.

**Mel:** We'll need the bankcards to close his account down.

**Joe:** Doctor told you how he kicked the bucket yet?

**Matt:** No.

**Joe:** Probably the old fart's liver packed in.

**Matt:** (*To Joe*) Did you speak to Richard?

**Joe:** He's coming tomorrow.

**Matt:** He is?

**Joe:** Yeah, he's coming tomorrow.

**Matt:** We'll sort a room out, he can have his old room, is Caroline coming with him?

**Joe:** Who's Caroline?

**Matt:** His fiancée.

**Joe:** Didn't know he'd got one.

**Mel:** You aren't close?

**Joe:** Ain't spoken in years. He went to Manchester. Thinks he's better than us.

**Matt:** There's probably more work in been a psychiatrist-

**Joe:** Nothing wrong with Innsborough.

**Matt:** -in Manchester than there is in Innsborough.

**Joe:** I like Innsborough, don't see why you'd need to go to Manchester.

**Matt:** He's doing really well in Manchester, he's made a real life for himself, I bet.  
He doesn't even drink.

**Joe:** So?

**Matt:** He said he wouldn't and he hasn't. I think that's brave.

**Joe:** Huh.

**Matt:** I was closer to Richard, there was only a few years between us. After mum died he looked after me.

**Mel:** It must've been hard on all of you.

**Joe:** Not on the old man, all he did was drink himself stupid, the old bastard. Here, what are these? *(He points at the estate agent leaflets on the table)* You moving out or something?

**Mel:** There's no point in staying here.

**Matt:** We're just talking about it?

**Joe:** You two? *(Laughs)* Aren't you a bit young to be playing house? Christ, I couldn't afford to get a place till I was earning proper money.

**Mel:** The house will have to be sold.

**Joe:** Who'd want this shit heap?

**Mel:** We're going to clean it up.

**Joe:** You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig, sweetheart.

**Mel:** You know, houses like this can go for large sums of money.

**Joe:** Yeah?

**Mel:** Yes. Large sums.

**Joe:** Who does the house go to?

**Mel:** It's in his will.

**Joe:** Wait- he hasn't left it to the pub, has he?

**Matt:** We can't find it.

**Joe:** You lost his will?

**Matt:** It should be in the purple folder.

**Mel:** Your Dad must've done something with it.

**Joe:** Who gets the house?

**Mel:** Matt does live in his house. (*Matt exits into the kitchen*) It should-

**Joe:** Yeah, alright, let us know. You going to sell his stuff?

**Mel:** No, it's going to the charity shop.

**Joe:** You could probably get a bit for some of his stuff, all those Roy Orbison CDs, you could do a car boot with those.

**Mel:** Would you like them?

**Joe:** No, Christ... but if you're just going to give them away, I might take 'em, put 'em on eBay.

**Mel:** Do you want me to go and sort them out?

**Joe:** I'll have a look.

Mel exits into the kitchen. Joe goes over to the chest of drawers and picks up his Dad's wallet. He turns it over in his hands and opens it. There is twenty pounds in it. Joe looks into the kitchen and sees no one is watching. He quickly takes out the money and puts it in his pocket. He puts the wallet back on the drawers and moves away.

*Mel enters with a pile of CDs.*

**Mel:** These all of the kitchen ones, there's some upstairs-

**Joe:** S'alright, I'll sort it out later. Left with bloody Roy Orbison. Nothing bloody changes.

*Blackout.*



### **Scene Three**

*Afternoon of the next day.*

*Lights up.*

There are more bin bags on the floor and less junk on the tables. The pile of CDs from the previous scene is on top of the chest of drawers.

Mel is going through the chest of drawers again, she mutters and sighs to herself as she looks for the will papers. There is a knocking at the door. She stands and crosses to the front door. RICHARD CORRIGAN is standing outside. He is 26, but looks older; he looks older than his elder brother. He is tall and gaunt. He wears a dark coat. He carries a suitcase on wheels.

**Mel:** *Richard?*

Pause

*I'm Mel. Come in.*

She holds the door open and Richard tentatively walks into the house. Richard looks around.

**Richard:** Still the same.

**Mel:** The kitchen's different. We decorated while your Dad was in hospital, last year. Matt emailed you the photos.

**Richard:** The wallpaper's the same.

**Mel:** Your Dad didn't like us changing the house.

**Richard:** You're not Joe's wife?

**Mel:** No, no, I'm Mel... Mel. Matt's girlfriend.

*Richard moves to the sofa and rests his hand on the back of it.*

**Richard:** The house smells the same.

*Slight pause*

**Mel:** Is Caroline coming?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** No.

*Pause*

**Mel:** We've started clearing up. If there's anything of your Dad's you'd like-

**Richard:** No.

**Mel:** If you do...

*Pause*

Yes, well, we've got lots of stuff to clear away, old junk that's been here God knows how many years, we can't find your Dad's will, we've no idea what he's done with them. We bought him a folder to put them all in and now we can't find it. We've no idea what he did with it.

*Pause*

It's been a long time since you've seen each other, isn't it?

**Richard:** Yes.

*Pause*

**Mel:** Matt should be back soon.

*Slight pause*

I'll just text him (*She takes out a mobile phone*) Is that all you bought with you?

**Richard:** Yes.

**Mel:** Shall I take it up to your room-

**Richard:** No, no it's all right.

**Mel:** I don't mind, it's no-

**Richard:** No. I'm not going to... stay, here.

*The front door opens and Matt enters carrying a bottle of milk. Matt enters.*

**Mel:** (*To Matt*) I was just about to text you. Look who's here.

**Matt:** Richard...

**Richard:** Hello, Matt.

*Matt closes the front door and walks up to Richard.*

*Pause.*

**Matt:** Just getting milk... needed some, none in the fridge.

**Mel:** Nothing but beer in that fridge.

*Pause*

**Matt:** We, we've got a room for you, for you and Caroline-

**Mel:** He says he's not staying here.

**Matt:** You're not staying?

**Richard:** No.

**Matt:** You're, we've put fresh sheets and-

**Richard:** I don't think... I could stay here.

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** What about Caroline?

*Pause*

**Mel:** I don't think she's come with him.

**Matt:** Why?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** It'd be easier, for me, if I didn't stay here.

*Pause*

**Matt:** Do you want to see your old room?

Richard's phone begins to ring.

**Richard:** Sorry, I'll just...

*Richard takes his mobile phone from his pocket and exits into the kitchen.*

**Mel:** Are you alright?

**Matt:** Yeah, I'm alright, you alright?

**Mel:** Richard's...

**Matt:** I'm glad he's back, it's good to see him again, I'm glad he's back.

**Mel:** Don't you think he's-

**Matt:** I'm glad he's back.

**Mel:** I think he's been drinking,

**Matt:** N-no.

**Mel:** I can smell it on his breath.

**Matt:** I, I don't think he drinks...

*Richard enters*

**Richard:** Sorry.

**Matt:** Was it Caroline?

**Richard:** No, somebody, wanted to know where I am.

*There is a knocking at the front door.*

**Mel:** That should be Joe.

*Matt crosses to Downstage Right. He opens the front door. Joe enters.*

**Joe:** Alright.

*Joe steps into the house and Matt closes the front door.*

*(To Richard)* Well, here he is then. Come back to the nest.

**Richard:** Hello, Joe.

**Joe:** Well, here you are. How d'you get here? Matt pick you up?

**Mel:** He got a taxi. He didn't let us know he was coming.

**Joe:** He did? Who did you use?

**Richard:** I don't know. They were at the station.

**Joe:** Probably Silver Cabs. Friend of mine owns them. Well, I say friend but he's my competition too, so I guess he's not really a friend, I run a better taxi company than him.

Joe takes a business card from his pocket and hands it out to Richard. During this,

Matt exits into kitchen to put the milk away. He returns and stands next to Richard.

Here. A-2-B Cars. That's my company. Take it.

*Richard takes the card from Joe. Joe stands back and Richard looks down at the card.*

There. You need a cab, you call us, best cabs in Innsborough, I've made sure of that. You need a cab, you call us, you tell the driver that your Joe's brother, and see what he does.

*Slight pause*

He'll give you a free ride, or a discount cos you're my brother, the boss' brother. Just you see what they do.

**Richard:** (*Putting the card in his pocket*) Thanks.

**Joe:** (*To Matt*) You've had a free cab before haven't you?

**Mel:** The last time we had to pay.

**Joe:** Oh yeah? Who was your driver?

**Matt:** Don't know.

**Joe:** Man or woman?

**Mel:** It was a man. I told him Matt was your brother. We still had to pay a fair bit.

**Joe:** Who was it, you tell me?

**Mel:** It was a man. A big guy.

**Joe:** Ginger?

**Mel:** Yes, I suppose-

**Joe:** That'll be Ginger Mick. Me and him had a big of an argument last month, all sorted now, he was pissed at me, that was why you had to pay.

*Slight pause*

You go with Rani and she'll give you a free cab, promise you that.

**Richard:** (*To Joe*) I saw you in town.

**Joe:** Oh yeah?

**Richard:** On the way here. From the taxi.

**Joe:** You recognised me then?

**Richard:** Straight away.

**Joe:** Didn't see you, but you were in a cab, how could I?

**Richard:** You were with, is it, Karen?

**Joe:** Karen?

**Richard:** I presume it was Karen.

**Joe:** No, I wasn't with anyone.

**Richard:** No, you were with someone, a woman and-

**Joe:** It wasn't Karen.

*Pause*

**Richard:** I see.

*Pause*

**Matt:** It's the undertaker's tomorrow.

**Joe:** You going to see him or something?

**Matt:** I thought we all, we all could go, to sort it all out.

**Joe:** I'm not paying for a funeral.

**Mel:** The money in your Dad's account pays for the funeral.

**Matt:** Will you come with me the undertakers tomorrow?

**Joe:** *(To Mel)* You going?

**Mel:** The bank won't let me have time off.

**Joe:** Shame. *(To Richard)* How about you? Sure you won't be too emotionally distressed?

**Richard:** I'll go.

**Joe:** Who you going to?

**Matt:** Mr. Jones.

**Joe:** Mr. Jones. You can tell him that as far as I'm concerned you can bury him in the back garden. In a bin bag. It'll be cheaper that way. You gonna have a service? Like hell I'm going if he has a service.

**Mel:** Maybe it'd be more normal if you showed a little grief-

**Joe:** I left here when I was 16, I had to grow up all by myself. He buggered off to Manchester. Only little Matthew stayed behind. Christ, I hate this house. Let's go out.

**Richard:** Where?

**Joe:** Anywhere. Pub somewhere.

**Mel:** The pub?

**Joe:** There's a Weatherspoons in town, that's pretty cheap and the beer's decent.

**Mel:** Hang on- you want to go to the pub?

**Joe:** That's where the Black Sheep used to be in the high street-

**Richard:** Yes, I know where it is.

**Joe:** It's pretty cheap, beer decent. Smells like you started without us.

**Mel:** You want to go to the pub? After your Dad...

**Joe:** What? He's not us, is he?

*Slight pause*

*(To Richard)* Can smell it on your breath. Matt said you don't drink.

**Richard:** I had one... On the train.

**Joe:** Think you'd need it to get through seeing us again?

*Pause*

Let's get pissed.

**Mel:** Seriously?

**Joe:** Yeah. Don't bother me.

**Richard:** As long as it's not the Lion's Head.

**Mel:** Well... if you're all sure. I'll get-

**Joe:** Sorry?

*Mel turns to face Joe. She is confused.*

**Mel:** I was just going to get-

**Joe:** *(Laughs)* Sorry.

**Mel:** I said-

**Joe:** I know what you said, but... it's a catch-up... Between us.

**Mel:** Erm...

**Joe:** You wouldn't want to come with us.

**Mel:** Why not?

**Joe:** We've just having a catch-up, between ourselves-

**Mel:** I don't understand.

*Pause*

I'm with Matt.

**Joe:** I haven't brought Karen. He... *(To Richard)* Where is your missus?

**Mel:** So this is a boys only session?

**Joe:** You wouldn't want to come.

**Mel:** Matt, what...

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** I... well, if she-

**Joe:** I haven't brought Karen, it's not for her.

**Mel:** But she's family. So am I.

*Slight pause*

Well like it or not I am Matt's girlfriend so that makes me fam-

**Joe:** Look, we haven't seen each other in years, all right? We just want to have a drink and talk... *(Sighs)* Come on, let's just go. It'll be dark before long.

*Joe turns around and opens the front door.*

Come on then.

*Richard looks across at Mel. He makes a few steps forward.*

**Richard:** *(To Mel)* It was nice to meet you.

*Joe and Richard exits.*

**Mel:** Matt?

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** We haven't seen Richard in seven years.

**Mel:** I'm family. You're my family, you're part of my family, why can't I be part of yours?

**Matt:** It's just Joe he... he doesn't...

**Joe:** *(Off-stage)* Matthew, get a move on! Christ...

*Pause*

**Matt:** Sorry, better, *(He heads towards the door)* calling for me.

*Slight pause*

You've got your key?

*Pause*

I'll call you later?

*Pause*

Bye.



*Blackout.*

## **Scene Four**

*Later in the evening*

*Lights up*

The door opens and Matt enters. He holds the door open for Joe and Richard. Joe is carrying a large brown bag containing Chinese takeaway. He heads over to the table Downstage Centre and puts the bag down. He then takes his coat off.

*Richard has had more to drink than the others at the pub, but he is well versed in how to hide his drunkenness. He crosses to Stage Left and sits down in the armchair, with his hands in his coat pockets.*

When Richard and Joe have entered, Matt closes the front door.

**Matt:** I'll get some plates.

**Joe:** We don't need plates, we'll have it out of the box.

**Matt:** I normally put it on a plate.

**Joe:** That's why they're in boxes, Matthew, so you can eat it out of the box.

**Matt:** I normally put it on a plate.

**Richard:** So do I.

**Joe:** *(To Matt)* I didn't realise you'd gone posh. Could do with a fork, though, go get us some forks.

**Matt:** Right.

*Matt exits into the kitchen. Joe starts taking the takeaway boxes from the bag.*

**Joe:** We've got... *(He reads the writing on the top of the box)* Egg fried rice. Is that yours or his?

**Richard:** Matt's.

**Matt:** *(Offstage)* That's mine. And the curry.

**Joe:** *(Taking out another box)* Yeah... beef chow mein?

*Richard raises his hand.*

Yours?

*Richard nods.*

Here.

*Joe puts the box down next to Richard.*

There some spring rolls in here.  
*Joe puts the bag of spring rolls on the table.*

Guess we'll share them.  
**Richard:** Old times.

**Joe:** What?

**Richard:** Just like old times. After Mum died, on a Saturday, after Dad had been out at the pub, he'd bring a Chinese, wouldn't he? (*Matt enters carrying a plate and cutlery*) He'd sit there and hand it out.

Matt puts the plate down on the table and begins sorting out his curry and rice.

Richard reaches forward and takes a spring roll.

**Joe:** Starting without us, Richard?  
**Richard:** Hungry. Haven't eaten in a while.

**Joe:** Soon as you walked in here you looked as skinny as a rake. Ain't that missus of yours feeding you?

**Richard:** We're not married.

**Matt:** They're engaged.

**Joe:** (*Opening his carton and eating his food*) Alright, future missus, then.

**Richard:** We're not engaged.

**Joe:** (*With a mouthful of food*) What d'you say?

**Richard:** We're not engaged.

**Matt:** I thought you were.

**Richard:** We were.

*Pause*

**Joe:** What, you're not engaged or not together?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** Not together. Anymore.

*Pause*

**Joe:** Having a bit of a bad week, aren't you?

**Matt:** What happened?  
*There's a knock at the door.*

**Joe:** Who's that? (*To Matt*) Is it whatshername?

**Matt:** Mel has a key.

*There's more knocking.*

**Joe:** Go and open it, then.

Matt hesitantly puts his plate on the table and then crosses to Downstage Right. He opens the front door. Standing outside is GEORGE, a Welshman in his late 50s. He wears a dark green coat that he has owned for 30 years- and it shows.

**George:** Ah, boys, you're all here, aren't you?

**Joe:** Who is it?

**George:** (*Entering*) I came along because I wanted to pay my respects.

**Matt:** It's George.

**George:** Came to pay my respects, boys.

**Joe:** Oh, it's George.

**George:** Pay my respects. Your father was a lovely man.

**Joe:** You remember George, Richard?

**George:** I recognised you, Richard, soon as I walked, said to myself, said to myself, 'That's Richard, that is'.

**Richard:** I remember George. Dad's best friend.

**George:** Oh now, your father he had friends, he had lots of friends, lots of 'em, boys, he will be missed, I tell you...He was a lovely man.

*Slight pause*

For a man with Irish blood in him, he was a lovely man, that I can say. A lovely man. Your Father would be pleased he would, be pleased to see you all together again.

*Slight pause*

Be pleased to see you, Richard, he would, talked about you.

*Pause*

Manchester, who'd have thought you'd go all the way to Manchester. Always said, when you were a little one, always said, that one, that Richard, go far, he will, go far.

*Slight pause*

Manchester. Almost other side of the world, isn't it?

**Joe:** Had one of my taxis pick you up the other week, George.

**George:** What taxi's that now?

**Joe:** One of mine. My driver said you threw up in her backseat.

**George:** Oh, I, I don't be riding taxi's, Joseph, far too expensive.

**Joe:** Rude and offensive, she said you were.

**George:** I just came here to pay my respects about your father, I thought he was a lovely man, a lovely friend to me, yes, yes he was, a lovely man. (*Indicating the bin bags*) Getting rid, getting rid of his things, are ya?

**Joe:** That's right.

**George:** I was wondering-

**Joe:** You want something?

**George:** Yes, yes, just a keepsake, or some small thing, just something like-

**Joe:** Matthew knows where his stuff is, ask him.

**George:** Me and your Father, we used to buy some things, go halves, between ourselves, you know...

*Slight pause*

Last thing we bought, we when we out a week ago, bought ourselves, just a few, just bought ourselves a few drinks, to share between ourselves, just a few tins of beers, I thought I might take what I'd bought-

**Joe:** You've come round here to get hold of some beer?

**George:** I came here to pay my respects to your father, Joseph-

**Joe:** And all you want is the old bastard's booze?

**George:** Now I understand you're grieving and upset and you're angry and I forgive you-

**Joe:** You came here from the old man's booze?

**George:** No, now, Matthew was there when I bought that lot with your father, you were here, weren't you, Matthew?

**Matt:** He and Dad came home with a crate of beer. It's in the fridge.

*Joe stands.*

**George:** (*Moving backwards*) Now half of that is mine, me and your Father went halves on it, it'd be wrong not to let me have what's mine-

**Joe:** Get out of here.

**George:** My money went into-

**Joe:** Get out of here, you dirty, stinking drunk.

**George:** I bought that beer with my own money, that's mine, it's not fair you're not giving me what's mine.

**Joe:** You get out of here now... you are a dirty, fucking, Welsh scum drunk and how dare-

**Richard:** Joe. (*To George*) Go away, George.

*Pause*

**George:** S'not fair, boys, that's mine-

**Richard:** Leave.

*Pause. George crosses to the front door.*

**George:** I don't know what your Father would say about this if he were still here.

**Joe:** (*Sitting down*) Oh, piss off, you dirty Welshman.

*George opens the front door and exits.*

The cheek. The fucking cheek.

*Joe continues eating. There is a long pause.*  
How much beer is in the fridge?

**Matt:** I don't know. A lot. Me and Mel were going to get rid of it.

*Pause*

**Joe:** What... you mean... throw it all away?

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Joe:** All of it?

**Matt:** I don't want it.

*Pause*

**Joe:** How many cans are there?

**Matt:** A lot.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** Yeah, well... err... don't you worry about them, Matthew. Don't worry about them. I'll get rid of them for you.

**Matt:** Yeah?

**Joe:** Yeah, I'll take them, don't worry about it.

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** You'll take them?

**Joe:** Yeah.

**Matt:** You mean... you'll... *have* them.

**Joe:** Christ, Matthew.

**Matt:** No, I mean, you're having them for yourself?

**Joe:** The old man ain't going to be drinking them, is he? Just going to waste otherwise.

**Matt:** But-

**Joe:** Christ, Matthew, the old bastard isn't going to care.

**Matt:** It's his, Joe. It's *his*.

*Pause*

**Joe:** *(To Richard)* Don't know 'bout you, but I fancy a drink.

*Richard nods*

**Matt:** It's his beer, though.

**Joe:** Christ... *(sighs)* He's dead, what's the point of letting them go to waste?

*Joe stands and crosses to Stage Right.*

*(To Richard)* You're having one, aren't you?

**Richard:** *(Without looking at Matt)* Yes.

**Joe:** 'Course you are. *(As he exits and from offstage)* Knocking 'em back in the pub, one on the train, 'course you're having one.

**Matt:** *(To Richard)* It's his beer, Richard, it's not-

**Richard:** Matt. Don't.

**Joe:** *(Enters carrying three cans of beer. He hands one to Richard, puts one down next to Matt and then he sits down)* There's loads in there, must be about forty or something. No idea how those two bastards managed to get themselves forty cans from anywhere.

*Richard opens his can, as does Joe. Richard drinks.*

*(To Richard)* Oi, wait a second. *(To Matt)* You having one?

**Matt:** No.

**Joe:** No?

**Matt:** No.

**Joe:** Come on, you haven't had a drink all night.

**Matt:** I had one at the pub.

**Joe:** You had coke, you big ponce! Drinking coke all night like a ponce!

**Matt:** I don't drink beer. Especially not his beer.

**Joe:** Christ, Matthew, it isn't his! This best is the best thing he ever did for us.

**Matt:** He brought all three of us up.

**Joe:** I brought myself up. Leaving here was the best thing I ever did. It was tough and it was hard, I admit. But now look at me. I am a success. *(Holding his can up)* Thank you, Daddy for been such a twat. If you weren't such a twat I wouldn't be the man I am today-

**Matt:** Stop it.

**Joe:** I know you loved him, you wouldn't have stayed if you didn't, and I don't hold it against you, Matthew, really, I don't, it was your choice to stay.

**Matt:** No-

**Joe:** But it was your choice. You're, what, still at Asda, are you? Still at Asda?

**Matt:** Yes.

**Joe:** *(To Richard)* Before you came Matt was telling us how you don't drink.

**Richard:** I didn't.

**Joe:** Huh, fiancée, no drinking, I think Matthew really got the arse end of the stick.

**Richard:** I didn't drink when I left here.

**Joe:** How come you started?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** I wanted to try it.

**Joe:** See, Matthew, he just wanted to try it.



**Matt:** I don't want to drink it.

**Joe:** Let's celebrate our daddy how he'd want it. (*He picks up a CD box, takes out the CD and puts it in the player.*) With a beer in one hand and Roy Orbison on the jukebox.

*'Only the Lonely' begins playing. Richard drinks. Joe raises his can up.*

This is for you, Daddy.

*Joe drinks.*

*Blackout.*

## **Scene Five**

*Hours later*

*Lights up*

*Richard and Joe are on stage. Matt is offstage in the kitchen. The Chinese and plates on the table have been removed. There are now many empty cans of beer on the table.*

*Richard sits in the sofa where he sat before. As before he is quite drunk, but doing his best to hide it- his movements are slow and considered. He watches Joe. Joe stands upstage with a can of beer in his hand. He is very drunk and can barely hold himself up.*

**Joe:** And then the old bastard got it into his head that he's going to drive us home. 'I can do it', he says, Mum says 'Nah, you're not'. He says 'I am' and she says 'you're not'. All three of us had to help him into the car, even then the old bastard tried to climb into the drivers seat. Got home, Mum says to me, go open garage door so I can park the car. He gets out of the car and he's staggering about, and (*Laughs*) he goes and stand in front of the car! Like superman! An, and you remember, she drove at it him- you remember?

**Richard:** We had to pull him out of the way.

**Joe:** Hit you, didn't he?

*Pause*

Matthew! Get in here! Get in here and have a drink with your brothers.  
We're all here.

**Richard:** He's doing the washing up.

**Joe:** (*To Matt*) Matthew! Bring us another can! (*Matt enters*) Always bloody doing something aren't you?

**Matt:** It needed to be done-

**Joe:** You should be here, in here with us, with the family. We're all a family again aren't we?

*Pause*

(*To Richard*) You this miserable around everyone?

**Richard:** Pretty much.

**Joe:** Christ, no wonder she left you.

**Matt:** Joe...

**Joe:** What? How can he expect to keep a girl if he's got a face like four pence all the time! (*To Richard*) Been miserable will get you nowhere, I know that because I've never been miserable a day in my life...See, if you just stopped been miserable, then you could be like me.

**Richard:** Just like you?

**Joe:** Just like me.

**Richard:** I'd like to be like somebody else.

**Joe:** What's wrong with me?

**Richard:** No, no. If I had to be like anything it probably wouldn't be a human, let alone you.

**Joe:** You saying I'm not human?

**Richard:** No. You're human. I just... don't think I would choose to be human.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** What? What's the point if you're not human? You want to be... a dog or something?

**Richard:** Maybe.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** You've spent too much time in Manchester, driven him loopy, hasn't it?

**Matt:** Well... Dad just died, it's got to affect us all somehow-

**Joe:** Affected? It hasn't affected me I'm... not affected, I'm fine. I'm happy-go-lucky. I'm the same as I ever was, he's been dead to me years. Years. There anymore spring rolls left?

**Matt:** They're all gone.

**Joe:** What, all of them?

**Richard:** You ate them.

**Joe:** They are bloody nice spring rolls from there. (*Drinks. Lowering his can*) Christ. It doesn't matter anyway, he's dead.

*Joel deliberately takes a long drink from the can of beer.*

**Matt:** I don't like you're drinking and... Getting drunk.

**Joe:** (*Laughs*) Yeah, I'm pissed, but so what? I can hold my drink. I can hold my drink much better than he could. It doesn't take a lot. Doesn't take a lot to be able to control yourself, and I can do that. I can control myself.

*Pause*

Look at him, (*pointing at Richard*) he, he got started without us. You were knocking them back at the pub, weren't you? Knocking them back, I could barely keep up with you.

*Slight pause*

Look at him. Right pisshead. (*To Matt*) You can see it, can't you?

**Richard:** I saw you in town.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** Yeah?

**Richard:** I saw you in town with that girl.

**Joe:** You're just giving me this because you didn't like what I was saying.

**Richard:** I saw him, from the taxi, and he was with this girl-

**Joe:** So what if I was with a girl?

**Richard:** Standing on a doorstep, kissing her.

**Joe:** Don't you think it's funny he had a drink on the train here?

**Richard:** I thought it was Karen, your wife, but who was it?

**Joe:** How many did you have on the train?

**Richard:** You're cheating on your wife.

**Joe:** You're only giving me that because-

**Richard:** You have a daughter, Joe.

**Joe:** So what? You don't know how hard I've worked-

**Richard:** What does that justify?

**Joe:** (*Standing*) Don't you be judging me! You have no right, sitting there, pissed out of your arsehole-

**Richard:** You're cheating on-

**Joe:** Drunk as a trout, it's on your breath, on your clothes-

**Richard:** Joe-

**Matt:** Please, just-

**Joe:** Drunk as a fucking trout, is that why she left you?

*Slight pause*

Caroline? That why she left you?

*Pause*

**Matt:** Joe, I-

**Joe:** He's just like him.

*Pause*

No control.

*Joe downs the last of his can of beer.*

Right. I'm off.

**Matt:** Do you want me to take you back?

**Joe:** I can do it.

**Matt:** Joe-

**Joe:** (*Heading towards the door*) I can do it!

**Richard:** You can't, Joe.

*Joe stops and turns around.*

**Joe:** Is that a dare?

**Matt:** (*Walking towards Joe*) I'll take you back-

**Joe:** No.

*Slight pause*

He has just dared me.

**Richard:** Don't be a dick.

**Joe:** Who you calling a dick?

**Matt:** Joe, I'll take you back.

**Joe:** He just called me a dick.

**Matt:** I'll drive you back, come on, Joe-

**Joe:** (*Pulling away from Matt*) I can take myself back.

*Joe opens the door.*

**Matt:** (*To Richard*) Can you help me?

*Joe staggers towards the doorway.*

**Richard:** *(Without feeling)* Joe. Stop. Please.

*Joe exits with Matt following behind him. Richard remains still. He looks regretful. He stands up. From offstage the sound of Joe and Matt arguing, but it is indistinct. Richard takes a step forward. He then moves towards Upstage. It should look as if he intends to help his brother. Instead he exits into the kitchen. Sound of the fridge door opening followed by the sound of a can opening.*

*Richard returns to the living room with a can of beer in his hand. He slowly walks back to the sofa and sits down. Offstage the sound of a car door slamming. Richard drinks. Offstage the sound of a car driving off.*

*Matt enters and closes the door behind him.*

*Pause*

**Richard:** You couldn't have stopped him.

**Matt:** He could hurt himself.

**Richard:** He won't.

**Matt:** He's drink driving. He's drunk, he can't drive and-

**Richard:** I don't think it's the first time he's done it.

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** But what if something happens to him?

*Pause*

Why don't you care?

*Pause*

**Richard:** Because, Matt, it doesn't matter. Not really.

*Pause*

**Matt:** How is... Manchester?... And everything?

**Richard:** And everything? *(Drinks)* Manchester... didn't work out. And everything else... never was going to work out.

**Matt:** What, what do you mean?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** Do you remember Granddad and Grandma?

**Matt:** Yeah.

**Richard:** Do you remember Gran and her whiskey?

**Matt:** It was ages ago.

**Richard:** She always had a tot of whiskey, and when she couldn't get whiskey she drank Dettol.

**Matt:** I remember hearing about the Dettol.

**Richard:** That was Dad's Grandmother. And then his Dad, our Granddad, he drank too.

**Matt:** I don't remember.

**Richard:** I remember. Then our Dad. He was probably the worst of them. Drinking wise... Great-grandma. Granddad. Dad. Us... Me.

Pause

**Matt:** But... Manchester...

**Richard:** Manchester? (*Stands and begins to move around*) I thought- big city. Start again. No family, no past. I was felt I was Richard, not a Corrigan. Turns out the only thing you can be sure of with the past is that's not where it's going to stay.

Pause

I thought I was clever. I'd do research on the children of alcoholics. I thought I could write about it all because, well, personal experience. Did you know one in four children of alcoholics become alcoholics themselves? Some reports even say that it's fifty-percent more likely than a child from an alcoholic family will become like their parent?

Pause

Fifty-percent, it's like a coin-toss. What about us? What are our chances? The coin keeps coming up 'heads' in this family. Heads you're a drinker, heads you're a drinker, heads...

**Matt:** So we're cursed.

**Richard:** No, there's no such thing as curses. It's a combination of genetic inheritance and the environment we've been brought up in.

**Matt:** Why did you even start drinking?

**Richard:** To prove I could do it. To prove... that I could beat it. (*Drinks*)

**Matt:** What about me? You're saying that I'm going to...

**Richard:** Maybe. Who knows.

*Pause*

**Matt:** Why did you come back?

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** I don't know. See the old place again. Innsborough's still the same. Same streets, same shops, same people... it hasn't changed.

**Matt:** The fountain in town's gone.

**Richard:** I came back because I don't think I'll see this place again.

**Matt:** You...

*Pause*

You should've stayed away. You're selfish.

**Richard:** Imagine, Matt, if I had... if maybe in twenty years I was settled down. Married, kids. Imagine that. Imagine that if it was then that I realised that I would be so predisposed towards addiction, imagine that? With a wife and with kids. That would... I couldn't do that to them. That, now that would be selfish. What I'm doing is... I'm letting this happen to me now because the longer I leave it the more people will get hurt.

**Matt:** What about me?

**Richard:** With Caroline I thought, I don't know, I could hold it off. But it was always there. I like a drink, Matt. I really do. I like the way it makes me feel. I like the feeling that I can do anything.

**Matt:** But, you're a doctor, you were in Manchester you could-

**Richard:** But stopping... the world becomes so grey. And loud. And I... want quiet. And colour. For a time. But there's only so far you can go down that road... And I know what's at the end of it. And I accept that. I accept it. After all... does the world really need one more Corrigan?

*Pause. Richard drinks.*

**Matt:** I thought we'd all be back together again. A family. A... family. (*Richard sits down.*) A normal family.

**Richard:** A normal family?

*Richard takes a can of beer from his coat pocket and holds it out to Matt.*

There's nothing worse than that.

*Blackout.*



## **Scene Six**

Early the next morning.

*Lights up.*

*Richard is asleep on the sofa. He slowly begins to wake. He grunts and groans as he sits up. The coat he had over him as a blanket falls to the floor. Richard holds his head and groans. He looks at the time on his phone and then looks about.*

**Richard:** *(Calling)* Matt?

Pause

Matt?

He stands up, a little wobbly and dizzy.

Matt?

He looks down at the table and sees a half empty beer can on the table. The thought of drinking in passes through his mind, but only for a moment. He goes over to the stairs.

*(Calling)* Matt? Matt?

He rubs his forehead.

*Where are you?*

He looks back across at the can of beer on the table. He freezes, watching it. He looks about.

*(Without expecting an answer)* Matt?

He sighs and rubs his forehead again. He goes back over to the coffee table. He looks down at the can of beer. He pauses. He then picks up the can and downs what's left of it. When he finishes he grimaces a little.

There is a knocking at the door. Richard looks up in surprise. The knocking comes again. Richard quickly puts the beer can down on the table. He straightens out his clothes. The knocking comes again. He heads over to the front door and opens it.

George is standing outside, wearing the same clothes.

**George:** *Mornin', morning', it's you, I was looking for Matthew, I thought Matthew would be here.*

**Richard:** *No.*

**George:** Oh, not about is he?

**Richard:** No. He's out.

**George:** Well, then...

*Slight pause*

I weren't going to stop long, *(He moves past Richard and goes into the room)*  
just wanted to see if your brother was here, that Matthew, just a little matter, pay  
my respects, talk to him-

**Richard:** About the beer?

**George:** It's not nice to think such things, but while I was here I thought I'd mention  
it, I thought Matthew might-

**Richard:** How long have you known my Father?

**George:** Oh, years and years, not long after you were born, I should imagine, I moved  
up and then I met your Father-

**Richard:** You liked him?

**George:** My friend, he was.

**Richard:** Are you married, George?

**George:** No, no, old girl passed away, year last.

**Richard:** I'm sorry.

**George:** Seems like everybody's going at the moment. Still, when did you say your  
brother will be getting back?

**Richard:** I don't ever remember meeting your wife.

**George:** Well, she wasn't around that much, at all, really, she... few years back now,  
decided stay, back there in the Valleys with the children, you know, better for  
them there, what time's your brother coming back?

**Richard:** I don't know, George.

**George:** Ah. Well.

*Pause*

**Richard:** You know... I can't remember a time when my Father didn't have a can of beer in his hand. I can remember, after my Mother died, when you used to come over, and you and him used to sit here and we'd watch you get-

**George:** I remember, always reading a book, you were, said, always said, that boy, go far, he will, go far.

*Pause*

Father'd be proud of ya. Fine young man, he'd say, fine young man... Always willing to help anybody, he'd say, always willing, stranger in need, or a friend. Or family. Never turn 'em down, he wouldn't. Fine young man,

*Pause*

Well, I'd better be making a move, (*heads towards the kitchen*) I'll just be taking my stuff and be going-

**Richard:** No.

**George:** Two seconds, all it'll be, I take it down-

**Richard:** No.

**George:** Oh, oh, you see I wanted to speak to Matthew to sort something out-

**Richard:** I don't know when he'll be back so if you'll-

**George:** I've got something, he'll be wanting, see, something important.

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** What kind of important?

**George:** The very important kind of important.

**Richard:** Which would be?

**George:** Ah, (*wagging his finger*) I'm not telling you that one, I'll sort it out with Matthew. Would've mentioned it too him the other night but with Joe there, oh I don't think that Joe would've been too happy, bit, bit angry, that one, bit angry.

**Richard:** What is it?

*George giggles and puts a finger to his lips.*

If you won't tell me, I'm afraid I can't help.

**George:** Sort it out with Matthew, I will.

*Pause*

**Richard:** Would you like a cup of tea, George?

**George:** Oh no, no, I'm not staying long, no.

*Pause*

**Richard:** Perhaps... I could help you.

**George:** Just wait for Matthew, I will.

**Richard:** Well, didn't you say you could use a hand to... help you carry...

*Slight pause*

**George:** Well... that's most appreciated of you, Richard.

**Richard:** No trouble. At all. Just... What is it you have for Matt?

**George:** Well maybe you could give us a hand first, the bus'll be here soon, only down the road it is-

**Richard:** Yes, but... how important is what you've got for Matt... is it...

**George:** If you too just give me a hand-

**Richard:** Yes, but I'd like to know-

**George:** I'll tell you on the way, just give us a hand-

**Richard:** You haven't got anything, have you?

**George:** I have, course I bloody well have, you think I'd come in here if I didn't have something to give Matthew, something very important that he'll want.

*There's a knock at the door.*

*Pause*

**George:** I can't answer it. S'not my house.

**Richard:** It isn't mine.

*More knocking.*

*Richard goes over to the front door and opens it. Standing outside is KAREN. She is 32 and Joe's wife of 3 years.*

**Karen:** Richard, aren't you?

**Richard:** Yes.

**Karen:** I'm Karen. Can I come in?

*She walks into the house.*

*(To George)* You're here too? *(To Richard)* Matt in?

**Richard:** No, I don't-

**Karen:** Thought you'd go with him.

**Richard:** Where?

**Karen:** Undertakers.

**Richard:** I was asleep. He didn't wake me.

**Karen:** I got Joe in the car. I thought he should go. He says he won't come in. *(To George)* He won't be pleased to see you here.

**Richard:** He was just leaving.

**George:** I'll have a word with Matthew, when he gets back, we'll get something sorted.

**Richard:** What about your bus?

**George:** I can get the next one. *(To Karen)* Young Joseph's out there, you say?

**Karen:** He's sitting in the car because he refuses to come in.

*George laughs nervously and opens the door slightly.*

**George:** Outside, you say? I, I don't see a car.

*Karen goes over to the front door and looks outside. She closes the door.*

**Karen:** He's driven off. What a dickhead. Hate it when he's like this, hate it. *(To Richard)* Whatever you said to him last night must've really pissed him off. *(To George)* On your way, weren't you?

**George:** Yes, but-

**Karen:** Off you go then.

*Pause*

**George:** I'll be going then, but you tell your brother, you tell him, not to get rid of my stuff, because I've got something important for him, you hear me? *(Opening the door)* T'ra.

**Karen:** I'd have thought you be at the undertakers with Matt.

**Richard:** Matt didn't wake me.

**Karen:** Have a lot to drink? So did Joe. He came home trashed last night. I had to tell him off for waking Michelle up. *(Taking out her mobile phone)* Text Joe, tell him to get his arse back here. *(Whilst texting Joe)* He wouldn't come in the house. He refused. Like a big kid. Told him he was been a knob-end. Knob's got a 'k', ain't it?

**Richard:** I believe so.

**Karen:** I've called him a knob-end. I only call him a knob-end when I'm really pissed off at him. He'll know I'm really pissed at him if I call him a knob-end. He can be a right knob-end sometimes... He, he got in a bit of trouble last night. Police.

**Richard:** The police?

**Karen:** Drink-driving. Might lose his licence. Serves him right if you ask me. You look like him.

**Richard:** Joe?

**Karen:** No, your Dad.

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** I take after him.

*The door opens and Matt enters.*

**Karen:** Hi, Matt, love. You alright?

**Matt:** Just been to the undertakers.

**Richard:** You didn't wake me,

**Matt:** You were asleep, I didn't want to disturb you.

**Richard:** I wanted to be there.

*Pause*

**Karen:** When is it?

**Matt:** The funeral? Tuesday.

**Karen:** Blimey, that's quick.

**Matt:** I said as soon as possible would be best.

**Karen:** Least it'll be over soon. Joe was here, but he pissed off. I thought he should go with you.

**Matt:** It's alright. I expected that I'd be on my own.

**Karen:** Here, Joe took off with my car, would you give us a lift back?

**Matt:** Yeah. As long as I don't have to see Joe.

*Slight pause*

**Karen:** Some family you lot are.

*Blackout.*

## **Scene Seven**

An hour later.

*Lights up.*

Richard is on stage. He is Upstage Left and going through the pile of CDs. He finds one that surprises him. The door opens and Matt enters.

**Richard:** Have a look at this.

**Matt:** What?

*Matt crosses to Upstage Centre. Richard holds up a CD.*

**Richard:** I had no idea he'd got this.

**Matt:** Roy Orbison?

**Richard:** No. Cat Stevens.

**Matt:** I don't recognise it.

**Richard:** Cat Stevens? (*Matt shakes his head*) This was Mum's. You probably wouldn't remember. She loved Cat Stevens, used to play it all the time... when dad was out. Dad hated it. But Mum loved Cat Stevens. I had no idea this would be here.

*Richard puts the CD down.*

I wish you'd woken me up. I would've come with you.

**Matt:** Dad didn't like me waking him up. He used to get really cross. He used to lie too. He said he wasn't drinking, but I'd get home from work and he'd be half-cut on the sofa. I asked him if he'd been drinking and he said he hadn't and I knew he had. I could tell, I've seen him pissed so many years, I... of course I knew. Turns out... he was hiding them in the garden. In a Tesco's bag in the garden. I told him. I said, 'Dad, there's a Tesco's bag full of beer in the garden'. 'So what'. That's what he said to me, 'So what'. Next night, I came home and the Tesco's bag wasn't in the garden anymore. He'd put it all in the fridge. Why aren't I like that?

**Richard:** You were always the best one of us.

**Matt:** But I've spent more time with him. I've spent my whole bloody life with him. I've spent more time around him than you or Joe ever have!

**Richard:** Maybe over exposure has an opposite effect, you were always the best of us.



**Matt:** Stop saying that! I'm, I'm bloody angry at you, you-

**Richard:** There was only one way to go. Why be forced into it? Why let events make it that way. I took control.

**Matt:** Took control?

**Richard:** It was always going to end up this way.

**Matt:** You were supposed to... make something! You were in Manchester, you weren't here, you weren't in Innsborough, nothing ever happens in Innsborough, you were in Manchester, you were making that life that... that I couldn't.

**Richard:** Matt, now you can-

**Matt:** I stayed because you left! I couldn't leave. I had to stay. You went away and you never came back so I had to stay, I had to.

**Richard:** Matt, you don't have to worry anymore...

**Matt:** Worry? Worry? I wanted him dead, I couldn't wait to see him dead. I hated him, I fucking hated him so much, more than you ever could, I wanted him dead! I wanted him dead!

**Richard:** I hated him.

**Matt:** No! No, you didn't, not like I did, I had to stay, I had to stay and watch him drink and drink and throw his money away on it and I couldn't take it anymore, I couldn't take it!

**Richard:** (*Reaching out to his brother*) Matt-

**Matt:** No! (*Pulling away*)

*The door opens. Mel enters.*

*Pause*

**Mel:** Did you go to the undertakers?

*Matt nods*

Well? When is it, then?

**Matt:** Tuesday.

**Mel:** Where?

**Matt:** St. Mary's. I tried calling you.

**Mel:** I know.

*Pause*

**Richard:** I should go. The Travel Lodge will be wondering where I am.

**Mel:** Stay. After all, Matt wanted you here.

**Richard:** Maybe-

**Mel:** No, I'm annoyed that I just get forgotten about as soon as they tell you to do anything.

**Matt:** Family's very important to you.

**Mel:** Yes.

**Matt:** Family's very important to you... as long as it's your own.

**Mel:** What good have your family ever done?

**Matt:** When I told you, told you about Dad, about his drinking and all that, I told you all about it and you said about him, about my Dad, 'People like that shouldn't have children'.

*Slight pause*

**Mel:** I didn't-

**Matt:** You did-

**Mel:** I never said-

**Matt:** Yes, you did, Mel, that's what you said about my Dad, 'People like that shouldn't have children'. Just because... just because I haven't been brought up like you. I've only known one parent. I don't know what it's like to have two. And you... you think I shouldn't be here-

**Mel:** Matt-

**Matt:** No, that's how you made me feel. Like I shouldn't be here. And I've thought about it and thought it, and you're right. Why should I be here? Looks like all of us are going to go the same way. We've all got it within us, he said, to waste our lives. I thought with Dad gone I could move on. I thought we'd be back together, a family. It's so stupid, a family, we don't know what a family's like. I don't know what one's like, I just expect people like you to tell me because I can't work it out for myself. But I shouldn't be here, should I? People like that shouldn't have children.

**Mel:** Excuse me, but you're taking everything I've said out of context.

**Matt:** You're just as affected by your parents. By your sister.

**Mel:** I don't see what that's got to do with anything.

**Matt:** She's married. She's expected to have a kid. That's all your lot every talk about. 'When's Lisa going to have a baby'? 'Remember Lisa's wedding'? You think that you have to follow their path. You think that's what you ought to do. You dragged me into it and I let you because I thought that what you wanted was what I wanted. But you can't help it, that's just how you were brought up.

**Mel:** You... you can be a right bastard sometimes.

**Matt:** I don't care. I don't care anymore, I just want to be left alone.

**Mel:** What about sorting the house out?

**Matt:** I don't care.

**Mel:** We were sorting it out.

**Matt:** I don't care.

**Mel:** About the will, you need-

**Matt:** I got rid of it.

**Mel:** What?

**Matt:** I got rid of it.

**Mel:** You got rid of your Dad's will?

**Matt:** Yes.

**Richard:** Matt, why?

**Matt:** I didn't want it. What's the point in it?

**Mel:** The money? The house?

**Matt:** I don't care what happens to it, I just want to be on my own.

**Mel:** So... that's it? You just... want me to leave?

*Pause*

I'll go. But, Matt... I know. All those things you talked about with your Dad...and his pills, you... I know. And don't you forget that.

*Mel exits.*

**Richard:** What did she mean?

**Matt:** Leave me alone.

**Richard:** Matt, I'm so sorry I've let you down, but what did she mean?

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** I...

*Pause*

We argued. Me and Dad. About, about all the drinking... I'd found a Tesco bag in the garden full of beer and I was just... so angry, so angry with him, I was sick, sick of all the lies and sick of all the hurt... I was just sick and fed up. Of

everything to do with him. I hated him, I wanted him there. I was so sick, Richard, so sick of watching him... drink all the time, and I... I had nothing. I had nothing. I thought you were doing so well, and I... I wanted that, I didn't want to take care of him, I never did, I hated him, Richard, I really hated him...

**Richard:** Matt, what, what are you... did you?... Matt?

*Matt begins to weep. Richard goes over to him.*

Matt... it's... it's all right...

**Matt:** I hated him... I hated him so much...

*Richard cradles Matt.*

*Blackout.*

## **Scene Eight**

*Tuesday morning. Four days later.*

*Lights up.*

*Karen is standing Upstage Right. She wears black funeral clothes. She looks around the room, which is as it was previously with bin bags scattered on the floors, papers out of drawers etc. Karen looks up at the picture of Bill Corrigan that hangs on the wall.*

*Matt enters from the kitchen. He is wearing a cheap black suit.*

**Karen:** Matt, love, have you thought about clearing up? Before people turn up.

**Matt:** I don't know if anybody will be turning up.

**Karen:** I think some people will want to see your Dad off.

**Matt:** They'll go to the pub. Just... family will be here. If they turn up.

**Karen:** Maybe you should think about cleaning up?

**Matt:** Yeah.

*Matt looks about unsurely. He then picks up a bin bag and carries it into the kitchen. Karen moves to Upstage Centre.*

**Karen:** My aunt's second husband used to know your Dad.

**Matt:** *(Entering)* Yeah?

**Karen:** *(Picking up a bin bag and handing it to Matt)* He used to be on the force, knew your Dad when he drove the ambulance.

*Matt carries the bin bag into the kitchen.*

He used to say those drivers, they were quite a lot.

**Matt:** *(Entering)* Yeah?

**Karen:** Yeah. Quite a lot, he said.

*Pause*

Can't say I knew your Dad that well. Or at all. I knew him by sight. Joe didn't want me knowing him. Didn't want Michelle knowing him. Thought that's a bit sad, he's never met his granddaughter.

**Matt:** Will Joe come?

**Karen:** He should. *(As Matt exits; to herself)* Even if it just be make sure the old man's dead. *(To Matt)* You heard off Richard?

**Matt:** I didn't want to speak to him.

**Karen:** Upset you or something?

*Pause*

Can't choose your family, can you? I'd have traded mine in years ago. Not like your lot, thought. Yours are... quite a lot. I should know.

*Knocking at the door. Karen goes over and opens it. Joe stands outside. He is dressed in a black suit and has not shaved for two days. Both shirt and suit are scruffy.*

Here he is then.

*Matt continues shifting bin bags from the room into the kitchen.*

**Karen:** Didn't think you'd show.

**Joe:** Wanted to make sure he's dead, didn't I? You clearing up or something?

**Karen:** People might come back here.

**Joe:** They'll be down the Lion's Head.

**Karen:** It's for us then. You been driving?

**Joe:** Your mum got 'Chelle?

**Karen:** Yeah she's got her. Where did you go last night?

**Joe:** Just about.

**Karen:** Just about?

**Joe:** Yeah, just about.

**Karen:** Where just about?

**Joe:** Asking me questions, like a bloody Nazi.

**Karen:** Wanted to know why you didn't come home last night.

**Joe:** You miss me or something?

**Karen:** You were getting drunk, weren't you?

**Joe:** It's me Dad's funeral.

**Karen:** Any excuse, eh?

**Joe:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Karen:** You know bloody right and well what I mean.

**Joe:** I don't know what you mean.

**Karen:** You-

**Joe:** Go on, tell me what you mean.

**Karen:** You know bloody well what I mean, Joe.

**Joe:** I don't know what you mean and how can I know what you mean if you don't tell me what you mean because you just think I know what you mean.

**Karen:** Stop been an arsehole.

**Joe:** I'm not been an arsehole.

**Karen:** You are and a bloody big shit one and all.

*Matt enters to take another bin bag. Joe goes over to him.*

**Joe:** You haven't said 'hello' to me.

**Matt:** Hello.

**Joe:** That's better. Now, where's that girl of yours?

**Matt:** I don't know.

**Joe:** Trouble in paradise?

*Matt exits.*

**Karen:** If you're going to be a knob-end you can piss off now.

**Joe:** I never liked her. You know where they live? They live on Knightsbrook Road. Right bunch of poshos living on Knightsbrook.

**Karen:** What time's the car coming, Matt?

**Matt:** (*Entering*) Soon...ish.

*Joe moves past Matt and enters the kitchen. There is a knocking at the front door. Karen opens it. Standing outside is Richard. He is wearing an expensive, finely cut black funeral suit.*

**Richard:** I didn't know what time the funeral was.

*Matt stands sheepishly behind the sofa.*

I hope I'm not too early.

*Joe enters from the kitchen carrying a can of beer.*

**Joe:** Here he is then.

*Richard enters the house. Following behind him is George. George wears a very old, navy blue suit that is too small for him. He wears a white shirt that is yellow and stained.*

**Joe:** Christ, what's he doing here?

**Richard:** I bought him with me.

**Joe:** What, is he your plus one or something? Your special guest? You going to go out on the piss after this is over?

**George:** Now look here your father was a good friend of mine, and I'm here to pay my respects, I am.

**Richard:** He has something for Matt.

*Slight pause*

**Matt:** Me?

**George:** We can sort it all out afterwards, after the service. (*George spots Joe's can of beer and looks at it suspiciously.*) Ah, a very sad occasion, perhaps we should all have an early toast to...

*Slight pause*

Well... your father, he was a lovely man, a lovely man-

**Joe:** Piss off.

**Richard:** After the funeral, we should come back here. To talk.

**Joe:** Have a nice little wake, eh? A little wake for Daddy.

**Matt:** What, what do you want us to...

**Joe:** He wants to talk about Dad. We can all share our memories, can't we, Richard? The three of us. Together again. Just like old times.

*Joe downs his beer.*

*Blackout.*



## **Scene Nine**

*Afternoon.*

*Lights up.*

*Sitting on the sofa are Richard and George. Both have drinks in their hands. On the table in front of them are several cans. Sitting in the armchair is Matt. George talks, mostly to himself.*

**George:** Lovely service, lovely, one of the best I've seen, it was lovely, 'course I've been going to too many recently, all the old ones seem to be going now, dropping like flies, they are. Terrible, really, all the old ones going. Makes you wonder, who's next, eh, who's next? Is it me? Sometimes I wish it was bloody me. Ah, you don't know what it's like been young as you are, you don't know what it's like, all the aches and pains, terrible, really, all them aches and pains. *(Offstage Joe can be heard laughing in the kitchen. Richard turns and looks in that direction)* Never had aches and pains before. Still, I'll miss Bill, though. Ah, he was a lovely man, lovely man your Dad was.

*Enter a drunken Joe. He staggers into the living room holding a can of beer.*

**Joe:** What you listening to that old prat for? Hear you out there, going on and on, Christ, does anybody ever bloody listen to you?

**George:** Been, err, been having a few of those tins, have you?

**Joe:** What's it too you? They're not yours, old man.

**George:** Ah, now Richard said-

**Richard:** *(Standing)* Yes, well, it's probably time for us to talk.

**Joe:** Have a nice little chat about everything?

**Richard:** I've made George deal.

*Pause. George lifts his can to Joe and drinks.*

**Joe:** Want you making deal with him for?

**Richard:** I said he could have what's left of Dad's beer.

**Joe:** You what?

**George:** It is mine by right, Joseph. *(Laughs nervously)*

**Joe:** What you given it to him for? It ain't yours to give away!

**Richard:** It's not yours either.

**Joe:** Matt said I could have it.

**Richard:** Because he has something for Matt. Something important. I went to find him the other day. He said that he'd hand over... Dad's will if he could have Dad's beer.

**George:** Your Dad and I went halves, I only want half.

**Richard:** Well... it's in the kitchen.

*Pause. George stands.*

**George:** Well... if you don't mind-

**Richard:** George?

*Slight pause*

The will?

**Matt:** He, he can't have a copy of the will ...

**George:** See, your Dad, week back or so, he said he wanted to do another one, another will, wanted things to be a little different to his other one, he said, don't know why... *(To Matt)* Maybe you had a little falling out?

**Matt:** He can't have another will.

*George reaches into his inside pocket of his jacket and produces a scruffy, brown envelope and holds it out to Richard.*

**Joe:** Oi, that's no will. Will's are on proper paper, aren't they?

**Richard:** *(Richard takes the envelope, looks at it and turns it over)* As long as there are two witnesses and it's signed... it holds up.

**George:** There, boys. Now if you don't mind, it'll be just...

*George heads the kitchen. Joe stands in his way and folds his arms across his chest.*

Now, Joe... your brother said...

*Joe looks over at Richard. Richard looks up from the envelope. George turns and looks over at Richard. He then turns back to Joe and tentatively moves around him and exits into the kitchen.*

*Pause.*

**Richard:** It must be the most recent will, it's only dated from a couple of weeks ago. When was the one you had done dated, Matt? Matt?

**Matt:** We had it done last year. Mel took Dad to the solicitors in town after he'd been in hospital.

**Joe:** Bet I won't get anything.

**Richard:** Let's see... 'I, William John Corrigan...', something, I, I can't read it too clearly-

**Joe:** Give it here-

*Joe goes to snatch the envelope but Richard pulls it away.*

**Richard:** Let me, Joe.

*Pause*

'I, William John Corrigan...'

*Slight pause*

'To my son, Richard Corrigan I...'

*Pause*

**Joe:** What? What d'you get?

**Richard:** He spelt 'bequeath' wrong.

**Joe:** Get on with it.

**Richard:** 'To my son Richard Corrigan, I... bequeath... the family encyclopaedia because reading that... made him clever.'

*Joe laughs*

**Richard:** I used to read it when I was little. Go to a random page and read an entry.

**Joe:** Alright, alright, that all you get?

**Richard:** 'All my savings and money I bequeath to... my friends at the Lion's Head-'

**Joe:** The bastard! He left it to the pub! He left it too the sodding pub!

**Richard:** 'They're the only true friends I have in this life-'

**Joe:** The bastard, the old bastard.

**Richard:** 'My possessions and my house I leave to... the PDSA but only as long as they agree to clean their shop up because at the moment it's bloody filthy'.

*Slight pause*

There's a little more... 'To my sons, Joseph William Corrigan (*Joe stops pacing around and listens*) and Matthew James Corrigan I leave them... nothing at all because they're little... (*Quietly*) gobshites.'

*Pause*

**Joe:** He couldn't do one thing for me, one last thing. That bastard, that... right old bastard.

**Matt:** The PDSA deserve his money more than we do. We don't deserve anything.

*George enters from the kitchen carrying a shopping bag full to the brim of beer cans. He grins broadly.*

**George:** Alright, boys.

*Pause*

**Richard:** You know what this says?

**George:** What's that now?

**Richard:** The will.

**George:** Oh, Bill, Bill said we were his friends, his true friends, that we'd all get something.

**Richard:** Who knows about this?

**George:** Oh, just me and old Graham.

**Richard:** Just you two.

**George:** Get, get something will I?

**Richard:** Thank you, George?

*Not fussed, George grins and nods at Richard. As he moves past Joe, Joe steals a can of beer from the top of the shopping bag. George turns.*

**George:** Oi, that's mine, that is-

**Joe:** Yeah, you want to take it off me?

*Pause*

**George:** Well, I suppose now you are upset and you are grieving and I do understand... *(Moves back towards the front door)* I'll let you have this one, just that one, for the sake of your Dad... He was a lovely man.

*Joe hurls the beer can at George. George yelps.*

Oi!

*George quickly bends down and picks the beer can up. He groans as he gets up.*

**Joe:** Get out of here-

*Without waiting to hear what Joe says, George quickly opens the door and escapes.*

Bastard, dirty old bastard... I bet he's took it all, I bet he has...

*Joe exits into the kitchen.*

**Matt:** *(To Richard)* We got what we deserve.

*Joe enters.*

**Joe:** You let him have all of the beer! It's gone, it's all bloody gone! Now what are we going to do?

*Richard looks down at the envelope in his hands.*

**Richard:** That depends.

*Richard puts the envelope in his pocket. From the inside pocket of his jacket he pulls out three miniature alcohol bottles. He holds one out to Joe.*

**Joe:** You're a crafty, aren't you? *(Reaches out and takes out of the little bottles)* Is this what you do back in Manchester? Is this how you get through the long and lonely hours in the office? Do you have one of those couches where people lie down and tell you all about their problems.

**Richard:** No. I have a chair for them to sit in.

**Joe:** Ain't it funny that you, been a psychologist and all, you've probably got more problems than the nutcases who come to see you?

**Richard:** Yes. *(Richard laughs)* Yes.

**Joe:** *(Laughing)* You nutcase bastard.

*Joe undoes the top from the bottle and takes a gulp. Richard opens his bottle and downs it. He then puts the bottle back in his pocket and opens the top on the other bottle.*

That's strong stuff.

**Richard:** The first will, Matt, the first will, what happened to it? When Mel was here you said you got rid of it. You said that you didn't want it.

**Joe:** Hold on... *(To Matt)* You got rid of his will?

**Matt:** I didn't know there was another one.

**Joe:** What was in that one?

**Richard:** Matt got everything.

**Joe:** And why did you throw that away?

**Matt:** Because I thought... *(Scoffs)* Because I thought we could share it, because I thought... the three of us, after he'd gone, we could... we could be a family.

And we are. We're the Corrigan's. We're his sons after all. And none of us deserve anything.

**Richard:** I do have a problem. I know I do. I'm very aware that I have a problem... with alcohol.

**Joe:** You want to go on the couch and tell us all your problems? You should do that yourself, you know, talk to yourself, you're the one whose meant to sort these things out.

**Richard:** I don't think-

**Joe:** You didn't need to tell me, I can tell a drinker a mile off, after been with dad for all those years.

**Richard:** Listen, Joe. Just... listen. I am doing what I'm doing because... because I see no hope, no hope for me. As Matt said, I'm a Corrigan. I am a Corrigan. It's his blood, his upbringing in me. And I don't want to have to inflict that on anyone I love. So I'm doing this now, by my own hand. And... it's selfish. I'm selfish. I'm no good.

**Joe:** After years, after bloody years of people asking me 'How's Richard?', 'What's your brother doing in Manchester', 'He's done well for himself', I can turn around and I can say to them- nah. Not my brother, my brother, he's a worthless drunk, just like our old man.

**Richard:** You're no better than me.

**Joe:** You want to say that to me again?

**Richard:** That girl. What about Karen and Michelle?

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** You're just jealous.

**Richard:** Joe-

**Joe:** You're just jealous, I've earned what I have, I've worked bloody hard-

**Richard:** You're cheating on your family-

**Joe:** You shut up, shut up now.

**Richard:** At least Dad didn't cheat.

**Joe:** You're the drinker, you are, mate- you.

**Richard:** The money. Why do you need the money?

**Joe:** I don't need it.

**Richard:** How's the taxi life, Joe? A-2-B cars.

**Joe:** It's doing better than you in Manchester.

**Matt:** This is just what I wanted. Us. Talking.

**Richard:** (*To Joe. Calmly.*) We're alike.

**Joe:** I'm nothing like you.

**Richard:** We both ignored our family.

**Joe:** What you talking about?

**Richard:** We left Matt on his own.

**Joe:** He chose to stay.

**Matt:** I didn't chose. (*Standing*) I was the only one left.

**Joe:** No, you could've gone.

**Matt:** I had to stay.

**Joe:** Nobody made you stay, you could've left.

**Matt:** I couldn't.

**Joe:** For fuck's sake, Matthew, of course you could've! You work, you've got money! How hard is it, really? When I left I was sixteen, I had no money. Christ. I managed it.

**Matt:** I had to stay. He... he needed help.

**Joe:** Yeah, 'cos he helped us kids so much, didn't he? Should've just let the old bastard rot by himself.

**Matt:** You think you hated him?

**Joe:** You what?

**Matt:** You really think you hated him?

**Joe:** Yeah. Old bastard was an old good-for-nothing drunk. I know you cared but-

**Matt:** You didn't see him all the time.

**Joe:** This ain't a game, you know, who hated him more.

**Matt:** You didn't have to deal with him like I did. I had to be with him all my life.

**Joe:** This ain't about who spent more *time* with him! Christ, Matthew!

**Matt:** Stop calling me Matthew.

**Joe:** Your name isn't it?

**Matt:** My name is Matt. It's not Matthew. He always used to call me Matthew, but I'm Matt, I'm Matt.

**Joe:** Christ, it's only your name.

**Matt:** It's who I am.

**Joe:** I don't know you. I don't know you from Adam.

**Richard:** We left him with Dad, Joe.

**Joe:** So?

**Richard:** It's because of that, I think, anything that happened, is something we are complicit in.

**Joe:** Done like what?

*Pause*

Like what?

**Richard:** Matt?

*Pause. Matt begins to silently weep. He nods his head.*

**Joe:** Christ, you...

**Matt:** I couldn't take it anymore. I couldn't... couldn't get away...

**Joe:** This, this isn't right, you should've left-

**Matt:** But I couldn't leave him.

**Joe:** Christ, you... Christ! But the... his liver, weren't it? His liver packed in, didn't it? Didn't it?

**Matt:** They knew (*wipes nose*) they knew he drank, they knew he was taking pills... I told them that sometimes he lost count, sometimes he took extra... he did, he actually did, but that night, I... I put some in his beer. I ground them up. In a bowl. With a dessert spoon. I used a dessert spoon... because it's got a big surface.

**Joe:** Christ, Christ...

*Joe rests against the drawers and rubs his head. Matt sits down.*

Why didn't you...

*Pause*



Why didn't you just...

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** Why didn't he ask for help?

*Pause*

**Joe:** No...

**Richard:** He couldn't ask us.

**Joe:** No, no, I, I would've done something.

*Pause*

I would've. Christ, you know that, Matthew.

**Matt:** I'm not Matthew.

*Pause. Joe raises himself up and takes a deep breath.*

**Richard:** We're all guilty.

*Pause*

We all... hated him. It could've been any of us. Because of how he was, because of who he was... because of who he made us. Made us Corrigan's.

**Joe:** We can't change that.

*Slight pause*

Taxi stuff, company money, I... been dipping into it. Now and again. Different things, just... dipping into it... Now and again. They caught me the other night, police. Driving and... drinking. Not the first time, either. I knew the guy, went to school with him. Garry, something. He said I should get myself sorted. Told him I would. I told him... I got a family, it's just one time. Might lose my licence. Imagine that- taxi man without a licence? Christ.

*Pause*

That's it, then? You saying that's it for all of us?

**Richard:** No. Matt... he's not like us.

**Matt:** I'm worse... I...

**Richard:** No, Matt. You're different.

*Pause*

There's something... something I found... the other day.

**Joe:** Yeah?

**Richard:** In the CDs.

**Joe:** Bloody Roy Orbison.

**Richard:** No. Take a look.

*Unsure, Joe picks up the pile of CDs. He moves them about. He looks up at Richard, then down at the CDs. Still confused he begins to go through the CDs until he gets to the Cat Stevens CD. He stops.*

**Joe:** Cat Stevens? What's that doing here? Dad hates him, he bloody hates him...Christ this is...

**Richard:** It's Mum's, Joe.

*Slight pause*

**Joe:** She bloody loved Cat Stevens.

**Richard:** Cat Stevens, you see... a Cat Stevens among the Roy Orbisons, a Cat Stevens among the pigeons.

*Pause*

Matt's not hundred percent Corrigan. Not like us... he's Mum's. He's not just a Corrigan.

*Slight pause*

He's a Hughes.

*Pause*

*(To Joe)* We might not deserve Dad's money, but he does. Because he... he can start again.

**Joe:** There ain't any money to give away, remember, he gave it all to the pub.

**Richard:** *(Taking the envelope from his pocket)* Yeah...

*Richard tears the envelope up.*

**Matt:** What, no...

**Richard:** I imagine we can buy George off with a few drinks. The other witness was...

**Joe:** Old Graham. Buy him off an' all.

**Matt:** But... then there's no will.

**Richard:** There's the first will.

**Matt:** But I got rid of it.

**Richard:** Where?

**Matt:** I... I threw it away.

**Richard:** Where?

**Matt:** In the bin.

*Slight pause*

**Richard:** The bin in there?

*Richard points to the kitchen.*

*Pause*

*Richard moves past Joe and exits into the kitchen. Joe puts down the Roy Orbison CDs, but keeps hold of the Cat Stevens CD. He moves back. When Richard enters he is dragging a large black bin. He drags it to Upstage Centre. He opens up the lift. Joe recoils.*

**Joe:** Christ.

**Richard:** When did this last get emptied?

**Matt:** Last week?

*Richard pushes the sleeves of his jacket and shirt up his arm.*

**Joe:** You're going too...

*Richard puts his arm into the bin.*

That's not very... hygienic.

*Richard starts taking out cans and bottles and puts them on the floor. Richard pulls out a half-eaten sandwich and puts it back. He reaches deeper down into the bin, a mild look of disgust on his face. He pulls out several sheets of paper that are held together by a bulldog clip. These will papers have been screwed up into a ball.*

**Joe:** That's it?

**Richard:** Dad's will.

**Joe:** I get nothing?

**Richard:** Same as before.

**Joe:** Matt gets everything?

**Richard:** Yes.

**Joe:** I, I could do with a little help, the company, the taxis...

**Richard:** No. This is for Matt.

**Joe:** (*Without meaning it*) Bastards. Both of you.

**Matt:** (*Standing*) But I...

**Richard:** You deserve it. You're the only one that can do anything do with it.

**Matt:** But I-

**Richard:** Use it too get away.

**Matt:** But I can help you, Richard.

**Richard:** No.

*Pause*

No. Not this time. Help yourself.

*Richard straightens out the will and holds it out to Matt. Matt reaches forward, lingers for a moment, then takes the will and slowly pulls it towards him. Richard smiles and nods. Richard moves around so that he is sitting on the sofa. He takes out one of the miniature bottles from his pocket.*

**Joe:** You want us to put the kettle on something?

*Richard nods. He puts the bottle back in his pocket. Joe moves around the bin and gets to the CD player. He puts the Cat Stevens' CD in. It begins to play 'Father and Son'.*

*Richard drinks from his bottle. Matt watches him, then looks down at the will. Richard stands at the drawers. He folds his arms.*

*The music rises. Richard lowers his drink. Matt looks up from the will. All three brothers listen to the Cat Stevens song all the way through.*

*Blackout.*

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