

GRACE OF GOD, AN ORIGINAL WORK  
FOR THE THEATRE AND A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE PLAY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT.

by

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UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

MPhil(B) in Playwriting Studies

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of two parts. The first part is a critical analysis of an original work for the theatre entitled Grace of God. It explores the writing process from conception to the final draft presented here in this thesis. The critical analysis reflects primarily upon the establishment of character, theme and a dramatic structure; it examines how theatrical conventions and ideologies affected the development of the play. The second part is the play text. Grace of God is a homecoming play, which explores themes of religion, race and identity within the microcosm of a family. It is the story of two estranged daughters, Anna and Grace, who return to their childhood home in Devon where their father, Edward is dying. Grace, the adopted daughter has not returned to the family home for years, having had a turbulent relationship with their mother; during the course of the play, Anna attempts to uncover the cause of this estrangement. The play centres on the idea that wrongdoings have to be confronted in order for both victim and perpetrator to move forwards. Over the course of the night, Grace, Anna and Eleanor are forced to confront the issues that tore their family apart.

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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF 'GRACE OF GOD' AND IT'S WRITING

### PROCESS

‘A human being is the best plot there is... (Galsworthy, 1913, p. 193).

This thesis examines the development of Grace of God, from conception to final draft; I consider the dramaturgical developments of the play, focusing in particular, on the process of re-writing. I will identify the practices that I employed to form character, structure and theme and the discoveries that were made throughout. I intend to consider the wider context of playwriting by drawing on secondary sources, tutorial feedback and the advice of experienced playwrights that were encountered throughout the course. In writing Grace of God, I intended to write a feature length naturalistic play, which would explore the concept of multiculturalism in rural British society. It was my objective to consider this within the more manageable microcosm of a family, where issues of cultural and personal identity entwine. This initial concept was inspired by advice given by Tim Fountain: ‘An audience wants to hear *your voice*, they want to see your vision of the world and they want the *story only you know*’ (Fountain, 2007, p. 5). As a mixed-race female raised in Devon, a predominantly Caucasian environment, I was interested in the dynamics between identity and race, and I wanted the play to find a dramatic expression for the question: How far does a person’s race define their sense of identity?

While there is a wealth of drama that explores issues that affect the black community, they are mostly placed within a city environment; I wanted to relocate these issues to a more rural setting, an area that I feel has been neglected in contemporary British theatre. The play focuses on the presence of one black person, Grace, in an otherwise Caucasian family and is constructed around her experiences in

this racially and geographically isolated environment. Rather than presenting examples of direct racism, I wanted to explore her personal struggle with race, and what it comes to represent for her. I wrote the play for a multicultural audience, interested in the dynamics of race in modern society and it was my intention to create a play that was both theatrical and informative without being overtly didactic.

Recently, much media attention has been focused on the adoption of African children by Caucasian celebrities. I felt that there was an uncomfortable element of colonialism in this exercise, and I began to research the practice of adopting black children into white families. It became an accepted practice in Britain in the late 1960's due to a glut in adoptable white children, until this point, 'racial background was considered a major handicap to placement' (Gill and Jackson, 1983, p. 7). The British Adoption Project conducted a sociological study into the exercise, assessing the development of 53 black children placed with white families. While the study found no 'conclusive evidence to suggest that trans-racial placements are psychologically damaging for black children' (Barn, 1993, p. 10), it discovered a number of issues pertaining to racial identity. Almost half of the children in the study identified themselves as white, despite their obvious aesthetic differences and a large percentage assigned negative stereotypes to black people. The central paradox is that the child's 'differentness' must be celebrated but that s/he also feels an integral part of the family unit. This contradiction became the controlling idea for Grace of God.

### **FIRST DRAFT AND CHARACTER**

When examining the essential components of dramatic writing in Poetics, Aristotle argues that, 'tragedy is not an imitation of persons but of action and life' (Aristotle, 1996, p. 11). In the post-Freudian world however, the primacy of plot has

been challenged by theorists who claim that plays are innately concerned with *human* action and emotion; that character is the most essential element in drama. Wallis and Shepherd support this assertion: ‘many of us who are interested in drama would say that this is part of our more general interest in people’ (Wallis/Shepherd, 2002, p. 15). The inspiration behind Grace of God was undoubtedly anthropological; I was interested in the theatricalities of human interaction. While character may not be the most significant element in playwriting, it was undeniably where I began my creative process. In my pitch for the play, I expressed a concern for the number of challenging roles for both black and older women in contemporary plays. As a female writer, I felt compelled to address this gender imbalance by creating a female-centric play.

The first draft of a play is a process of experimentation and discovery; there are endless possibilities and creative decisions to be made. Anthony Weigh when discussing the conception of his play, 2000 Feet Away, said that he began with a general outline and filled in the details through periods of re-writing; it was only after he had a sense of who his characters were that he began to search for the narratives that best expressed them. I was inspired by this organic method of allowing a narrative to gradually emerge and I employed a similar methodology. Draft 1 began with a consideration of character and the ways in which these ‘agents of action’ (Smiley, 2005, p. 123), can operate within a play. In classical drama, there were often large casts with archetypal characters who functioned primarily to advance the plot. I wanted to avoid simple characterisation and felt that this could be best achieved with an economical cast. Once I had my ‘germinal idea’ (Smiley, 2005, p. 24), a black child is adopted into a white family, I was then able to assess how many characters would be required to convey the narrative effectively. The nuclear family, defined by the Oxford dictionary as a ‘couple and their dependent children, regarded as a basic

social unit' ("nuclear family," def.), represents the most common family setup in contemporary British society. This configuration facilitates a small cast and was a conventional construct that I was able to subvert by establishing a racial conflict.

Grace of God, was structured primarily around the relationships between three women: a mother, Eleanor, her biological daughter, Anna, and her adopted daughter, Grace; the dynamics of their relationships came to shape the narrative of the play.

When writing Draft 1, I decided that there would be no outright protagonist as the play is essentially concerned with the interconnectedness of familial relationships. One of the main concerns of the play is causality: how one person's actions affect another person and how that person's reaction consequently affects another:

ANNA: I have these moments where I remember something happening in this room. But when I try to picture it, when I really try to work out what it meant, I can't. I can't seem to distinguish what I thought I saw from what happened right in front of my eyes.

*Eleanor takes a large gulp of the wine, uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation. (Draft 3: 67)*

Eleanor's maltreatment of Grace and Grace's subsequent reaction has a lasting effect on Anna; she saw something happen as a child but was unable to understand its significance and the effect that it had on the relationship between her mother and sister. The breakdown of Eleanor and Grace's relationship has a direct impact on how Anna interacts with them both, and on returning to the family home, she endeavours to uncover what she actually witnessed that day. Presenting a multiple protagonist play was a decision that I upheld throughout the re-writing process but it had dramatic implications. Paul C. Castagno suggested that: 'The action of the play is more tautly compressed if a clear structural network or relation is established from the top character down. Multiple protagonists may blur the central action of the play'



(Castagno, 2001, p. 53); with no clear hero or villain, it is more difficult for the audience to know who to root for.

David Edgar suggested that every character has an office within the fabula and a role within the play (Edgar, D., 2008), and that this conflict between office and role can create a dramatic energy. Grace of God charts the breakdown of a family structure and explores the characters' inability to successfully execute roles: Eleanor is psychologically unable to fulfil her role as a mother, Edward neglects his role as a father, Grace is aesthetically unable to bond with her family and Anna feels emotionally isolated from them. I wanted to experiment with this concept of unfulfilled roles, focusing particularly on Edward; while I wanted to limit his presence in the play, to allow the women's stories to flourish, it felt natural that a decision Edward made would be the catalyst for the disintegration of the family unit. In Draft 1, Edward was confined to his bed following a major stroke, unable to communicate for the duration of the play. This decision however, created a number of problems: how to successfully convey the impact he has on the women, how to articulate his objectives and how to get the other characters to interact with him. By Draft 2, I realised that it was necessary to give him a voice and re-visit the past in order to resolve these dramaturgical issues. He became a tyrannically religious figure but by characterising him thus, I struggled to find a credible reason for Eleanor to have remained in the house with him. Religion was the motivation for him to preserve his relationship; as a church leader it would be important for him to respect the sanctity of marriage. His character underwent significant changes during the re-writing period, and finally he became a man who was more concerned with his religious commitments than his family:

EDWARD: I'm going to the church. They need my help.

ELEANOR: You are not leaving this house.

EDWARD: (*Shouts*) God damn it Eleanor I am more than this family.

*He turns to leave and a wave of anger overtakes her. She throws the book at him.*

ELEANOR: (*Desperately*) You bastard.

*Calmly he bends down and picks it up.  
He places the book on the table and leaves. (Draft 3: 100)*

Edward's preoccupation with his religion and his neglect of his family eventually becomes too much for Eleanor to bear; the frustration that she feels escalates, and eventually discovers an outlet in the abuse that she enacts upon Grace. Their differing approaches to parenting Grace also causes friction in their relationship. While Eleanor tries to observe Grace's cultural heritage, Edward refuses to acknowledge her racial differences:

EDWARD: I just think that you're making too much of a fuss of her.

ELEANOR: By trying to introduce a little bit of her culture into her life?

EDWARD: By making it such an issue.

ELEANOR: It is an issue Edward.

EDWARD: I disagree. (Draft 3: 96)

This was a way of exploring the controlling idea for the play, the contradiction of interracial adoption. Their conflicting methods complicate Grace's acceptance of herself and her ability to fit in. She functions in a predominantly white milieu and realises that ethnic invisibility will allow her to assimilate more effectively into her environment, which has a detrimental impact on her sense of identity as an adult.

Lin Coghlan in a lecture on ‘Storytelling through Character’ spoke of the inner dynamics of a character and posed the questions, ‘What does the character want?’ and ‘What does the character need?’ (Coghlan, L., 2008). Coghlan suggested that the key to creating a good internal conflict in a play is ensuring that what the character desires is in conflict with what that character actually needs. For instance, Grace wants to blame Eleanor for her unhappiness but in order to be happy she needs to forgive her. In Draft 1 of the play I was preoccupied with cause and effect of action rather than character’s objectives and I employed Coghlan’s practice during the re-drafting process in order to achieve a clearer sense of their individual motives. This was particularly helpful when thinking about Anna, whose voice and role I found the hardest to discover. Initially, she functioned as a facilitator; she was the person who brought Grace and Eleanor together but this resulted in her having no clear project of her own. Anna’s journey in the play needed to be the discovery of this: I decided that Anna had consciously returned for the death of her father but that what she unconsciously desired was to reconnect with Grace, which she comes to recognize in the final scene:

ANNA: I didn’t come back here for him. I realised that when I walked through the door and you weren’t here.

*She pours more vodka into the glass and slides it across to Grace.*

ANNA: What happened when we were younger? I think I know, but I need to here it from you. (Draft 3: 117)

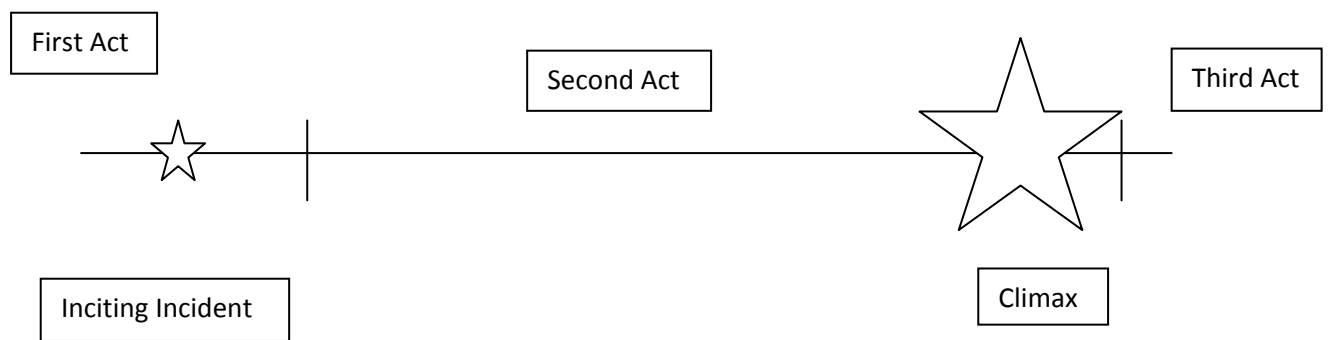
By the final draft, I came some way to rectifying this problem. Anna returns with secrets and half-perceived truths that she actively tries to elucidate. I feel that Anna remains the least developed of the characters, the other character’s objectives feel stronger and dramatically more significant; this was possibly something I could have

foreseen earlier in the writing process and addressed accordingly. Vladimir Propp argued that a character's function is more important than their characteristics. It was during the first re-draft that I began to create plot points for each of the characters and consider the best dramaturgical decisions for their emerging narratives. When the first draft is complete, it is essential to revise the form, style and purpose of the play. One of the biggest problems with Draft 1 of Grace of God was the lack of focus: character's motives fluctuated, the story lacked coherence and the themes were not conveyed effectively. Where the first draft of my play allowed for experimentation with character and possible story options, it was during Draft 2 that it became necessary to form a logical structure.

## **SECOND DRAFT AND STRUCTURE**

Yves Lavandier suggests that the 'Three Act Structure' logically divides a play into three parts: the period before the audience know what the objective is, the period during which the protagonist pursues the objective and the period after it has been achieved or abandoned. In Draft 1 Grace of God was a two act play with Edward's death functioning as the catalyst for a return to the past. Act 1 was concerned with the effect Edward had on the women while Act 2 explored how he enacted that effect. The two act structure however created an incomplete sensation; it presented the cause and effect without any sense of dramatic resolution. By adopting a three act structure in Draft 2, I gained a more focused form and was able to deliver Edward's story and then re-visit the present, something that was not achievable in Draft 1.

In Writing Drama, Yves Lavandier presents the diagram below to demonstrate the structure of the majority of stage plays:



(Lavandier, 2005, p. 166)

I tried to follow this model, as it gave an existing structure that I could work with: the inciting incident in Act 1 is Grace’s arrival at the house; her return disrupts the delicate equilibrium between Anna and Eleanor and creates a conflict that eventually permits the return to the past in Act 2. The second act climax is when Eleanor cuts Grace’s hair and subsequently locks her in the cellar; a physical transgression that Grace has never forgiven her for. The climax to Act 3 is when the women collectively realise that in order to move on with their lives they must forgive each other’s wrongdoings. In a lecture with Steve Waters on ‘Forms and Aesthetics’ we were encouraged to identify the emerging events in each act, an exercise that allowed me to break the action into more manageable units:

Act 1 - Anna and Grace return to the family home.

Edward dies.

Act 2 - Edward reveals that his religion means more than his family.

Eleanor cuts Grace’s hair.

Eleanor assaults Grace and locks her in the cellar.

Act 3 - Anna reveals her true feelings for her father.

Eleanor opens the cellar door.

The reappearance of the lake.

It was useful to deconstruct each act in this way as it became clear which aspects of storytelling were important in the re-drafting stages.

In Draft 2, I experimented with a prologue and epilogue, both of which contained the same sequence of action. I wanted to create a sense of mystery in the play; the events of the past continue to haunt the house and I felt that this could be an effective structural method of exploring that idea. In Draft 2, the narrative centred on a specific action: the second act climax, where Eleanor locks Grace in the cellar. The prologue foreshadowed this and the repetition of the action in the epilogue would serve as the pay off. By Draft 3 however, that narrative event was no longer the inciting incident and the structural framing no longer held such significance. In the final draft I realised that I could effectively create mystery by delaying the return of Grace. In *Old Times*, Harold Pinter builds a sense of anticipation around the reveal of Anna, who is both present and absent, an enigmatic figure at the window who overshadows the scene. Through the other characters' dialogue, I could similarly build expectation:

ANNA: Where's Grace?

*Awkward pause.*

ELEANOR: A cup of tea. That's what we both need.

ANNA: Mum?

ELEANOR: And a towel. I promised you a towel didn't I? Look at you, you're soaking through.

ANNA: (*Persistently*) She has been to visit?

ELEANOR: I've been using towels to mop up all these bloody leaks. But I have one. I put one aside for you. Like a 4\* hotel.

*Eleanor rushes out of the room.* (Draft 3: 35)

This also allowed me to explore Anna and Eleanor's conflicting relationships with Grace; while Anna actively pursues the topic, Eleanor avoids it. Their conflicting objectives create an energy which heightens the expectation of Grace's arrival. In Draft 2, there was a preoccupation with her return which began to overshadow the objectives of Anna and Eleanor in the scene; it was essential to focus on their individual projects in the final draft.

Grace of God is both a homecoming and a reckoning play; it revolves around the return of Anna and Grace to their childhood home where they are forced to come to terms with their shared past. I studied David Eldridge's Festen and George Gott's Cocoa, two contemporary homecoming plays, exploring the ways in which both playwrights sequence the action and drive their stories forward. Although Eldridge and Gott's plot methods are different, Festen begins with the arrival of the children while in Cocoa we await the return of Charlotte with anticipation, there is a clear comprehension of the plays' overriding projects from beginning to end. David Edgar, when discussing dramatic structure suggested that it is the 'order of the play that contains the meaning' (Edgar, D., 2008); the basic principle of emplotment, is where the audience enter the story. Grace of God became an onion play, there is a vast backstory and a significantly shorter response; it is essentially a play about dealing with the past. It is through the action in the present that the characters make sense of the past. I decided to introduce the characters after years of estrangement in order to allow the back story to drive the action of the play, but this meant that lots of exposition had to be conveyed in a short time. I am an advocate of allowing an audience to draw their own conclusions from a piece of theatre but during a feedback session with Steve Waters, it became clear that the mode of storytelling I had opted

for was too evasive for the structure. Lavandier wrote, ‘Mystery is not a matter of totally hiding information, as if to prepare a surprise but of telling the spectator, ‘I have some information for you but I’m not going to give it to you straight away’ (Lavandier, 2005, p.308). In Draft 2, I began to develop a method of releasing fragments of story, holding back enough to create suspense without ineffectively telling the story.

In the pitch for Grace of God I intended to set the play in two distinct locations (one for each act) using real time. When it came to exploring devices for time and space however, I realised that this would disconnect the action. I wanted to exploit the advantages of writing for the stage and avoid using filmic devices. Immediacy is something that is inherent to theatre; the audience are present, the action is live and tangible and an experience is shared. Yves Lavandier advocates ‘respecting unity of time – that is to say, compacting the action into a limited period of time, such as a few hours or days (Lavandier, 2005, p. 196). With this in mind, I decided to employ what David Edgar refers to as ‘single cycle time in one place’ (Edgar, 2009, p. 100). This allowed me to retain a defined period of time and sense of place: one evening and one house. This time cycle is disrupted in Act 2, when we return to the past but structurally, time functions in the same manner and each scene takes place in real time. How to convey what had happened in the past without preventing the play from moving forwards however, was a considerable obstacle during each phase of re-writing. In Draft 1 the events of the past were conveyed through dialogue but the immediacy of action was deficient and I felt that it was necessary to travel back, to allow the audience to experience the action rather than report it through over-expository dialogue. Steve Waters suggested that it was necessary to return to the past but that that return had to be earned. I decided that only Eleanor could enable this:



ELEANOR: You have no idea what it was like to live with him. You were just children. (Draft 3: 71)

There was a danger of interrupting the momentum of the play and breaking the audience's connection with the characters, but I felt that it was an essential narrative decision. There were a number of implications for using this temporal structure: conveying exposition, getting characters on and offstage and ensuring that physical actions took a realistic length of time. It was my intention to create a naturalistic play, and I felt that this was the most effective time cycle as it created an intensity of action and a sense of verisimilitude that was further enhanced by the spatial considerations.

Having imposed strict spatial and temporal restrictions on myself, the configuration of characters in each scene became difficult to manipulate. While it was necessary for the characters to interact together as a whole, it was also necessary to find a means of isolating action and ensuring that the right characters were present in each scene. A consequence of the linear structure and limited fictional space was an abundance of entrances and exits and I was concerned that the milieu would become monotonous for the audience. During Draft 2, I began to recognise how this structure allowed me to use place as a metaphor, something that I then expanded upon in my final draft. Most of the play takes place in the kitchen, where the characters perform together; it is the space where all three of the women interact and the events of the past are eventually resolved. The study then, became a confessional; it is a more intimate space where the characters are allowed to express themselves openly and honestly. Although changing location from kitchen to study disrupts the action and exposes the artifice of the performance with a set change, I felt that it was necessary to create the space as it communicates a different meaning. The house and its geographical location became an important aspect of the play; it is where all of the

action both past and present takes place, and its state of disrepair comes to mirror the condition of the family relationship:

*A country kitchen in desperate need of love and re-decoration.*

*There is a long counter cluttered with dirty dishes. A dining room table, a few mismatching chairs and a range with a charred pan. (Draft 3: 28)*

The rain also functions in this manner; it is raining when Anna and Grace return to the house, the weather worsens towards the climax of the first act and the sun finally shines at the denouement. The leak in the roof is a plot point that features in each act of the play, particularly Act 2 where it becomes the catalyst for Eleanor and Edward's major conflict. It was during Draft 2 that the play began to take on a symbolic/metaphorical dimension that I had not foreseen in the earlier draft. What David Edgar refers to as figuring, 'a technique whereby we draw attention to the relationship between different elements' (Edgar, 2009, p. 169), became an important aspect of the second draft. I began to think about the play as a whole; conceiving set ups and pay offs. Objects became mechanisms for creating links throughout the play, particularly in Draft 3 and were a useful way of creating continuity between the events of the past and the action of the present.

Wallis and Shepherd suggest that fictional space can be created using, 'verbal techniques (dialogue) and non-verbal techniques (e.g. scenery, props and the movement of characters)' (Wallis and Shepherd, 2002, p. 152). Devon is a rural county with fantastic vistas and a rich sense of place, but I struggled to exploit this in the play. I was particularly inspired by the feeling of geographical isolation in Sam Shepard's Buried Child, a play that similarly breaks down traditional family structures. Shepard refers to the corn field at the back of the house chiefly through dialogue and the significance of it becomes clearer as the play proceeds. I decided that the most

effective way of establishing a sense of place was verbally. Through dialogue I attempted to convey the remoteness of the location, its relationship with the surrounding landscape and the significance of this to each of the characters:

*They continue to stare out of the window.*

ANNA: It's so dark.

ELEANOR: It's the darkness that makes you feel so alone out here.

ANNA: Still carry that torch in your bag?

ELEANOR: He has a head torch somewhere. Looks like a bloody miner.

*Eleanor closes the shutters.*

ANNA: Keep them open. We can act like a beacon.

ELEANOR: No, I like the shutters closed.

ANNA: Why?

ELEANOR: I just do.

ANNA: You used to open them all the time. You were always complaining this house was too dark.

ELEANOR: That was before I found myself alone in a house in the middle of nowhere. (Draft 3: 46-47)

The windows and the shutters became an essential prop; they create both a sense of claustrophobia and a connection with the landscape outside. All of the characters are drawn to the windows and the possibilities held outside but they are emotionally bound to the house and the memories that it contains. This also enabled an understanding of Eleanor's relationship with the house; she has become defined by it and afraid to leave its familiarity despite her unhappiness.

Alan Ayckbourn suggests that 'there is no point in launching into a scene between two characters, however sparkling their dialogue might be, if you have no

idea at all what might happen next' (Ayckbourn, 2002, p. 7). This was how I approached the writing of scenes in Draft 1 and consequently, the progression of scenes was ineffective. Most of the scenes in the play are 'French Scenes' as most end with the entrance or exit of a character. This was a structural implication but also felt effective; the play essentially deals with a family who struggle to communicate, and it was natural for characters to leave rooms after a conflict. Steve Gooch suggested that: 'In situations where your characters are on stage continuously, it may be necessary to think of other breaks or changes in the direction of the action to make these mini-scenes or beats. (Gooch, 2001, p. 45). Although there are natural changes in a character's objectives in any scene, it was necessary to construct external actions which propelled the story; telephone interruptions, objects falling and the worsening weather were all devices that created energy. It was in Draft 2 that I began to assess how far each scene moved the action forwards or shifted the audience's view of the characters and their situations as: 'scenes exist in relation to one another; they begin by answering questions posed in the last scene and often end by propelling the audience into the next one' (Edgar, 2009, p. 123). Ensuring that each scene counted was something that I struggled with as a result of my approach to re-drafting. Initially, I thought of the process as linear; I began at the beginning and ended at the end. What I discovered however was that this was not always the most effective method. It resulted in spending a lot of time on certain scenes and less on others which ultimately affected the consistency of the final draft.

### **FINAL DRAFT, THEME AND THE PLAYWRIGHT'S WORKSHOP**

The playwright's workshop and rehearsal period with actors and a director was a particularly illuminating experience; the re-writing period that followed

produced the most significant developments in my play. The workshop was an opportunity to experience the play kinetically and understand which parts of the play translated successfully from page to stage. During the post-workshop feedback session, it became clear that a large percentage of the audience had assumed that colour-blind casting had taken place, and while in the first 30 minutes of the play (length of extract) there was no direct reference to race, I had believed that I had conveyed the theme effectively. When I compared Draft 1 and Draft 2 of Grace of God it became evident how far I had deviated from my original premise. Noel Greig suggested that ‘When you have your story and your characters, it will be time to see what ideas you have – perhaps unconsciously – been exploring’ (Greig, 2005, p. 44), but I felt that the play had lost its sense of direction. I had wanted to create a play that dealt with issues of racial identity and yet I had avoided this almost entirely. Paul Castagno questioned: ‘should a playwright disguise thematic concerns so as to avoid ‘telegraphing’ a message?’ (Castagno, 2001, p. 57) I was concerned that the play would become didactic and that it would revert to stereotype but watching the play performed in that state prompted me to address its thematic concerns.

I had initially wanted to focus on the aesthetic differences between Grace and the other people in her family, which would create the isolation that was essential for successfully conveying the theme. While skin colour was the most obvious choice, I decided that hair allowed for a more theatrical distinction. There is an obvious incongruity between European standards of beauty and the physical characteristics of black women. As Elaine Jackson’s 1979 play *Paper Dolls* highlights, black women have to come to terms with the fact that they can never achieve the ‘Barbie Doll’ concept of beauty. Hair is a fundamental issue when assessing standards of black beauty and Caucasian people are often ignorant of the complexities of good hair care

for black women. Hair became a frustration for both Grace and Eleanor; Grace wants a hairstyle that she cannot attain and Eleanor is powerless to help. It was necessary to find a dramatic expression for this in the play and the first idea I explored was that Anna's hairdresser was unable to cut afro hair. Eleanor then takes it upon herself to cut Grace's hair herself with disastrous results. While the scene conveyed the sense of racial isolation that Grace suffers, it did not have the dramatic weight or theatricality that it required. I wanted hair to be an incredibly painful aspect of her appearance and a source of great animosity between her and Eleanor. During a series of tutorials with Steve Waters it became clear that rather than presenting action, I reported it through dialogue. During my final re-writing phase I was encouraged to write the obligatory scenes and found that they invigorated the play with an energy that was deficient in earlier drafts:

*Eleanor slams her glass of wine on the desk and takes a pair of scissors from the drawer.*

GRACE: What are you doing?

*Eleanor pins Grace to the chair.*

GRACE: I want it cut at the hairdressers.

ELEANOR: We don't always get what we want.

GRACE: Stop it.

*In a frenzy, Eleanor begins to hack at Grace's hair.*

*Grace struggles, which makes it worse.*

*The wine spills all over Grace.*

*She screams.*

GRACE: Please.

*Suddenly, Eleanor stands back with the scissors in her hand.*

*Grace holds her head in her hands.*

*Her ear bleeds and she is covered in red wine. (Draft 3: 103-104)*

This scene became Lavandier's 'Second Act Climax' and led Eleanor to lock Grace in the cellar. In a lecture, April De Angelis spoke of transgressing boundaries as a way of moving action forward, an idea that stayed with me. I felt that it was necessary for a significant boundary to be crossed and the cutting of Grace's hair, an act that has severe physical ramifications ensures that there is no going back. The scene also conveys the complexity of their relationship; Grace cannot accept her differences which frustrates Eleanor:

GRACE: I want a bob.

ELEANOR: You can't have one. Your hair can't be cut into that style.

GRACE: I want it cut.

ELEANOR: It's not the same as our hair. It's wiry and frizzy and no-one around here knows what to do with it.

*Beat*

GRACE: Why doesn't anyone know how to cut it?

ELEANOR: (*Snaps*) Because you're black Grace. You're a negro.  
(Draft 3: 102)

I felt that it was necessary for Eleanor to use the word 'negro' at a heated moment during the play as the term carries with it such a strong cultural significance: 'while the word 'black' is used triumphantly in contemporary society... 'the word 'negro'... is now regarded as pejorative' (Hendriks and Figueroa, 1995, p. 3). By pointing out the racial difference between Grace and her sister, Eleanor crosses another boundary that affects Grace significantly. It is the first time in her life that she truly recognises the aesthetic difference between herself and her family and it prompts her departure at the end of the act. The negative identification Grace has with her hair is revisited in

Act 1, where Grace returns with a long straight weave; she has finally achieved the Caucasian ideal of beauty she so coveted as a child but it does not naturally belong to her.

Race is not the only divisive device in the play; religion creates a partition that affects all of the characters in distinct ways. Edward is a leader in the Jesus Army, an Evangelical Christian church with a strong community spirit, and while he is fanatical about his faith, Eleanor is completely removed from the religion he has immersed himself in. His enthusiasm for his religious community and his reluctance to help his own family is a constant source of irritation for Eleanor:

*She stands in front of the wooden crucifix, silent for a moment.*

ELEANOR: Our home is falling down around us and I feel as though I'm the only person holding it in place.

EDWARD: Is this about the roof?

ELEANOR: This is so much more than the roof. (Draft 3: 85)

Religion overshadows all of the action in the house both in the past and the present; a giant wooden crucifix hangs from the kitchen wall in Act 2 and the shadow remains in Act 1 and 3. It functions as an obstacle between Edward and Eleanor and bonds him to Grace. Religion provides an identity for Grace and a sense of belonging that she could not achieve within her family. It serves as a division between her and Anna who like Eleanor, does not share their religious beliefs. I was particularly interested in the Jesus Army for their concept of community and the way that they open their homes to people in need, something I was able to build into the story. The phrase 'by the Grace of God go I...' refers to the salvation of sinners and is fundamentally linked to forgiveness. The title Grace of God sprang from the idea of a devout Christian not being able to forgive her mother. Over the course of the play, Grace's assumptions



about her mother however, are challenged and her understanding of Eleanor develops throughout the play:

*Slowly, Grace takes the bottle away from Eleanor and puts it back on the table.*

ELEANOR: I always loved him. I thought that's what it was all about...

*She looks to Grace.*

ELEANOR: But its not enough.

*Grace goes to the wooden crucifix. She looks to the outline on the wall.*

GRACE: It doesn't belong here anymore. (Draft 3: 120)

It was not until the final draft that I decided how best to end the play. While there are tragic elements to the play, I felt that it was essential for Grace of God to have an uplifting climax. As Syd Field suggests, with a three act play, it is useful to separate the acts into the set-up, the confrontation and the resolution. I wanted to create a non-verbal expression for the future as I felt it would be implausible for the women to forgive one another through dialogue. The story of the disappearing lake is introduced in Act 1 by Eleanor, repeated in Act 2 by Edward and returns in Act 3. The lake represents a time when the house was a happy place to live, when Edward and Eleanor were in love and the future was something to look forward to. The reappearance of the lake in Act 3 then becomes a metaphor for hope:

ANNA: See it? Just past the hedgerow, where the blackberries used to be.

*They look closer.*

GRACE: Oh my God.

*Beat*

GRACE: It's the lake.

*They gaze out for some time.*

*Hesitantly, Eleanor takes Grace's hand.*  
*The outline of the crucifix disappears as a bright light fills the room.*  
(Draft 3: 123)

The process of re-drafting led me to consider how far writers should be bound to their original premise. I was concerned, particularly with Draft 2, that I was no longer writing the same play. What became clear from my re-writing process was the importance of allowing new ideas into the play. Holding on to extracts of dialogue, story or action that featured in earlier drafts was not the most effective approach. While I felt compelled to re-visit the controlling themes from Draft 1, by the final draft I began to accept the developments in the play that I had not initially anticipated. Sam Smiley suggests that there 'are two basic methods of drafting: exploratory writing or working from a plan' (Smiley, 2005, 42). I was interested in writing organically, and felt that a plan would limit my creativity yet the earlier drafts lacked focus. I began to work from a comprehensive plan with Draft 3, perhaps too late in the process. I had developed plot points, themes and storylines that were inconsistent and it was difficult to address all of these in the final draft. In my pitch I intended to avoid creating a 'well-made play', manoeuvred chiefly by plot but the consequence of this was illogically organised scenes. This led me to recognise the collaborative nature of plays both performatively and structurally. No one element works independently: characters perform actions, actions are arranged by plot and plot enacts meaning. David Edgar suggested that, 'we test a play for coherence. We ask ourselves whether it hangs together internally' (Edgar, 2009, p. 8), and were the play to undergo another re-draft I would assess the way that all of the dramaturgical decisions interact on a closer level.

The final draft of the play was a period of addressing all of the obstacles encountered in the earlier drafts and ensuring that the story was conveyed logically

and effectively. Grace of God developed significantly during the re-writing process, in response to feedback and experimentation with character, structure and theme. In order to attain the best theatrical expression for my original premise, it was necessary for the play to undergo this process of development in order to become the play that is presented in this thesis.

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# **GRACE OF** **GOD**

**By Lisa Thomas**

## Characters

**Eleanor**

**Anna**

**Grace**

**Edward**

... indicates an unfinished thought

/ indicates interrupted/overlapping dialogue

**ACT 1 – Present**

**ACT 2 –Ten years ago**

**ACT 3 - Present**

**ACT 1**  
**SCENE 1**

*A rural cottage in Devon.  
Slightly worn.  
A dusky sky.  
Raining.*

**The Kitchen**

*A country kitchen in desperate need of love and re-decoration.  
There is a long counter cluttered with dirty dishes, a dining room table, a few mismatching chairs and a range with a charred pan.  
The faded outline of a crucifix on a wall, long ago removed.  
There is a door leading out to the study which is slightly ajar. There is a wooden cellar door which has been blocked by a table, on which stands a number of dying potted plants.  
There is a small but persistent drip coming from the ceiling. A saucepan is placed beneath it.*

*Eleanor, an attractive woman in her late 50s wears an apron with a picture of a scantily clad woman on the front. She leans against the kitchen counter, drinking out of a gravy boat, staring at a bottle of vodka in the cupboard.  
Dirty dishes cover the counter but she is not washing up.  
A radio is on. The signal is bad and the song barely audible.*

ELEANOR: Dear God, when will this end?

*She notices that the bowl beneath the drip is overflowing with water.*

ELEANOR: Drip. Drip.

*She picks up the bowl and the timbre of the drip changes as it hits the hard floor.*

ELEANOR: Plop. Plop.

*She goes to pour the rain water into the sink but cannot see past the dirty dishes. She sighs, pours the water over the dying plants on the table in front of the cellar.*

ELEANOR: *(To the plant)* I know how you feel.

*She replaces the bowl under the drip and looks up to the source.*

ELEANOR: Drip. Drip.

*She goes to the cupboard and takes out a half empty bottle of vodka. She picks it up, looks at it, and then abruptly replaces it, closing the door  
A telephone starts to ring.  
She looks to where it should be.*



*It's not there.*

ELEANOR: Where are you?

*She follows the sound around the kitchen, trying to locate the phone.  
Eventually she finds it in a cupboard.*

ELEANOR: I certainly didn't put you in there.

*She answers the phone.*

ELEANOR: Hello?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Speaking.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Oh really?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: A special offer you say?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Indeed, that does sound like a generous offer.

*She looks to the drip.*

ELEANOR: And I could do with a set of stainless steel pans with a lifetime guarantee.

*As she listens, there is a knock on the door.*

ELEANOR: I'm sorry, you'll have to call back.

*Eleanor puts the telephone back in the cupboard.  
As she turns she stares momentarily at the cellar door.  
Another knock, clearly coming from the front door.  
Eleanor turns as keys are heard in the door.*

ANNA: *(Voice offstage)* Hello?

ELEANOR: *(To herself/Relieved)* Anna.

ANNA: *(V.O louder)* Mum?

*She takes a deep breath.*

ANNA: (*V.O loud/concerned*) Mum?

*She hesitates then calls out decisively.*

ELEANOR: (*Calls*) In the kitchen love.

*Anna enters with a large travelling bag. She is an attractive woman in her mid 20s but looks dishevelled and damp from a heavy downpour.*

ANNA: Someone's been to the gym.

ELEANOR: Oh dear, what must I look like?

*She takes off the sexy apron.*

ELEANOR: I didn't expect you yet love. This place was supposed to be spotless. I even made a banner.

*Eleanor rushes to the kitchen table and picks up a piece of paper. 'Welcome Home' is haphazardly scrawled across.*

ANNA: Well it's the thought that counts.

*Beat*

ANNA: I knocked. I didn't know whether to just let myself in anymore. I thought you might be out.

ELEANOR: Sorry love. Listening to the radio.

*Eleanor switches off the radio.  
They stand, awkward in each other's presence until Anna embraces her mother.*

ANNA: Hi mum.

ELEANOR: Oh love.

*She holds Anna close.*

ELEANOR: I didn't mean to bother you.

ANNA: Bother me?

ELEANOR: I know you're busy love.

ANNA: I want to be here.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: It's just... it doesn't seem right, asking your children for help.

*Anna holds her mother tighter.*

ANNA: I've missed you.

*Slowly, they move away from each other, awkward, unsure of what to say after such an intimate moment.*

ELEANOR: Sit. You must be exhausted.

*Anna sits at the table.*

*Eleanor adjusts the saucepan to sit better beneath the leak.*

ANNA: I see the roof is still leaking.

ELEANOR: I know. It's like Cheddar Gorge in here.

ANNA: He never fixed it?

ELEANOR: Bane of my bloody life, this roof.

*Anna shakes her head in annoyance.*

*Eleanor sits.*

ELEANOR: Did you take the train?

ANNA: Bus.

ELEANOR: All the way from Manchester?

ANNA: Bloody nightmare. I'm never using the National Express again.

ELEANOR: We used to take the National Express to Plymouth. I always found it quite enjoyable.

ANNA: Enjoyable isn't exactly the word I'd use to describe my journey. A man smelling of piss sat/

ELEANOR: Don't say piss say urine.

ANNA: It wasn't urine, it was piss. It was old piss. He insisted on sitting next to me despite fifty empty seats to choose from. I had to focus on my crossword to take my mind off the vomit rising up my throat.

ELEANOR: Oh dear.

ANNA: And the bloody driver had 90's club classics on repeat all the way to Taunton.

ELEANOR: It's nice that you had something to listen to.

ANNA: I wanted to pierce my eardrums with my free biro.

ELEANOR: And you got a taxi from the station?

ANNA: I shared a taxi. Apparently taxis don't come all the way out here unless there are at least two passengers. I shared it with a lovely young man called Jesus.

ELEANOR: The Messiah himself?

ANNA: I think he was just Portuguese. But you never know...he did pay.

*Eleanor smiles.*

ELEANOR: You're dripping wet. Let me get you a towel.

*Eleanor stands.*

ANNA: Mum, wait...

*Anna steals herself.*

ANNA: How is he?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: We had a good day today. Mostly.

*Pause*

ANNA: Is this really happening?

*Eleanor looks towards the study.*

ANNA: Is he awake?

ELEANOR: He's in and out of sleep.

ANNA: Where is he?

ELEANOR: The study.

ANNA: Next door?

*Beat*

ANNA: Why?

ELEANOR: We've been given a bed by the hospice. One with sides, stops him from rolling out, not that he has enough energy. It just wasn't going to fit up those stairs.

The nurse thought it would be better for him to be down here anyhow. Why run up and down the stairs when there's a perfectly good space down here?

ANNA: It's the darkest room in the house.

ELEANOR: Perhaps God will finally shine his light in there.

*Eleanor gets up and peers through the gap.  
She opens it further to enter but Anna holds it still.*

ANNA: (*Whispers*) He's probably asleep.

ELEANOR: We won't disturb him.

ANNA: I wouldn't want to wake him.

ELEANOR: An armed robbery wouldn't wake him.

ANNA: I'll look in on him later.

*Anna returns to the table.  
Eleanor continues to look in.*

ELEANOR: Funny. He still has the same happy resting face.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Oh to be content.

*Softly, she pushes the door to.  
She goes to table and puts her apron back on.*

ANNA: Did she say anything?

ELEANOR: Who?

ANNA: The nurse.

ELEANOR: He says a lot of things. Mostly in this serious voice he likes to adopt to make sure I know exactly how bad the situation is. As if an incapacitated husband wasn't indication enough.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I've found it quite difficult. A male nurse. Somehow I feel like a woman would understand better. She'd know what to say.

ANNA: He's not saying the right things?

ELEANOR: I'm not entirely sure what the right things are. He told me to call you. Said I needed some support. I told him about your travels. I did say that you were busy.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I was surprised you didn't contact me sooner. I left a message with that friend of yours a few weeks back now. Did he not pass it on?

*Awkward beat*

ANNA: Ryan's not exactly the most reliable of people.

ELEANOR: He seemed nice enough. Funny accent, but friendly.

ANNA: Well he didn't pass it on.

ELEANOR: Boyfriend is he?

ANNA: He's 19.

ELEANOR: Is that code for something?

ANNA: I'm too old to have a 19 year old boyfriend.

ELEANOR: You're only as young as the man you feel.

*Anna sighs.*

ANNA: I should have called.

ELEANOR: I should have called you earlier.

ANNA: You had no idea where I was.

ELEANOR: I should have had you tagged/

ANNA: Well I should never have gone in the first place. I knew he was sick when I left/

ELEANOR: Anna love/

ANNA: No, I knew. And I went anyway.

*Beat*

ANNA: I went anyway.

ELEANOR: There's no timetable for this. Could be six months, could be tomorrow. You can't stop living your life because your Dad got sick.

*Beat*

ANNA: I am here now.

ELEANOR: Exactly. And it probably is for the best love. Although knowing Edward, he'll keep us waiting on him hand and foot for as long as he possibly can.

*Anna thinks for a beat.*

ANNA: Where's Grace?

*Awkward pause*

ELEANOR: A cup of tea. That's what we both need.

ANNA: Mum?

ELEANOR: And a towel. I promised you a towel didn't I? Look at you, you're soaking through.

ANNA: *(Persistently)* She has seen him?

ELEANOR: I've been using towels to mop up all these bloody leaks. But I have one. I put one aside for you. Like a 4\* hotel.

*Eleanor rushes out of the room.*

ANNA: *(Loudly, to be heard)* It's just...it's just that I haven't heard from her in a while.

*Silence*

ANNA: I was expecting to find her here if I'm honest.

*Silence*

ANNA: I mean, if there's ever a reason to put things behind you it's now, isn't it?

ELEANOR: *(Voice off)* I know I have one here somewhere.

*After a moment, Eleanor enters with a tiny tea towel.*

ELEANOR: Sorry love. Must have used that towel after all. Had to move my bed a couple of inches last night, just to get a dry night's sleep.

ANNA: (*Seriously*) Where is she?

ELEANOR: (*Snaps*) Not here.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: (*Softer*) Can we not just enjoy our little reunion? Just for a bit longer?

*Eleanor hands her the tea towel.*

ELEANOR: I can't promise you that you'll stay dry, mind you. You just boarded Noah's ark.

ANNA: This roof has been leaking for a decade.

ELEANOR: It's alright when it doesn't rain.

*Anna wraps the tea towel around her hair.*

ELEANOR: (*Tenderly*) Not so long next time, do you hear me? I might not recognise you.

ANNA: It is nice to be back.

*Eleanor does not believe this.*

ELEANOR: Well...nice to finally have you back.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I've even kept that mug you liked so much.

*She starts to rummage through the dirty dishes looking for the mug.*

ELEANOR: It's here somewhere. That blue spotty one.

ANNA: That's Grace's mug.

*Awkward pause*

*Eleanor abandons the search and picks the two nearest mugs.*

ANNA: I can make the tea.

ELEANOR: You've barely sat down love.



ANNA: I've been sitting on a coach for hours, my arse practically fused to the seat. You must be exhausted, please, let me.

*Anna motions her mother towards the table, fills up the kettle and switches it on.*

ELEANOR: The kettle is broken.

ANNA: Oh.

ELEANOR: I've been boiling water in a pan.

*Anna holds up the charred pan.*

ELEANOR: I did plan on buying a new kettle the other week, only there were so many shapes and sizes I thought I'd just carry on using the pan.

*Anna looks at her in disbelief.*

ANNA: You went out to buy a kettle and then decided to carry on using a dirty old pan?

ELEANOR: I didn't know which one to buy.

ANNA: Well you can get rid of this one anyway.

ELEANOR: You can't just throw it away.

ANNA: Why not?

ELEANOR: You can't put a kettle in the bin.

ANNA: What else do you do with it?

ELEANOR: I don't know, but you can't put it in the bin.

ANNA: What have you done with all your other kettles?

ELEANOR: They're in the cupboard under the stairs.

*Beat*

ANNA: All of your broken kettles are under the stairs?

ELEANOR: And the microwave.

ANNA: What?

ELEANOR: Well you certainly can't throw a microwave in the bin.

ANNA: You don't have to keep them all in the cupboard. You have a strange tendency to hold to things.

ELEANOR: Oh love, I've been throwing things away for over fifty years.

*Anna fiddles with the stove but can't seem to turn it on.*

ANNA: How do you get a flame?

ELEANOR: Push it down, then turn.

*She continues to fiddle.*

ANNA: It's not working

ELEANOR: You have to push before you turn.

ANNA: I am pushing.

ELEANOR: Push.

ANNA: It's broken.

ELEANOR: Enough. I'll die of thirst before I get a cup of tea out of you.

*Eleanor switches the stove on and fills the pan with water.*

ANNA: I'm just going to feel like I'm getting in the way if you won't let me help you.

ELEANOR: I'll let you help love, I will. But sometimes help isn't always that helpful.

ANNA: You sound like Dad.

*Beat*

ANNA: Cup of coffee then please.

*Looking for coffee, Eleanor opens the cupboard that holds the vodka.*

*She closes it abruptly.*

ELEANOR: Sorry love, no coffee.

ANNA: Oh.

ELEANOR: I thought I had some.

ANNA: Tea's fine.

ELEANOR: (*Slight irritation*) I should be more organised.

ANNA: I don't mind tea.

ELEANOR: (*More irritated*) Always forgetting something, Forget my head if it wasn't attached to my bloody neck.

ANNA: Mum. Tea's fine. Two sugars please.

ELEANOR: Two?

ANNA: Please.

ELEANOR: Two sugars?

ANNA: Yes.

*Eleanor turns to the counter with an air of disapproval.*

ANNA: What now?

ELEANOR: I just think that that's an unnecessary amount of sugar in one cup of tea, is all. It's a small cup.

ANNA: It's how I take it now mum.

ELEANOR: (*Disapprovingly*) Ok. If that's how you take it.

*Anna is mildly irritated by this.*

ANNA: I don't smoke, I don't take drugs. Two sugars in my tea is hardly the worst habit to have.

ELEANOR: You never used to have two sugars.

ANNA: I never used to drink tea.

ELEANOR: I'm not even sure that I have any sugar.

ANNA: Are you being serious?

ELEANOR: You begin to value your teeth when you reach my age.

ANNA: (*Snaps*) Just forget the bloody tea I wanted coffee anyway.

*Beat*

ANNA: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap.

*Eleanor is quiet for a moment, busying herself with the cups.*

ELEANOR: When the nurse first came here he sat in that exact spot. Talked about options and routes we could go down and I found myself making tea. Funny, how tea seems to take ones mind off a problem. Headache? Cup of tea. Upset stomach? Cup of tea. Dying husband? Cup of tea.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: He doesn't take sugar.

ANNA: I don't need any sugar.

ELEANOR: Right you are.

*Eleanor continues making tea.*

ANNA: I know I should have come sooner I just...

*Eleanor brings two cups of tea to the table and sits beside Anna.*

*Anna tastes her tea and makes a face.*

*They sit in silence.*

ANNA: Dad used to put an extra sugar in his coffee.

ELEANOR: I know.

ANNA: (*Disappointed*) Oh really? I thought only I knew about that.

*Beat*

ANNA: He said that three sugars weren't really all that worse than two.

ELEANOR: (*Surprised*) Three?

*They laugh until it dissolves into sadness.*

ANNA: I'm not ready for him to die yet.

ELEANOR: It happens to the best of us.

ANNA: But Dad...

ELEANOR: Isn't like the rest of us?

*Anna shakes her head.*

ELEANOR: He's just a man. Mortal and fallible.

ANNA: I thought he'd be around forever.

ELEANOR: I think he did too.

*Beat*

ANNA: Can we change his mind?

ELEANOR: When has anyone changed your father's mind?

ANNA: He could fight this.

ELEANOR: It's a losing battle.

ANNA: He could just try the treatment.

ELEANOR: He doesn't think its right to interfere with God's will.

ANNA: That's such a flawed argument. If God wanted us all to die of cancer he wouldn't have let us discover Chemotherapy.

ELEANOR: He's made his decision.

ANNA: If we just try and talk him round...

*Eleanor shakes her head with an air of finality.*

ELEANOR: He finds it hard to talk these days. No quotations, no passages. Thank God.

ANNA: *(Disapprovingly)* That's not funny.

ELEANOR: He always said we should thank God for small mercies.

ANNA: Don't.

*Pause*

ELEANOR: I know that parents are supposed to go first but there's something terribly undignified about your children watching you die. I didn't want you to see it happen. Didn't think it fair.

ANNA: Of course I should be here. That's what children are for.

ELEANOR: Some children.

*Anna goes to her bag.*

ANNA: I did think about you when I was away. I know I didn't call all that often but...I was thinking about you. I bought you something back.

ELEANOR: Love, you shouldn't have. You shouldn't spend your money on me.

ANNA: Well technically I stole it.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Oh. My daughter stole me a gift.

*She rifles through her bag.*

ANNA: Here it is.

*She hands her mother an unsightly statue of Buddha.*

ELEANOR: It's...a little fat man. A naked fat man.

ANNA: It's Buddha. I got it in Thailand.

ELEANOR: You stole Buddha?

ANNA: Apparently every house should have a Buddha, a Shiva and a crucifix. For luck.

*They look to the outline of the crucifix on the wall.*

ELEANOR: Do they protect you if they're stolen?

ANNA: Technicality.

ELEANOR: Steal me a Shiva and we'll know.

*Eleanor looks at the shadow of the crucifix.*

ANNA: You could paint over that.

ELEANOR: Never really thought about it before.

ANNA: I suppose its good that you didn't. Now that you've got a Buddha.

ELEANOR: I think I prefer Buddha. He's looks happier.

ANNA: We didn't crucify him.

*Eleanor places the Buddha on the table.*

ANNA: I tried to talk to her before I left. I called the church, asked them pass on a message. She never got back to me.

ELEANOR: Did you leave the message with a man called Ryan?

*Beat*

ANNA: You don't think she'll come back here.

ELEANOR: I never said that.

ANNA: No, but you asked me to travel thousands of miles to get here and she lives across the field. What's going on?

*Eleanor goes to the window.*

*She opens the shutters and peers out.*

*The sound of heavy rain and hail can be heard.*

ELEANOR: When we first moved to this house there was a lake just across the field. Do you remember that?

ANNA: I wasn't born.

ELEANOR: No. Of course you weren't.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: It was a lovely lake. Absolutely beautiful. It wasn't huge but it was just across the way. Close enough for a nice view but not so close for the insurance company to blacklist the house. We used to get ducks and geese, even spotted a kingfisher perching next to it once or twice.

*Anna joins her mother.*

ELEANOR: Then we had that awful winter. Must have been thirty years back now. Rains like you've never seen. The temperature dropped so suddenly that winter, forty of Wharton's sheep died right out on the field. We got snowed in that day. Right up to this window. Opened the shutters and there was a wall of white. Of course your father and I didn't mind. We spent most of the time cuddled up by the fire, drinking hot chocolates talking about politics and love, we were still free love at that point you see.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: And then we woke up the next morning and the sun was blazing, like a fabulous summer's day it was. Still blistering cold out but the sun was brilliant, shone right through the snow and ice. Dried up the ground in a single morning. We went outside with our cups of tea and marmite on toast, like the liberal landowners we were. Then I realised. Something wasn't right.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: It was gone.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Just like that.

ANNA: Dad used to talk about the lake.

ELEANOR: We ran over there in our pyjamas, you'd have thought we'd lost our child we rushed over so fast, but there was nothing left. Just a muddy patch.



*Beat*

ELEANOR: You'd never have known there was lake there at all.

*The rain beats down.*

*Anna puts her arm around her mother.*

ELEANOR: It hasn't rained like this in years.

ANNA: The land must be thirsty.

ELEANOR: It's an omen. It's the seventh plague.

ANNA: It's Devon. I'm sure this is the wettest county in England. It's like all of the rain in the country trickles down. I didn't think the taxi would make it to the end of the lane.

ELEANOR: We should get the sand bags/

ANNA: ...from the shed?

*Beat*

ANNA: Sandbags from the shed. Nothing changes here.

*Eleanor looks to the study.*

ELEANOR: Some things change.

*They look out.*

ANNA: Does Wharton still own that place?

ELEANOR: Jack's dead love.

ANNA: Really?

ELEANOR: Died a few years back now. Throat cancer. Probably from all those pesticides he was using over there.

ANNA: And the pipe that was attached to his mouth.

ELEANOR: Three months and he was dead.

ANNA: He was such a nice man.

ELEANOR: Cancer doesn't care whether you're nice.

ANNA: No.

*Beat*

ANNA: Grace and I used to steal blackberries from his bushes. I was good at hiding but he caught her every time. 'You'll end up in the clink you will'. She always took the blame and I always convinced her to go back. She felt so guilty once she wrote him a note asking for his forgiveness. He let her have as many blackberries as she liked after that.

ELEANOR: Those bushes were the first thing they tore down. The whole plot was laid to waste, even that beautiful white rose bush. His son sold most of the land to one of those farming conglomerates. Ashtons or Ashfields, something beginning with A. They kept the farmhouse, I think it might have been listed, but it hasn't been lived in since he died. Now and then I notice something different about it. The paint started to flake just after the funeral and most of the windows are blown out now. They keep chickens on it. Hundreds and hundreds of chickens.

*They continue to stare out of the window.*

ANNA: It's so dark.

ELEANOR: It's the darkness that makes you feel so alone out here.

ANNA: Still carry that torch in your bag?

ELEANOR: He has a head torch somewhere. Looks like a bloody miner.

*Eleanor closes the shutters.*

ANNA: Keep them open. We can act like a beacon.

ELEANOR: No, I like the shutters closed.

ANNA: Why?

ELEANOR: I just do.

ANNA: You used to open them all the time. You were always complaining this house was too dark.

ELEANOR: That was before I found myself alone in a house in the middle of nowhere.

ANNA: You're not alone mum.

ELEANOR: Oh, I've been alone for a long time love.

*A bang is heard.*

*Eleanor jumps.*

ELEANOR: This bloody house.

ANNA: What was that?

ELEANOR: The roof's probably caving in.

ANNA: We should check on Dad.

*Anna looks to the study.*

ELEANOR: I wasn't being serious.

ANNA: Just in case.

ELEANOR: It didn't come from the study.

ANNA: We should check on him anyway.

ELEANOR: He'll be fast asleep.

ANNA: You never know.

ELEANOR: You haven't even finished your tea.

ANNA: I'll make another.

ELEANOR: It probably came from outside. It'll just be the rain. Tiles fly off this roof every other day.

ANNA: It definitely came from inside.

ELEANOR: (*Snaps*) It's nothing Grace. It's an old house. It makes noises.

*Beat*

ANNA: I'm not Grace.

*Eleanor sighs.*

ELEANOR: Go on then. Check he's ok.

*Anna looks to the study but doesn't move.*

ANNA: Perhaps you should go. I don't want to scare him.

*Eleanor looks to Anna.*

ANNA: I'll start making another cup of tea.

*Anna goes to the counter.*

ELEANOR: Are you alright?

ANNA: Me?

*Beat*

ANNA: I'm fine.

*Eleanor exits quietly into the study.*

*Anna looks around the kitchen at the piles of dirty dishes and goes back to the window.*

*She opens the shutters and looks out.*

*The telephone starts to ring.*

*She looks to where it should be then follows the sound, eventually finding the phone in the cupboard.*

ANNA: Hello?

*Beat*

ANNA: No, she's busy at the moment, can I take a message?

*Beat*

ANNA: Pans?

*Beat*

ANNA: We're not interested thanks.

*Beat*

ANNA: I don't think she really meant for you to call her back.

*She listens growing increasingly annoyed.*

ANNA: *(Irritated)* We're not interested in your bloody steel pans.

*Beat*

ANNA: *(More irritated)* Even if they do have a lifetime guarantee.

*Annoyed, she hangs up.*

ANNA: Jesus Christ.

*She spots the bottle of vodka in the cupboard and picks it up.*

*Concerned, she looks towards the study*

*She thinks for a beat then decisively dials a number.*

*She waits for a moment.*

ANNA: Hello?

*Beat*

ANNA: Grace?

*Beat*

ANNA: It's me. It's Anna.

**Lights**

## SCENE 2

### **The study**

*A dark claustrophobic room.*

*The room is lit only by the light of the moon.*

*Bits of wallpaper are badly torn where someone has ripped things down in a frenzy.*

*There is a hospital style bed on which Edward, a man in his mid-sixties lies.*

*There is a rocking chair next to the bed and a bedside table.*

*There is a photograph placed face down on the table next to a small reading lamp.*

*The window is wide open and the wind blows the rain into the room.*

*Eleanor closes the door to the kitchen.*

*She picks up the photograph and looks out of the window, seeing if she can spot anyone through the darkness.*

*She closes the window and the shutters leaving the room in darkness.*

ELEANOR: You've sent the rains. What are you going to send next? Rivers of blood and wild animals?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I won't be washed away that easily.

*She switches the reading lamp on and looks closely at the photograph before placing it upright on the table.*

*She turns to face Edward.*

ELEANOR: The roof is leaking again. It's coming in through the kitchen and the two front rooms. It's damp in most of the rooms actually.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Except this one.

*She looks up to the ceiling.*

ELEANOR: You never did get around to fixing that roof.

*She walks towards the bed.*

ELEANOR: It's my fault really. I should have done something about it years ago. I'm running out of ways to stop it from flooding the entire house.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I think I'm going to buy some new saucepans. Stainless steel. And they have a lifetime guarantee. All of my other pans are collecting water.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I've run out of towels you see. And everything is damp.

*She sits on the edge looking away from him*

ELEANOR: She came back.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Bought me a statue of Buddha. From Thailand. Or Vietnam was it? It's a good luck charm, for the house. Although I fear it's a little late for this place.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I told you she'd come back. Back to the rain. Back to nowhere. Just for you.

*She leans close to him.*

ELEANOR: (*With malice*) How much longer are you going to torture me?

*There is a knock at the door which surprises Eleanor.*

ANNA: (*Voice Off*) Mum?

*Eleanor smooths down the bed cover.*

ELEANOR: Come in.

*Silence*

ELEANOR: We won't disturb him love.

ANNA: (*V.O*) Tea's ready.

ELEANOR: You can come in Anna.

*Beat*

ANNA: (*V.O*) I'll just pour you a cup then.

*She looks to Edward and smooths his hair.*

ELEANOR: It looks like we were both bad parents.

**Lights**

### SCENE 3

#### **The Kitchen**

*Eleanor begins to wash up but seems overwhelmed by the task. Instead, she dumps most of the cups and saucers into the bin.*

*The kettle has gone.*

*Grace enters (Grace is a black woman in her late 20's).*

*She is soaking wet and wears a hat.*

*She drips unashamedly onto the floor.*

*She stands by the table that blocks the cellar door.*

*Eleanor is unaware.*

*She goes into the cupboard and takes out the vodka.*

*She looks for a glass on the counter and then retrieves one from the bin.*

*She pours a large glass of vodka and replaces it in the cupboard.*

*She drinks heartily.*

*She turns and is startled by Grace.*

ELEANOR: That's a bad habit.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Creeping up on people.

*Silence*

ELEANOR: Are you trying to drive me mad?

*Grace walks out the way she entered.*

*Eleanor watches her leave.*

ELEANOR: (*To herself*) You can't ignore me forever.

*Anna enters.*

ANNA: Did you call me?

*Beat*

ANNA: Did you call me mum?

ELEANOR: No love.



ANNA: You did say something?

ELEANOR: Talking to myself.

ANNA: First sign of madness.

ELEANOR: It's not the first sign.

*Eleanor pours the remainder of the vodka onto the dead plant.*

ANNA: I put the kettle in the cupboard.

ELEANOR: I'm surprised you found any space.

ANNA: You've kept a lot of shit.

ELEANOR: One man's rubbish/

ANNA: Is another man's rubbish. You've got a dot matrix printer in there.

*Pause*

ELEANOR: Anna love, we need to talk about/

ANNA: Dad?

ELEANOR: There's something/

ANNA: I know/

ELEANOR: (*Relieved*) You've seen her?/

ANNA: I'm just not ready to see him.

ELEANOR: I'm sorry love?

ANNA: Who?

ELEANOR: (*Confused*) Your Dad?

ANNA: I'm not ready to see him yet.

ELEANOR: He's just sleeping.

ANNA: I can't go in there.

ELEANOR: But you came back to see him.

*Silence*

ELEANOR: You are allowed to be upset.

*Anna looks at the shadow of the crucifix on the wall.*

ANNA: Are they still bothering you?

ELEANOR: Who?

ANNA: Who else?

ELEANOR: You know what those bloody Christians are like. Can't leave a happy sinner in peace.

*Eleanor empties the pan of water.*

ELEANOR: They come round every few days, armed with their bibles and their holier than thou smiles. It seems their one mission in life is to save my soul. My soul is not for saving.

ANNA: Pisses me off.

ELEANOR: They still think of this house as their own.

ANNA: You don't have to have them in your house any more.

ELEANOR: Does that include Grace?

*Eleanor replaces the pan.*

ELEANOR: Why don't you want see him?

*Anna looks away.*

ANNA: This can't be easy for you.

ELEANOR: I'm not dying.

ANNA: No, but you're the one keeping this place afloat.

*Eleanor looks at the water that has escaped from the saucepan.*

ELEANOR: I don't think I'm doing a very good job of that.

*She sits next to Anna.*

ELEANOR: Do you remember that year we went to Scotland?

ANNA: We didn't go.

ELEANOR: We did, but the car broke down outside Durham and we were towed all the way back.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I feel like the car's broken down. And we were almost there.

*Anna reaches across and holds her mothers hand.*

ANNA: I didn't expect to feel like this. I thought I could come back here and things would be different.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I don't understand love.

ANNA: I told you I was sorry to have gone away but/

ELEANOR: You don't have to be sorry Anna./

ANNA: It felt like the right thing to say/

ELEANOR: Its ok love/

ANNA: Whether I meant it or not/

ELEANOR: Like I said, you can't stop living your life...

*Anna shakes her head.*

ANNA: You're not listening to me.

*Eleanor takes her hand back and sits, waiting for Anna to speak.*

ANNA: When I was on the coach, I was going over and over the things I wanted to say to him. Rehearsing this speech I've been preparing since I left here. But when I came up the lane in the taxi, I knew that I'd never tell him. Because I never told him how I really felt.

*Beat*

ANNA: Then I saw that the fucking roof is still leaking after all these years...

*Beat*

ANNA: This house hasn't been the same since she left.

*Eleanor goes to the counter, she starts to fill the charred pan with water.*

ANNA: He would want her here.

*Eleanor turns to Anna.*

ELEANOR: (*Brusquely*) How would you know what he wants? You haven't spoken to your father in years.

*Silence*

*The water in the pan boils loudly.*

*Grace appears at the door, unnoticed by both women.*

ANNA: There are so many lies in this house. When are we going to start telling the truth?

GRACE: The truth? Who wants to know the truth?

*Eleanor takes the pan off the stove.*

*She stands still at the counter; she doesn't turn to acknowledge Grace.*

*Anna rises and looks at Grace.*

*She goes to her and embraces her tightly.*

**Lights**

## SCENE 4

### **The Kitchen**

*Eleanor and Anna are seated at the kitchen table.*

*There is a bottle of red wine in the centre and the statue of Buddha.*

*Eleanor has a cup of tea. Anna has a glass of red wine. There is another poured for Grace who stands next to the cellar door.*

*Grace holds the tea towel in her hand.*

*The crackled radio is playing again.*

ANNA: This is nice.

*Beat*

ANNA: All of us together.

*Beat*

ANNA: Finally.

*Anna stares at her mother, silently encouraging her to welcome Grace.  
Eleanor looks away.*

ANNA: You can sit down, if you like.

*Grace stays put.*

ANNA: We're really glad that you came.

*Beat*

ANNA: Aren't we Mum?

*Awkward pause*

ELEANOR: (*To Grace*) You haven't touched a drop of your wine. It isn't a poisoned chalice.

*Anna looks at Eleanor critically.*

ELEANOR: Please sit down, you're dripping on my floor.

GRACE: So is the roof.

*Exasperated, Eleanor looks to Anna.*

ELEANOR: (*Amiably*) Please Grace.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: (*Firmer*) Sit.

*Grace remains steadfast.*

GRACE: Thank you.

*Beat*

GRACE: But I'm comfortable standing.

*Eleanor and Anna drink in silence.*

ANNA: I've only been back for a few hours. It took me bloody ages to get here. Twenty hours on a plane then 7 hours on a coach.

*Awkward beat*

ANNA: But I am glad that you're here.

GRACE: Thank you.

*Eleanor tops up Anna's glass of wine.*

ANNA: Please sit down, you're making me nervous.

GRACE: You don't have to be nervous, I'd just rather stand.

*Pause*

ELEANOR: (*To Grace*) You look well.

*Anna looks relieved.*

ELEANOR: Apart from that hat.

ANNA: (*Sternly*) Mum.

ELEANOR: It just makes you look a bit like a homeless person.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I suppose in a way you are homeless person.

ANNA: I like the hat.

*Grace takes off her hat.*

*She wears a long, straight weave.*

ELEANOR: You've got straight hair.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: How have you got straight hair?

ANNA: That's amazing.

ELEANOR: If only you'd had straight hair when you were a child.

*The radio crackles in the background.*

GRACE: It's the aerial.

ANNA: Sorry?

GRACE: The radio. It's the aerial.

ELEANOR: It's always been like that.

GRACE: I know.

ANNA: That noise?

GRACE: It needs adjusting.

ELEANOR: I've always found it quite comforting.

ANNA: Now you've mentioned it...

GRACE: You never get used to a sound like that.

ELEANOR: I've never been able to fix it.

GRACE: You never tried.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I've never been good at fixing things Grace.

GRACE: Then throw it out.

*Eleanor and Anna drink in silence.*

*Grace's wine is untouched.*

ANNA: Can I get you anything else?

GRACE: No thank you.

ANNA: You don't have to be so polite, this is your home.

GRACE: I don't want anything thanks.

ELEANOR: Well I do.

*Eleanor leaves the table.*

*Grace picks up the statue of Buddha.*

ANNA: I bought that back from Thailand.

GRACE: Thailand?

ANNA: Yes.

GRACE: Exotic.

ANNA: It's a wonderful country. It has such a beautiful landscape. The most amazing beaches I've ever seen.

GRACE: Better than Torquay.

ANNA: That's a dirty river in comparison with the beaches on Koh Samui. The waters there are so clear. You can see every particle of sand on the seabed.

GRACE: Is that right?

ANNA: And the Buddhist temples are just... I've never felt so spiritual in my life.



GRACE: And to think you used to be a Christian.

*Beat*

ANNA: I think it's the most beautiful place in the world. You really must go.

GRACE: That's highly unlikely.

*Grace puts the Buddha down.*

ANNA: So you're still living in community?

GRACE: I'm staying with Aidan.

ANNA: (*shocked*) Aidan?

GRACE: In the new community house.

ANNA: He's a fundamentalist/

ELEANOR: Would you like some whisky Grace?/

GRACE: It's a fundamental decision, to devote your life to the Lord.

ANNA: You don't have to tattoo Jesus' face on your torso.

GRACE: He was saved by Jesus.

ANNA: He's fucking crazy.

GRACE: He's been assigned most of Dad's duties.

ANNA: I bet he has.

GRACE: He offers a prayer of healing at the start of every meeting/

ELEANOR: Have a drop of wine Grace/

GRACE: We're praying for his recovery/

ELEANOR: I can open a bottle of white if you don't fancy the blood of Christ/

ANNA: His recovery?

GRACE: The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.

ANNA: I don't think that prayer is going to save him.

GRACE: Because you don't believe.

ANNA: Chemotherapy is the only thing that will save him and he doesn't want it. He doesn't want to be saved/

GRACE: Our concepts of salvation are very different/

ELEANOR: White wine?/

ANNA: Because I don't believe?

GRACE: Because we're different people.

*Eleanor roots through the cupboards.*

ELEANOR: I might have some rosé somewhere but if not I suppose I could just mix the two, I mean, what's the real difference?/

ANNA: It was never as simple for me as it was for you.

GRACE: I understand that. Faith is personal.

ELEANOR: As is wine preference. I know I prefer red/

ANNA: I would like to visit the church. I can't seem to picture it anymore.

*Eleanor stops at Anna's suggestion.  
(Her interjections now become louder, more irritating).*

GRACE: You are always welcome. God cares for every one of us/

ELEANOR: Nobody wants rosé then?/

ANNA: It wouldn't be a return. I'm just curious to see where you're living/

ELEANOR: We have that fizzy wine/

GRACE: It's a start.

*Eleanor retrieves the bottle of fizzy wine.*

ELEANOR: Fizzy wine Grace?!

GRACE: I know that the community would like to see the person you've become/

ELEANOR: It's fizzy/

GRACE: I don't drink wine/

ELEANOR: Fizzy wine anyone?!

GRACE: (*Snaps/Shouts*) No. No. I don't want wine. I don't want any wine.

*Silence*

*Eleanor puts the bottle back.*

ELEANOR: I was only asking.

*A long pause*

ANNA: You wouldn't have come if I hadn't had called you.

ELEANOR: You called her?

*Beat*

ANNA: For God's sake.

GRACE: Please don't use the Lord's name in vain.

ANNA: I'm already sick of this. We should be together; we shouldn't be snapping at each other like a bunch of teenagers.

ELEANOR: I didn't snap at Grace, she snapped at me

ANNA: We're a family.

*Beat*

GRACE: I have a family.

ANNA: (*Derisively*) The Jesus Army?

GRACE: We are the children of God.

ELEANOR: I thought I'd heard the last of that religious nonsense.

GRACE: (*Firmly*) We are all the children of God. Whether you choose to accept that or not.

*Eleanor takes a large gulp of Grace's red wine.*

ANNA: I might have that drink after all mum. Put it in a pint glass.

GRACE: Joshua Tree have always supported me.

ELEANOR: Well that's a backhanded insult if ever I heard one.

*Beat*

ANNA: This is your home.

GRACE: This was never my home.

ANNA: Whether you feel that way or not, he needs you here. He probably wants you here the most.

*Anna gets up to leave but turns back to Grace.*

ANNA: No, you know what? You're the selfish one Grace. You talk about being a good Christian but you weren't even going to come here. Our father is dying and you're too busy taking care of your new 'family'. What happens when you come to your sense? If the Jesus Army is the only family you have then I'm sorry for you.

GRACE: How dare you?

*Beat*

GRACE: You leave here, you run away as far as your money will take you and you think that I've abandoned this family?

*Grace stands.*

GRACE: You come back with your statues of Buddha and your tales of Thailand and I bet you haven't even asked yourself...

*Beat*

GRACE: What did it take to get you back here?

*Grace exits into the study.*

*Angry, Anna pushes the Buddha off the table.*

*It smashes on the floor.*

**Lights**

## SCENE 5

### **The Kitchen**

*Eleanor sits alone.*

*The smashed fragments of Buddha remain on the floor.*

*Water is beginning to collect in pools.*

*She goes to the cupboard and takes out the bottle of vodka.*

*Anna watches her from the door unnoticed.*

*Eleanor unscrews the bottle and sinks what is left.*

*She replaces the bottle and goes back to the table with a glass of wine.*

*She seems increasingly uncoordinated.*

*She sits staring at the cellar.*

ANNA: Penny for them.

*Eleanor starts.*

ELEANOR: Bloody hell. I wish people would stop creeping around this house.

ANNA: I wasn't creeping.

ELEANOR: You've always been a creeper, you both have.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: You're wet again.

ANNA: I needed some fresh air.

ELEANOR: I don't have a towel for you.

ANNA: There's more water in here than there is outside anyway.

*Anna sits at the table.*

*She sighs.*

ELEANOR: Are you two talking now?

*Anna stares blankly at her.*

ELEANOR: You used to make up before you'd even finished arguing when you were kids.

ANNA: I don't what we're arguing about anymore.

*Pause*

ANNA: Every time I come back here I think it'll be different. The longer I'm away, the better it seems. Then I get back here and it hits me square in the face. Same house, same leaks, same old fucking problems.

ELEANOR: Don't say fucking.

ANNA: It was good wasn't it? For a while?

*Silence*

ANNA: Why do I feel like a kid in this house?

*She looks to the cellar.*

ANNA: I have these moments where I remember something happening in this room. But when I try to picture it, when I really try to work out what it meant, I can't. I can't seem to distinguish what I thought I saw from what happened right in front of my eyes.

*Eleanor takes a large gulp of the wine, uncomfortable with the direction of the conversation.*

ANNA: He said that Grace wanted to devote her life to the Lord and she couldn't do that here. But I saw my sister steal, lie and cheat and I know that something must have happened that day to make her leave and never turn back.

*Beat*

ANNA: How many of my memories did you make up?

*Eleanor looks to the cellar.*

ELEANOR: She never called me mum. Not once. The adoption agency said it could be harder for her to forge a bond with a woman and yet she fell in love with you the minute you met.

ANNA: You introduced her as your adopted daughter.

ELEANOR: She is my adopted daughter.

ANNA: It's hardly the most inclusive of titles.

ELEANOR: But she called him Dad.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Anyway, it's not the time to talk about this, love.

*Anna thinks for a beat.*

ANNA: (*Abruptly*) Is it because she's black?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: (*Surprised*) What?

ANNA: Things have never been right between the two of you.

ELEANOR: And you think that's because Grace is black?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: My God Anna. I have my reasons for not wanting to talk about Grace. It really isn't black and white.

*Eleanor fiddles with Grace's spotty mug.*

ELEANOR: There are some things that children just don't need to know.

ANNA: We're not children anymore.

ELEANOR: But you'll always be my children, whether you like it or not.

*Grace enters.*

*There is an awkwardness which Eleanor breaks.*

ELEANOR: Who wants something to eat?

*She leaves the table.*

ELEANOR: I have tarts.

GRACE: I'm not hungry.



ELEANOR: They're only small.

*Eleanor takes some tarts out of the cupboard.*

ELEANOR: I'm not trying to poison you.

GRACE: It wouldn't be the first time you tried.

ELEANOR: I'm sure I can get through these alone.

GRACE: Gluttony is a sin.

ELEANOR: Well, gluttony is my favourite sin and I'm going to start with one of these little tarts.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Anna?

*Eleanor looks at Anna.*

*Anna shakes her head.*

ELEANOR: Look, they're little. Spinach and Goats Cheese. Caramelised Onions. Some other thing.

*Eleanor takes a bite of one and puts it back on the plate.*

ELEANOR: I have to say. I never thought I'd get both of you under this roof again. I think it calls for a toast.

*Eleanor gets another bottle of wine.*

*She pours wine sloppily into her Anna's glass and some into the spotty mug.*

*She hands it to Grace who refuses it.*

GRACE: I don't drink wine.

ELEANOR: You should. Might loosen you up a bit.

*Eleanor holds the mug in the air.*

ELEANOR: To a wonderful family reunion.

ANNA: Stop it.

ELEANOR: I'm just trying to enjoy the company of my two children who quite clearly don't want to be here.

*Eleanor drinks the entire mug of wine.  
Anna goes to the cupboard and gets out the vodka.*

ANNA: I think I'd prefer some of this.

*Beat*

ANNA: Got any mixers?

*Eleanor puts the mug down.*

ELEANOR: I think wine is a little more appropriate, my love.

ANNA: Really? Because it looks as though you've had quite a good go at this tonight.

*Grace and Anna look at Eleanor.*

ELEANOR: Aha. I wondered when you were going to turn on me.

ANNA: Don't be so fucking evasive.

ELEANOR: Don't say fucking Anna. It's vulgar.

*She looks to Grace.*

ELEANOR: Come on. This is a perfect opportunity for you two to join forces.

ANNA: You're drunk.

ELEANOR: I'm always drunk. Isn't that what you were getting at by waving the bottle in my face?

*Anna and Grace look increasingly irritated.*

ELEANOR: He disappeared for 10 days once. 10 days. Went to morning prayer one day and came back 10 days later.

*She laughs.*

ELEANOR: Had the urge to save some souls apparently.

GRACE: He'd probably had enough of you.

ANNA: (*Disapprovingly*) Grace.

ELEANOR: No love, let her say what she has to say, it's nice to have her actually talking to me instead of sneaking in through the study window.

GRACE: You're pathetic.

ELEANOR: That's not very Christian of you.

GRACE: He's sick and you're celebrating.

*Eleanor looks at Grace.*

ANNA: I think you should go and lie down.

*She looks to Anna.*

*She suddenly looks overcome with anger.*

ELEANOR: (*Shouts*) My husband is dying.

*Silence*

ELEANOR: You have no idea what it was like to live with him. You were just children.

*She puts the mug on the table and slowly, precariously walks out of the kitchen.*

*Grace and Anna stand in silence.*

*Light catches the shadow of the crucifix.*

**Lights**

## SCENE 6

### **The Study.**

*Edward remains still on the bed.*

*Grace enters and watches him from the doorway.*

GRACE: (*To Edward*) You've finally managed to get us all under this roof.

*Beat*

GRACE: You really didn't have to get sick.

*She goes to Edward's bedside and kisses his head.*

GRACE: Hi Dad.

*She picks up the photograph and looks hard at it before placing it face down on the bedside table.*

*She strokes his hair*

GRACE: It's dark out tonight. So dark it's almost light.

*Pause*

GRACE: (*Whispers in his ear*) Wake up.

*Beat*

GRACE: Please?

*She gets up and goes to the window.*

GRACE: It's still raining. It's been raining all day. And yesterday. The Exe flooded. The council closed the quay and we spent most of yesterday putting sand bags around the church. Aidan says that God willing it won't reach that far. God willing.

*Pause*

GRACE: I'm not sure we'll survive this weather. I told Aidan, I said, the children should be moved at least, to somewhere dry, somewhere safer but he wouldn't listen. Said we should be together, as a community. But the water levels are rising and the heavens are wide open and I just...

*She takes a deep breath.*

GRACE: I just....

*She runs her hands across the wallpaper where things have been torn down.*

GRACE: She can take your psalms away but she can't take your spirit. She'll try, but she can never take that away.

*She looks out of the window.*

GRACE: The lane is flooded. All the way down to the front door. She's trying to keep the water out with towels and saucepans.

*Beat*

GRACE: The sheep are swimming in the fields. The land must be thirsty.

*Beat*

GRACE: Or it's an omen.

*She picks up the photograph from the bedside table.*

GRACE: Why do you keep this picture?

*Beat*

GRACE: Scotland. Sounded much more exciting back then. It's no Thailand. Nine hours we were in that car. And we didn't even get there. Furthest from home I've ever been. And I never really went anywhere.

*She looks closely at the picture.*

GRACE: And then she made me take the photograph.

*Beat*

GRACE: A family portrait without me.

*She puts the photograph face down.*

GRACE: Why did you let her treat me like that? How could let it happen?

*She opens the shutters.  
The rain beats down onto the windowsill.*

GRACE: I can't feel Him today. I've been searching for Him, looking for a sign that He's still here but I can't feel Him.

*Beat*

GRACE: I never could feel Him in this house.

*She opens the window and leans out.*

GRACE: I lift my heart to you, O Lord, to be strengthened on this day. Be with me in all I do, my God; guide me...

*She stops abruptly and sighs.  
Suddenly overcome with anger, she goes to Edward.*

GRACE: You don't have to do this. You can stay with me. You promised me you wouldn't leave me.

*She takes his hand.*

GRACE: I won't let you go.

*She closes her eyes, searching for a prayer.*

GRACE: O Lord my God. Teach my heart this day, where and how to find you. You have bestowed on me all the good things I possess, and still I do not know you. Teach me to seek you, for I cannot seek you, let me find you by loving you; let me love you when I find you.

*Edward's grip tightens.*

GRACE: Dad?

*Edward speaks quietly but does not move.*

GRACE: *(Relieved)* Dad?

*Beat*

GRACE: The lake?

*She leans closer to hear.  
He speaks quietly again.*

GRACE: Remember the lake?

*He grips her hand tightly.*

GRACE: I don't understand. What lake?

*She looks at him confused.*

GRACE: What are you trying to tell me?

*His grip loosens.*

GRACE: Dad?

*She moves closer to her father.*

GRACE: *(Fearfully)* Dad?

*She closes her eyes, willing him to answer.*

GRACE: *(Whispers)* Please.

*When she opens her eyes, she knows that he is dead.  
Overwhelmed, she goes to the window.*

GRACE: I lift my heart to you. I lift my heart to you every day.

*Beat*

GRACE: *(Shouts)* Don't take him from me.

*She cries out, grabs the family photograph and smashes it against the wall.*

**Lights**

**ACT 2**  
**SCENE 1**

**The Kitchen**

*(Ten years ago).*

*Same kitchen as in ACT 1 only it is spotless and there is an electric kettle. There is a giant wooden crucifix where the shadow was in ACT 1. The kitchen is immaculate.*

*Eleanor is seated at the table with a cup of tea.  
She has a book open but she is not reading it.  
There is also a bowl of green bananas (plantain).*

*A single persistent drip is coming from the ceiling.  
She stares at it menacingly, daring it to continue.*

*Anna enters.  
She seems younger.  
She waits to be acknowledged by Eleanor who is preoccupied with the drip.*

ANNA: Mum?

*She stares.*

ELEANOR: How tall would you say you are love?

ANNA: Why?

ELEANOR: Taller than me?

*Anna takes a green banana and starts to peel it.  
Eleanor looks up.*

ELEANOR: You can't eat that.

ANNA: Why not?

ELEANOR: It's not a banana.

ANNA: It looks like a banana?

ELEANOR: Its plantain love.



ANNA: What's plantain?

*Eleanor takes the banana and looks it over.*

ELEANOR: I have absolutely no idea. But you can't eat it.

*She gets up and takes her chair over to the drip.*

ELEANOR: Come on, I'm putting you to work.

ANNA: I'm too young to work.

ELEANOR: Nonsense. A child is never too young to work.

*She helps Anna onto the chair.*

ANNA: I'm shorter than you are.

ELEANOR: But you're younger and you're stretchy.

ANNA: Dad will fix it.

ELEANOR: Your Dad has to be here in order to fix things.

ANNA: What am I supposed to do?

ELEANOR: Just tap it. I want to know whether it's going to fall down.

ANNA: It's going to fall down?

ELEANOR: Knowing our luck.

*Anna tries to reach but cannot.*

ANNA: It's too high.

ELEANOR: Imagine it's a biscuit. Don't think I haven't seen you reach that top shelf in the cupboard.

ANNA: What if it collapses on my head?

ELEANOR: You'll die wrinkle free.

*Anna tries and reaches higher but it is just out of her reach.*

ELEANOR: Now I know why they call it 'Do it yourself'.

*They swap places.  
Eleanor is clearly taller but can't quite reach either.*

ANNA: Imagine it's a bottle of wine.

*She gives her a look.  
Edward enters in a soaking overcoat with a pile of wet books.  
He is a tall, imposing man.*

EDWARD: The land must be thirsty.

*He shakes his jacket and puts it on the back of a chair.*

EDWARD: What are you doing up there?

*Eleanor turns to him.*

ELEANOR: I'm getting closer to God.

EDWARD: Hallelujah.

ELEANOR: The roof is going to collapse.

ANNA: She made me get up there first.

EDWARD: There is always something in this household. I know from living here why Jesus surrounded himself with men.

ELEANOR: And prostitutes.

*He ignores her.  
Anna helps her mother off the chair.*

EDWARD: Can you fetch me a towel please Anna?

ELEANOR: And if you find a bone on your travels...

*Beat*

EDWARD: Thank you.

*Anna leaves.*

ELEANOR: The roof is leaking.

*Edward starts laying the books out to dry on the table.*

EDWARD: I was worried the lane might be flooded.

ELEANOR: It started this morning and it will only get worse.

EDWARD: We've got the sand bags out around the church. I tell you, that river is going to burst its banks if this rain carries on.

ELEANOR: I would fix it myself but I'm only 5'6".

EDWARD: I'm sorry?

ELEANOR: I said I would fix it if I could.

EDWARD: If you were 5'6"?

ELEANOR: I am 5'6".

EDWARD: You're 5'4".

ELEANOR: Says who?

EDWARD: The tape measure.

ELEANOR: That was years ago. I feel taller now.

EDWARD: Not tall enough to fix the roof though?

*He goes to the drip and looks up.*

EDWARD: It's probably the guttering.

*He goes back to the table and continues fussing with his books.*

ELEANOR: Is that it?

EDWARD: Well I don't think it's the tiles.

ELEANOR: I mean is that all you have to say? Probably the guttering?

EDWARD: I'm not a roofer Eleanor.

ELEANOR: No, you're a man.

*Anna enters with a towel and hands it to Edward.*

EDWARD: Thank you.

*He starts to dry himself off.*

ANNA: Is the roof going to fall down?

EDWARD: Absolutely not.

ANNA: Mum thinks it's going to.

EDWARD: Your mother likes to exaggerate.

ELEANOR: And your father likes to ignore things.

*Edward and Eleanor look at each other.*

ANNA: Are you still talking about the roof?

EDWARD: (*Decisively*) It's not going to fall down.

*Anna picks up one of the books.*

ELEANOR: It is likely though, is it not, that if the gutter continues to leak there will be an increased chance of that happening?

EDWARD: Can you put that book down please, it's soaking wet and I don't want it to tear.

ELEANOR: Would you not say?

*Anna opens the book.*

EDWARD: They're just copies of my book. They belong to the church.

*Edward watches her out of the corner of his eye.*

ELEANOR: And once the roof falls in, the floor will flood, water will get underneath the tiles and then we'll need new flooring, and a new fridge, a new cooker and/

EDWARD: Eleanor, I've just stepped into the house. Can I take a breath before I fix everything?/

ELEANOR: Two hours late I might add/

EDWARD: Anna/

EDWARD: It took over two hours to put the sand bags out/

ELEANOR: And two minutes to check the roof of your house/

*Anna pulls a page out of the wet book.*

EDWARD: (*Snaps*) Did I not tell you to leave that book alone?

*Surprised, Anna quickly puts the book back on the table.*

ANNA: I didn't mean to.

EDWARD: I told you to leave it alone, why can you never do what you're told?

*Awkward beat*

EDWARD: I think you should go and find Grace.

ANNA: I don't know where she is.

EDWARD: Upstairs?

ANNA: I looked up there. I haven't seen her all afternoon.

EDWARD: (*To Eleanor*) Where's Grace?

*Eleanor looks away.*

EDWARD: (*To Anna*) Can you check upstairs for me please?

ANNA: I told you, she's not/

EDWARD: (*Firmly*) I won't ask you again.

*Anna looks to her mother, then leaves.*

*Edward puts the towel over the back of a chair and sits at the table.*

EDWARD: Why does nobody do what I ask in this house?

ELEANOR: Because you don't ask people to do things, you command them.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I think what she was going say was that.../

EDWARD: Anna can speak for herself.

ELEANOR: Except Edward, when you're around you have this terribly aggravating habit of speaking over people.

*Edward sits back and waits in silence.*

ELEANOR: The roof is leaking.

EDWARD: I know.

ELEANOR: So fix it.

*Beat*

EDWARD: Where is she?

ELEANOR: If it was the church roof...

EDWARD: Where is she, Eleanor?

*Eleanor sits opposite him.*

ELEANOR: The roof has been leaking on and off for about month now. If you look at it from the window, you can see that it's starting to dip.

EDWARD: We need to talk about Grace.

ELEANOR: (*Irritated*) We always talk about Grace.

EDWARD: Where is she?

ELEANOR: We never seem to talk about anything else. Like the roof. Or Anna.

EDWARD: I don't have time for this.

*Silence*

ELEANOR: I don't know where she is. The last time I saw her she was storming out of the kitchen vowing never to talk to me again.

EDWARD: So you had an argument?

ELEANOR: I wouldn't exactly call it an argument.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: We had words.

*Edward takes a deep breath.*

EDWARD: God set me a challenge today.

*Eleanor rolls her eyes and goes to stand.*

EDWARD: Just listen. Please?

*She sighs.*

EDWARD: God set me a challenge today.

ELEANOR: He sets me a challenge every day.

EDWARD: Irina came to my office this afternoon. She's been with the church for a few months now. Russian woman. Girl really. We've been helping her apply for refugee status but the government refused her stay yesterday.

ELEANOR: Why are you telling me this?

EDWARD: She has no job here and nowhere to live, but she told me that England is her home. She's found a spiritual connection with the people here and a sense of purpose that she never had in Russia.

*Beat*

EDWARD: She's found a family here.

ELEANOR: What exactly is your point?

EDWARD: Family comes in all shapes and sizes. And colours.

*Edward takes Eleanor's hand across the table.  
She allows him to and they share a moment.*

EDWARD: I've invited her to stay here. Just until she figures something out with immigration.

*She snatches her hand back and stands.*

ELEANOR: Unbelievable.

EDWARD: For a few days, a week at the most.

ELEANOR: A few days to figure something out with immigration?

EDWARD: The community houses are overcrowded and we have so much space here. We bought a large house so that we could help people.

ELEANOR: No, you wanted to help people. You did. I wanted the house because we needed somewhere to live. That's generally why people buy houses.

EDWARD: There is plenty of space Eleanor.

ELEANOR: For illegal immigrants?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Your children live in this house, your family. You can't just invite every refugee who wanders into your church, this isn't the bloody YMCA.

EDWARD: We're a community.

*She walks away too angry to speak.  
She stands in front of the wooden crucifix, silent for a moment.*

ELEANOR: Our home is falling down around us and I feel as though I'm the only person holding it in place.

EDWARD: Is this about the roof?

ELEANOR: This is so much more than the roof.



EDWARD: Because I can fix the roof.

ELEANOR: It's not about the roof.

EDWARD: It's the guttering, I'm sure of it.

ELEANOR: (*Annoyed*) It's not the fucking roof.

EDWARD: Don't say fucking.

ELEANOR: I'll say whatever I damn well please. I'm your wife not a member of your congregation.

*Beat*

EDWARD: I don't think it's unsalvageable.

*She turns to face him.*

ELEANOR: (*Sadly*) I'm not so sure about that.

*Edward picks up the torn book.*

EDWARD: I've been blessed with this gift, this ability to help people. People come to me Eleanor, they come to me every day for advice, for direction because I can give it to them. I can help people. And when I speak, people listen.

*Beat*

EDWARD: He sacrificed his only son so that we could be saved. And I will make whatever sacrifice I need to make to show my appreciation.

ELEANOR: Including your family?

*Silence*

*She goes to speak but cannot find the words.*

EDWARD: I couldn't do any of this without you. You know that. We're a team.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Then why do I feel so completely alone?

*Edward suddenly gets up and takes the chair over to the drip.*

EDWARD: It's definitely the guttering.

ELEANOR: I'm not upset about the roof.

EDWARD: Well you were upset about the roof a moment ago.

*He gets up on the chair and reaches the ceiling easily.*

EDWARD: Is it bowing?

*Beat*

EDWARD: Is it bowing? Is it dipping?

ELEANOR: Yes.

EDWARD: It is isn't it?

ELEANOR: It's been leaking for over a month, of course its bowing.

*He inspects the ceiling closely.*

EDWARD: It's definitely bowing.

*He pushes hard at the ceiling and climbs down. The water starts to come through stronger.*

ELEANOR: That's bloody fantastic Edward. Fantastic.

*Edward panics. He rushes under the water, unsure of what to do.*

EDWARD: Oh no.

ELEANOR: You shouldn't have prodded at it like that.

EDWARD: You asked me to fix it.

ELEANOR: Fix it, not make it worse.

EDWARD: I'm not a roofer Eleanor.

ELEANOR: I can see that.

*Edward rushes about underneath the drip, getting wet.*

EDWARD: What should I do?

ELEANOR: Get something for the water.

*Edward goes to the cupboard and gets a desert bowl.*

ELEANOR: For God's sake.

*Eleanor goes to the cupboard and gets a large saucepan.*

EDWARD: Please don't use his name in vain.

ELEANOR: I'm not using it in vain, my roof is falling down.

*She places the bucket under the drip.*

*They both stand back and look at the state of the floor.*

*Their faces are soaked.*

*Edward is out of breath from all of the rushing and panicking.*

*He looks pathetic.*

*Eleanor looks at him and laughs derisively.*

EDWARD: So this is funny now?

*She starts to laugh properly.*

EDWARD: What?

*Beat*

EDWARD: What could you possibly be laughing at?

*She laughs harder.*

ELEANOR: People go to you for help.

*She continues to laugh.*

EDWARD: Help isn't always that helpful is it?

*He begins to laugh to.*

*They stand close to each other, tenderly for a few moments. Affectionately he dries the drops of water from her face.*

*Eleanor is the first to break the moment.*

*Edward is disappointed but conceals it.*

ELEANOR: When she's upset, Grace sits under your desk in the study. She doesn't like anyone to see her cry.

EDWARD: I didn't know that.

*Impulsively, he kisses her on the forehead. It is awkward but loving.*

*Edward goes to leave.*

EDWARD: Eleanor.

ELEANOR: *(Without turning to face him)* Yes?

EDWARD: I will see to the roof later.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I really hope you do.

*Edward leaves.*

*She goes to the giant wooden crucifix on the wall.*

*She holds her hands out, shadowing it.*

**Lights**

## SCENE 2

### **The Study**

*The same as in Act 1 only: there is a large desk and chair in the room where the bed and beside table were. A pile of papers and a telephone sit on the desk. Elaborately decorated bible passages have been pasted onto the walls. They surround a large promotional poster of a book 'The Prophetic Word' which shows a grinning Edward holding a copy of the bible. A slogan along the bottom reads 'Join the Jesus Army and fight for your soul!'*

*Edward sits behind the desk.  
We can see Grace sat huddled beneath the desk.*

EDWARD: Oh Lord, I have looked high and low for her but she cannot be found. Please deliver her to me safely and quickly for I miss her dearly and have not had the pleasure of her company all day. Amen.

*Grace slowly emerges from under the desk.*

EDWARD: My prayers have been answered.

*Edward points to her hat.*

EDWARD: It's not raining inside.

*Beat*

EDWARD: Well, maybe in the kitchen.

*Beat*

EDWARD: Take off your hat.

*She takes her hat off.  
Her hair is frizzy and unkempt.*

EDWARD: Now that's an interesting hairstyle.

*She tries to flatten it but it doesn't work.  
She sits herself on the desk.*

EDWARD: I hear you've had words with your mother.

*Beat*

EDWARD: She had a few words with me too.

GRACE: She's always having words with me.

EDWARD: She is your mother Grace, and for that reason alone she deserves some respect.

*He leans forward conspiratorially.*

EDWARD: Did I ever tell you the one about the lake?

*Grace looks bored at the prospect of the story.*

EDWARD: Do not roll your eyes young lady, it is a good story.

GRACE: But it's not true.

EDWARD: Why do you say that?

GRACE: Because lakes don't disappear overnight.

EDWARD: Oh really?

*Beat*

EDWARD: And did the red sea not part for Moses?

*She makes herself more comfortable on the desk.  
She knows she is about to receive a lecture.*

EDWARD: Things don't always make sense in life. It takes most people their entire lives to just accept that and enjoy it for what it is. A wonderful adventure.

*He gets up and opens the shutters  
It is still raining outside.*

EDWARD: We bought this house for the view. You don't get rolling fields and moors like this anywhere else. It was the first time that we went for a walk, just after we'd moved in that we discovered the lake. Just past Wharton's farm there. Oh it was spectacular. The sun bounced right off the surface in the morning. You couldn't be sad or angry with a view like that.

GRACE: And then it rained and snowed and the lake was gone.

*Beat*

EDWARD: That's not quite how I tell it, but...

*He motions to her to join him at the window.  
He puts his arm around her.*

EDWARD: We never truly appreciated that lake. Until it was gone.

GRACE: Maybe it'll come back.

*Edward laughs.*

EDWARD: That's the spirit.

*Beat*

EDWARD: People are like that lake. They don't last forever. And it's best to appreciate all of the good that they bring us while we can. There is nothing worse than regret.

*He turns her to face him.*

EDWARD: I know that life has thrown a fair few challenges your way but they serve only to make us stronger. You're a better person for it.

*Beat*

GRACE: People always leave me.

*He takes her face in his hands.*

EDWARD: Listen to me. You have something very special. Something that nobody can take away from you. Faith. As long as you keep that Grace, you'll never be alone.

*Beat*

EDWARD: And besides, I'm never going to leave you.

*He holds her tightly.*

GRACE: Do you promise?

EDWARD: As God is my witness.

*They are interrupted by the phone ringing. He hesitates and then rushes over to the phone, leaving Grace next to the window.*

EDWARD: *(To Phone)* Praise the Lord.

*He listens.*

EDWARD: I knew it would burst its banks.

*He puts his hand over the phone.*

EDWARD: *(To Grace)* We'll have to talk later.

*She nods and he listens to the telephone again.  
Unsatisfied, she leaves.*

**Lights**



### SCENE 3

#### **The Kitchen**

*Eleanor is boiling the plantain.*

*She has absolutely no idea what to do with it.*

*She takes a bit out and tastes it. Repulsed, she drops it back in the pan.*

*The radio is on but the song can barely be heard over the crackling.*

*Grace enters, she wears a hat.*

*She stands awkwardly at the door.*

GRACE: It's raining inside.

ELEANOR: Just the child I wanted.

GRACE: Why do you listen to that radio? You can't even hear the music.

ELEANOR: Because it drowns out the voices in my head.

*She switches it off.*

ELEANOR: Sit at the table.

GRACE: Why?

ELEANOR: Why not?

*Grace sits petulantly at the table.*

ELEANOR: I've made you something special.

GRACE: Why?

ELEANOR: Do you know any other words?

*Eleanor plates up the plantain and takes it over to Grace.*

*She sits with a cup of tea and watches Grace.*

*Grace looks at the plantain disgustedly.*

GRACE: What is it?

ELEANOR: Plantain.

GRACE: It looks like banana.

ELEANOR: It is a banana. Sort of. A savoury banana I suppose.

GRACE: I don't like it.

ELEANOR: You haven't even tasted it.

*Grace pushes it around her plate for a minute and then tastes a tiny bit.  
She makes a face and pushes the plate away.*

GRACE: It's horrible.

ELEANOR: You've barely tasted it.

GRACE: I tasted enough.

*Eleanor gets a bottle of tomato ketchup and puts it on the table.*

ELEANOR: Put some of that on it. Ketchup makes everything taste better.

GRACE: I'm not hungry.

ELEANOR: I bought it especially for you. I had it shipped in from the bloody Caribbean for you.

GRACE: Why?

ELEANOR: Because you should at least try black people's food.

*Grace gets up from the table and storms out of the room, leaving the book on the table.*

ELEANOR: *(Shouts after her)* Grace.

*She sighs and turns to the crucifix.*

*She goes towards it when Edward enters carrying his coat.*

*He places it over a chair.*

*He looks closely at the plantain.*

EDWARD: Is that boiled banana?

*Eleanor is shocked by his presence.*

ELEANOR: Can you not do that?

EDWARD: Do what?

ELEANOR: Creep around.

EDWARD: Sorry.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: It's plantain.

EDWARD: Never heard of it.

ELEANOR: I bought it for Grace.

*He tastes a little and makes a face.*

EDWARD: Are you sure that's meant to be boiled?

ELEANOR: It didn't come with instructions.

EDWARD: I would have fried it.

ELEANOR: I thought she'd like it.

EDWARD: But she doesn't like bananas.

ELEANOR: I know, but it's Jamaican.

EDWARD: So?

ELEANOR: Well... so is she.

EDWARD: And that automatically means she'll like plantain?

*Eleanor gets up and takes the plate from him.*

ELEANOR: Right, of course, stupid me for trying something different.

EDWARD: I just think that you're making too much of a fuss of her.

ELEANOR: By trying to introduce a little bit of her culture into her life?

EDWARD: By making it such an issue.

ELEANOR: It is an issue Edward.

EDWARD: I disagree.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: We went to the hairdresser today. All three of us. It was supposed to be an opportunity to bond. Only the hairdresser took me to one side. Said I'm very sorry, but I can't cut Grace's hair. Didn't know how to cut Grace's sort of hair. Didn't need to know I suppose, since Grace is the only Black person she'd ever seen.

EDWARD: That's ridiculous.

ELEANOR: Almost as ridiculous as the woman in Marks and Spencer's who told me to leave her alone. Apparently you shouldn't shout at other people's children.

EDWARD: It's easy to explain.

ELEANOR: Yes it is. Only I'm sick of having to explain. I'm sick of having people look at me like I've kidnapped her. And when I say that she's mine, that she's my adopted daughter, I get this look. This look of admiration. As if I've done the world a favour for taking on a poor black orphaned child.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: And I feel like saying. She's actually the daughter of my husband's mistress. And seeing the look on their faces then.

*Edward takes his coat from the chair.*

EDWARD: I can't talk to you when you're like this.

ELEANOR: You never talk to me.

EDWARD: You're being completely irrational.

ELEANOR: No, I'm not.

EDWARD: You're trying to pick a fight with me.

ELEANOR: For God's sake Edward I'm trying to talk to you.

*She takes a deep breath.*

ELEANOR: I'm beginning to think...that its time Grace was around people who are more like her.

*He stops.*

EDWARD: More like her how?

ELEANOR: You know exactly what I'm saying.

*He turns.*

EDWARD: Around black people?

ELEANOR: She's clearly unhappy.

EDWARD: She's a teenager.

ELEANOR: She argues with me at every opportunity. I don't know how much longer it can carry on.

EDWARD: Are you asking me to send her away?

*Beat*

EDWARD: Is that what you're asking me?

ELEANOR: I don't think this is the best place for her anymore.

*Pause*

EDWARD: I can't believe I'm hearing this.

ELEANOR: People rub their eyes when she passes them. What kind of environment do you this is for her?

EDWARD: A loving environment.

ELEANOR: Where everyone else is white.

EDWARD: I know what this is about and it isn't the colour of her skin.

*Anna appears at the doorway, unnoticed by her parents.*

ELEANOR: I didn't sign up for this.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: When I married you I did not sign up for this.

*Edward goes to comfort her but she backs away.*

EDWARD: Eleanor.

*Beat*

EDWARD: It was a long time ago.

ELEANOR: It doesn't matter.

EDWARD: I would never do that to you again.

ELEANOR: They're just words.

EDWARD: You have to trust me.

ELEANOR: You lied to me.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: And you left me to pick up the pieces.

EDWARD: I thought we'd moved past this.

ELEANOR: How can I move past it when her child lives in my house?

EDWARD: It isn't Grace's fault.

ELEANOR: You think I don't know that?

*Edward moves closer to her.*

EDWARD: You have to forgive me.

*Beat*

EDWARD: You have to forgive me.

*Beat*

EDWARD: Eleanor you have to.

ELEANOR: Why?

EDWARD: Because it's me.

*She looks at him then walks over to the table.  
She moves the plantain around the plate.*

ELEANOR: I don't think she even realises that she's black.

EDWARD: Good.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: How is that good?

EDWARD: I just don't think she needs to be preoccupied with race and all of the complications that go with it.

ELEANOR: It's not a state of mind, it's who she is.

EDWARD: People aren't defined by the colour of their skin.

ELEANOR: Don't be so bloody naïve.

*Edward puts his coat on.*

EDWARD: I can't send her away.

ELEANOR: Can't or won't.

*Beat*

EDWARD: Both.

ELEANOR: Even if it's best for her?

EDWARD: It isn't best for her and I won't have this conversation with you again.

*Anna disappears as Edward makes to leave*

ELEANOR: Joshua Tree have a lot of respect for their leader. They like to be led by example.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Adultery is a work of the flesh. Like murder. Isn't that what your bible says? And we all know how the church values the sacred union of man and woman in holy matrimony.

*He looks at her in disbelief.*

EDWARD: Are you threatening me?

*She tries to maintain his gaze but looks away.  
She fiddles with one of the books on the table.*

EDWARD: The Exe has burst its banks.

*She shakes her head at him.*

ELEANOR: Oh no. You will not walk out on this conversation again.

EDWARD: I'm going to church. They need my help.

ELEANOR: You are not leaving this house.

EDWARD: (*Shouts*) God damn it Eleanor I am more than this family.

*He turns to leave and a wave of anger overtakes her. She throws the book at him.*

ELEANOR: (*Desperately*) You bastard.

*Calmly he bends down at picks it up.  
He places the book on the table and leaves.*

*Eleanor drinks the last of her tea but it is cold and she spits it back into the cup.  
She looks as though she is about to cry but holds it back.  
She stares at the drip and her gaze wanders to the crucifix.  
Impulsively, she takes her chair to the wall and standing on it, removes the crucifix.  
Its shadow is ingrained on the wall. She opens the cellar door and throws it in.*

**Lights**



## SCENE 4

### **The Study**

*Grace sits on the chair facing away. (She cannot be seen)*

*Eleanor enters with a large glass of wine.*

*She stands by the door and knocks on the doorframe.*

ELEANOR: Knock, knock.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: (*Jovially*) Anybody in here?

*She realises that Grace isn't in the mood to make up.*

ELEANOR: I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I was actually trying to do something nice for you.

GRACE: By poisoning me?

ELEANOR I didn't realise it was going to taste like that. I thought it would taste like banana.

GRACE: I don't like bananas.

ELEANOR: I didn't think of that.

*Grace spins her chair around.*

*Her hair is wild.*

ELEANOR: What have you done to your hair?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: What happened to your braids?

GRACE: I took them out.

ELEANOR: Why?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I did not spend three hours braiding your hair only for you to take them out an hour later.

GRACE: I didn't want it braided, I wanted a bob.

ELEANOR: If your hair was cut into a bob Grace, you'd look like triangle. Braids were the best I could do.

GRACE: Then why didn't you take me somewhere where people knew how to cut my hair?

ELEANOR: (*Frustrated*) Because I don't know anywhere.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: You have afro hair.

GRACE: No I don't.

ELEANOR: You do. It's different to our hair.

GRACE: I want a bob.

ELEANOR: You can't have one. Your hair can't be cut into that style.

GRACE: I want it cut.

ELEANOR: It's not the same as our hair. It's wiry and frizzy and no-one around here knows what to do with it.

*Beat*

GRACE: Why doesn't anyone know how to cut it?

ELEANOR: (*Snaps*) Because you're black Grace. You're a negro.

*Grace spins her chair back around.*

ELEANOR: I didn't mean that.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: What can I do?

*Silence*

*Eleanor turns to leave.*

GRACE: I hate you.

*Eleanor turns back.*

ELEANOR: What did you say?

GRACE: I. Hate. You.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Don't you dare say that to me. You have no idea what I have done for you.

*Grace turns around to face her.*

GRACE: (*With Malice*) I hate you.

ELEANOR: You ungrateful...

GRACE: I'll always hate you.

*Eleanor looks angrily at her.*

ELEANOR: You want your hair cut?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I'll cut your hair.

*Eleanor slams her glass of wine on the desk and takes a pair of scissors from the drawer.*

GRACE: What are you doing?

*Eleanor pins Grace to the chair.*

GRACE: I want it cut at the hairdressers.

ELEANOR: We don't always get what we want.

GRACE: Stop it.

*In a frenzy, Eleanor begins to hack at Grace's hair.  
Grace struggles, which makes it worse.  
The wine spills all over Grace.  
She screams.*

GRACE: Please.

*Suddenly, Eleanor stands back with the scissors in her hand.  
Grace holds her head in her hands.  
Her ear bleeds and she is covered in red wine.*

ELEANOR: Oh my God.

*She moves towards Grace who moves back, scared.  
Eleanor puts the scissors on the desk and backs away slowly.*

ELEANOR: I'm so sorry.

*Grace looks terrified.  
Eleanor leaves quickly.  
Grace crawls under the desk.  
She tries not to cry.*

GRACE: (*Whispers*) God is my salvation, I will trust him and not be afraid. God is my salvation, I will trust him and not be afraid. God is my salvation. I will trust him and not be afraid.

**Lights**

## SCENE 5

### **The Kitchen**

*The cellar door is still open.*

*The bucket is beginning to overflow with water.*

*Eleanor leans helplessly on the counter.*

*She goes into the cupboard and takes out a bottle of vodka.*

*It is unopened.*

*She looks at it.*

*Picks it up.*

*Looks at it.*

*Thinks for a beat.*

*Puts it down.*

*She goes over to the window and throws the shutters open.*

*Anna enters.*

ANNA: What were you arguing about?

*She frightens Eleanor.*

ELEANOR: Jesus Christ, you scared me.

ANNA: I heard you shouting.

ELEANOR: It was nothing.

ANNA: Where's Grace?

ELEANOR: (*Snaps*) For God's sake Anna.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Please, just go up to your room.

ANNA: I'm always being sent away.

ELEANOR: (*Shouts*) Do as you're told.

*Anna rushes out.*

*Eleanor goes to the vodka and opens it.*

*She takes a long swig and puts the bottle down.*

*She turns to the shadow of the crucifix.*

ELEANOR: What's next? The bloody plague?

*Grace enters with a bag.*

*She wears her hat again.*

*Eleanor takes another drink of the vodka and is shocked to see Grace.*

ELEANOR: Why does everyone creep around this house?

*She quickly replaces the bottle in the cupboard.*

*Grace puts her bag down on the floor.*

*Eleanor takes a deep breath to calm herself.*

ELEANOR: I'm sorry, I'm having a bad day and .../

GRACE: I'm leaving/

ELEANOR: and I shouldn't have cut your hair/

GRACE: I'm leaving/

ELEANOR: but I can't seem to get anything right with you Grace.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: What?

GRACE: I'm leaving.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: What do you mean you're leaving?

GRACE: I'm going.

ELEANOR: Don't be so ridiculous.

*Grace stands close to her bag.*

ELEANOR: You can't leave, you're a child.

GRACE: I don't want to stay here.

ELEANOR: I went too far with your hair, I know that. But you never give me a break, never... It's not my fault that she couldn't cut your hair today. I didn't realise that would happen.

*Grace takes her hat off.*

*It looks as though clumps of her hair have been pulled out.*

ELEANOR: Jesus Christ.

*Grace picks up her bag.*

*Eleanor moves towards her.*

ELEANOR: You can't just leave.

GRACE: Why not?

ELEANOR: I'm responsible for you.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Nothing like this will ever happen again. I promise.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: You can't leave.

GRACE: But you don't want me here.

*Eleanor takes a deep breath.*

ELEANOR: That's not true.

GRACE: I'm going to live in community.

ELEANOR: They don't have space in the community houses. You father is moving some Russian girl in here.

GRACE: Then she can have my room.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: You've got it all worked out haven't you?

GRACE: Yes.

ELEANOR: And what about your father? What about Anna? You're just going to leave without saying goodbye?

*Grace turns to leave.*

ELEANOR: You can't leave.

GRACE: You can't stop me.

ELEANOR: Yes I can.

*She takes the bag from her.*

GRACE: Give it back you bitch.

ELEANOR: Don't speak to me like that.

GRACE: Why? You aren't my mother.

*Eleanor slaps her hard across the face.*

*Grace is pushed back by the force.*

*Shocked, she cowers by the cellar door.*

*Grace opens her mouth and screams 'Dad' as loudly as she can.*

ELEANOR: Stop screaming.

*Anna appears at the door.*

*Shocked, she stands and watches.*

GRACE: (*Shouts*) Dad.

ELEANOR: Stop it. Stop it. Stop it.

GRACE: (*Shouts*) Dad.

ELEANOR: (*Viciously*) He's not here. He left you home with me.

*Grace suddenly tries to rush past Eleanor but she blocks her.*

*They struggle and Eleanor forcibly pushes her into the cellar.*

*She locks the door and stands back.*

*Grace's frantic cries can be heard from the cellar.*

*She bangs loudly on the door.*

*Eleanor stumbles to the counter and grabs the vodka.*



*She switches the radio on and turns up the crackled noise to drown out Grace's cries.  
She stands in a state of shock and slumps to the floor overshadowed by the shape of  
the crucifix on the wall.  
She catches Anna's eye.*

**Lights**

**ACT 3**  
**SCENE 1**

**The Kitchen**

*Same as in Act 1 except:*

*Drips have formed all over the ceiling.*

*Water has begun to pool on the floor.*

*Eleanor is washing up in her apron.*

*Her actions are calm and methodical but her hair is falling down and she is beginning to look dishevelled.*

*She listens to the crackling radio.*

*Anna enters.*

*She looks worn out.*

*She watches her mother, unsure of how to approach her.*

ANNA: She won't leave the room.

*Eleanor washes up in a trance.*

ANNA: Just sitting by the window, staring out through the rain. Praying for a miracle.

*Beat*

ANNA: Mum?

*Eleanor continues to wash up.*

ANNA: Perhaps you can finish that later Mum?

*Beat*

ANNA: *(Firmly)* Mum?

*Eleanor snaps out of her reverie.*

ELEANOR: Sorry love?

ANNA: I was just saying that, perhaps you can finish that later.

ELEANOR: I've started it now. God knows I've put it off for long enough.

ANNA: It'll keep.

ELEANOR: Look at this one.

*Eleanor holds up a filthy bowl.*

ELEANOR: We're growing a new breed of mushroom. Are they still legal, magic mushrooms?

*Anna shrugs her shoulders, confused by her mother's behaviour.*

ELEANOR: We used to eat them at Glastonbury, when it was free.

ANNA: Please mum.

*Eleanor faces her.*

ELEANOR: There was a time when I'd never leave a plate in the sink. I couldn't sleep if I knew that there was a dirty cup on the counter. If I could count the hours I've spent in this exact spot...

*She returns to the washing up.*

ANNA: I just think that ...maybe this isn't the right time for you to be washing up.

ELEANOR: There's never a right time for washing up love. Or ironing. Never a right time for ironing. Its either too warm or you just cannot be bothered.

ANNA: What I mean is....

ELEANOR: (*Firmly*) I know what you mean Anna but I need to. I need to wash up. And when I finish...

*Beat*

ELEANOR: When I finish I'll know what to do.

*Anna picks up the tea towel.*

*She starts to dry some of the dishes.*

*They work together in silence for some time.*

ANNA: She's been staring out of the window for a while now. She won't talk to me, won't answer my questions. Just sitting there, muttering to herself.

ELEANOR: She's praying.

*Beat*

ANNA: She refuses to leave the room.

ELEANOR: So you finally went in?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: When are you going to worry about yourself Anna?

ANNA: I'm fine.

*Eleanor turns to her.*

ANNA: I am. I'm fine. Really.

*Eleanor picks up Grace's blue spotty mug.*

ELEANOR: We bought this from Paignton Zoo. It was supposed to be a leopard mug but the boy who painted them was completely colour blind. Painted 50 leopard mugs with blue paint. She wouldn't drink out of anything else for months.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: I've probably washed this cup more times than I've washed anything else in my life.

*She washes the mug carefully, with love.*

ANNA: Ryan passed on the message.

*Eleanor passes it to Anna.*

ANNA: I wasn't ready to come back.

*Beat*

ANNA: She was right. I had to know that he was dying before I could come back here.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: He wasn't always the easiest man.

ANNA: No, he wasn't.

*Anna dries the mug carefully.*

ANNA: She's angry with me.

ELEANOR: She's angry with him.

ANNA: Why?

ELEANOR: Because people always leave her.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: And promised her he wouldn't.

*Anna takes the mug and places it on the table.*

ANNA: What if she doesn't get over this?

ELEANOR: She's tougher than she looks.

*Beat*

ANNA: A bit like her mum.

*They continue to wash up.*

**Lights**

## SCENE 2

### **The Study**

*Edward lies still on the bed.  
Grace stands at the window facing him.*

GRACE: You promised.

*Beat*

GRACE: You promised me.

*She turns away and opens the window.  
Rain beats down on her face.*

GRACE: Teach me to seek you, for I cannot seek you; let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you.

*She waits for a response.*

GRACE: (*Angrily*) The one thing I need, the one person I could rely on you've taken from me.

*Wet faced, she turns to face Edward.  
She tries to compose herself and closes her eyes.*

GRACE: Wake up.

*Beat*

GRACE: (*Louder*) Wake up.

*Beat*

GRACE: (*Shouts*) Wake up.

*Eleanor enters.  
She waits by the door.*

ELEANOR: He's not going to wake up.

*Grace stands with her eyes still closed.  
The sound of rain fills the room.*

ELEANOR: Close the window. You'll catch pneumonia. The last thing we need is another sick person to take care of.

*Eleanor goes to Edward.  
Grace watches as she smooths his hair.*

*She straightens the bed sheets around him.*

GRACE: Stop it.

*Eleanor continues.*

GRACE: Stop it.

*Eleanor stops.*

GRACE: You can't start caring for him now that he's gone. This is what you wanted.

*Beat*

GRACE: You didn't love him at all.

*Eleanor looks up at Grace.*

ELEANOR: Don't you know me by now?

*Eleanor notices the photograph on the floor.  
Carefully, she picks it up.*

ELEANOR: This was the first photograph you ever took.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Your first picture was supposed to be of the Scottish Highlands but we never made it. You were so disappointed I made you take this by the side of the motorway before we were towed home. It was one of those cheap disposable cameras but it took a nice picture wouldn't you say? I told you I'd frame it.

*She hands the photograph to Grace who takes it.*

ELEANOR: Children don't come with manuals and parents make mistakes. Mothers and fathers.

*She turns to Edward and strokes his hair.  
Tenderly, she kisses him on the head.  
She turns to leave but stops.*

ELEANOR: I might be a terrible mother. And you probably have every right to hate me but don't you ever suggest that I don't love him. You don't know anything about our love.

*Eleanor leaves.  
Grace looks at the picture closely.  
Grief overtakes her and she cries.*

**Lights**

**ACT 3**  
**SCENE 3**

**The Kitchen**

*The kitchen is now immaculate but the floor is completely flooded.*

*Leaks have appeared all around the kitchen.*

*Anna sits at the table in Eleanor's apron.*

*She sits with a full bottle of vodka and a glass.*

*Grace enters, her eyes heavy from tears.*

*She sits at the table in silence.*

*Anna slides the bottle of vodka across the table towards Grace who picks it up and looks at it.*

ANNA: Doesn't seem so inappropriate now.

*Anna drinks.*

*Grace puts the bottle down and slides it back.*

*Anna pours more into the glass and looks to the window.*

ANNA: If it carries on like this, we'll be washed away.

*Beat*

ANNA: The frogs are probably on their way.

GRACE: It was locusts.

ANNA: After the storm?

*Beat*

ANNA: Where did pestilence come?

GRACE: Before the boils.

ANNA: Well at least we've survived the boils.

*Beat*

GRACE: I'm sorry.

ANNA: You don't have to apologise.

GRACE: I shouldn't have spoken to you like that.

ANNA: No, but you were right. I went as far away as my money could take me.

GRACE: But you came back.



ANNA: Much later than I should have.

*Beat*

ANNA: He was different with me. You two had this bond that I never had with him. You shared his faith and I never could.

GRACE: He wanted you to find God, but he did love you.

ANNA: It's ok. He disappointed me too.

*Beat*

GRACE: What are you trying to say?

ANNA: That he wasn't perfect either. He was never around.

GRACE: That's no reason not to say goodbye.

ANNA: Refusing the treatment was selfish. But then he was always selfish. He just cloaked it in religion as if that somehow absolved him. It took me a long time to realise that. I could go into that room, I could stand over his bed and pour out my heart to him. But it wouldn't change anything. I couldn't do it when he was alive and it doesn't feel necessary anymore.

*Beat*

ANNA: I had to be away from him to love him. We said goodbye a long time ago.

*Anna finishes her drink.*

ANNA: I didn't come back here for him. I realised that when I walked through the door and you weren't here.

*She pours more vodka into the glass and slides it across to Grace.*

ANNA: What happened when we were younger? I think I know, but I need to hear it from you.

*Beat*

GRACE: No-one ever mentioned that I was black. I was the adopted daughter, but I was never adopted the black daughter. It was like, if it wasn't mentioned, we just wouldn't have to deal with it.

*Grace takes the glass and swirls the drink around the glass.*

ANNA: I don't think they wanted it to be an issue.

GRACE: It's not an issue. It's who I am.

ANNA: They just wanted to protect you.

GRACE: From what? From the colour of my skin and the curls on my head?

*Beat*

GRACE: I didn't realise I was black until I was thirteen Anna. Thirteen. Until some ignorant woman refused to cut my hair.

*Grace drinks some of the vodka.*

ANNA: You can't carry it around with you anymore.

GRACE: It's not that easy.

ANNA: You have to forgive her.

*Grace looks away.*

ANNA: You can.

*Grace shakes her head.*

ANNA: You have to.

GRACE: Why?

ANNA: Because she's your mother.

*Anna puts her hand on top of Grace's.*

ANNA: I like your hair.

*Beat*

ANNA: It's straighter than mine.

GRACE: I think it came from China.

*Beat*

GRACE: Or a horse.

*Anna laughs.*

ANNA: I always loved your hair.

GRACE: You didn't.

ANNA: I did. I used to try and backcomb mine to make it more like yours.

*Beat*

GRACE: Really?

ANNA: I was always trying to be like you.

*Eleanor enters carrying a hammer.*

*Her clothes are more dishevelled.*

*She strides across to the cellar, pushes the table away from the door and wrenches it open.*

ANNA: What are you doing mum?

ELEANOR: Something I should have done a long time ago.

*She disappears into the cellar and suddenly emerges with the wooden crucifix and a hammer.*

ANNA: Oh God.

ELEANOR: I put up with it far longer than I should have.

*She takes the hammer and goes to break the crucifix but she stops as Grace stands up.*

ELEANOR: He was so vain, your father. He was really vain. And by vain, I mean conceited. That man read his own book more times than he read the bible. I think he could probably recite every page of that book as if it were Gospel. Join the Modern Jesus Army and save your soul, as if every soul can be saved so easily.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: He put posters of his book all over the walls of the house, amongst the psalms and the prayers. And to listen to him preach about humility.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: And all of the people he brought back to this house...

*Eleanor's speech becomes more and more impassioned.*

ELEANOR: At one point we had five people staying here. It was like Coronation Street. Any waif or stray was welcome in this house and I mean anyone. We had a Russian girl here for six months. You must remember her? Irina. Sinewy girl. Too much protein and not enough fat. The Home Office asked her to leave, but life was really hard in Russia so she figured she'd stay and find a desperate British man to marry. She has the most annoying habit of not putting things back where she found them. Infuriating. Then there was the boy who stole from us. And don't get me started on those bloody Christians.

*Eleanor goes to the table and takes the bottle of vodka in her hand.*

ELEANOR: Open house this was. Doors unlocked all hours, I'd come back to find a stranger either eating at the table or taking a bath. 'It's alright Eleanor they're Christians'. They were only Christian when there was free room and board.

*She undoes the top.*

ELEANOR: What was he thinking?

*Eleanor suddenly seems very sad.*

ELEANOR: Bloody selfish man. Stupid, selfish, selfish man. Who never took care of his family or himself.

ANNA: Mum.

*She tries to collect herself but is clearly devastated.*

ELEANOR: Edward believed that if you prayed hard enough, God would forgive you all your sins. He would never, never apologise for the wrongs he did to people because God's forgiveness surpassed all others. As if how I felt, what I needed was just completely bloody insignificant.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Thirty bloody years of being insignificant. Stupid woman.

*She clutches hard on to the bottle.*

ELEANOR: Bloody stupid woman.

*Slowly, Grace takes the bottle away from Eleanor and puts it back on the table.*

ELEANOR: I always loved him. I thought that's what it was all about...

*She looks to Grace.*

ELEANOR: But it's not enough.

*Grace goes to the wooden crucifix. She looks to the outline on the wall.*

GRACE: It doesn't belong here anymore.

*She returns to the table.*

*The women sit in silence for a moment.*

*They are interrupted by the phone.*

ELEANOR: That'll probably be the woman about the pans.

*She goes to the cupboard.*

ANNA: It's six o'clock in the morning.

ELEANOR: I think it's later in India love.

*She answers the phone.*

ELEANOR: I've changed my mind about the pans. I'm going to have my roof fixed instead.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Right.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Half an hour?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Thank you.

*Beat*

ELEANOR: Bye.

*She hangs up the phone and stands still.*

ELEANOR: The ambulance is on its way.

*The women are silent for a moment.*

ANNA: We need a cup of tea.

*Eleanor goes to make it.*

ANNA: You sit down now Mum.

*Eleanor nods and sits.*

*Anna pours water into the pan and places it on the hob.*

*She listens for a moment.*

ANNA: I can't hear the rain anymore.

*They listen.*

GRACE: I think it's stopped.

*Anna goes to the window and opens the shutters.  
The dawn is breaking; it fills the room with warmth.*

ANNA: Oh my.

*Eleanor joins her.  
They are bathed in light.*

ANNA: What a wonderful morning.

*She opens the window.*

ELEANOR: I haven't seen a sunrise like this in years.

ANNA: Come and see this Grace.

*Grace stands in front of the cellar door.  
Decisively, she shuts it.  
She joins them at the window.  
The three women look out on the surrounding fields.*

ANNA: I missed this smell.

ELEANOR: Farmland?

ANNA: Fresh air.

GRACE: They didn't have fresh air in Thailand?

ANNA: Nowhere has fresh air like this.

*The stand looking out.  
They have never looked more alike.*

ANNA: What's that over there?

*Beat*

ELEANOR: What?

ANNA: That, over there.

*Anna points.*

ANNA: There. Right behind Wharton's farm.

ELEANOR: That's a chicken love.

ANNA: Not the chicken.

GRACE: It's a duck.

ANNA: Not the chicken or the duck. There's something there. See? It's catching the light.

ELEANOR: It looks like glass.

*They look out.*

ANNA: See it? Just past the hedgerow, where the blackberries used to be.

*They look closer.*

GRACE: Oh my God.

*Beat*

GRACE: It's the lake.

*They gaze out for some time.*

*Hesitantly, Eleanor takes Grace's hand.*

*The outline of the crucifix disappears as a bright light fills the room.*

**END**