

FATHER'S DAY

by

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Abstract

Father's Day is a full length family play which, though largely linear, incorporates non-linear structural elements. Act 1's action occurs in Barbara Roberts' living room and kitchen diner, while that of Act 2 occurs outside the home of Errol Roberts on a Jamaican mountain side.

The play's plot concerns Barbara, 48, who has terminal uterine cancer. Barbara's two children, the devoted Will and the largely absent Sandra, pack up her possessions in the first Act ready for her final journey to a hospice.

This plot trajectory is disrupted when Errol returns to the family he abandoned 23 years earlier. Errol comes to make amends with Barbara but she wants him to care for their children after her death.

Sandra and Will must come to terms with their mother's death and overcome the negative effects Errol's abandonment left them with. Sandra returns to her childhood home for her mother's final days but also to escape her eight month old son Max, who she struggles to feel love for. Will, working from home to be with his two year old daughter Izzi, must decide whether to accept a job offer that means Izzi will spend two days a week at nursery.

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Thesis Essay

1. Introduction

This critical evaluation is concerned with how ‘playwrights choose, arrange, and above all concentrate events and behaviours they observe in the real world in such a way that gives them meaning’ (Edgar, 2009, p. 5). The document critically examines how Edgar’s words above apply to the final script of *Father’s Day* (French, 2011).

The following critical evaluation of the processes involved in writing and developing the stage play *Father’s Day* to give it ‘meaning’ (Edgar, 2009, p. 5), follows a reflective pathway which elucidates the progression from the play’s initial pitch document to the play’s final script. The discussion is divided thematically into seven areas of playwriting which I feel most significantly contributed to the play’s development. These areas are; theme, research, structure, character, setting, and symbols. Dividing the essay this way follows Waters’ (2010, p. 8) assertion that ‘time, space, language, character, symbol, seamlessly fold into one another. Whilst those conventions can all be analysed independently of each other (...) in performance they are experienced as inseparably fused. This essay’s logic is somewhat the reverse of the construction employed in playwriting, as it deconstructs *Father’s Day* into its constituent elements.

The writing journey that culminated in the *Father’s Day* script is explained below: The play’s pitch document (French, 2010, p. 1), included as appendix 1, was written in October 2010. This formed the basis for the play’s first draft; written between October 2010 and January 2011. A rehearsed reading of 25 minutes of this draft, work-shopped with student directors and drama students, was presented to an audience of students and lecturers in January 2011. Evaluation forms interrogating aspects of the extract were completed by this audience and given to the writer.

The play's second draft was written between January 2011 and May 2011 in response to this and regular supervision sessions with the course supervisor, Steve Waters. Additionally, there was one supervision session with tutor Stephanie Dale.

Following a further supervision with Steve Waters the play's third draft was written in three weeks between early and late May 2011. It was then work-shopped for one day with professional director, Gwenda Hughes and four professional actors. During this workshop process Deborah Tracey played Barbara, Elexi Walker played Sandra, Duane Hannibal played Errol and Colin Dunkley played Will.

After the workshop day thirty minutes of the play received a rehearsed reading in front of students, lecturers and invited theatre industry professionals on the 10th of June 2011. The theatre professionals provided the writer with feedback comments on the extract.

A subsequent final supervision with Steve Waters resulted in the final script of *Father's Day* being written between June 2011 and early September 2011.

As evident from appendix 1, my initial intention for *Father's Day* was the exploration of the Afro-Caribbean Roberts family. The matriarch, Barbara, suffering from terminal uterine cancer, is preparing to leave her home of 28 years in the West Midlands to enter a hospice. Her children; Sandra, 29, and Will, 25, must negotiate their mother's dying, their issues regarding fatherhood and motherhood and their returning father Errol, who abandoned the family 23 years ago. The family then decide that instead of entering the hospice Barbara will go on one last trip to her and Errol's native Jamaica.

This essay examines and evaluates changes that occur between the plot I intended in the pitch and the plot of the final play.

Similarly, any differences detected in the themes the pitch document states and those apparent in the final play are discussed. All research activities undertaken are evaluated to determine how they contributed to the effect of the final play. Choices regarding structure

and setting, given the nature of the play's plot, its characters and themes, are interrogated to discover how effectively these selections serve the play's other components.

I will assess how successfully characterisation has been employed to allow Barbara, Errol, Will and Sandra to appear as three dimensional, living characters that engage and move an audience. Finally symbols employed in the play will be considered to determine their effectiveness at conveying the intended meaning and doing so with subtlety.

2. Theme

As appendix 1 states; 'the play's themes are what does it mean to be a good father? What does it mean to be a good mother? Why if a husband and father abandons his family is that more readily acceptable to society than if a wife and mother does that?' (French, 2010, p. 1).

In evaluating any difference in theme evident in *Father's Day* I must refer to the last supervision session where Waters stated the third draft 'seems to be saying that before a family can move forward it has to deal with the past' (Waters, 2011).

This feedback made me realise that in successive drafts I had veered away from the intended theme of examining why a mother's abandonment is viewed as worse than a father's. The final script retains less an interrogation of the imbalance of the far harsher negative response a mother receives for considering taking the same action as many fathers before her, and more a look at how the harm of a father's abandonment can be manifested differently in two siblings.

This is demonstrated by Will's response to Barbara in Act 1 Scene 1, 'I should know the right things to do but I don't. (...) might not be right, but it's the best I know how to do' (French, 2011, p. 6). This theme is further evidenced when Sandra tells Will in Act 2 Scene 2 that his refusal to leave Izzi is 'not healthy' (French, 2011, p. 87).

Sandra has clearly been negatively affected by Errol's abandonment because on four occasions she tells different characters that she feels nothing for Max. In Act 1 Scene 4 Barbara tells Sandra, 'a mother A mother just knows (...) gets to feel what her baby needs', and Sandra asks, 'And if she can't? Can't feel the way she should?' (French, 2011, p. 32) In Act 1 Scene 5 Sandra tells Leon 'I don't feel any love for him [Max]' (French, 2011, p. 41). Later Sandra admits to Leon, 'I imagine putting my hand over his [Max's] nose and mouth and holding it there until he (...) stops moving' (French, 2011, p. 43). Furthermore, in Act 2 Scene 2 Sandra tells Errol 'When you left what that did to me, to Will, to all of us; something happened that you can't just take back' (French, 2011, p. 75).

Another different theme within the play which I identified from responses to the first draft was that the play showed the effect of the past on future generations. This theme links to Waters' feedback, discussed above, and also the instances of Will and Sandra being negatively affected by Errol's departure mentioned above. This theme was identified from response to the January reading. Anonymous audience responses to the specific question, 'what themes were clear from the extract?' (Kennedy, 2011) included, 'things which are passed down within families – values, issues with commitment (...) inheritance' (Audience member, 2011). 'Family, commitment, responsibility, inheritance, culture', 'inheritance, identity – what do we leave behind? How much are we like absent parents?' and 'family vs career' (Audience member, 2011).

From these responses I took the theme of the younger generation's inheritance from the old. Will and Sandra are presented as products of the environment their parents' decisions created for their upbringing. This is best demonstrated when Leon asks Sandra, 'like father like daughter?' (French, 2011, p. 39)

To a lesser extent I also utilised the 'family vs career' theme. This is shown by Sandra having chosen her career over her family, having guilt about this and being judged harshly by

Barbara, Leon and Will for her choice. Will tells Sandra ‘you’re too late’ (French, 2011, p. 22) and mocks her commitment to work, asking, ‘office in desperate need are they?’ (French, 2011, p. 23) Leon calls Sandra, ‘selfish’ (French, 2011, p. 40) for returning to work six months after having Max, despite having twelve months maternity leave. Barbara asks Sandra ‘Where’s likkle Maxxie while you making all dem decisions?’ (French, 2011, p. 47)

While Sandra’s journey in the play is to be able to embrace family life, particularly motherhood, more than she does, Will’s is the opposite. Will must relinquish a portion of his domestic life with his daughter and allow her to attend nursery two days a week so he can improve his career trajectory and as Barbara states ‘be the provider again; bring home a proper salary to support [his] family?’ (French, 2011, p.45)

3. Research

My research for *Father’s Day* began with reading plays recommended by Steve Waters during the first supervision. These plays were; *Talking in Tongues* (1995) by Winsome Pinnock, *The Homecoming* (1965) by Harold Pinter and *August: Osage County* (2008) by Tracy Letts.

Talking in Tongues mainly confirmed that my chosen play structure of setting Act One in England and Act Two in Jamaica had a precedent and encouraged me to pursue this choice.

The Homecoming began an awareness that family plays are populated by characters with secrets that once revealed will cause a transformation in the lives of the family members forever. It showed me that in family plays people resume their old roles when they return to the dysfunctional family they left. Additionally, I learned that the drama in such plays is often punctured with humour and stories of a shared family past.

Secrets in *Osage County* include that Violet and Bev have a safety deposit box plan, that Barbara is Violet’s favourite daughter, and that Little Charles and Ivy are lovers moving to

New York together, despite being cousins. Violet reveals Barbara and Bill's separation to the entire family at dinner when she asks Bill 'You and Barbara are separated now, right? Or are you divorced already' (2008, p.92).

When Barbara and Karen return to their childhood home Violet sees her daughters as remaining in the roles they occupied when living there. She criticizes Ivy as the 'schlub' and as 'hopeless' (2008, p. 25). Violet sarcastically says Karen will 'be a big fat help, just like [Ivy]' (2008, p. 25). However of Barbara Violet says, 'I need Barbara' (2008, p. 25), and puts all responsibility for future action on Barbara's shoulders. These are old roles but Violet still expects her daughters to fill them.

The interactions between Mattie Fae and Charlie provide much of the play's humour. An example is when the couple discuss 'cheese coney's' and the appropriateness in the 'fraught' situation of Mattie Fae's 'cocktail' of 'straight whiskey' as opposed to Charlie's 'beers', which 'show (...) little class' (2008, p. 23).

Finally several stories of the family's past are recounted throughout the play. This includes the amusing one Barbara relates to Bill about Violet becoming, 'this serial parakeet killer' (2008, p. 29) because Violet refused to use the air conditioner, despite the heat.

This play greatly influenced *Father's Day's* development, as did the other family plays I read and subsequently dissected to discover that they too were constructed of the four attributes I have ascribed to family plays above; secrets eventually reveal to massive impact, old roles resumed upon return to a dysfunctional family, humour and stories from a shared family past. The other family plays I read were Laura Wade's *Colder Than Here* (2005), Bruce Norris' *Clybourne Park* (2010), Shelagh Stephenson's *The Memory of Water* (1997), Harley Granville Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance* (2006) and Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup With Barley* (1960).

Reading these plays assisted me in deciding to have Sandra, however much she tries not to, revert to the person she becomes when with family. Sandra tells Will in Act 1 Scene 6, 'I'm not like this usually, really I'm not. Sorry. It's this place. It just sucks me back in' (French, 2011, p. 48). In the same scene Sandra says of Barbara, 'She can't help herself; never could. Always needs to put me in my place' (French, 2011, p.48). In Act 1 Scene 5 Sandra accuses Will of being 'stuck here, in the role she gave you way back then' (French, 2011, p. 37).

Though *Father's Day* contains humour I feel that currently there is not enough. If redrafting the play again I would increase the humour because *Father's Day* shows a family coping with a terminally ill mother and then mourning her loss. I feel this darkness requires as much lightness of humour as possible to ensure the play's tone is not unremittingly bleak.

Humour is demonstrated when Will deliberately mocks Sandra's social aspiration by asking 'how is Tarquin?' when, as Sandra replies 'you know that's not his name' (French, 2011, p.17). Additionally, Sandra humorously asks Will, 'Shit. (*Thinks for a moment.*) Can you give a two year old a cheque?' (French, 2011, p. 29) Further humour comes from the mismatch of audience expectations of Sandra and Errol when at 48 Barbara complains to Errol 'that Farmville's addictive you know?' (French, 2011, p. 55) and at 53 Errol proudly tells Barbara, 'Email, Facebook, I'm very technologically literate. Even logged onto Twitter last week' (French, 2011, p. 54).

Despite the instances of humour, including those analysed above, I do not feel this is sufficient to fully offset Barbara's bleak situation or Sandra's serious revelation that she thinks of killing Max. This is because, as Ayckbourn states of playwriting, 'the darker the subject, the more light you must try to shed on the matter' (2002, p. 3).

Further research included reading Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* (1980), Connor McPherson's *The Weir* (1997), Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1998) and Jez Butterworth's

Jerusalem (2009). The fantastical stories that Johnny “Rooster” Byron tells in *Jerusalem* draws the audience in and places them firmly on his side in the pastoral world he inhabits. *The Guardian’s* Michael Billington states that Johnny ‘epitomises the glamorous, yarn spinning outlaw’ (Billington, 2009). Reviewing *The Weir* Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* states, ‘if a story is told well enough, you’ll follow it anywhere (...). Take the plain-spoken, utterly alluring tales unfolded by the denizens of the rural Irish bar in “The Weir,”’ (Brantley, 1999).

During the last supervision, discussing the third draft of *Father’s Day*, Waters stated that ‘there is a desire to see more of the past’ (Waters, 2011). The final script explores this aspect of the play further. Characters tell stories of the past, especially Sandra, who admits to Barbara that ‘my memories aren’t solid; they shift, change a bit each time, (...). I can’t be sure sometimes if the way I remember is how it happened or if I’ve added bits, forgotten bits or just made huge chunks up’ (French, 2011, p. 32). Influenced by the powerful effect of Butterworth and McPherson’s storytelling characters, I intended the stories told in *Father’s Day* to enthrall the audience and simultaneously be revealing about the family’s past and the character telling the story. I believe this effect was achieved and reveals most about Sandra, as she tells the most stories.

Research was also carried out by watching a BBC series of three documentaries called *Eyewitness* (BBC4, 2011). These explored the truth behind eye witness testimony. This documentary series, which interrogated the flawed nature of a human’s capacity to remember events with absolute accuracy, heavily influenced the way Sandra’s imperfect recall of past events is expressed. This depiction of Sandra’s memories demonstrates the unreliability of memory. This representation serves Sandra’s characterisation because she is struggling with several uncertainties including whether she can be a good mother. Her unsure memories add to the feelings of insecurity and turmoil she is experiencing.

4. Characters

Barbara's character consistently received most positive feedback from readings undertaken. During January's reading, responding to the question 'Who was your favourite character?' (Kennedy, 2011) five of the eight responses said Barbara. One respondent added; 'The Grandma because even though she is dying, she is still upbeat and making us laugh' (Audience member, 2011). This is a balance within Barbara that I determined to retain; that she be funny, gentle, maternal, but all of these things set against the dark fate awaiting her.

Waters' response to Barbara during the last supervision was 'get more of the mother into Act 1, as she is not there in Act 2' (Waters, 2011). A similar response to Barbara came from the June reading with comments from the industry professionals being that 'there was an enticing sense of the younger Barbara (...) show more of who Barbara is as a mother and also as a woman' (Audience member, 2011).

Responding to the above comments, I removed Will's wife, Aisha, from the final script of *Father's Day*. This left Barbara as the driving force encouraging Will's acceptance of his job offer. Thus satisfying the wish to 'see more of who Barbara is'. This also made her overall objective clearer and more understandable as a mother's need, 'to know you'll be okay, all of you' (French, 2011, p. 44) when she dies.

Additionally, my intention to show Barbara's identity as a woman is, I believe, fulfilled well by presenting the contradiction of a woman thinking her daughter should spend less time at work but more with her child and, paradoxically, that her son should spend less time with his child and more at work. Also revealing is the complexity of Barbara insisting to her children 'Una show respect right. Yes him gone but dat man still your daddy' (French, 2011, p. 7), despite Errol's abandonment 23 years before. Barbara's femininity and love for Errol is expressed effectively through her preparations to go dancing with him in the Prologue and in

Act 2 Scene 3, which looks back to Barbara and Errol's wedding day in Jamaica 30 years ago.

As discussed above, I believe the final script presents Barbara as a successfully written complex character with a clearly understandable motivation throughout the play.

Will's character was problematic to write effectively. From responses to January's reading; 'Will seems really heavy' (Audience member, 2011). This is because in the first draft Will was, not only nursing his dying mother, but him and wife Ellie (this name has since changed to Alisha) were coping with the cot death of their daughter Rosie two years before. During the first, second and third supervisions sessions with Steve Waters his continual response was that 'Will's grief seems too much' (Waters, 2011), and the 'repetitiveness of Will and Sandra's conflict; they are at each other's throats immediately' (Waters, 2011). Finally, of the third draft, Waters stated, 'take out a lot of the rebuke in Will. Enjoy Will's power a bit' (Waters, 2011).

I feel that currently Will has clear objectives and undertakes a clear journey. His objectives are to care for Barbara and his child. The journey he goes on is to stop inhabiting a role traditionally considered feminine and to relinquish his grip on caring for Izzi for two days a week so he can further his career and move into the public realm within his working life more. Tellingly in Act 1 Scene 3 Sandra describes Will as 'morphed into this Mr Mom, Florence Nightingale hybrid' (French, 2011, p. 20).

However, what I would like to solve about Will is the 'rebuke' in him where he constantly argues with Sandra. This repetitively argumentative quality in Will makes him a hard character for the audience to get close to, despite his clear devotion to Barbara and Izzi.

Therefore, if given the opportunity, I would reduce the number of arguments between Will and Sandra. I would do this by removing their argument in Act 1 Scene 5 completely and redistributing any expositional sections of this encounter that are necessary for the rest of the

play's action. This redistribution would include Will berating London, that Sandra attended a grammar school and Will didn't, that Sandra went to university in London, that Sandra feels she is 'just Sandy' to Barbara but that it's 'never just Will' (French, 2011, p. 37).

I would want to retain the above information despite cutting this argument because I want to keep a sense in Will's character that despite his constant criticism of Sandra's actions he is secretly a little envious that she had the courage to leave and give precedence to her own needs because he feels he never could.

Waters (2010, p. 90) states, regarding stories told in *The Weir*, 'we then find ourselves entering into the active inner time of storytelling, with each character telling a story, and each story in turn taking us (...)into the inner reality of the character s'. Similarly to McPherson, as mentioned above, I intended Sandra's stories to characterise her. For instance, the way she recounts the story of sitting in a restaurant with her university friend and the girl's dad has an immediacy which conjures up the past scene for the audience. They can see Sandra's desperate attempt to betray no visible reaction to this display of father daughter bonding as she chokes on her food. I believe Sandra's stories effectively show the audience what sort of person she is behind the corporate mask she wears.

During the June workshop feedback from the director and actors about Sandra included that, 'Sandra's journey of how she feels about her father should be more gradual' (Actor, 2011), and that 'the narrative that parents do through photographs – for their children – it is about the child creating a sense of self' (Hughes, 2011). Feedback also indicated a need to 'see a softer side to Sandra earlier in the play' (Actor, 2011) and that, 'maybe Sandra's step is that she asks for help' (Actor, 2011). Steve Waters' feedback about the third draft was that, 'Sandra comes back maybe to get a handle on herself as a bad mother and get closure on that, (...) I want Errol or Will to be the solution to her problem' (Waters, 2011).

Responding to the above comments, in the final script Sandra's transformation where she forgives and accepts Errol is something on the horizon for these two but is deferred into a future beyond the play's close. In Act 2 Scene 2 when Sandra greets Errol's offer to accompany her to get help with 'I don't know' (French, 2011, p.84), this indicates that forgiving him is possible but she is not quite able to take that step yet. This is a subtler and, I think, more effective and believable treatment of Sandra's transformation regarding Errol than in play draft three. In that draft all it takes for Sandra to begin calling Errol 'Dad' (French, 2011, p. 76) is for Errol to give her his bottle of water. Soon afterwards Sandra tells Errol 'thanks dad (...) would you call me Sandy?' (French, 2011, pp. 81-82) I feel the final script contains a more successful indication of the difficulty Sandra has forgiving Errol for his abandonment.

The final script also slightly changes Sandra's characterisation in a way I think is more consistent with the stories demonstrating Sandra's inner turmoil and emotion. In all previous drafts Sandra arrives at Barbara's house already having decided she has left her husband and baby permanently, telling Leon in the third draft, 'You're not hearing me. I am not coming back' (French, 2011, p. 31). However, in the final script Sandra's reasoning is not; I have definitely left my family. But more; I need time to think; do I want to leave my family? In the final script Sandra tells Leon; 'Thing is I'm not sure I know how to be what he needs' (French, 2011, p. 41). I believe changing Sandra's journey through the play, so she is unsure of herself as a mother but eventually embraces seeking help to try to resolve her problems, softens her characterisation considerable, making her character more likeable and understandable to the audience.

In earlier drafts Errol's characterisation was uneven and unfocused. In draft 2 for example, Errol's return is not built up very much because Will, Sandra and Barbara do not speak of him, other than when in Act 1 Scene 1 Will replies to Barbara's statement that 'you can't run

from this', saying 'he [Errol] would, he did, from everything' (French, 2011, p. 8). Errol's characterisation improved significantly after feedback on draft three.

This feedback included Steve Waters stating that, 'the notion of the well-made play. The obligatory scene is we want to see the father give an account of himself to his children' (Waters, 2011). Stephanie Dale's feedback on Errol from draft one was that, 'the audience will need to know why Errol made the decision to leave' (Dale, 2011). The director and actors from the June workshop commented that 'Errol needs to explain where he went (...). Does he need to explain to Barbara where he was and what he was doing?' (Actor, 2011). A further response during this session was that 'maybe Sandra has mythologised her dad' (Actor, 2011).

Given the above, in the final script Errol becomes a man who explains his absence to Barbara and his children saying: 'I was afraid' (French, 2011, p. 56). He later admits to them that, 'when I leave here I go back to Jamaica and just sit up dere in di hills at mi parent's place at first, me and old Jessie playing di old songs' (French, 2011, p. 60).

Errol is also now greatly anticipated by Sandra before his return. The 'what if game' (French, 2011, p. 25) Sandra remembers but Will rejects and Sandra's story of Errol being, 'like a giant from a fairy story' (French, 2011, p. 31) effectively characterise Errol as someone very special, making the audience anticipate his return. After Errol's arrival his charming manner, his flattering words for B and Barbara's awareness, looking at him 23 years later, that, 'looking at you, you still all flash and nothing behind it' French, 2011, p. 55), are juxtaposed. Later in Act 1 Scene 8 and Act 2 there is also a successful juxtaposition of Sandra's former thoughts of Errol as, 'this amazing thing' (French, 2011, p. 75), and the short man the audience witnesses in a small rural home Sandra describes as 'a dump (...). more a tin pot shed than a house' (French, 2011, p. 72). Errol himself admits to Sandra that, 'over di years what kept me company was shame' (French, 2011, p. 83).

Given the above analysis of Errol's characterisation I believe that he has been successfully characterised through the anticipation created for this great man's arrival; he is almost mythic in Sandra's eyes. The huge discrepancy between the image Sandra created and the actuality of this failed musician living a lonely humble rural existence is moving.

5. Setting

I believe the play's setting serves the narrative, themes and character progressions very well. This is because the play's plot is disrupted in a surprising and unexpected way by the sudden decision in Act 1 Scene 8 for Barbara to go to Jamaica with Errol. The audience's expectation that Barbara will die in St Michael's hospice with her family around her struggling to cope is altered. The audience are thrown out of their comfort zone and do not know what to expect when the action relocates to Jamaica.

The effect of setting the Prologue and Act 1 in Barbara's living area is that the significance of this space and, by extension the house, is magnified because Errol, Sandra, Barbara and Will each have different experiences and memories of living in it. There is continuity between the Prologue's events and those of Act 1 because Barbara and the children are all now back in the house Errol abandoned. Errol's leaving in the Prologue forms continuity with Act 1's events because this action deeply influences the characters' behaviour in Act 1.

Setting Act 1 among the packing of Barbara's possessions; underlines that her life is ending. That Barbara's children pack her possessions emphasizes that they are deeply implicated in her movement towards death. The children pack her things but these belongings are their possessions too because the items have significant childhood memories attached for Sandra and Will.

Setting Act two in Jamaica frees Sandra particularly to confront Errol about the damage he has caused her. It also allows her to voice without apology, as she could not in Act 1, the extent of her desperate situation as a mother. 'I look at Max and I'm scared I'm like you (...) I've thought about killing him' she tells Errol (French, 2011, pp.82-83). This time, in this natural, Caribbean mountain paradise setting Sandra is not judged for this like she was by Leon and Barbara in Act 1 when she communicated the same feelings. Instead Errol tells Sandra, 'I know how you feel' (French, 2011, p. 83). In Jamaica where 'there is no clock' (Waters, 2010, p. 89), the characters are freed from the immediate pressures of life back home in England and thus free to make different choices than they otherwise could in the domestic, English living room setting of the Prologue and Act 1.

My choosing this Jamaican setting for Act 2 has a similar effect for the characters in *Father's Day* as it does for Leela in Winsome Pinnock's *Talking in Tongues*. Of Pinnock's play Lynette Goddard states, 'the trip abroad [to Jamaica] enables Leela to find a voice to express herself freely' (2011, p. xiii).

6. Structure

Father's Day's structure is influenced by the structure of Pinter's *Betrayal* and Norris' *Clybourne Park*. As with these two plays, dramatic irony is very effectively used in the last scene of *Father's Day*. Similar to *Clybourne Park's* second act and *Betrayal's* last scene, dramatic irony creates a dual effect. The audience sees two newly-weds hoping and dreaming of their future on stage but simultaneously, the effect of seeing the action backwards is that the present scene is put into the context of what the audience knows comes afterwards. The audience knows what the consequences of Barbara and Errol's actions now will be in the future. Therefore, the words and actions of the characters in the scene are given greater

weight and poignancy because the audience know how the characters will view these supposedly throw away comments and actions in the future.

Father's Day is structured as a family play full of secrets and problems which, like all pastoral plays before it, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Winter's Tale* (1996), cannot be resolved in clock bound time. Act Two is structured in Pastoral Time and, as Waters states of pastoral time in plays, it 'seems to renounce the narrative imperative altogether, lingering with the characters, forcing us to relinquish our urge for movement and action' (2010, p. 89). Structuring the act like this ensures that the characters have time to linger in each other's company and resolve their differences.

However, concerns about Act 2's structure include Act 2 Scene 2 where Leon, Sandra and Will listen to Errol soothing and talking to Max through the baby monitor. Here the audience watches three characters on stage standing and listening; nothing visual occurs. In a further draft I would work on this moment by watching actors rehearse the scene to determine whether audience attention is sustained or not.

I feel Act 1's close intimate time structure arranged from Friday early evening until Monday mid-morning works effectively with the Act's action of packing up 'remnants of a life' (French, 2011, p. 17).

Additionally, not knowing when the removal men will arrive creates a sense of urgency regarding the packing. This urgency makes sense of Will and Sandra continuing to pack late into the night in Act 1 Scene 3. It also creates tension because the returning Errol is mistaken for a removal man and, ironically, enticed to stay and make himself comfortable. This incident where Sandra, Will and Leon do not recognise Errol is a significant comment on the family's dysfunction because Errol's actions mean his own children do not know his face.

Having an entirely linear Act 1 and an Act 2 where two of its three scenes are linear means that the Prologue and Act 2 Scene 3, set 23 and 30 years in the past respectively, stand

out as significant. These scenes function to round out the portrait of Barbara as a woman in love, as opposed to Barbara the dying mother, shown by the rest of the play.

Furthermore, the Prologue's structure teases the audience regarding Errol because though his voice is heard his face remains unseen. This structure strengthens the audience anticipation to see who Errol really is given Sandra's mythologizing of him and Will telling Barbara, 'when I think of him [Errol], try to imagine the shabby, lonely, overweight reprobate he must be by now' (French, 2011, p. 6). Therefore, by Errol's return the audience has several conflicting images of who he is, what he looks like etc.

Finally, structuring the play's last scene as occurring on Barbara and Errol's Wedding day in Jamaica satisfies the identified audience need to see more of the young Barbara because she is absent from the rest of Act 2.

7. Symbols

I believe the symbolism in *Father's Day* operates effectively to varying degrees. The first symbol is the Russian doll ornament Barbara plays with in the Prologue. This symbol of an intact family later becomes symbolic of the Roberts family's lack of completeness when in Act 1 Sandra relates how the ornament cracked. She alludes to their family situation saying, 'Every single doll cracked in exactly the same place. The whole family marred in an identical way' (French, 2011, p. 18). I believe this ornament's symbolism is further enhanced after the discovery that it was a wedding present from Errol to Barbara. However, in a further draft I would make this ornament's symbolism slightly subtler.

Other symbolism *Father's Day* utilises is the flickering light bulb in Barbara's living room that finally blows plunging the family into darkness as Act 1 Scene 7 ends. By Act 1 Scene 8 the bulb has been replaced and the room's light is very bright. This symbolic representation of the fractured family whose future becomes more hopeful, and thus brighter, in Act 1 Scene

8 when they finally sit down together as a family to eat Sunday lunch, may require more emphasis. Currently it is lost amongst all the other action occurring in this act.

The symbolism of the transition of Barbara's living space from fully equipped domestic space in Act 1 Scene 1 to empty shell of a room in Act 1 Scene 9 works as I intended. It symbolically shows that the life Barbara led here is ending.

Finally, in Act 2 Scene 2 the purple anthurium Will, Leon and Sandra plant as 'something of hers [Barbara's] to leave behind' (French, 2011, p. 79), becomes a metaphorical representation of Barbara herself throughout the rest of the scene. This memorial works effectively as a focal point bringing Barbara to mind for the audience during the exchanges between Sandra and Errol and then Sandra and Will.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, *Father's Day's* final script was arrived at by continually responding to notes from audiences and supervisors who encountered play drafts either as text or via rehearsed readings. As previously evidenced, these notes were invaluable in shaping the thematic areas of the play discussed above.

While writing the script some thematic elements were altered from the pitch document. Altered themes include the effect of one generation's actions on the one following it. Additionally, the effect of Errol's abandonment as manifested differently in Will and Sandra replaces the pitch's intention to explore why mothers who leave their children are condemned more severely than men doing the same.

Research undertaken influenced the development of the play's structure and characterisation, as described above. This included *Betrayal* and *Clybourne Park* influencing the dramatic irony used effectively in *Father's Day's* last scene. Additional structural decisions were prompted by *Talking in Tongues*. The multi-functioning stories recounted in

The Weir and *Jerusalem* were influential in characterisation choices. Such choices include the stories characters in *Father's Day*, particularly Sandra, choose to tell.

Research also determined *Father's Day's* family play structure with its secrets revealed to great repercussions, the reversion to determined roles once back in the familial home, stories told revealing past family life and humour which offsets the bleakness of Barbara and Sandra's situations.

Barbara is well characterised as a dying mother but also a woman in love. Sandra's character evolution has meant including memories uncertainly remembered to aid audience understanding of the emotionally damaged woman beneath the corporate suit and make her journey and motivations clearer and more sympathetic.

Errol and Will were difficult characters to write effectively. While Will remains too argumentative for the audience to warm to, Errol's initial unevenness of characterisation was used to advantage with different expectations of him constructed by Sandra and Will. These are shattered when Errol returns.

Setting Act 2 in Jamaica's pastoral time leaves the characters free to resolve Act 1's obstacles. Setting the Prologue and the play's last scene years in the past serves many functions, including allowing the young Barbara to be seen, along with her love affair with Errol.

Structuring *Father's Day* with an unexpected narrative change when the family goes to Jamaica serves the play well because this surprising action unsettles the audience and eliminates predictability.

Finally, while the symbolism of the Russian doll and flickering light bulb works partially, a further draft would make the doll more subtle and emphasize the light bulb's significance.

Overall in the final script of *Father's Day* a number of the playwriting elements discussed above work effectively together. However, as outlined, some elements, when analysed against the cohesive whole a successful stage play must reach, still require amendment.

Characters:

Sandra	29, British Afro-Caribbean woman. Lives in Swiss Cottage, London. Works as a marketing manager for an international cosmetics company. Girlfriend of Leon. Mother of Max.
Will	25, British Afro-Caribbean man. Husband of Alisha. Father of Isobel.
Barbara	48, black Jamaican woman. Lives in Coseley, West Midlands. Mother of Sandra and Will.
Errol	53, black Jamaican man. Estranged husband of Barbara, father of Sandra and Will. He lives in Mount James, Jamaica.
Leon	32, British Afro-Caribbean man. Boyfriend of Sandra, father of Max.

The prologue is set in Barbara's living room in Coseley, West Midlands

Act 1 is set in Barbara's living room in Coseley, West Midlands

Act 2 is set in Mount James, Jamaica

Prologue

1988. Barbara Roberts, 25, is in her living room in Coseley, West Midlands. The room is sparsely and inexpensively furnished and leads into a visible open plan kitchen diner. Barbara is just putting the finishing touches to her short, sexy outfit in preparation for an evening out. A clock is visible on the living room wall.

Barbara clips on an earring and begins looking for the other one. She looks under chair cushions, under the coffee table etc.

Errol: *(Calling from off stage)* B, you comin' or what?

Barbara: *(Continuing to look for her earring.)* Mi cyan jus throw on any old piece a rag and walk street with knotty hair same way.

Errol: *(Calling)* Well di bus ain't gone wait pan you.

Barbara: Mi soon come.

Errol: *(Calling)* Ten minutes, you hear? I gwan get me one cigarette from Shorty.

Barbara continues looking for her earring.

Errol: *(Calling)* B? Your hearing me?!

Barbara: Me na go deaf yet, gwan no?

Beat

Errol: B!?

Barbara does not acknowledge this and continues what she is doing.

Errol: B!?

Barbara: What?

Errol: You always been my dancin' girl and you know it. Just you and me on dat dance floor. Movin' together like we flyin'!

Barbara laughs.

Errol: You a catch.

Barbara: Of course.

Errol: You di best B, di very best.

Beat.

Barbara: Errol, y'alright?

Beat.

Barbara stops what she is doing and looks towards the living room door, beyond which is the hallway where Errol is.

Barbara: Errol?

Errol: I'm good man. Good. In a bit y'hear?

The sound of Errol shutting the front door behind him.

Barbara: *(To herself)* Ten minutes? No sir, dis dancin' girl na step one foot pan no dance floor looking like a ragamuffin. 'Bout ten minutes. Mr Errol Roberts you goin' to be waitin' tonight.

Barbara finds her other earring and clips it on. She holds up a little mirror and applies her lipstick carefully, blots it on a tissue and then applies another coat.

Barbara puts a cassette tape into a music centre in the room and puts on some music. The music of Peter Tosh; 'Johnny Be Goode', begins to play. Barbara moves sexily to the music as she finishes getting ready.

She uses the mirror to apply her eyeliner, mascara and eye shadow.

Barbara checks the clock on the wall a moment and then lights the gas stove and places a hot comb on it to heat up.

During the next few moments Barbara quickly rinses a few plastic toddler's plates and tumblers that stand by the sink and folds down a child's high chair and places it out of the way behind one of the living room chairs. Barbara folds a small pile of toddler's clothes that lie in a washing basket that sits on top of an ironing board in the dining area. Barbara places the pile of folded clothes onto the dining room table and folds down the ironing board; standing it against a wall in the kitchen.

She then uses the hot comb, with the aid of the mirror, which she props between the kitchen counter and the wall, to press the sides of her hair quickly. While Barbara is doing this she checks the clock again.

She puts on her high heeled shoes and coat. She looks in the direction of the living room door and then takes a seat in a chair. She waits with her small handbag in her lap. She cannot help but still move to the music.

After a moment Barbara glances at the clock again and then moves to the window. Drawing the curtain aside she looks out of the window to check for Errol down the street.

Barbara: *(Glancing at the clock on the wall again as she retakes her seat.)* ‘Bout ten minutes.

Pause.

Barbara picks up a Russian doll from the mantel piece near where she is sitting. She plays with it taking it apart and sitting all of the dolls on the table next to her. She picks up the smallest doll and looks at it, really studies it and then replaces it on the mantel piece. Barbara minutely adjusts the position of the doll three or four times until she is satisfied. She then crosses to the telephone and dials.

Barbara: What a go-on Shorty? Tell Errol I’m waitin’ pan ‘im.

Barbara listens.

Barbara: Him nat come by you?

Listening again for a moment.

Barbara: Him come for Jessie? *(Laughing nervously)* Sorry no, no it’s alright, dat him now just knockin’ di door.

Barbara listens again.

Barbara: I let him know. Sunday after church yeah? Carter’s Green, you said? Tell Angela I ask after her you see?

Barbara listens a moment.

Barbara: Yeah okay. Bye. Bye.

Barbara replaces the phone and looks up and down the street from the living room window again. The sound of a bus stopping and then driving off can be heard. She picks up the Russian doll and examines it again. This time tears are forming in her eyes. Just before the first tears spill over her eyelids Barbara blinks them away and throws the Russian doll as hard as she can against the wall. It hits the clock and ends up somewhere on the kitchen floor. The clock falls off the wall.

Barbara: *(Quietly, through a voice choked with tears that she will not let flow)* Damn you Errol.

Barbara leaves the room briefly and returns with cotton wool and make up remover. She sits in the same chair in the living room – kicks off her shoes and using the mirror slowly and violently begins rubbing the make-up off her face with the cotton wool and make-up remover.

The music continues to play. Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 1:

2011. Barbara Roberts, 48, and Will Roberts, 27, present. A dimly, poorly lit living room with an attached kitchen diner in Barbara's home in Coseley, West Midlands. All of the furniture in the room is cheap but matching. The furniture and decor are at least ten years old.

Barbara lies on a sofa, while Will is in a chair opposite her. Barbara wears a colourful paper crown and has pink hearts painted on her face in face paint. The debris from a recently concluded children's party lies around the room.

Will pulls off his coloured paper crown and begins clearing up the room.

Barbara: You ain't king daddy no more, eh?

Will: Me king? Jokin' aren't ya? It's Isobel, she rules the roost, and she knows it.

Barbara: Ain't no good Will, a child callin' di shots.

Will: *(Scrubbing at the stars painted on his face.)* Can't get this stuff off.

Will picks up a very old hand held mirror and looks at his face.

Don't know why I agreed.

Will scrubs at his face some more; but to no avail.

Barbara: 'Coz she ask.

Will: *(Looking at the mirror he is holding.)* Can't believe you kept it. I remember this from way back. You, sitting right in this kitchen, hot comb in hand every Sunday morning.

Barbara: You'd kill a man, she ask you to.

Will continuing to clean up; putting children's toys into a bag and picking up plastic cups, paper plates, wrapping paper etc.

Will: Sort this place in no time.

Barbara: She spoilt Will, you know it.

Will: You don't –

Barbara: It not good for her all dis –

Will: A father does things. Provides things. Should anyway *(Quieter)* if he can.

Barbara: There's providing and there's spoiling.

Will: A father provides.

Barbara: Sometimes but not –

Will: Always. (*Beat.*) Always if that's what she wants.

Barbara: That what you think a father is? Like Father Christmas?

Will: No 'course not. Yes maybe, no, it's, not that simple, you know it's not. Saying that makes it sound-

Barbara: What?

Will: Like the simplest thing in the world.

Will continues tidying the room for a moment and then turns back to Barbara.

Will: I should know the right things to do but I don't. I don't and so I can only do my best. (*Indicating the signs of the recent children's party.*) It might not be much, might not be right, but it's the best I know how to do.

Barbara: Love I'm not saying –

Will: I know what you're saying.

Beat.

Barbara: You and Sandy Will, I only ever wanted the best.

Will: Don't upset yourself, not now. Leave the past where it belongs just for once, let's concentrate on now eh.

Barbara: I know what you think. But he was never all bad Will. I never said he was all bad. Even after what happened I-

Will: What happened? What he did. What he chose.

Barbara: Okay, him make a choice, a stupid one, but does hating him make your life better?

Will: Yes.

Beat.

Yes it does. When I think of him, try to imagine the shabby, lonely, overweight reprobate he must be by now; it reminds me of Izzi. Reminds me how not to be.

Barbara: That nat fair; you know it's nat.

Will: I know what you say, what you tell me about him, but that's all I know.

Will and Barbara say the next speech at exactly the same moment.

Will: *(Mimicking his mother's voice.)* Una show respect right. Yes him gone but dat man still your daddy.

Barbara: Una show respect right. Yes him gone but dat man still your daddy.

Barbara stops a moment and looks at Will. He looks her right in the eye.

Will: Respect your daddy that's all I know.

Barbara: You want I tell you him a bad man? You want I talk and talk and run him down?

Will: I don't know I –

Barbara: All dem years is what I shoul da done?

Will: Respect mommy? We're all who we are because of what he couldn't take, wasn't man enough to do. How you want me to show that respect?

Barbara: Sometimes you're so hard I don't recognise you.

Will: If you don't want to hear it don't ask me.

Barbara: But baby-

Will: I'm not doing this again mom. Not this weekend when your –

Barbara: If not now when?

Will: After, another time.

Barbara reaches for Will.

Barbara: Come baby, sit by me.

Barbara makes space on the couch and Will perches on the edge of it but cannot make eye contact now.

Me, I ain't got another darlin', no second chance. So if not now, there's no more time. I just want to make sure –

Will gets up suddenly and continues clearing the party debris.

Will: Nearly done.

Barbara: You and Sandy need to –

Will: Be clean as a whistle soon.

Barbara: Will.

Will keeps cleaning up.

Will: Just let me –

Barbara: Will.

Pause

Will stops what he is doing but cannot look up at her.

Will: Mom, I can't.

Barbara: Look at me.

Will: Not now.

Barbara: Look baby.

Will: *(Still not looking up.)* It's too soon.

Barbara: You can't run from this.

Will: He would, he did, from everything.

Barbara: You're nothing like him.

Will: Sandy too, didn't even look back.

Barbara: Sandy's coming, you know that.

Will: Probably just a little too late though, that's her specialty.

Barbara: She's busy.

Will: No one's that busy.

Barbara: The baby and all.

Will: It's too soon.

Barbara: Honey look at me.

*Will kneels in front of his mother, his head down unable to look her in the eye.
Barbara takes his face in her hands and gently makes him look at her.*

Barbara: It's time baby.

Will embraces his mother, her crown falls off in the embrace. Will picks up the crown and replaces it on her head.

Will: *(Looking into his mother's eyes.)* Queen of the world.

Barbara gives Will a playful swipe.

Barbara: You're bein' silly.

Will: No.
Will finishes clearing and the last thing he does is swipe Barbara's crown.

Barbara: Gimme ma crown boy.

Will: Thought it was silly

Barbara: It is.

Will: So you won't be wanting it back.

Barbara: *(Laughing.)* So; you turn tief now?

Will: I'm in good company.

Barbara: Boy!
Barbara attempts to get up off the sofa and grab the crown from him – she attempts to pull the crown out of Will's hands but it rips.

Will: *(Rushing to keep Barbara on the sofa.)* What are you doing, you're supposed to be resting.

Barbara: Look now you mash up mi ting.

Will: Not so bad. *(Will places the crown in Barbara's hand.)*
Just wear and tear.
Barbara examines her crown.

Barbara: Looks like more tear than wear to me.
Barbara places the crown carefully under the cushion she has her head on.
Will sits.
Beat.

Barbara: You gonna sort things out fa mi?

Will: Tomorrow. They're not coming 'til Monday.

Barbara: And if there's a cancellation?

Will: There won't be.

Barbara: Might be. They come earlier then. I want to be ready.

Will: No one's coming tonight.

Barbara: You don't know.

Will: It's a service mom, they come when you say they come and you said Monday right?

Barbara: Just mek a start na man.

Will: You agreed Monday, that's what you said.

Barbara: Well...

Will: What?

Barbara: Him say if I'm flexible, ready from Friday, if anyone cancel, he can do me and maybe knock a bit off.

Will: Mom!

Barbara: You and Alisha always tellin' me; get a good deal.

Will: But you're not ready.

Barbara: So mek a start. I know you pack it all real good; careful.

Will: What's the number? Let me call them; arrange it for Monday like we said.

Barbara: You and Alisha said.

Will: You agreed.

Barbara: He'll call when him ready for me.

Will: You can't just wait for a call, whenever. They should've been specific. Who you using?

Barbara: Why?

Will: Why won't you say?

Barbara: He's mi church brother, you don't know him.

Will: Who?

Barbara: Why?

Will: Who?

Barbara: Brother Shorty, you know him?

Will: I know Shorty.

Barbara: Hmm. And before you say it –

Will: Why do you always have to get some dodgy ... you can't just look in the yellow pages like everyone else?

Barbara: Now look this is my business right. Shorty is good. He move my good friend Sister Anderson's brother's daughter's child, Tracy, you know her too? Did a fine job. And anyway, Shorty, him a God fearin' man.

Will: Oh, that's alright then.

Beat.

Barbara: *(Rubbing Will's head.)* You gonna do it fa me?

Will: *(Sighs)* 'Course.

Beat.

Will: You should get some rest, take your pills.

Barbara: It nat 6 yet.

Will: *(Checking his watch.)* Quarter past.

Barbara: Already?

Will: Been a long day.

Barbara gets up off the couch and slowly approaches the living room doorway. As she is about to leave the room she turns back to Will.

Barbara: But didn't she look pretty; Izzi all dressed up like a princess?

Will: Yeah. You look tired Mom.

Barbara: All her little friends.

Will: Just a little lie down? It'd do you good.

Barbara: She reminds me of Sandy at that age. Loved pink a whole lot. But with Sandy it was fairies not princesses.

Beat.

Barbara: Where did she get that beautiful costume?

Will: *(Gently)* I made it, remember? You helped with the skirt hem, remember?

Barbara pretends to remember.

Barbara: Oh yes, of course. It's these pills, mek me confused man.

Will: Go on then; have a bit of a sleep eh?

Barbara: Just a few minutes. You wake me when Sandy comes?

Will: If.

Barbara: She's comin' man. She promised me.

Will: Didn't she 'promise' last week.

Barbara: She got busy, she can't help that.

Will: No one's that busy.

Barbara: Get me some water baby.

Will goes to get the glass of water from the kitchen tap.

Barbara: Let it run, mek it nice and cold.

Will: I know mom.

Will returns with the water – he keeps hold of the glass while he helps her out of the living room and into her bedroom. This is a room down a short corridor just off the living room.

Will returns and begins assembling some cardboard packing boxes from a stack in the corner of the living room. The living room light flickers for a moment, Will registers this. Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 2

Barbara Roberts' living room. Time has passed since the previous scene. Will is now surrounded by cardboard boxes, some full, taped down and neatly labelled. Other boxes stand empty waiting to be filled.

Will has separated Barbara's living room into piles. Books, ornaments, cushions, pots, plates, glasses, cutlery, cups etc. These piles of things are on nearly every surface of the living room and attached kitchen-diner.

Will is packing up a box of books. As he packs each book Will looks it over first; he flicks through a couple – every item he packs holds memories for him of his mother and their shared life in this house. He finishes packing this box; tapes the box down, labels it and then selects another one of the empty boxes. Will begins to place ornaments into the box. He gets to the Russian doll and takes a moment to really look it over. There is clearly a specific memory linked to it.

The doorbell rings.

Will puts the Russian doll on a table and rushes to get the door. The doorbell rings again just as Will yanks open the door.

Will: *(Seeing Sandra.)* For God's sake Sandy, you're gonna wake her.

Sandra: Hello to you too.

Will: No, sorry, sorry, come in.

Will wheels in her suitcase for her.

Will: Well you gonna stay on the door step?

Sandra steps inside and surveys the chaos in the room.

Sandra: So, how's things.

Will: Good, good, you?

A moment. The two are awkward with each other.

Sandra: Stupid question?

Will: Perhaps, given-

Sandra: I didn't mean anything by it.

Will: No, no, 'course not. I didn't think you-

Sandra: I'm just a bit, you know, uh, a bit, it's that thing where in your head you see a situation, see what would be really unhelpful and so you're thinking don't say it, don't say it, whatever you do don't say that. And then suddenly that thing, the thing you're not supposed to say just comes out of your mouth. And you hear it in your voice and can't believe it.

Will: Don't worry about it. Who knows the right things to say now anyway? Drink?

Sandra: Please.

Will: *(Going to the kitchen.)* What are you drinking these days? I should be able to scare up something half decent.

Sandra: Water's fine.

Will turns to look at her.

Will: Water?

Sandra: Bottled if you've got it. Isn't that what all the good breastfeeding mothers do – cut out the booze?

Will: Course, breastfeeding, right sorry. Forgot. Can't stretch to bottled I'm afraid. Tap's as good as any of that fancy rubbish though right.

Will gets a glass from the rack beside the sink and runs the cold tap in the kitchen.

Sandra: If there's no bottled it's fine, leave it.

Will: *(Turns off the tap and is irritated.)* What afraid you'll catch something? Good enough for mom and me but not you?

Sandra: Did I say that?

Will: Didn't have to.

Beat

Sandra: Tap water will be fine. Thanks.

Will runs the kitchen tap again and fills the glass of water which he places next to Sandra.

Will: Sorry.

Sandra takes a reluctant and tentative sip of her water, more to please Will than anything else. She smiles brightly at Will.

Will: Take a seat if you can find somewhere.

Sandra looks around the room. There is nowhere free of objects where she can sit down.

Sandra: *(Taking a pile of books off a chair.)* Do you mind if I *(Indicates the books.)*

Will: No, please.

Will removes stacked items from a chair in the room across from Sandra and takes a seat himself. The two sit far apart on either side of the room with most of Barbara's possessions between them. Will smiles brightly at Sandra.

Sandra: Alisha, Isobel?

Will: You know, getting by, can't complain. You?

Sandra: Same.

Beat.

Will: Good journey up?

Sandra: Can't complain.

Will: Should have said, I'd have got you from the station.

Sandra: Didn't want to put you out.

Will: Only round the corner, was it Coseley you came into? 5 minutes, wouldn't have been a problem.

Pause

Will: *(Indicating the glass of water she has left on the side across the room.)* Gonna have that then?

Sandra: 'Course. *(She crosses the room, retrieves the water and sits back down putting the glass of water on the edge of a heavily laden side table next to her.)*

Will: Go on then.

Sandra: What?

Will: Thought you wanted a drink?

Sandra: I will.

Will: So drink it.

Sandra: You look worn out.

Will: Go on.

Sandra: How is she Will?

Will: Go on.

Sandra: What does it matter, really?

Will: Go on.

Sandra grabs up the glass of water and drinks it straight down in one.

Sandra: Are you happy now, does that make you happy?

Will: *(Will smiles brightly at Sandra)* Can I get you another?

Sandra: Why do you always have to ... *(trails off)*

Pause

Sandra: *(Indicating the chaos around them.)* Maid's day off?

Will: We can't all afford servants.

Sandra: Maria is not a servant; she's a cleaner Will, two days a week that's all. But you know that don't you Will. Because I've told you that more than once.

Will: Take your shoes off; Mom doesn't like shoes on her carpets.

Sandra: I have been here before. I have lived here before.

Will: Have you? I can't remember that far back.

Sandra: This is childish.

Will: You never change do you?

Sandra: What's that supposed to mean?

Beat.

Sandra: Where's mom?

Will: Out dancing the night away on Broad Street.

Sandra: Will?

Will: Another stupid question.

Sandra: I didn't mean-

Will: Where do you think she is? In bed; like most people with a terminal illness.

Sandra: Can I go in, say hi?

Will: She's sleeping.

Sandra: I'll be quick.

Will: What part of that didn't you understand?

Pause – Sandra takes off her jacket and steps out of her shoes.

Sandra: What's all this then?

Will: Remnants of a life.

Sandra: I meant –

Will: Remnants of her life. You know her, the woman who gave birth to us both.

Sandra: Why are you making this so hard?

Will: You're too late Sandy.

Pause

Sandra: Look, I don't want to fight.

Will: *(Sighs deeply.)* Neither do I.

Beat.

Sandra: Let me help.

Will: What you got a few hours between meetings?

Sandra: I'm staying the whole weekend.

Will: Oh the whole weekend, aren't we lucky, isn't mom ever so lucky?

Sandra: I was busy, you know that.

Will: No one's that busy.

Sandra: The baby, he –

Will: Oh, how is Tarquin?

Sandra: That's not his name; you know that's not his name.

Will: *(Squeezing his eyes shut briefly and clearly having to stop himself.)* I'm sorry. Sorry.

Sandra: *(Closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.)* Okay. Okay. Will I love you. I don't want to fight with you.

Pause

Will goes back to filling the box he was working on before Sandra arrived.

Sandra: *(Approaching the box Will is filling and looking inside.)* Maybe I can help you with this one, ornaments is it?

Will: If you want.

Sandra: *(Picking up the Russian doll ornament.)* Oh my gosh, remember this? I was what six, seven and you what three –

Will: Four.

Sandra: *(Sitting on the arm of the sofa nearby.)* Yes four, that's right. Sitting right here in this room, you and me on this carpet, well not this exact one, a different one, but similar, with apple trees all over it, thread bare with apple trees –

Will: Cherry trees, it was covered in cherry trees.

Sandra: I remember now, cherries all over. You and me playing catch inside because mom wouldn't let us outside, *(imitates her mother's Jamaican accent.)* not unsupervised. *(Returns to her own normal voice.)* Throwing this between us *(indicating the Russian doll)*. Throwing it and throwing it, again, again, again. We knew what would happen if we kept on; neither said but I knew and knew you did too, but we kept on. And then I threw one last time and you let it slip through your fingers and –

Will: Yours not mine.

Sandra: What?

Will: Your fingers not mine.

Sandra: It slipped through my fingers to the floor and cracked. *(Sandra traces the crack in the ornament as she speaks.)* A crack running right through the family of Russian dolls. Every single doll cracked in exactly the same place. The whole family marred in an identical way.

A moment – Sandra catches Will's eye. Will holds her gaze for a moment and then is forced to look away.

Isn't that curious? The chances of that are –

Will: Go in if you want. She wanted me to wake her if you arrived.

Sandra: She said that? If?

Will: I said if, she said when.

Pause – Sandra looks at the Russian doll ornament and then pockets it.

As Will watches her, Sandra pushes open Barbara's bedroom door.

Sandra: *(Calling out)* Mom, I'm home, you awake?

Lights down

Act 1 Scene 3

Barbara's living room, as the previous scene. It is later in the evening. There is a sense of the passage of time and a more contemplative mood. More boxes have been filled and taped up. Sandra is filling a box with kitchen ware. After a moment or two Will enters the kitchen from the back garden, he walks past Sandra to continue filling a box of books.

Sandra fans at the air in Will's wake. Will and Sandra continue to fill their boxes during the following.

Sandra: Funny how a smell can take you back; transport you like a time machine. Minty fresh with strong under notes of air freshener.

Will: Don't know what you mean.

Sandra: You haven't come clean yet? You're a grown-up Will, no need to sneak around now. Must of cost a fortune over the years all that air freshener and breath spray.

Will: Could you imagine it? If I just lit one up right in front of her, could you imagine?

Sandra: What could she say?

Will: She wouldn't have to. It'd be pursed lips-

Sandra: And that look, just staring-

Will: Disappointed.

Sandra: Hurt.

A moment.

Will: Why did you take the blame; when she found that pack?

Sandra: Yeah in my coat pocket, you cheeky bastard.

Will smiles; he is a little ashamed at the memory.

Sandra: I did try to deny it but she went all Miss Marple on me going (*Imitating Barbara's voice*) I caught you red handed. You cyan deny it; your coat, your pocket; your packet. (*Back to Sandra's normal voice.*) Anyway that's what she expected from me; something like that.

Will: But not me?

Sandra: Golden boy, you must be joking, even at twelve your arse was gold plated according to her. Must be 9 carat by now, maybe even 18 seeing as you've morphed into this Mr Mom, Florence Nightingale hybrid.

Will throws a cushion at Sandra but it misses.

Will: Shut up.

Sandra: Am I lying?

Will: She doesn't do favourites.

Sandra: So you say. No to her I was always more like that costume jewellery, you know the kind; cheap, turns your ears green after a bit; disposable. That was Mom for you.

Will: Is.

Sandra: What?

Will: (*Quietly.*) Past tense. Mom isn't past tense, not yet.

Sandra: Will I ... I didn't mean-

Will: Whatever.

Beat. Sandra doesn't know what to say to Will.

Sandra: (*Sitting back against the kitchen counter.*) Huh, let's take a break, I'm shattered.

Will: Needs to be done tonight.

Sandra: They're not coming 'til Monday so-

Will: Could be here tonight, tomorrow first thing, or Sunday maybe.

Sandra: Tonight? (*Looks around for a clock on the walls sees none and checks her mobile phone instead.*) It's already 10:30 as it is, no one moves at 10:30. Anyway they give a set time usually.

Will: Ask mom.

Sandra: That doesn't sound right.

Will: It's one of her church brothers doing it.

Sandra: Ah, her good old church brothers, the vagueness makes sense now.

Will looks at Sandra.

Will: Why do you do that?

Sandra: What?

Will: Do that thing? Act like you know all there is to know about it, now that I've said one phrase you recognise, 'church brother'. You have no idea what that means to her or me. Maybe once but not now.

Sandra: You never were good at sharing.

Will: I ain't doin' this with you.

Sandra: *(With deliberate emphasis on underlined words.)* I am not doing this with –

Will: Are you fucking joking?

Sandra: Sorry. Habit.

Will: I hate that. Do you know it's rude doing that? Correcting someone? Like you know better than they do, are better than they are.

Sandra: I never said-

Will: Don't have to.

Beat.

Sandra: What I said about Mom before *(beat)* past tense wasn't what I meant.

Beat.

Sandra: You know what I'm like Will; foot in mouth that's me.

Will: I don't even know why *(thinks better of it.)* I have things organised, under control. We don't need you Sandy; you're too late.

Sandra: That's not for you to say.

Will: Ask her; that's what she's thinking; you know that's what she's thinking.

Sandra: Don't say that.

Will: Ask her.

Sandra: *(Close to tears.)* Don't, okay, just don't say that.

Pause

Sandra: So I haven't been back in a while.

Will: Two years.

Sandra: That's not so long.

Will: Two years is not so long?

Sandra: Not to some people.

Will: You want to ask mom?

Sandra: Aren't you tired of getting at me little brother?

Will: Mom, me, we're not some people I guess.

Pause

Sandra's mobile phone rings, she checks who is calling and then cancels the call. Sandra has succeeded in getting the tears and emotion that threatened under control.

Will: Office in desperate need are they?

Sandra: I told you, I've taken leave.

Will: If you're on leave, someone should've told them that.

Sandra: Do you ever think about him?

Will: Who?

Sandra: You know who.

Will: What made you ask that?

Sandra: Just wondered.

Will: I think about her not him.

Sandra: Not even sometimes? You never think about why he did what he did?

Will: I'm too busy thinking about Mom's medication, thinking about Mom's hospital appointments, her chemotherapy, her radiotherapy, all the things that need doing so she can stay in her own home, because she wouldn't move from here 'til now. So no, I don't think about him, or why.

Sandra: Ever?

Will: Ever.

Sandra: Liar.

Pause

Sandra: She corrected us.

Will: What?

Sandra: Mom, all the time, each and every time. *(Imitating Barbara's voice.)* Don't use slang Sandy, Will that's not the right word, use the right word, always use the right word. *(Back to Sandra's voice.)* Remember?

Will: She just wanted us to be better, do better, 'coz she knew we could.

Sandra: All those years, her thing, it just seeped into me like osmosis. It winds Leon up but I can't seem to stop. *(Beat.)* I'm starving, what is there to eat?

Will gets up, checks the kitchen cupboards and then takes a family pack of crisps from one of them. He tosses Sandra a bag of crisps and takes one himself.

Sandra: *(Catching the crisps and glancing at the bag.)* Salt and vinegar

Sandra looks Will in the eye and they say the following phrase in unison.

Sandra: It's finger licking good.

Will: It's finger looking good.

Both laugh at the memory.

Sandra: Ew, remember what we used to do?

Will: What? We were kids.

Sandra: Yeah but can you imagine. I'd never allow Max to do that now.

Will: *(Looking at Sandra.)* Don't suppose you would.

During the following Sandra and Will eat their packets of crisps as they talk.

Will: There's this thing that I do sometimes, just recently. Not intentionally, not consciously doing it but just when I am really engrossed in something, like when I'm writing code for a webpage or a banner or something, really going for it you know. I hum; really quiet under my breath on and on until someone tells me I'm doing it. Thing is I was over here the other day and I was doing that thing and mom comes out with it really suddenly, made me jump if I'm honest. She says, loud as she can but not quite shouting, *(Imitating Barbara.)* 'Errol give it a rest na man'.

Sandra: What?

Will: That was his thing, what he used to do sometimes. Only I didn't know see, would never have known that I did what he did if she hadn't said. Since I found that out I've tried to stop but it's like it's programmed in me; it's unconscious, I don't know when I'm doing it so how can I stop myself?

Sandra: But you never think about him?

Will: Shut up.

The lights flickers again; for a little longer this time.

Sandra: Bulb's going.

Will: Just does that sometimes when it's coming to the end. It's got a good few days yet.

Beat

Sandra: Do you remember the what if game?

Will: No.

Sandra: What if he is a millionaire?

Will: I don't remember.

Sandra: What if he is a secret agent?

Will: Stop.

Sandra: What if he is an astronaut? What if, what if, on and on.

Will: It wasn't healthy two children hung up on a blank like that.

Sandra: Healthy curiosity.

Will: Sleeping with his picture under your pillow for ten years, that healthy?

Sandra: You not me.

Will: You too. I used to steal your copy of NME sometimes, you never knew 'coz I'd always put it back under your pillow before you got home. Each time I saw it under there, a little passport sized picture of him tucked between your pillows.

Sandra: Okay so once or twice maybe. Oh and I knew, I knew you read it 'coz you'd always fold back the edges of the pages of the bands you liked; couldn't help yourself.

Will: You never said.

Sandra: There's a lot I never said.

Will: Like what?

Beat – Sandra watches Will a moment.

Sandra: Like maybe I could see how a person could get to that level of feeling.

Will: What do you-

Sandra: A pressure, a confinement.

Will: I don't-

Sandra: Trapped in their choices.

Will: What choices?

Sandra: Trapped by the wrong choice; how that could make a person do what he did.

Will: Sandy what are you saying?

Sandy watches Will for a second, as if on the verge of telling him something but at the last moment thinks better of it.

Sandra: It's late, I'm tired, I-

Will: What so you're saying it's right that Mom was the one, had to be the one. Working two jobs; ward sister by day and then any agency work she could get at night, four nights a week, every week. Any stinking old people's home that needed a nurse overnight. You and me left to practically bring up ourselves 'coz mom has to catch up on sleep when she's home, the brief time between jobs when she's home. So no noise kids, ever. No family time kids, no holidays kids and certainly no paying attention to what you might need kids. Not because she didn't want to, no not because of that. But because she had to, because his choices gave her no choice and made her have to.

Sandra: *(Looks at Will a moment.)* Now do you see why I never said?

Beat.

It wasn't that bad Will. You make it sound so-

Will: Wasn't it?

Sandra: We did alright.

Will: Did we Sandy? You ever look at Leon and though the two of you, you're having a nice time now, a wonderful time now, in your head you're planning how you're gonna cope if he ever walked out, just left you holding the baby?

Sandra: Never.

Will: Who's lying now?

Beat.

She says I shouldn't hate him, imagine that.

Sandra: Imagine.

Will: *(Mimicking Barbara's voice.)* Una show respect right. Yes him gone but dat man still your daddy.

Sandra: Ever thought she might have a point?

Pause.

Both Will and Sandra have finished their crisps by now. Sandra puts her bag on the kitchen counter. Will rips his bag down one side so that it is spread open. He proceeds to lick every inch of the inside of the crisp packet clean of its crisp crumbs and salt and vinegar residue.

Sandra: *(Disgusted.)* Ah you can't be serious, how old are you?

Will: *(Looking up at her from his crisp packet.)* Mmm finger licking good.

Sandra: That's so, so uncivilised.

Will: So I like it.

Will finishes licking the last of the crisp packet and throws it in the kitchen bin.

Now come on, this stuff isn't going to pack itself.

Sandra gives Will a mock salute and recommences packing her kitchen ware box.

Will: *(Watching Sandra pack for a moment.)* You don't put those in there. These go in the baby box. *(Will takes a small toddler's plate, cup and bowl out of the box of plates and glasses Sandra had been packing.)*

Sandra: *(Indicating the toddler's cutlery.)* Can you believe she kept them? These are historic. Thunder cats, man. Faded now but I can just make one out still, Cheetarah I think. *(She brushes her fingers over the image)* Historic. Mine then yours.

Sandra's mobile phone rings again. She checks who is calling and then cancels the call.

Will: Put it on silent then.

Sandra: I can't just yet.

Will: Who is it?

Sandra: Just someone I used to know.

Will: Other people you're running from?

Sandra: Who's running; I'm here aren't I?

Will: You can run without moving your feet, did you know that? I found that out the last couple of years, since Isobel. Just stay in one place, refuse to acknowledge, refuse to be changed by it. That's a kind of running.

Sandra throws a cushion at Will.

Sandra: When did you get so deep?

Will throws the cushion back; it hits Sandra in the chest.

Ow!

Will: You'll be surprised how much your baby brother's grown up.

Sandra: Oh yeah?

Will: Yeah.

Will goes to a coat in the room and takes an almost empty packet of cigarettes out of a coat pocket. He lights up and slowly inhales and then blows out smoke in practiced rings. Will looks Sandra straight in the eye.

Sandra: Oh very daring.

Will takes another drag on the cigarette.

Sandra: Did you hear that? Is it mom?

Will immediately stubs out the cigarette on the packet, grabs a can of air freshener and drowns the room in it. As he yanks open the window in the room and throws the cigarette butt out of it, he takes breath freshener from his back pocket and gives his mouth a few squirts.

Sandra: *(Laughing.)* Smooth.

Will: *(Realising that Sandra was teasing.)* Cow.

Sandra: Really smooth. Kind of like a timid clown philosopher then; spouting wisdom while covered in fear and face paint?

Will remembers the paint on his face and rushes to look in the small hand held mirror.

Will: *(Holding up the mirror and scrubbing at his cheek.)* Slipped my mind.

Sandra: *(Laughing)* Really fetching.

Will: Isobel's birthday party. Remember Auntie Sandra?

Sandra: Shit. *(Thinks for a moment.)* Can you give a two year old a cheque?

Will: You know what, I despair when it comes to you. What are you going to do for Max's first birthday? Somehow I don't think a cheque will do it.

Sandra: Might not be up to me.

Will: What, gonna leave poor Leon to deal with all that stuff? Why am I not surprised? You never did like getting your hands dirty.

Sandra: You have no idea what you're talking about.

Will: Becoming a parent changes you, or at least it should. Makes you a bit ridiculous, or at least it should. *(He rubs at his face some more.)*

Give it time and your expensive business suits will be replaced by tracksuits, trust me, you'll look like me.

Sandra: Maybe I've got more in common with him than her.

Will stops scrubbing at his face paint and looks at Sandra.

Will: You shouldn't say that, not even joking.

Pause

I'm gonna go wash this stuff off my face. Finish up on that one will you?
(Indicates the box of plates Sandra was filling.)

Will exits

Sandra finishes filling the box and begins taping it up. Her phone rings, she checks it and then cancels the call, as previously. Sandra throws the phone hard onto the sofa across the room. She continues taping up the box.

Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 4

Early morning the next day; Saturday. Barbara sits on the sofa in her bathrobe using a lap top. She is typing away and reading a screen and then typing again. After a few moments Sandra comes in. She is already fully dressed in a smart outfit though it is only 06:30 in the morning. Barbara is startled by Sandra and closes the lap top immediately and puts it on the floor at her feet.

Barbara: Up early.

Sandra: Couldn't sleep. You too?

Barbara: Have to be up early everyday. Will never lets me check my emails and things. Thinks it's too much for me but I like to keep my hand in; know what's going on.

Sandra: Hmm, email? I am impressed.

Barbara: I know you and dat son a mine like to think I'm a hundred years old but I am not an old woman, you know?

Sandra: I never said that.

Barbara: Always had this way about you, from I used to take you to nursery you had it. A way of looking at a person like you think you're di only one who knows how to do things properly.

Sandra: That's not fair.

Barbara: I'm dying Sandy, dat fair? I won't see mi grand son and daughter grow, dat fair? I'm tired a bein' fair Sandy, dat has gat me nowhere.

Beat.

Sandra: Are you in pain?

Barbara: *(Indicating the laptop.)* You keep dis to yourself; no point worryin' Will right? Our little secret?

Sandra: 'Course.

Barbara: All dat hair in your face; no one can see you behind all a dat. Come let me tie it up for you.

Sandra: Will said you are sometimes, in pain I mean.

Barbara: *(Putting a cushion on the floor between her feet)* Come baby sit here. I'll plait it fa you to show that pretty face.

Sandra: If you're in pain, I mean I could get you something, painkillers, something.

Barbara: It's alright.

Sandra: I don't mind I could-

Barbara: Will sees to dat. Him know my schedule for di pills.

Sandra: I could learn.

Barbara: No time. Will doin' just fine.

Sandra: I don't mind; I am home now.

Barbara: Girl what's wrong with you?

Beat.

Sandra: Are you scared? (*A moment.*) sorry. I didn't mean to ask that. I was thinking and thinking don't say that.

Barbara: Yes. I am.

Sandra: Me too. For you, of you.

Barbara: I scare you?

Sandra: A bit. You're you but not you. The you I remember is not the same as the you you are now.

Barbara: Two years on a sick bed'll do that. Meks me look in di mirror these days and not recognise this skin and bone ghost lookin' back.

Sandra: Sorry I couldn't come up; I should've come but-

Barbara: You've always done what suits you, why should this be any different?

Sandra: You're wrong you know? You're not ghostly, not to me. You're beautiful, really knock out even now.

Barbara: One thing I can say; you always had your daddy's tongue.

Sandra: I'm serious.

Barbara: So am I.

Sandra: (*Glances at Barbara.*) Now when I think of him I imagine a wood; tall, tall trees so much higher than me. But he is looking down at me and he is as tall as the tallest tree and almost as broad; like a giant from a fairy story. And there is a fun fair; I can hear the music, see the candyfloss, smell the toffee apples and hot dogs. He holds out his hand to me; I see his hand big and dark and safe with fingernails a little too long. But when I think of him his actual face is a blank; I mean I can see a face; his face but that's not the right face for then I know it's not. The face I always see is the one from the photograph, the passport sized one that I stole from the ones you'd tucked away behind the picture of Will on his first day of school that you kept on your dressing table next to the bottles of lotions and perfumes. That face is too young to be the one I remember because that is the face of a teenage boy.

Barbara: Errol never been to a fair in his life.

Sandra: My memories aren't solid; they shift, change a bit each time, get jumbled, mixed up. I can't be sure sometimes if the way I remember is how it happened or if I've added bits, forgotten bits or just made huge chunks up.

Barbara: Dat picture's definitely real, solid. You can touch it, hold it your hand. And every time you look it's the same thing looking back; Errol; 18 years old, staring down at the camera like it done somethin' to him.

Beat.

Sandra: When did you know?

Barbara: How long you home for?

Sandra: When did you know you would be good at it?

Barbara: How long you home?

Sandra: I don't know?

Barbara: What's troubling you darlin'?

Sandra: *(Getting up from her chair and pacing the room as she talks.)* Apart from the obvious? You're dying, isn't that enough?

Barbara: I know you. From dat first nativity play I know you. Six years old and you were a ball of all dis energy, never still, worryin' and worryin', chewin' ya bottom lip just like you are now. One line you had and you practiced it over and over; I tested you again and again but always the same thing; 'mommy I can't do it, I know I will do it wrong, say the wrong words, mess everything up'.

Sandra returns to her chair and plays with a stray thread on the chair cushion with one hand. She tries not to chew at her bottom lip but does not succeed.

Barbara: Darlin'?

Sandra: You've got enough on your plate.

Barbara: Dat for me to decide. Something wrong with little Maxxie?

Sandra: How did you know that plaiting my hair when I was at nursery rather than cutting it short or doing something else was the right thing?

Barbara: I did what mi madda did.

Sandra: How did you know when to feed me, if I had had enough, if I was happy in your arms when you held me, if I was happy or sad?

Barbara: A mother just knows, well gets to know, gets to feel what her baby needs.

Sandra: And if she can't? Can't feel the way she should?

Barbara: Come let me get dat hair off your face.

Sandra: Doesn't just know?

Barbara: You should see little Izzi playin' with her daddy. Will know dat baby better than his own self. Before she can cry for it he have it right there like he is in her head. You should see-

Sandra: Forget it Mom.

Sandra gets up to leave.

Barbara: I like this time of di mornin'; nice and quiet. Just di two of us takin' like we used to.

Sandra: A long time ago.

Barbara: Not so long. (*Looks at her daughter a moment.*) Sit let me plait it; I might not be good for too much now but I can do that.

Sandra looks at Barbara a moment.

Sandra: If you want.

Sandra sits on the cushion between her mother's feet and Barbara begins plaiting her hair. Neither woman speaks as she separates Sandra's long permed hair into portions and plaits one after the other. We linger on this for a minute before the lights go down gradually.

Act 1 Scene 5

Mid-morning on Saturday. Sandra is present in Barbara's living room. Her hair is all plaited back neatly. Though many of Barbara's possessions have been packed in boxes now, there is still a considerable amount of packing to do. Despite the room being full of a mixture of haphazard piles of possessions and packing boxes Sandra is laying three place settings at the dining room table for breakfast. She is laying the table elaborately and has bought a bunch of long stem white roses for the table centre-piece.

Will enters.

Will: *(Watching Sandra a moment.)* What are you doing? No need to make it so fru fru.

Sandra: It's not fru fru Will. It's how civilised people eat.

Will: You saying we're not civilised?

Sandra: I'm trying to make it nice for Mom.

Will: Just 'coz you moved to London, suddenly you're different to rest of us?

Sandra: You know what, I've tried with you, I really have but-

Will: What?

Sandra: You're getting on my last nerve now, so give it a rest okay?

Will: Think of me as like, like, I don't know like, I've got it; the voice of your guilty conscience.

Sandra: Isn't it heavy?

Will: What?

Sandra: That chip you've got on your shoulder?

Will: Learn that in London did you? How to be a smart arse?

Sandra: What's so wrong with London?

Will: Where do you want me to start? The tube's dirty, smelly, crowded. Everything's ridiculously expensive, people living in tiny boxes, living one on top of the other in tiny boxes like ants, and that's just off the top of my head.

Sandra: Oh as opposed to the luxury existence you and mom lead in this small, close minded arse end of nowhere.

Will: Now we're getting to it.

Sandra: I didn't mean that. You pissed me off.

Will: I always knew you looked down on me, mom but-

Sandra: I didn't mean it.

Will: Arse end of nowhere. Your words.

Sandra: You've never even been to London and you're slagging it off.

Will: Everyone slags off London.

Sandra: People here, course they do but-

Will: Why? 'Coz they're so small minded?

Sandra: That's not what I meant.

Will: What did you mean then?

Sandra: Nothing.

Will blocks Sandra's way.

Sandra: Look can you move I am trying to sort the table out.

Sandra tries to get past Will but he continues to block her path.

Will: What did you mean?

Sandra: *(She looks at her brother)* This really bothers you doesn't it?

Will: You can't just say a thing like that Sandy.

Sandra: What is it you think I'm saying?

Will: We both know what you meant.

Sandra: No, please, enlighten me. You're the one who seems to be the expert on what's in my head all of a sudden.

Will: I should check on mom. *(Will moves out of Sandra's way but she now blocks his way.)*

Sandra: What do I think Will? Go on.

Pause – Will watches Sandra.

Will: Okay. *(Beat)* You think we're provincial, unworldly. You think we're a joke, our existence isn't equal to yours, we don't matter.

Sandra: That's what I think is it little brother. Your words, not mine. If you have a problem with your life do something, change it. Don't try to make me feel guilty.

Will: Would you do something, just like that?

Sandra: I would, I did.

Will: I don't understand how you can hate the place that made you, where you grew up.

Sandra: I don't hate it.

Will: You haven't been back for years.

Sandra: So? That doesn't mean-

Will: Did it even occur to you, even once, to move home, help mom out, just a bit?

Sandra: I have a life Will and it isn't here.

Will: And it never will be will it? No, not you. Little miss grammar school, little miss I can't possibly go to uni anywhere but London because that's where the centre of the world is. Remember when you told me that.

Sandra: It's not my fault you didn't get into a grammar school Will. You had the same chances as I did, exactly the same.

Will: I know that, I am not saying that.

Sandra: Then what?

Will: Even back then you had no intention of staying, even then you planned to leave Mom to me, make her my responsibility.

Sandra: I was 17 Will, excited about uni, excited about life; of course London is the centre of the world when you're 17.

Will: And what, where you lived that was second best was it? Then and now.

Sandra: I told you when she got sick we should pay for a nurse. I told you Leon and I could afford it. No one made you nurse her, you chose that.

Will: Alisha and I could have afforded a nurse too, but that's not the point.

Sandra: What is this really about?

Will: She's our mother Sandy, doesn't that make a difference to you?

Sandra: That's the difference between you and me Will. You think only with your heart, you have the rationality of a four year old boy. You can't just cling to her regardless. Don't you matter? How you are affected isn't that an issue? With you it's just let's keep Mom happy. Keep other people happy and fuck what I want, what my happiness requires.

Will; She's dying Sandy.

Sandra: I know but you're not Will.

Will: How can you just ... I don't understand you.

Sandra: Yeah you do.

Will: I don't.

Sandra: You're scared to.

Pause

You need to think about yourself Will.

Will: I can't.

Sandra: She'd understand.

Will: That what you've been doing all these years. Thinking of number one?

Sandra: Someone had to.

Will: What's that supposed to mean?

Sandra: It means; I refuse to be just, is there something wrong with that? Always just Sandra, don't mind her it's just Sandy, just, just, just, that's how she always described me. Like I was invisible, insignificant. But not you though hey. Her one son, the man of the house, helping with all her decisions. Never just Will.

Will: Oh get over yourself.

Sandra: I have, a long time ago. Have you? Still sitting here, staying here, stuck here, in the role she gave you way back then.

Will: Because she knew I was dependable.

Sandra: She doesn't know you. Not all of you. She doesn't even know you smoke.

Will: That's got nothing to do with anything. She relies on me because I was here, because I bothered to-

Sandra: Because you *were* a boy. That's all, just that. How ridiculous, an accident of birth no one could change.

Beat. Will looks at Sandra.

Will: I don't think I know how to just think of me. (*Beat*) Sounds stupid doesn't it, ridiculous? (*Beat*) It's never been just me, always the two of us Mom and me, since you left. 11 years and just mom and me together, looking after each other. My life, my own life, I don't know what that is without her.

Sandra: It's not healthy.

Will: What?

Sandra: The way you two are so bound up, so in each other's lives.

Will: She's my mother, our mother.

Sandra: Well, you don't see me –

Will: You're right we don't see you; that's part of the problem. We don't see you, haven't seen you for a very long time.

Sandra: You act like I haven't visited in 11 years.

Will: You haven't, not really.

Sandra: Rubbish. I used to come back at least once a year.

Will: A weekend at Easter, where you're constantly checking the traffic report to make sure you can take the quickest route home. That's not visiting, that's gritting your teeth until you can leave again.

Beat.

When you didn't come back that first Easter I rang and rang, filled up your voicemail but-

Sandra: I'd just got a promotion, I was so busy.

Will: Right.

Sandra: I just couldn't come back then.

Will: It wasn't about what you could do. It was about what you should.

Sandra: You know me, never do what I should do I?

Will: Only what you can stand, what makes you happy.

Sandra: We were busy at work. Had a big account presentation, I'd just been promoted and I wanted to show them that I-

Will: I understand Sandy, really. Your mom is diagnosed with cancer and for two years you're nowhere in sight? I understand, really.

Sandra: I called her every day.

Will: That's not the same thing!

Sandra: Will-

Will: I should check on Mom. Give me ten minutes and I'll start on breakfast.

Sandra: I'll make it.

Will: You don't know where anything is.

Beat.

Sandra: What do you think it'll be like when she ...after she-

Will: Don't.

Sandra: I can't stop thinking about that.

Will: I'm trying to make myself not think of it.

Sandra: Is it working? (*Beat.*) It's coming, we can't hide from it. (*Beat.*) Remember that after I'll still be here; I'm not going anywhere. Sorry little bro but like it or not you're stuck with me.

Will: Those flowers look ridiculous.

Sandra step out of Will's way and Will exits to check on Barbara.

Sandra continues setting the table. After a moment her phone rings, she checks who is calling and cancels the call. Sandra looks at the flower centre piece on the table. She considers it and then takes the roses out of the vase and dumps them in a bin nearby. Sandra is cleaning up the water droplets that spread across the table from the flowers when the doorbell rings.

Sandra: Hang on, I'm coming!

Sandra crosses the room quickly and answers the door. Leon is at the door. The two face each other and for a moment neither speaks. Sandra steps aside, Leon enters the house but Sandra does not close the front door. Leon is holding a small present which is wrapped in child's wrapping paper.

Leon: Your phone broken?

Beat

Leon: You knew I'd come. If you didn't answer you knew I would.

Sandra: You can't stay.

Leon: A letter Sandy?

Sandra: Please Leon.

Leon: 'I need time', what does that mean?

Sandra: I don't know I-

Leon: Like father like daughter?

Sandra: Please, I don't want Mom and Will to find out like this.

Leon: You don't think they'd be proud?

Sandra: They've got enough on their plate. I just need time away. It's for the best.

Leon: Why, because you said so?!

Sandra: *(Attempting to shush him.)* Please keep your voice down, they're only down the hall; Will'll be back any minute.

Leon: You just decide? I don't get a say?

Sandra: It's not about you. It's me; I'm not sure I'm cut out.

Leon: No one's cut out.

Sandra: *(Indicating the present in Leon's hand.)* You are. I didn't even remember, she's my niece and I forgot.

Leon: Don't be ridiculous.

Sandra: Am I though? You know Max in ways I don't, in ways I can't.

Leon: Give it time.

Sandra: It's been eight months.

Leon: That's nothing.

Sandra: You didn't need time.

Leon: People are different.

Beat.

Leon: Are you coming back?

Sandra: I'm not sure.

Leon: So you've not left; this is just what?

Sandra: I don't know what to tell you.

Leon: You didn't even try.

Sandra: I tried but-

Leon: You got up with him in the night three times in eight months. Won't breast feed him, bathe him, hardly go near him even. I mean what is that?

Sandra: Okay Leon you want to talk, I can see that, I understand that. Just not here, now please. I'll call you.

Leon: Don't make me laugh.

Sandra: I promise.

Leon: When you went back to work I thought –

Sandra: Leon, listen, I'm sorry about the letter, I should have spoken to you but-

Leon: You had 12 months maternity leave, 12 months. When you went back after 6. I should've seen it then.

Sandra: Seen what?

Leon: How selfish you are?

Sandra: I wasn't happy at home you know I wasn't.

Leon: I'm not happy in that tiny cramped flat we're all crammed into 'coz you refuse to move. 'coz you want to be a stone's throw from Hampstead Heath, like living there gives you something, makes you something. That place is too small, we earn enough we could buy somewhere nice, Surrey somewhere maybe. For him, for Max; space, a garden, he could have his own little room. But no, you don't want to move, you are quite happy throwing our money away on rent month after month just so you can live where you live. Max and me are hostages to what makes you happy.

Sandra: If I make you so unhappy, why are you here?

Leon: He's a baby Sandra; he needs his mother.

Sandra: Thing is I'm not sure I know how to be what he needs.

Leon: Every child needs their mom.

Sandra: Leon please just go. It's not you, I love you I do. If it was just you and me then, but-

Leon: But not Maxxie. So let me get this straight; you haven't left me, just our baby?

Sandra: I'm not saying this makes any sense, the way I feel. But sensible or not, right or wrong, I feel it and I can't seem to stop no matter how hard I try.

Leon: I don't understand. He's a baby, a tiny defenceless baby, why do you need space from that?

Sandra: Please.

Leon: If you come back we can work this out together

Sandra: No.

Leon: Why not?

Sandra: Don't make me say.

Leon: Sandy?

Sandra: Please.

Beat. Sandra watches Leon a moment.

Sandra: *(Only just audible.)* I don't feel any love for him.

Beat.

(Only just audible.) I don't feel anything for him.

Beat.

Leon: It's hard I know, sometimes I'm so tired I-

Sandra: I have never felt anything for him Leon.

Leon: What do you mean?

Sandra: Those 6 months, just him and me-

Leon: And me, quite alot of the time actually; every evening after school, through the night, every weekend.

Sandra: In the day then, just him and me, it felt like I was suffocating. He was suffocating me.

Leon: He's a baby, he's helpless, what could he do to you?

Sandra: Before, I knew exactly who I was but after ... after it was always him and me; mom and baby – people actually said that, but more mom – 'n'-baby, like it was one word, like we were one person.

Leon: You didn't say.

Sandra: Didn't I?

Leon: we could get a nanny, we can afford it.

Sandra: I know you, you wouldn't be happy with a stranger in your house, with your son.

Leon: I'd be happier than without you.

Pause – Leon and Sandra watch each other.

Will: *(Calling from Barbara's bedroom.)* Sorry, Sandy, just coming now!

Sandra: Leon? *(Indicating the open front door.)*

Leon: But it's not permanent, this space you need, how long? A few days, a week?

Sandra: I can't tell you for sure.

Leon: Two weeks then?

Sandra: I *(Cannot continue.)*

Sandra: You want me to give you a time frame and I can't.

Leon: What I want is my family back. The way it was when I left for work yesterday morning, before I got back from school and read your stupid letter. Oh and by the way you misspelled 'your' all through it. It's 'Y.O.U.R', not 'you' apostrophe 'R.E.' That's 'you are'. Even my year 11s get that one right.

Sandra: You are infuriating and pedantic do you know that?

Leon: You're the only one who can correct people that it? That's an example of 'you' apostrophe 'R.E.' by the way; in case you were wondering.

Sandra: Oh for heaven's sake.

Leon: Come on Sandy, what is all this really about huh? I mean I know you're selfish, I know you don't even care enough to remember your own niece's second birthday but I never thought-

Sandra: Leon, it's not that simple; at least for me it's not. You wouldn't understand.

Leon: What's to understand; you're a selfish cow.

Sandra: I *(can't continue.)*

Leon: Can't even argue 'coz you know I'm right.

Sandra: I ... I ... Because every time Max cries and cries and cries I imagine putting my hand over his nose and mouth and holding it there until he stops crying, stops moving, stops doing anything. *(Sandra clasps both of her hands over her mouth; unable to believe she actually voiced the thought.)*

Leon: Oh my God Sandy! *(Leon grabs Sandy's upper right arm.)* How can you even *(cannot finish)!*

Will enters the living room. Will stops in surprise at Leon's presence and also at the volume of Leon's voice.

Sandra pulls free of Leon's grasp. Leon closes the front door and crosses the room to Will. Will is aware that something is going on between the couple.

Leon: *(Embraces Will briefly.)* Sorry about your mom.

Will: Yeah.

Leon hands Will the wrapped present.

Leon: For Izzi. Party go okay?

Will: Yeah good. Mom did her best. Izzi insisted she join in the pass the parcel. It was nice. You eaten?

A moment. Sandra gives Leon a look, Leon returns this.

Will sees this and looks from one to the other.

Will: Am I missing something?

Sandra: No, no, nothing.

Leon: Yeah, go on then Will, I'd love some breakfast if you're making. Mom asleep or can I say hi?

Sandra: *(Warning him.)* Leon?

Will: Nah, she's up.

Leon: Cheers.

Leon exits to Barbara's room. Sandra watches him go.

Will: Forgotten hey? Yeah right, what you get her?

Sandra: What d'you mean?

Will: *(Waving the gift at her.)* Izzi's gift?

Sandra: Why don't you ask Leon?

Blackout.

Act 1 Scene 6

The used breakfast things are still on the dining table; including a carton of orange juice. Only Will and Barbara are still sitting at the dining table.

The following never gets above conversational volume, despite the extent of feeling, as both are aware of not alerting anyone else in the house.

Pause – Barbara drinks from a mug of tea while Will pretends to read The Guardian.

Will: I-

Barbara: *(Looking up.)* Baby?

Beat

Will: I *(can't say it.)*

Beat

Barbara: She'll be okay.

Will: How can I just *(trails off.)* I want her to know me you know? Know that I'm there if-

Barbara: *(Moving the newspaper aside.)* And she will; she does.

Will: If she needs me?

Barbara: You spoilin' dat girl, how many times I tell you? She's old enough Will; it's time, past time. Izzi she'll have fun, make friends. It's a good place, Alisha say she checked it out.

Beat.

Have a look yourself love, they do tours Lisha said, show you everything, you can ask questions. Tell you what; you go on a tour see what you think.

Beat.

Look Will, Lisha's pay cut, she's got to tek it, you know dat. So she's not just being, and it's not just dat I think you ought to, think Izzi's ready, it's, it's *(beat.)* How will you all survive you don't tek dat job Gary's offerin'?

Will: I told Lisha to leave it. Can't believe she bothered you with this, especially now; it's not fair.

Barbara: Why, I'm still your mother right? If I can help.

Will: Forget it okay? I'll speak to Lisha, make her see sense.

Barbara: I want to know you'll be okay, all of you. It's a good job.

Will: She might not settle.

Barbara: She might. She could love it. Do you have a choice? Without dat likkle extra Lisha makes you could lose di house. You will lose di house.

Will: It won't come to that.

Barbara: Take di job. Gary knows you, knows your work. Dat website you did for dem last month he was pleased, you said so yourself, very pleased.

Will: Alisha put you up to this? This all sounds like her to me.

Barbara: She nat allowed to talk? A problem shared Will dat's all.

Will: She had no right to come to you with our problems now.

Barbara: Rather that than everybody grin to mi face; all teeth and lies in dem mouths 'bout everything's fine when really dem don't know which way to turn.

A brief smile crosses Will's lips at Barbara's words.

Will: Okay look I like working for myself, I can be flexible; work around Izzi.

Barbara: Dat deal, how many people do you think Gary'd offer dat to? Working from home three days a week, company car-

Will: She told you about the deal?

Barbara: *(Stops and looks at her son for a moment.)* Is it a secret?

Will: No, no, I just ... It does mean I wouldn't be my own boss.

Barbara: As good as.

Will: Gary'd call the shots, could have me working all hours.

Barbara: He's bending over backwards as it is. Three days at home? It's a great deal. And the salary-

Will: It's not about that.

Barbara: From where I'm sitting it is. You've got a mortgage and God knows what else to pay for.

Will: Who's gonna know that she won't go down for her afternoon nap unless you sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star first?

Barbara: *(Looks at Will)* You've got to join the real world again baby?

Will: Who'll know that she hates mashed up peaches but will eat them if you slice them and give them to her one piece at a time?

Barbara: You can't hide away and look after Izzi, look after me, not anymore. We've taken all your time for so long but now it's your turn. Don't you want to be the provider again; bring home a proper salary to support your family?

Will: Who'll know she won't eat eggs boiled or fried but if you scramble them and put a bit of ketchup in she'll polish them off in no seconds flat? Anyway I bring in plenty as it is.

Barbara: You're not ashamed your wife brings in more than you?

Will: *(Through gritted teeth.)* My, you and Alisha did have a long, detailed chat.

Barbara: You leave dat girl alone.

Will: What else did she tell you?

Barbara: Dat sounds like a question a guilty man asks. You gat somethin' to be guilty about?

Will: No, you?

Barbara: *(Looks at Will – she's defeated.)* Suit yourself. Don't say I didn't try.

Will: Something else will turn up, you'll see. Something more suitable.

Barbara looks at Will in disbelief and then gets up from the table and moves slowly over to lie on the sofa. Will picks up the family sized carton of orange juice from the table.

Will: Juice?

Barbara: Nah you're alright.

Will starts clearing up the table and putting the breakfast cups, dishes etc. onto the kitchen counter. Given the level of clanging, Barbara glances over in Will's direction.

Barbara: Get Sandy to give you a hand with dem plates. Sandy!

Will: It's okay.

Barbara: Sandy!

Sandra rushes into the room and to Barbara's side.

Sandra: Mom, you okay?

Barbara: Fine baby, just fine. Help Will with dem plates. You just eat and run like ya maid comin' after you.

Sandra: *(Appealing to Will.)* Will said-

Will: I'll do it, said I would. There's not much, won't take long.

Barbara: *(To Sandra.)* Will's busy.

Will: *(To Barbara.)* Am I?

Barbara: *(To Will.)* You are. Come son, I need you to help me finish get my tings in order, my papers and so on.

Sandra: I could help with-

Barbara: It's alright Will knows all about it, him real good at making decisions, making sense of things.

Sandra: That's my job mom, I manage eight people; all I do all day is make decisions that make sense of things.

Barbara: Where's likkle Maxxie while you making all dem decisions?

Sandra: At nursery, a good nursery, an exclusive nursery actually. They've won awards.

Barbara: Really, awards? Hmm.

Barbara smiles sweetly at Sandra.

Look Sandy, if I need decision making on what make up, what perfume best for me I know where to come, but this a little more serious, a little more-

Will: Mom, that's not fair, Sandy's only-

Sandra: *(She smiles just as sweetly at her mother.)* No, it's fine. *(She grabs the dish towel from Will and speaking to Will, as she picks up a dish from the rack and begins drying it.)* You'll tell me where these go?

Will: *(Laughing.)* All a bit different from the last time you *(thinking better of what he is about to say)*. Just leave them out; ready to pack if we need to.

Sandra: *(Putting the plate she has just dried on the kitchen counter and picking up another wet one from the dish rack.)* Whatever you want.

Barbara motions for Will to help her into her bedroom. Will goes over to the couch and tries to help support his mother into her bedroom. Barbara tries to stand but her legs buckle under her own weight. Will picks her up and begins to carry her out of the room and into her bedroom.

Barbara: *(As Will carries her from the room.)* I want to get it all sorted you know before I go in.

Will: I said I'd do it.

Barbara: And did I agree? No. I know that now you like to think all you gat to do is say and that what happenin'. But why if I'm still compus mentus are you doing it? I'm just sick Will, just weak and frail, not old, not some old woman who's weak and frail and lost her mind. I know what I want, you just there to confirm it, you know?

Will: Agree you mean?

Barbara: Now you get di picture.

Both Will and Barbara laugh as he carries her from the room.

Sandra continues drying another plate as she watches them go.

Barbara: *(Off stage.)* No it's in the big brown one with the strap. Get it for me na?

Will returns to the living room and looks for something near the sofa.

Will: *(Calling to Barbara.)* It's not there, where else could it be?

Barbara: *(Calling.)* Maybe under di table.

Will checks and grabs a large brown bag from under the dining table.

Will: *(To Sandra.)* She doesn't mean it you know.

Sandra: She can't help herself; never could. Always needs to put me in my place.

Will: Can I ask you something? This nursery-

Sandra: Oh, don't you start.

Will: I'm not. Just wondered how many hours a week he goes.

Sandra: Oh, sorry. 5 full days.

Will: Really, that much?

Sandra: Suppose Isobel hasn't seen the inside of one yet then?

Will: With me at home in the day, it sort of made sense. *(Beat.)* No regrets?

Sandra: Should I have?

Will: I only meant Lisha and Mom are press ganging me to-

Sandra: I bet you did.

Will: What?

Sandra: You can keep the lecture on what a shame it is that I choose to condemn my child to a nursery during the whole of the working week. Any future teenage angst, antisocial or psychopathic tendencies of course no doubt will be solely located at my selfish, heartless door. I know.

Will: Well you can add paranoia to that list right now. Jeez Sandy, Lisha wants Izzi at nursery two days a week but I'm not sure it's the right thing that's all. But forget it.

Sandra: No sorry, Will I'll-

Will: Anyone ever told you constant hostility's not a good look?

Sandra: Wow pot and kettle.

Will: Yeah I deserve that.

Sandra: And then some.

Will: Alright.

Sandra: I'm not like this usually, really I'm not. Sorry. It's this place. It just sucks me back in.

Barbara: *(Calling from off stage.)* Will you find it!

Will: *(To Barbara.)* I got it; coming now!

(To Sandra.) You're not just Sandy okay. No matter what mom says.

Will exits back into Barbara's room with the bag. Sandra looks after Will and then smiling to herself she turns on a small radio in the kitchen and sways gently to the music as she dries the rest of the dishes. Sheryl Crow's 'Home' plays from 0:10 – 01:00.

Sandra has finished drying and stacking the breakfast things. She is just quickly wiping off the surfaces when the door-bell rings. Sandra turns off the radio and goes to answer the door.

She opens the door to Leon. Both Leon and Sandra speak quietly at first so that Will and Barbara do not hear them.

Sandra: *(Sighs deeply at the sight of him.)* Thought I might get lucky and that walk of yours would take you back home to your son.

Leon: Our son.

Sandra: If you like.

Leon: Doing this, it should be tearing you apart, why isn't it tearing you apart?

Sandra: How do you know it's not?

Leon: You look very together; that's all I'm saying.

Sandra: I said I need space; is this you giving me space Leon?

Leon: In all the biology books I've studied, all the theory I've taught, not one single time has anything in all of that talked about space from your own kid. A mother should-

Sandra: *(Louder than she means to as she sits down in a chair before him.)* Sorry sir, do I need to sit for this, for your lecture, your hypothesis on womankind?

Beat.

Leon: What's wrong with you?

Sandra: Why does it make you feel better to think I'm somehow broken?!

Will rushes out of his mother's room at the sound of a raised voice.

Will: Can you keep it down; mom's just gone off to sleep.

Leon and Sandra both turn from their confrontation with each other. Sandra goes to a box and starts filling it with DVDs that are stacked high near the front door.

Sandra: Better get a move on, seeing as no one has any idea when the movers might turn up. (*Waving an empty roll of packing tape at Will.*) Oh and we need some more packing tape.

Will: (*To Sandra.*) Should be some in the bathroom cupboard I think.

Will leaves the room to go and find the tape.

Leon starts making up a box but his attention keeps wandering to Sandra.

Leon: (*To Sandra.*) I don't mean to get so ... (*sighs*) okay, no pressure.

Sandra: (*To Leon –glancing up at him for a moment.*) Yeah?

Beat.

Leon: Yeah.

Leon has finished putting the box together and Sandra has filled her DVD box and is putting the lid on it. Leon places his empty box between him and Sandra. He begins to put items from a pile beside him into it. Sandra hesitates a moment and then moves over to the box and starts putting items from a different pile beside it into the box also. The two have been packing in silence for a few moments when the front doorbell rings.

Sandra leaves the box and crosses to answer the door – she opens the door to Errol Roberts, 53. Errol is very well dressed in a suit and heavy overcoat.

Sandra: Oh come in. I thought you were going to ring first.

Errol: You want I do dat? Call? I can go if you –

Sandra: No you're here now, you may as well.

Sandra walks back to the boxes.

Sandra: (*Indicating the state of the room.*) As you can see we're not quite finished yet. But if you'd phoned.

Errol: I don't –

Sandra: Could you do this lot, the ones we've packed so far and then maybe (*calling off stage.*) Will! (*Back to Errol.*) Then maybe do the rest in the morning say? If it's any extra I can cover it. You really should've called first. (*Calling again.*) Will!

Will: (*Off*) What?! Give me a minute will ya?! Can't find the tape!

Leon: (*To Errol*) He'll be one minute mate yeah?

Leon continues to make up and pack boxes throughout the following.

Sandra and Errol remain standing, the front door still open. Sandra is clearly uncomfortable and a little embarrassed at the situation.

Sandra: Sorry, it's just Will knows more about the arrangements.

Errol: Arrangements?

Will comes back into the room triumphantly holding up the packing tape, which he throws to Leon.

Will: What's so urgent Sandy? You'll wake mom.

Sandy: *(Under her breath)* Removal guy's turned up. Bit over dressed isn't he?

Will: *(To Errol)* You were supposed to call first. Didn't you say you would call?

Errol: Maybe I should go.

Will: No, you're here now.

Sandra: That's what I said.

Errol: No, I shouldn't have come. I thought –

Sandra: You can't just take the ones we've done for now?

Will: *(Giving Sandy a meaningful look. Leon sees this as well and plays along.)*
Why don't you take a seat?

Will guides a reluctant Errol to one of the chairs in the living room.

Errol: Maybe um-

Sandra: Something to drink?

Sandra kicks the front door closed.

Leon rushes to the fridge and pulls out the box of orange juice, pours a glass and hands it to Sandra.

Sandra: *(Offering Errol the glass.)* Orange juice?

A very flustered Errol takes the glass.

Errol: Miss I-

Leon: *(Reading the orange juice box.)* The luxury stuff; no bits.

Will: Only the best.

Sandra: Of course.

Leon: What else?

Will: For someone who clearly-

Sandra: So clearly-

Will: Likes the finer things-

Sandra: Really understands the finer things in life.

Will: But most of all-

Sandra: Can accommodate the inconvenient-

Will: Unexpected snags that come up. Removals for instance that run a bit-

Sandra: Only a tiny bit-

Will: Behind schedule.

Leon: *(Producing a packet of biscuits from beneath the kitchen counter he is leaning against and offering them to Errol.)* Biscuit?

Beat.

Will: Listen mate you couldn't help us out could you?

Beat. All eyes are on Errol. He gets up to leave, puts down the glass of juice and turns back to them all.

Errol: I don't think ... *(tries again.)* I think I mus' come to di wrong place, sorry.

Sandra: You're not the removal guy?

Errol: No I *(He stops talking as Barbara enters the room and watches her every step – she walks very slowly and deliberately.)*

Will: *(Rushing to his mother's side.)* Mom, what are you doing up?

Barbara: Who can sleep with you all shouting your heads off like you goin' deaf?

Barbara glances at Errol and then stares at him.

Barbara: *(To Will)* Mek me sit in di chair so.

Will helps Barbara to the sofa.

Barbara stares at Errol. Errol looks back at her but he cannot retain eye contact with her. Errol takes off his hat.

Errol: *(To Sandra)* I should go Miss.

Barbara: I know those pills strong but I ... it can't be no way but ... Errol Roberts dat you?

All attention falls on Errol again. Errol looks at the ground and shifts from foot to foot.

Barbara: You got ants in ya pants Errol? Me a talk to you!

Errol stands still and it is an effort but he looks Barbara straight in the eye.

Barbara: What a go on B?

Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 7

A few moments after scene 6 ends. All characters, except Leon, remain in their previous positions. Leon exited during the scene break.

Errol puts his hat back on and prepares to leave.

Errol: I should-

Barbara: No.

Will: Yeah, you should.

Sandra: *(To Will)* You don't –

Will: You think I don't?

Sandra: I'm not saying –

Will: Then what?

Throughout the following exchange Errol and Barbara's attention is solely on each other.

Sandra: Can't you just ... wait? *(To Errol)* I just need a minute.

Errol: It's alright, I understand.

Will: Do you?

Barbara: Will, love-

Sandra: *(To Will)* Ease up a bit.

Will: *(To Sandra.)* I'm not the one, don't look at me like that. Like I'm the one

Sandra looks at Errol; really takes in every detail of him.

Will: *(To Errol)* How can you? Now? *(squaring up to Errol.)* You're too late, the ship has sailed. You hear that you *(breathing heavily)* you ... the bloody ship has sailed. *(Low but firm.)* Hear me.

Barbara's eyes are still on Errol.

Barbara: Shut your mouth Will.

Will: Mom I just –

Barbara: Get out of mi sight.

Will: How can you just let him in?

Barbara: Go!

Will leaves.

Barbara: Sandy you too. Go on, me and him gat things to say.

Sandra: Mom, will you be okay?

Barbara: Is what 'im gone to do 'im nat done already?
Sandra hesitates a moment and then leaves the room.

Errol: Sorry B, to just turn up, but your email said-

Barbara: I know what it said. (*Beat.*) Did I say you could speak? You is in my house, remember dat.

Errol: Bway, you still gat fire in you.
Pause

Barbara: You don't know what you left me with you dried up old man. Years I knew, thought I knew, what to say if I see your yellow backside again but –

Errol: And here I am at last eh B?

Barbara: Here you are. You nat ashamed to say dat? At last? You should never need to say at last when you talkin' family. At last show the long time passin'. Always, that's family Errol. Always that what I can say. Have always said.

Errol: You want I say sorry?

Barbara: Can I use sorry?

Errol: It's a start.

Barbara: See mi, this my end right here. So I ain't lookin' for no start now.
Pause

Barbara: Is what bring you here?

Errol: Your email.

Barbara: Email? The Errol I knew never use no email; computer neither.

Errol: People change.

Barbara: Evidently.

Errol: Email, Facebook, I'm very technologically literate. Even logged onto Twitter last week.

Barbara: (*She looks at him a moment.*) So what make this one, this email so different from all the rest I send you, why you come running now?

Errol: Why didn't you tell me B?

Barbara: Dat my business?

Errol: You silly woman. Why tell me at all if (*Beat*) Is there nothing they can do for you?

Barbara: I wanted to be sure you'd come. Dat the only reason I say it. (*Looks him up and down.*) But now I look at you, you know what, I change mi mind. Go back where you came from I made a mistake. (*Beat*) All dem emails I sent why you never reply?

Errol: And say what?

Barbara: You know what I thought? I go on Facebook, search for Errol Roberts in Jamaica, just to see you know? And there you were, all these years and ten minutes all it took. And then I add you but still I'm thinking can't be. But then you never reply to my first email or my second or any of the rest.

Errol: Last few months it's been so good to read all that's been going on with di children, all about your lives. Every night I'd log on and go straight to my messages and catch up on what you all been doing.

Barbara: When you didn't reply to the second email I told myself; stop now woman he don't care; but I didn't stop sending messages. Everyday; each one more and more detailed, more and more silly. But once I started I could stop. It's more for me now than anywhere I thought you might be sittin' readin' dem. It's silly I know but it's nice to have someone, response or not. Someone to tell what's goin' on; share things with a bit.

Errol: It wasn't silly.

Beat. Barbara looks at Errol.

Barbara: And then I went on last week; always have to wait 'til early, early mornin' so Will's still in bed. He says I need my rest and wouldn't approve of hours spent on Facebook, that Farmville's addictive you know. Anyway I thought if this is di end Will, Sandy dem gonna need someone.

Pause. Errol cannot look at Barbara.

Barbara: Don't worry, I realise now I made a mistake. Looking at you, you still all flash and nothing behind it.

Errol: B, I want to, I do. It's just-

Barbara: What?

Errol: I'm not sure, you know?

Barbara: No. 'Coz see, I'm sure. 27 years and 4 months. Dat how long I been in my son's life. As long as he had it. Sandra too; everyday.

Errol: Dis all wrong ... I just wanted to say something to you before ... to, I don't know, mek you easy in your mind.

Barbara: Come out my house Errol.

Errol: B, I thought I had time to –

Barbara: Come out!

Errol: Just make amends and –
Will and Sandra come running at Barbara's shout.

Will: What you saying to her? Mom you okay? *(To Errol)* She's a sick woman, you know she's sick!

Errol: I didn't mean to vex you B.

Barbara: You want to mek my mind easy, so just go.

Errol: B, I waited too long I know dat!

Sandra: It's never too late. You believe that right mom? If someone couldn't get here right away but made it eventually, did what they could for you at the end?

Errol: B I wanted to make amends before-

Will: You found religion have you? A born again Christian ready to fall on your knees, beg forgiveness? Then wipe the slate clean, that it? Like it never happened? Like the last 23 years never happened?

Errol: Will, Sandy, I know I don't deserve anything from you, I know dat.
Beat.

Sandra: Sandra.

Errol: I always called you dat; you've been Sandy to me since you were yay high *(Indicates a toddler's height)*. Before you could even say your own name.
Beat
See, I always remembered dat about you.

Sandra: I haven't been that height for a very long time. Sandy's for my friends, my family, people who know me well. You don't know me well.
Pause

Will: You've changed your tune.

Sandra: No, well he doesn't know me, I don't know him.

Errol: *(To Barbara)* I still owe you a dance B.

Barbara: I hung up my dancing shoes a long time now.

Errol: Dat last night, remember?

Barbara: You were cruel.

Errol: I was afraid.

Barbara: Of me?

Errol: No.

Barbara: Of two likkle babies?

Beat

Barbara: What kind of man is afraid of two likkle pickni?

Sandra: Are you proud of what you did? The reasons? Why you had to, couldn't do anything but leave? Daddy those reasons, are you still sure after all these years that it was the right thing, the only thing?

Errol: Daddy, dat sound good to me now.

Barbara: But not den? You haven't got a right to dat. No, you see these two? My children Errol. Mine. Now move from my house, I'm nat tellin' you again.

Pause – Errol make no move to go. He sits down on a chair.

Sandra: *(To Errol)* When is my birthday?

Errol: 24th September 1981.

Sandra: Do you even know what I do?

Errol: Marketing manager. Big cosmetics firm.

Barbara: Loreal.

Errol: Livin' in London I know. Married to Leon I know. One sweet likkle baby, likkle Max I know. And-

Sandra: How did you?

Errol: I was interested.

Sandra: You've seen Max?

Errol: Facebook. B's pictures.

Sandra: B? Facebook?

Barbara: Sorry darlin', dis is my fault.

Will: Mom?

Sandra: *(To Errol)* Leon's not my husband.

Barbara: Look I made a mistake, now I'm putting it right. Errol please I'm asking you?

Errol: B I can do it, I'm sure, I'll do it.

Barbara: I'm tired.

Sandra: *(To Errol)* Maybe now isn't the best time.

Will: Yeah get out.

Errol: But when, isn't she ... aren't you ... I mean –

Barbara: You can say it.

Beat – Errol watches Barbara

Errol: (*Whispers*) Your email said you go to St Michael's on Monday.

Barbara: It's a hospice Errol, not a dirty word, you don't have to whisper.

Will: (*Putting his hand on Barbara's shoulder.*) It's alright mom.

Barbara: It's not though is it Will? (*This takes alot of effort*) It's not a funeral parlour Errol, not just yet.

Sandra: Mom!

Will: (*To Barbara*) Why do you talk like that?

Barbara: How do you want me to talk?

Pause

Errol: Can I see you tomorrow?

Pause.

Sandra: Go on Mom, give him one last dance, he owes you that much.

Errol: One last dance in the tower ballroom. All dressed up. Smart, young and so pretty you could mek a blind man see.

Barbara: I see you're still fresh.

Errol: You were the queen of dat dance floor.

Barbara: I was.

Errol: Really knew how to move.

Barbara: You tryin' to get under my skin Errol Roberts?

Errol: I'm just so ... sorry ... dis just ain't fair ... what's happening to you ain't fair B.

Pause

Barbara: You still eat just green banana and yam for your Sunday dinner?

Errol: Every Sunday.

Barbara: (*To Errol*) I eat at three on Sunday. (*To Will*) Will, you think you might be available to find piece of yam and likkle green banana for tomorrow?

Will: No.

Sandra: Come on Will, course we can.

The light in the room flickers for a while and then everything is plunged into pitch darkness as the sound of the light bulb finally blowing is heard.

Act 1 Scene 8

Sunday afternoon. It is very dark outside like a storm is threatening; so the light in the room is on. The light in here now is very bright. All are present at the dining table having lunch. Will is perched near the head of the table, beside Barbara, who heads the table. Sandra is beside Will. All except Errol are having a traditional British roast for lunch.

Barbara: So Errol where you bin?

Errol: *(All eyes on Errol.)* Doing a bit a dis a bit a dat, you know?

Will: What does that actually mean?

Sandra: When I used to think of you I saw you as a giant. Huge, tall, looking down at me.

Errol: Only 5 foot 10 I'm afraid.

Barbara: *(Lets out a bark of laughter.)* Should be ashamed, your daughter's a big woman now Tich; she's outgrown fairy stories. You grown some Tich, over di years? Last time I saw you you were not an inch over five seven, except when you wore dem stupid heels. You still gat dem shoes?

Errol: No one calls me Titch anymore.

Barbara: I do, can't think of you as nothin' else. Shorty and me we used to rile your daddy callin' him dat; used to send him wild. *(Looking at how Errol is struggling to maintain his composure.)* See?

Will: Where you been Titch?

Sandra: You been treating sick kids in some third world disaster zone?

Errol: No.

Sandra: Building whole houses, whole towns with your bare hands?

Errol: No.

Sandra: In some lab somewhere making a huge break through to reverse the polar ice cap melt, or cure cancer?

Errol: No.

Sandra: I always imagined you were doing something so big, so important; that's what kept you from being here.

Errol: *(Speaking gently, just to Sandra; although everyone else is listening.)* I ain't done nothin' you could call important in my life.

Will: You surprise me.

Errol: *(Still just to Sandra.)* 'Cept maybe you and your brother.

Sandra: So where you been Dad?

Errol: Just chasin' a stupid dream. I'm nat an educated man but when it come to music there's nobody knows more than me. Remember old Jessie B?

Barbara: You still gat dat guitar? Bwoy, she older dan you are.

Errol: When I leave here I go back to Jamaica and just sit up dere in di hills at mi parent's place at first, me and old Jessie playing di old songs. I never meant to be away for long, I swear I kept thinkin' a year or two; I make it big with my music, come back to you all a superstar. Give you everything you ever wanted. Then a year turned into two and den five; by den I didn't know how to come back, it was too late.

Sandra: So you're a musician?

Errol: Now and again when I can get work. It's hard; never regular, always just on di edge of somethin', somethin' dat's gonna be big, but never quite dere just yet.

Will: So was it worth it?

Beat.

Errol: *(Too over enthusiastic.)* Yam's nice.

Pause

Nice and soft, banana too.

Pause

Really er ... really *(he just runs out of steam and puts his fork down and sits staring into his plate so he doesn't have to look at anyone)*

Pause

Will: Was it worth it?

Barbara: Always could sing. Voice like sweet, sweet sugar.

Beat.

Errol: 48 is no time B.

Barbara: Hey, none of that.

Sandra: Can't pretend it's not –

Barbara: Don't dwell.

Will: Mom, it's a big thing and it's –

Barbara: *(To Will)* I know, you think I don't know?
Pause – all stare into their plates.

Errol: *(Again over enthusiastic.)* This yam, it fresh, almost like back home.
Pause

Errol: You put bacon in this banana? I can taste bacon.

Will: For God's sake will you –

Barbara: Don't take the Lord's name in vain.

Will: It's just inane bullshit.
Will gets up from the table suddenly and goes to leave the room.

Barbara: Language Will! That's no way to talk to your daddy!

Will: *(Turns back to the table.)* Where? I don't see anyone like that.

Barbara: Careful, he'll be all you gat one day.

Will: That'll be less than nothing then.
Will exits.

Barbara: Will! Come love!
Beat.

Barbara: Will!
After a moment Will returns. He sits on the couch in the living room.

Barbara: You know you still sulk like a teenager.

Will: You know you still tell me off like I'm five?

Errol: Wanted to give Old Jessie a go for you B; like old times, what do you say?

Barbara: You brought Jessie all dat way? You still crazy as dat first day I saw you. Dem eyes a yours flashin' with mischief just di same.

Errol: I seem to remember a certain 16 year old Kingston school girl who went crazy for me and di old girl.

Barbara: Young and foolish I expect.

Errol: Young and beautiful, young and smart, young and brave, braver than me anyway.

Barbara: August 19th 1979.

Errol: Galilee church Kingston. Black dress; nice and proper, but these red shoes. It was dem shoes made me know first time I saw you you was no innocent choir girl.

Barbara: You really still gat Jessie?

(Errol gets up and retrieves his battered guitar case from near the front door. He takes out a battered old acoustic guitar.)

Errol: Di one and only.

Barbara: *(Beaming with pleasure at first.)* My God. *(Her expression changes.)* Dat damn guitar. Should've known you couldn't live without it. You know I called Shorty the night you went. Soon as he tell me you come and bought Jessie back I just knew. And with dat job lined up for you to start Monday?

Errol: A factory B? Dat life wasn't for me. Just di thought of it; di same thing over and over, every day di same, was suffocating me. Even when I said I would; sold Jessie, bought a pair of flat comfortable shoes, you must have known it.

Barbara: I hoped. Looked at our two small babies and hoped with all I had.

Errol: I left because *(stops)*. Because I wanted to show what we could do, Jessie and me.

Barbara: You did that.

Errol: I was young; I had stars in my eyes.

Barbara: *(Indicating the guitar.)* Looks to me like they're still dere.

Errol begins to strum on the guitar.

Barbara: I don't want to hear dat thing.

Errol continues strumming; faster now.

Will: She doesn't want to hear it.

Sandra: Come on stop now; you're upsetting her.

Errol: B you remember dis one? *(To everyone.)* First song I ever played her.

Errol proceeds to play the first verse and chorus of Bob Marley's 'No Woman No Cry' on his guitar. He sings along with the song; he has a very, very good voice, and sings with an ease and genuine love of the music that draws the

very reluctant audience in, despite themselves. By the end of Errol's performance Barbara, Sandra and Leon are clapping and moving to the music, even Will can't help tapping his foot to the infectious beat.

Errol: Your song; remember B?

Barbara: Painful though Titch, remembering. I was young too, younger than you. You weren't di only one with dreams. Couldn't listen to dat song for twenty years.

Errol: Sorry B; I don't want to make you sad anymore.

Barbara: *(Brushing a tear from her eye. There are tears in her voice.)* You're not. I'm nat sad Titch.

Will puts his arm around Barbara.

Will: *(To Errol.)* Look what you've done?

Barbara gently shrugs Will off her and uses a tissue to wipe her eyes.)

Barbara: *(Looking around at everyone in the room.)* I gat somethin' I want to say.

Barbara shoots a glance at Errol; it's clear from his face he knows what's coming.

They all watch Barbara as she struggles at first to get the words out.

Barbara: *(There is no hint of tears in her voice now.)* Will I know you won't want, Sandy you too but I, I gat to. He asked me and I think no at first. I did I told him "I can't, how can I? I'm going into St Michael's Monday. It's all arranged". But then he asked again, we talked first though and talking made me remember. Oh *(she shuts her eyes a moment at the memory.)* A ripe bread fruit pick from di tree just dat minute, and da june plum juice in summer. I know you all never had june plum juice but two, three times a week my mom used to make it and oh, you never taste anythin' like it. He made me remember and now I can't stop. So you see *(Beat.)* I gat to go. And him gat a nice house up in di hills. Old house, right up near Mount James. Everythin' there I need. So I gotta go.

Will: What's he said?

Errol: It's nothing she don't want.

Will: That right?

Sandra: *(To Barbara)* I'm sorry, where are you going?

Barbara: Back home, just for a while.

Sandra: You don't have a while.

Errol: She knows.

Sandra: *(To Errol)* All this, what are you doing?

Errol: I jus-

Sandra: *(To Errol)* She's dying, you know she's dying right?

Barbara: If I ain't gat long ain't it best I spend it where I want?

Will: That what he said? This sounds like him not you.

Errol: You don't know me.

Will: Why is that Errol?

Sandra: You're not going anywhere.

Errol: You can't just decide.

Sandra: This isn't your fight.

Errol: Not everything has to be a fight.

Sandra: I'm trying to do what's best.

Errol: For who?

Barbara: *(To Errol.)* Don't pay her no mind, dat's just Sandy; likes to think she the one knows what's right, what's best.

Sandra: *(Looking at her mother.)* Don't do that. Just Sandy? I am trying to help you here, don't ignore me.

Will: Listen to her mom; she deserves to be heard. And she's right.

Errol: But if it's what she wants?

Sandra: *(To Errol.)* You just sit down alright, nothing to do with you!

Barbara: Alright, enough!

They are all silenced.

The house phone begins to ring. Barbara snatches it up.

Barbara: Yes?! *(Listens and then in a calmer, really polite voice)* Oh Brother Shorty dat so kind, half an hour. Ok I'll see you then.

Barbara hangs up the phone.

(No longer polite.) Shorty's coming for mi things.

Will: Now?

Barbara: You deaf?

Errol: Shorty still around? (*He laughs*)

Barbara: Not every man drop him pickni and keep walkin' like him still a young man.

Beat.

Will: (*Gently to Barbara.*) So you're going to St Michael's as arranged tomorrow right? All this is ... you can't possibly, not now.

Barbara: Why?

Will: I arranged everything; they're expecting you – the doctor he'll never allow –

Barbara: Well this I arranged. It's my choice isn't it?

Beat.

Isn't it?

Sandra: You haven't got a ticket.

Barbara: I fly tomorrow afternoon.

Sandra: But how can ... (*looking at Errol.*) You?!

Will: (*To Errol*) You planned this didn't you? All the time, those emails, you were plotting to do some crazy thing.

Errol: Why is it crazy?

Will: All that time?

Errol: Only when she said she was sick.

Will: It doesn't make sense.

Errol: It make sense to B and so it make sense to me.

Will: Will you stop calling her that? No one calls her B.

Errol: I do.

Beat.

Will: You can't just turn up and take her away from us.

Barbara: He's not taking me away, I'm going.

Sandra: What about your medication?

Barbara: Since when have you cared about my medication? And what, you think there are no doctors in Jamaica?

Sandra: *(Crying)* You'll never get travel insurance.

Will: You don't even know him, not anymore.

Barbara: Sandy what happened to give him a chance he's our dad?

Errol: I'm not a bad man.

Will: *(To Errol)* Shut up!

Errol: I'll take care of her.

Will: You won't. I do that, mom and I we have a routine.

Beat.

Will: *(To Barbara)* Okay fine go, if that's what you want go, but I am coming with you. He wouldn't be able to get all your meds right.

Barbara: *(Smiling and putting her hand on Will's cheek.)* I don't suppose he would baby.

(To Sandra) You want to see me off Sandy? Say goodbye?

Sandra: You're not going.

Barbara: Say good bye Sandy. I ain't comin' back, not alive anyway.

Sandy: Don't say that.

Barbara: You know it's true.

Sandra: I don't know that, you don't know that.

Will: Come with us.

Sandra: What?

Will: Come to Jamaica.

Sandra: I can't, I thought you were going to a hospice. I thought they –

Errol: She's going.

Sandra: Shut up!

Will: This isn't about you.

Sandra: *(To Errol)* Do you have room for all of us, I mean if you don't-

Will: Sandy!

Beat – Sandra looks from Will to Barbara unsure what to do.

Sandra: Okay, I'll come. Mom you hear me I'm coming.

Barbara: It'll be okay baby.

Sandra: I should be telling you that.

Errol: I can make room, don't worry man, likkle cramp maybe but we all be okay.

Will squeezes Sandra's hand, she looks at him.

Will glares at Errol.

Lights down.

Act 1 Scene 9

Lights up on Barbara's living room. It is the next afternoon. Only Errol and Barbara are present. The room is completely empty. All of the boxes and furniture are gone.

Barbara: I know it isn't much but I'm gonna miss dis old place.

The beep of a car horn.

Errol: Taxi's here come on.

Barbara: Let 'em wait. I got a right to say goodbye.

Errol puts his hand out to Barbara. She bats it away.

Errol: I only meant for you to lean on me, let me help you out to the car.

Barbara: I thought you were gettin' ideas.

Errol: What kind of ideas? You mean like this?

Errol sweeps Barbara off her feet and dances while holding her in his arms.

Barbara: *(Fighting him feebly but as best she can.)* Errol Roberts loose me man!

Errol: You're light as a feather Mrs Roberts.

Peter Tosh's 'Johnny Be Goode' plays.

Barbara stops struggling and the two dance – with her still in his arms.

Errol: You never changed your name.

Barbara: Wasn't much point, changing a name doesn't change who you are.

Errol: I promised you one last dance.

Barbara: *(Laughing)* Bwoy you just as crazy as I remember. Now put me down, we gat a plane waitin' on us.

Errol: Let it wait.

The couple continue dancing and Barbara rests her head on his chest and closes her eyes.

Peter Tosh's 'Johnny Be Goode' continues to play as the lights go down slowly.

Act 2 Scene 1

2011. Mount James Jamaica. Errol and Will are present.

Errol sits in a deck chair on the substantial lush green land outside his house. The place is muddy and wild and the grassy land slopes downward to a dangerous precipice, below which is a steep drop into the valley below. The Blue mountain range is directly opposite Errol's house and the lush green mountains seem to stretch out for miles.

Will: So you got one?

Errol: Don't think so, you can look in di house if you want but-

Will: How'd you ever find anything? Place is a tip.

Errol: Wasn't expecting visitors. Never dreamed you all would want to come too.

Will: You thought she'd come alone? That I'd let her do that ill as she was?

Errol: Could try di shop. But it's just a small one; bottom of dem steps you come up yesterday.

Will: That's gotta be at least half a mile.

Errol: Down-hill though.

Will: And they sell travel adaptors yeah?

Errol: Well you can ask.

Will: I'm not going half a mile down the side of a mountain just to ask. Do they definitely sell them?

Errol: Sandy ain't gat one?

Will: Ah forget it.

Will goes back into the house. Errol takes out a tin of tobacco, some cigarette papers and filters. He rolls a cigarette and smokes it. After a couple of puffs Will comes back outside again.

Will: Sandy wants to know, you got anymore towels? The one you gave her isn't big enough; she's washing her hair apparently. Oh and where d'you want the camp bed? I've folded it up.

Errol: I ain't gat no bigger towels. Di camp bed fine where it is.

Will: It's in the way. There's no space in that tiny living room of yours as it is, with the camp bed too it's a joke.

Errol: Well put it in di hall den by di bathroom.

Will: Couldn't get past it there, not even turning sideways; hallway's too narrow.

Errol: Well just throw the blasted thing in di bin den if there's no room for it.

Will: Touchy Errol touchy. One last thing, don't know if you'd know but how do we go about getting the certificate, you know the one for Mom?

Errol: They'll give it to Leon.

Will: Today? So soon?

Errol: Nat sure, maybe. I never, dis, it's nat somethin' I did before.

Will: Oh, right. I'll call him then shall I, Leon? Ask him to get; what's the list so far? (*Will counts each item off on one hand as he speaks.*) Plasters for all those blisters we got climbing up here yesterday, a huge can of bug spray, something other than green banana and yam to eat, decent pillows and now towels and a travel adaptor.

Errol: What you want me to tell you? Wasn't supposed to be no visitors.

Will: (*Will strokes his stubbly chin.*) There anywhere I can plug in my shaver; couldn't see a socket in the bathroom?

Errol: You can't use a manual? I got a spare razor if you want it.

Will: Can't get a decent shave? This just gets better and better.

Will rolls his eyes and goes back inside the house.

Will: (*Off stage.*) Hasn't got any more towels Sandy!

Sandra: (*Off stage.*) What? But I already started; my hair's wet!

Will: (*Off stage.*) Ask Errol!

Errol finishes smoking his cigarette. As Errol stubs out the butt Max can be heard crying inside the house. The sound comes through clearly to Errol through a baby monitor that is on the porch.

After a few moments Sandra comes out of the house reading messages on her blackberry. Sandra is very over-dressed given the rural, muddy conditions. She wears a designer black business suit and high heels. Her hair is wrapped in a damp towel. During the following Will can be heard soothing baby Max over the baby monitor.

Sandra: (*Looking up from the blackberry for a moment and then going back to scrolling her emails as she speaks.*)

Okay, so I can get us all on a flight but not until tomorrow evening. I've started preliminary prep for the (*she can't say it*) But from what I can see you can't do this sort of thing remotely. Decisions need to be made.

Errol: Joint decisions.

Sandra: I don't think you have a right to-

Errol: But your mom does.

Sandra: Well she can't can she; not now.

Errol: She chose this.

Sandra: You made her, convinced her and now look.

Errol: You know your mom, she-

Sandra: Knew. (*Beat.*) I knew her.

Errol: Couldn't make her do a thing she didn't want.

Sandra: (*Quietly*) Yeah.

Max cries on the baby monitor. Will soothes him.

Will: (*Through the monitor.*) There, there, little man, I know, I know.

Errol: (*Errol is confused more than anything.*) You na hear dat?

Sandra: There's so much to organise. The flowers, the church, all that. I have no real idea what she would –

Errol: He cryin' for you.

Sandra: Will would know what she, and the wake, no reception, the, what do you call the place after the cemetery? The do? That's not right is it, a do? What's that bit called?

Max cries again over the baby monitor and Will soothes him with a song.

Will: (*Singing through the monitor.*) Twinkle, twinkle little star.

Errol: Sandy?

Sandra: That's not my name.

Will: (*Singing through the monitor.*) How I wonder what you are.

Max begins to be soothed and starts giggling and gurgling.

Errol: What would your mommy think?

Sandra: She's not here, so we can't ask her can we?

Errol: But a baby needs their mother.

Sandra: But not their father?

Beat

Errol: *(He hands Sandra a manila envelope.)* Everythin' all arranged. *(Laughing a little.)* She organisin' us all up until di last.

Sandra: Why'd she leave it with you? Why not Will, Will did-

Errol: She know Will too well, said to give it to you after, you cope better.

Sandra takes the manila envelope from Errol and hugs it to her.

Sandra: Aaagh mom. *(threatening tears.)* If only you knew hey.

Sandra shivers.

Errol: *(Indicating a chair on the porch)* See mi sweater on di back of di chair so?

Sandra: I'm fine.

Errol: Go on.

Sandra: Just, I don't want it. You don't know me; if you did you wouldn't *(She trails off.)*

Whatever you're thinking I'm not worth it, trust me.

Sandra turns away from him and wipes a tear away. She steps onto the grass and her heel sinks into the mud.

Sandra: God. *(Struggling to free her heel and then retreating to the patio.)*

Errol: Need sturdy boots for this mud.

Sandra: Do you see boots coexisting well with this outfit, I don't think so.

Errol: You think anyone up here care if your clothes don't look right?

Sandra: I care. This place is a dump.

Errol: It do me.

Sandra: More a tin pot shed that a house, how can you stand all that mud? *(indicating the ground in front of the house).*

Errol: Look dis place, it di only home I gat, and mi mother and father before me, your mother too before you. It nat much but dis my home. You don't like it little girl dem plenty big hotels down di road.

Sandra: I don't want a hotel.

Sandra shivers again, Errol notices.

Errol: Put something on, you don't want to make yourself ill. See dat mist comin' in on di mountains dere. Gonna rain any minute.

Sandra: I know mom just (*cannot finish the sentence*). But you don't have to do that.

Errol: Do what?

Sandra: Be nice. Say what you think a father should.

Sandra shivers again. She turns from Errol again and wipes away a tear. When she turns back she has composed herself.

As Sandra speaks Max can be heard girgling and giggling through the monitor.

Also while she speaks Sandra does not realise it but she steps off the patio and walks onto the grass. The same heel gets stuck in the mud again and this time she steps out of both of her shoes and paces over the muddy ground in her stocking feet.

Sandra: Couldn't sleep this morning; thought I better do something useful. So I called the airport to talk about how to fly mom home. (*Beat.*) Do you know what they said? Cargo. That's what they called her, cargo. Said all (*beat - she is crying now but does not turn from Errol or try to disguise it.*) human remains (*beat*) would have to go as cargo in the hold. And I don't know why because I know he wasn't trying to be, trying to do anything on purpose, but I couldn't help it. I wanted to scream down the phone at him. Scream until his ears bled. (*Beat*) Human remains; imagine.

Errol: Sandy.

Sandra: And he said they would need mom's passport, to cancel it. It's too soon though. Don't you think that; that it's too soon? Not yet. Not yet. Just wait a bit you know, until, until, I don't know. Just not right now.

Sandra begins to breathe heavily as she tries unsuccessfully to stop herself from the real sobs that threaten.

Errol: Sandy.

Sandra: And, And, then I couldn't breathe, I, *(she laughs at the ridiculousness of it.)* I hung up on him.

Sandra is really crying now. She clenches both of her fists and shuts her eyes tightly to try to help regain her composure. She takes a deep breath. This helps and she is able to calm herself and stop crying.

Errol: Sandy darlin' just-

Sandra: That's not my name.

Sandra wipes her tear streaked face with her sleeve.

Errol: Cry if you want baby.

Sandra: It doesn't help, does it? Me blubbering all over myself.

Sandra shivers again.

Errol: *(He gets up and gets his sweater from the chair on the porch of the house).*
Gets cold up here.

Sandra reluctantly accepts the sweater and puts it on.

Errol: I can help with arrangements if you need-

Sandra: I can do it.

Errol: Offer's there.

Beat.

It may not be your right name Sandy but I give it to you. Your mother never tell you? There you were two weeks old; so small but Lord you could scream. And I just lookin' at you one day screamin' yourself hoarse, won't accept nothing me or your mommy do to try to ease you. Now I say to myself Sandra too formal for a tiny thing like you, you is more a Sandy you know; dat suit your temperament better then. And you been Sandy to me every day after dat.

Sandra watches Errol; she is trying but she can't work him out.

It begins to rain. Sandra pulls up the sweater over her head and runs to the shelter of the porch. Errol collects his chair and also retreats out of the increasing rain shower to the porch. The sound of the heavy rain on the tin roof of the house can be heard. Errol and Sandra watch the rain for a few moments.

Errol: You know Sandy, sometimes it's stronger to ask for help.

Errol and Sandra continue watching the rain for a moment, facing outwards towards the Blue Mountains.

Sandra: You think I need help?

Errol: Don't you?

Sandra: I always thought of you as this amazing thing. It's only now being with you, alone, just you and me, I realise my dad's supposed to make me feel safe; that's what I must have thought about you all these years. The feeling I'd have if I finally met you; a safety, a certainty. I only know that I must have been thinking that all this time because I don't feel it and it seems wrong that I don't; when you're standing right beside me.

Errol: I want to help.

Sandra: What changed? I thought your family suffocated you and all you wanted was music and Jessie and fame?

Errol: Let me help; talk to me baby girl.

Sandra: What changed?

Errol: Your mommy said she was dying and the stars fell out of my eyes. Your mommy said she was dying and then she did and I gat a sick feelin'. Sick right to my stomach 'coz I know now. It take me long but I see it, dem stars I was chasin', dey wasn't a patch on her.

Sandra: Look just 'coz Mom (*can't say it.*), you don't get an instant family okay; it doesn't work like that. You don't deserve it. Will, Leon, me; we're just here until we can get the next flight home, then that's it.

Errol: You forgot Max.

Sandra: What?

Errol: You said you, Leon, Will but forgot about Max, Max is here too.

(Beat.)

Sandra: I don't owe you a thing. When you left what that did to me, to Will, to all of us; something happened that you can't just take back with a bit of a sing song and a few sugar coated words.

Errol: I don't know what you want den.

Errol goes inside the house. Left alone on the porch Sandra continues to look out at the rain and the Blue Mountain range opposite. Sandra pulls the sweater tighter around herself as the rain tapers off. Leon enters running

across the muddy, sodden ground to Sandra; he is trying to avoid getting wet even though it is only drizzling now.

Leon kisses Sandra in greeting. She gives him a hug and holds onto him for a long time. When she finally lets go she leans on the porch railings and goes back to looking out at the mountain range opposite.

Sandra: It's really, really beautiful up here. If she had to go anywhere I'm glad it was here; it was right, you know.

Leon: *(Looking out also.)* Looks like more rain.

Sandra: *(Sitting in the chair Errol put on the porch.)* What?

Leon: All that mist coming in over the mountains look; gonna be more rain anytime. Really heavy too I think.

Sandra: That what you want to talk about; the weather?

Leon: Safest thing.

Beat.

Leon: You okay?

Beat.

Leon: You look a mess.

Sandra: Thanks.

Leon: I didn't mean-

Sandra: You haven't said. The hospital?

Beat.

Sandra: What did they say?

Leon: Did you manage to get any sleep?

Sandra: Leon? Did you see-

Leon: You were up all night with-

Sandra: Did you? How did she look?

Leon: A few hours maybe, sleep would do you-

Sandra: I'm fine.

(Beat)

Leon: How can you be?

Sandra: What aren't you telling me?

Leon: Just, it's gonna take a few days, the certificate.

Sandra: What do you mean, certificate?

Leon: Before we can go back we need, when someone, when they, the coroner needs to certify it.

Sandra: Oh, *(laughing a little)* of course.

Beat.

Leon: Sandy, you okay?

Sandra: *(Moving away from him)* Stop asking me that.

Leon: What do you want me to say?

Sandra: I'm not some delicate flower Leon. I don't need-

Leon: Sandy, your mom she-

Sandra: Happens everyday. People lose a parent everyday, I, we, we're nothing special.

Pause

Leon: But she was, wasn't she?

Sandra: I didn't mean-

Leon: A mother-

Sandra: I didn't mean-

Leon: Your mother?

Sandra: *(Quietly)* Please.

Leon: Isn't that something? A mother Sandy? To anchor you, pin memories to, somewhere to come back?

Sandra: *(Tears in her voice)* Don't. No pressure, you agreed.

Leon: I can't help it. Do you want to be like him? 23 years Sandy? How did that make you feel? 'Coz that's how Max's gonna feel if you-

Sandra: I didn't say that; that I was leaving, not for sure. This isn't fair, I can't think, not right now, after-

Leon: I know you Sandy. Looking in your eyes I can see it. You're doing nothing but thinking.

Sandra: But he might be better off if I-

Leon: He needs an anchor.

Sandra: I want to be that for him but I'm no good at it; a mother should feel and I don't; I've tried.

Leon: I can help you.

Sandra: *(Tears threaten again.)* Don't you get it? You were right. I am; I'm broken. I'm no good for him.

Sandra runs back into the house before her tears come.

Leon closes his eyes a moment.

Lights down.

Act 2 Scene 2

Lights up on the scene of the land outside Errol's back door.

Throughout the beginning of this Tom McRae's song 'Human Remains' plays from 7secs – 1min 10secs

The rain has stopped and the sun has come out. Sandra sits on the edge of the porch; her stocking feet in the mud. She is typing on her lap top. At first she is consumed with what is on her lap top screen but quickly begins to steal curious looks at the activity of Leon and Will until finally she is watching them as they shovel the earth back into place with their spades having bedded in their plant.

Leon and Will are both planting an anthurium plant in the ground near a bench that faces out towards the valley and mountain range. The men are planting this in a shaded area of the ground. They both wear gardening gloves and are digging at the muddy earth with alot of effort. However once a sufficient size hole has been made Will delicately handles the plant and places it in the hole. Both men shovel the mud and dirt back into the hole to hold the anthurium plant firm.

Music ends. Will looks up and notices Sandra has been watching them.

Will: Just needed to mark it, you know?

Sandra: Looks good.

Will: Something of hers to leave behind.

Sandra: I would have liked to-

Will: Sorry, didn't think you would-

Leon: Will asked and I-

Sandra: It's okay.

Will: No.

Leon: There's still the compost to put on. Want to help?

Sandra: You sure? Don't know anything about growing things.

Leon: And we do?

Will: *(Smiling.)* Remember all Mom's plants growing up?

Sandra: *(Laughing)* Every room of the house.

Will: Always the hardest ones to grow as well; African violet, bird of paradise and remember that purple anthurium? No matter what she did that thing wouldn't

bloom. Thought it'd be right to leave one here for her. Something connected to her that grows and carries on.

Sandra: Give us a spade then.

Sandra sits on the ground, she gets mud and dirt on her suit but she isn't thinking about that. She uses one of the spades to put an ample layer of compost from a little bag on top of the soil around the plant.

Max can be heard babbling to himself through the baby monitor. Sandra reacts to this and stops for a moment but then she goes right back to adding more compost.

Leon: *(To Sandra.)* You alright?

Will: Alright Sandy, that'll do. Don't want to cover the whole thing.

Sandra: Since when did you have a green thumb?

Will: Thumb? All five fingers baby. Alan Titchmarsh better watch out.

Sandra: That so? *(She tosses a little dirt at Will)*

Will wipes a bit of mud on Sandra's cheek and smiling moves away quickly expecting retaliation.

Sandra: *(Mock outrage)* Oh that's it.

Sandra fills her spade with dirt and mud and jokingly aims it at Will and then Leon.

Leon: *(Smiling.)* You dare.

Sandra flings the dirt and mud at him as she backs away. It lands squarely in his lap.

Leon: *(Shaking the mud and dirt off himself.)* Oh you've done it now.

Leon, Will and Sandra chase each other; Leon and Will with handfuls of dirt and mud, and Sandra a spade full. Initially it is every one for themselves as the mud and dirt flies. Quickly though it becomes Will and Sandra against Leon.

As Max babbles through the monitor a new voice is heard; that of Errol talking to Max. As soon as Errol's voice is heard through the monitor Sandra stops dead and listens to his words. Just as she stops dirt thrown by Leon hits her in the chest. She ignores this completely. Leon and Will stop also; as all three listen to Errol's words.

Errol: *(As Errol talks Max babbles on making noises and nonsense words.)* Shh, likkle one. Shh darlin'. *(Beat.)* You nat even dat big. No nat big at all.

Max begins to cry and then to really scream.

Leon: *(Looking at Sandra, who makes no move to go to Max.)* I should go, Max doesn't know him. He's scaring him.

Will: *(Putting his hand on Leon's arm to stop him.)* No just-

Sandra: Ssh I want to hear.

Errol: Shh, Maxxie, shh. It's only me dat's all, only old pops. Maxxie hush now darlin'.

*(Singing)*Hush a bye baby, on the tree top.

When the wind blows the cradle will rock.

Errol repeats these two lines three times. Max is soothed and his screams and crying subside. He only makes little occasional noises over the monitor now.

Errol: You a tiny likkle thing. But your mommy Maxxie, now she was big. Massive to me. Couldn't get her off my mind at first. And your uncle Will, two a dem so big to me I play hide and seek 23 years. I hide so good no one ever find me. But dat no good Maxxie. It lonely you see. It lonely. *(Beat)* And it too late now. Oh your grandmother see you, how small you are, helpless. I come to it too Maxxie; jus I come late. It alright Maxxie, you alright now.

All that can be heard over the monitor is Max babbling to himself.

Will and Sandra hold each other's gaze.

Errol exits the house; Leon, Sandra and Will all stare at him.

Errol: What?

Will: Nothing.

Leon: *(Laughing nervously.)* Nice singing voice.

Sandra: Couldn't get me off your mind?

Beat.

Leon: *(Looking from Sandra to Errol.)* Gotta get a shower; I look a sight.

Will: Right behind you.

Errol: Will?

Will keeps on walking back to the house with Leon.

Will: *(Ignoring Errol.)* Oi Leon, don't use all the hot water; if there's any left that is.

Errol looks after them. Sandra follows Errol's gaze. Will and Leon exit back into the house.

Sandra: What do you expect?

Errol: I-

Sandra: You said it yourself; it's too late.

Beat.

Errol: Maxxie's one pretty baby do, so sweet.

Sandra: *(Looking him dead in the eye.)* When I was small do you know what mom said about you? She told us you loved us but couldn't be with us because you had to be out there in the world doing something important. *(Laughing though there are tears in her voice.)* I was 20 before I really got it. Allowed myself to. My third year of uni I had a friend; her dad would take her out every Sunday afternoon, you know to the movies or bowling or just the two of them at a restaurant eating and talking. She invited me along once; I didn't know how to say no so I find myself sitting in a restaurant watching the two of them and choking on my food. It was so easy their relationship; just laughing and joking together like they really had a connection; he really knew who she was and she could take that for granted 'coz he had always been there, wasn't going anywhere. That's when I finally admitted to myself what your absence had cost me.

Errol: I didn't mean to be gone so long; I always meant to come back.

Sandra: But you didn't. You know watching that friend of mine with her dad; I kept thinking; what can be so much more important to my dad than doing this? Whatever he is doing, wherever he is, this right here that's what's important, doesn't he know that?

Errol: I was selfish.

Sandra: Yes.

Beat.

Sandra: I look at Max and I don't feel *(cannot say it.)* I look at Max and I'm scared I'm like you.

Beat.

Sandra: I don't feel what I should. I look at him and I feel useless, trapped, not enough for him.

Beat.

Sandra: Does that, do you know what I mean?

Errol: I know. I know.

Sandra: I don't want Max to have to sleep with a picture of me under his pillow.

Errol: What does that mean?

Sandra: Nothing, it doesn't matter.

Sandra goes to run back into the house but Errol grabs her arm to stop her.

Errol: All I can tell you is what I know. Over di years what kept me company was shame. Someone ask me, hey Errol you gat kids? What can I say? I can't say yes but every time I say no it feel wrong, shameful. 'Coz how can a man deny his pickni when they on his mind every day? Every thought I had about you and Will had another one to keep it company. Dat one said; you gat no right to any of it; no right to thinking of dem, hoping for dem, loving dem. Sandra, whatever you feelin' now; all dat shame and regret gonna be too heavy for you to carry.

Errol releases his grip on Sandra.

Sandra: I've thought about killing him.

Beat.

Sandra: Bet you're sorry you found me now.

Beat.

Errol I know how you feel. That choice you made; the children you had, you wanted them more than anything at first. But soon you realise that that choice you made cuts off your choices for who you can be now. It's not about what you want anymore, it's about what you should and you're trapped between the two.

Sandra: *(Looks at him.)* You don't hate me; think I'm a bad mother?

Errol: I can't judge you.

Sandra: You know; you're the first person who's said that to me.

Errol: But you need to talk to someone.

Sandra: I know.

Errol: Someone to help you?

Sandra: I (*can't continue.*)

Beat.

Sandra: If I do, would you-

Errol: Yes.

Sandra: You don't know what I was asking.

Errol: I'll be there with you (*a moment.*). If that's what you want.

Sandra: You'd do that?

Beat – Errol and Sandra watch each other.

Sandra: I don't know.

Errol: Think on it.

Errol goes back inside the house. Sandra is deep in thought and wanders to the very edge of the Errol's land. She stands right on the edge of the precipice looking out over the Blue Mountains.

After a moment Will comes out of the house. He has now showered and changed his clothes.

Will crosses to Sandra but he stops a few feet from the edge where she is.

Will: Careful.

Sandra: Look at that view.

Will: Too close to the edge.

Sandra: It gives you a thrill? Standing so close, looking down there?

Will: I can see.

Sandra: Come see from here.

Will: This is close enough for me.

Sandra: You scared?

Will: No.

Sandra: I know you.

Will: What are you doing Sandra? Come on.

Beat.

Sandra: Mom told me about the job offer.

Will: She what? It's my business, she had no right.

Sandra: I told Mom-

Will: Stay out of it Sandy; it doesn't concern you.

Sandra: I told Mom I'm a crap mother and I don't think I love my baby. She told me all about your great job offer you're turning down because you're such a great father, you know your kid so well; love Izzi so much she can't possibly go to nursery.

Will: Mom said that?

Sandra: Errol stood here yesterday. Right here in this spot; Mom in his arms. She looked out, shouted at the top of her lungs. That surprised me that she could do that, even then. Then I shouted too. Then we all did.

Beat.

(Calling out into the valley) I am not afraid!

The sound of baby Max crying comes through the baby monitor that is still on the porch behind them. Will reacts to the sound and so does Sandra.

Come on Will say it with me. *(Calling out into the valley) I am not afraid!*

Will: Sandy this is dumb. Aren't you gonna see to Max?

Sandra does not move.

Will: 'Spose I better do it.

Will turns to go back to the house.

Sandra: *(Sandra turns from the view of the mountain range to Will's retreating back.)* Call me crazy but sometimes I think looking after other people means you don't have to do things for you. Live your own life.

Will stops in his tracks and turns back to face Sandra.

Will: This again?

Sandra: Mom said you take that job and you and Lisha'd be better off. You take that job and Izzi'd only have to go to nursery two days a week. Just two days Will, but you won't do it. Mom said Izzi wants to go but you love her so much you want to keep her at home. Mom might not have seen it Will but don't you? It's

not love for Izzi; it's just you holding her back so you can hold onto her. Because that way you can hold yourself back.

The sound of baby Max crying on the baby monitor again.

Sandra: You could be amazing Will, if you let yourself.

Will: Can't you hear him?

Sandra: He's not your responsibility. Things won't fall apart if you stop taking care of everyone else.

Will: I *(doesn't know what to say.)*

Sandra: When do you have to let them know?

Will: A week they said. So when we get back I 'spose.

Sandra: Take the job.

Will: I can't.

Sandra: Do you really have a choice?

Will: Look, can we ... Mom just died ... can't this-

Sandra: Take the job Will.

Will: She won't cope if I'm not there.

Sandra watches Will for a moment.

Sandra: Don't you mean you won't? I've seen you ever since we got here you've been stuck to Max like glue.

Will: Someone has to be.

Sandra: Skyping Lisha and Izzi, what was it? 7 times yesterday?

Will: Mom died; I had to let Lisha know.

Sandra: But 7 times? Lisha said two of those were to watch Izzi sleeping.

Will: She misses me.

Sandra: How do you know? You're never away from her long enough for her to miss you?

Will: I'm supposed to take parenting advice from someone who acts like the invisible man when it comes to her kid; I haven't seen you check on him once.

Sandra: Shut up.

Will: Touched a nerve?

Sandra: It's not healthy that's all I'm trying to say.

Will: And your way is?

Sandra: (*Quietly.*) No. Take the job Will.

Will: I (*shakes his head.*)

Sandra watches Will for a moment.

Sandra: Come on the view is great from here. (*Sandra extends a hand to him.*)

Will takes a single step and then stops unable to go any further.

Will: Careful Sandy.

Sandra: Are you scared?

Will: No.

Sandra: I am. Come on.

Beat – Will's eyes are on Sandra's and he eventually takes another step and grabs Sandra's hand. The two stand on the very edge of the precipice, holding hands and looking out over the Blue Mountains.

The sound of baby Max over the monitor again.

Will: I'm not scared; I 'm terrified.

Lights down.

Act 2 Scene 3:

March 1981. Lights up. The land outside Errol's parents' house in Mount James Jamaica. This is the same house which has been identified as Errol's house in earlier scenes. It is late afternoon and the sun is setting during the scene. Errol Roberts, 23, and Barbara Roberts, 18, are present. Errol sits on the porch steps and Barbara lies with her head in his lap.

Barbara: Can you believe it? *(She admires the wedding ring on her right hand.)*

Errol: All morning at work I couldn't stop smiling.

Errol kisses Barbara.

Barbara: *(Swiping Errol playfully.)* Anyone say anything?

Errol: Who's gonna say anything?

Barbara: Errol?

Errol: Only Shorty. I had to tell him, couldn't help it. But Shorty ain't gonna tell no one.

Barbara: *(Sitting up suddenly and very serious.)* How many times I tell you?

Errol: Who Shorty gonna tell? He only got one friend to tell and dat's me, so stop worryin'.

Barbara: You'll be worryin' if my daddy find out, trust me.

Errol: You look beautiful.

Barbara: *(Shy.)* You talk rubbish you know dat?

Errol: Mrs. Roberts.

Barbara: Mr. Roberts.

Barbara admires her wedding ring again and kisses Errol.

Barbara: I wish I coulda had a wedding dress though.

Errol: I know.

Barbara: And maybe a church, some nice flowers; likkle do after.

Errol: One day sweetness.

Barbara: You scared?

Errol: No.

Barbara: *(Rubbing her stomach.)* I was with mommy yesterday and she just talkin' and I thought I wish I could tell her and daddy; give dem a chance.

Errol: They the ones push me from di door step tell me I'm nat good enough.

Barbara: I know.

Errol: You think they'd let us do it if they knew? They'd a lock you up in dat house and no way we set foot on dat plane tomorrow.

Barbara: I never been so far that's all.

Errol: We could stay if you want B. Likkle patch a ground right here. My daddy he wouldn't mind. He likes you; always tellin' me you is good fa me.

Barbara: No Titch, we goin'. We gonna be great dere; you watch.

The sun has begun to set. Errol looks out at the Blue Mountains opposite.

Errol: You nat gonna miss a sight like dat? Like di sky on fire; burnin' up 'coz it know today special; di day I caught my very own Dorothy with her red shoes on?

Barbara: You think I gonna miss dem hills with di mist dat call di rain every single day? Di mosquito an' insects dat eat me alive up here?

Errol: Dey say dat place wet as a dish rag everyday too, di rain pourin' mornin' and night.

Barbara searches his face.

Barbara: We decided Errol; we gat di tickets; place to stay? You change ya mind?

Errol: You sure?

Barbara: *(She holds him as she talks.)* We gonna be great; you and Jessie gonna make it big, remember? We gonna have every little thing we want.

Errol: I know I just *(can't articulate his thought.)*

Barbara: What?

Errol: I just never been so far either.

Errol kisses Barbara and then jumps up.

Errol: But it'll be great. I'm sure. Everything we ever wanted. I got you a present.

Errol takes a small badly wrapped gift from behind a guitar case on the porch and hands it to Barbara. Barbara tears off the paper immediately to reveal a Russian doll.

Barbara: *(Looking at it dubiously.)* I never see anythin' like dat.

Errol: *(Taking it from her and taking all of the dolls out and laying them out on the porch next to Barbara.)* You can take it apart like dis. One inside di other; all di same just smaller and smaller until you get to dis one. *(Errol indicates the smallest doll right at the heart of the Russian doll.)*

Barbara: *(Unimpressed.)* Okay.

Errol: *(Picks up the smallest doll.)* Di other three dey all around her; to protect her right. But all together, all four a dem dey always inside each other no matter what, each a part, separate, but together they fit, you know B? Make a set? *(Errol smiles at Barbara and puts his hand on her stomach.)*

Barbara: We three make a set?

Errol: Always.

Barbara: I never seen a man so excited.

Errol: Ain't I gotta a right? Dat child mekin' me lose sleep man. Best feelin' I ever had waitin' to meet dat likkle thing. I'm gonna spoil her; make sure she have more dan me. England ain't gonna know what hit dem when me and Jessie start. *(Puts his arm around Barbara.)* Dis di first day of a good, good life, I promise you.

Barbara: *(Noticing how dark it has become and looking at the sky.)* Stars are out.
Errol and Barbara watch the night sky for a few moments.

Errol: *(Pointing into the sky and then following the star's trajectory.)* There's a shooting star look; make a wish.

Barbara: Dat foolishness man.

Errol: Go on.

Barbara: Alright.
They both continue following the shooting star as Barbara silently makes her wish.

Errol: One last surprise. We can't have a do but *(Errol takes out his guitar and begins to strum.)*

Barbara: *(Recognising the tune.)* You learnt it?

Errol: Took weeks. This sort of like a very small do, an exclusive do.

Barbara: Just you, me (*puts her hand on her stomach.*), likkle one and our song. (*She throws her arms around Errol.*)

Errol: All we need. Serenaded under the stars what more can you ask for?

Barbara and Errol laugh together.

As Errol plays and sings Peter Tosh's 'Johnny Be Good'. Barbara sits on the porch steps and happily moves to the music.

Lights down.

THE END

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Father's Day Pitch

Father's Day follows the events in the Robert's household over one hot weekend. The family matriarch, Barbara 48, is coming to terms with leaving her house to enter a hospice the following Monday morning. Her two children, Sandra 29, and Will 25, are also coming to terms with the fact that their mother is making her final journey to the hospice and that she will die soon from her terminal uterine cancer. Into this atmosphere of resignation and reminiscence of past family joys together comes Errol Roberts 53, the father and husband who abandoned his family 23 years earlier. His arrival stirs up long forgotten recriminations and anger for his daughter Sandra. She has recently given birth and is struggling to cope with balancing her cherished career as a marketing manager and motherhood. Errol's arrival throws Sandra into turmoil as she has been considering abandoning her own marriage and child. Sandra begins to fears she may not be as different to her father as she had always thought. Will clashes with his father because though he is please to meet the father he could never really remember his father mocks Will's current status as a house husband caring for his 2 year old daughter. Errol thinks that rearing children is women's work.

The play is in two acts. The first concerns the Robert's family over 1 weekend in Barbara's family home in the West Midlands. The family are rocked by Errol's arrival and instead of Barbara going into the hospice on the Monday morning as planned the family take her on last week long trip back to her and Errol's native Jamaica. The second act concern the fall-out from the revelations of the first act as Sandra decides whether to stay with her family or not and Will comes to terms with the form of manhood he believes in (this is almost in polar opposition to his Errol's notions). Errol and Barbara almost become their former selves again – narrating their former love affair which resulted in them marrying. We see that for them both this was a great love but while Barbara embraced the feeling of being out of control that it brought with it, Errol ran from that feeling.

This is a domestic drama spread over two continents. The past is always in the present but this is more immediately apparent in the second act.

The play's major characters are:

Barbara Roberts, a 48 year old Afro-Caribbean woman who was diagnosed with uteran cancer 18 months previously. Barbara lives in the Black Country, in her family house of 25 years.

Errol Roberts, a 53 year old Afro-Caribbean man. He married Barbara 30 years ago in a little Baptist church in Bilston, West Midlands. Errol abandoned his family 21 years ago to return to his native Jamaica where he worked as a painter and decorator sporadically. He has never had a stable life after he left.

Sandra Roberts, a 29 year old British woman of Afro Caribbean descent. Sandra is a marketing manager in London; her and her husband make a good living. She has recently returned to work full time after 3 months off on maternity leave. She returned to work after

only 3 months though she had 6 month maternity leave because she felt she was losing her own identity in motherhood.

Will Roberts, 25. He has a 2 year old daughter and has been married for 4 years. He is a house husband while his wife works as an accountant. He and his family live in Birmingham to remain close to his mother.

The play's themes are what does it mean to be a good father? What does it mean to be a good mother? Why if a husband and father abandons his family is that more readily acceptable to society than if a wife and mother does that?