

THE PACT (formerly known as **field of knives**)
with critical analysis

by

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A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
For the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (B)

Department of Drama and Theatre Arts
College of Arts and Law
The University of Birmingham
August 2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of two parts: an original play The Pact (formerly known as Field of Knives) and its accompanying critical analysis.

The Pact is a Three-Act play, set over a period of three years, that charts the journey of two women: a lawyer and a teenage girl. As the lawyer persuades the girl to be a witness for the defence at her brother's murder trial, she not only discovers the motives behind the sibling murder but also has to confront her own dark secret.

This critical analysis documents and reflects upon the dramaturgical challenges faced by the novice playwright, when creating an original drama for the stage. It examines questions of genre and the structural components of story, plot, and character function, as the play moves through the redrafting process, from initial concept to final submission. It considers how the script has responded to critical feedback and the substantial revision of the ideas that informed the original thesis. It aims to demonstrate how the introduction of significant new material, rigorous research and profound alterations to the scope of the narrative, has enabled the narrative to move from multifarious themes to a more focused and potent whole.

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

This critical analysis charts the journey of the playwriting process that informed the author's first play for the stage: The Pact (formerly known as Field of Knives). The aim is to document and critically reflect upon the dramaturgical challenges faced by the novice playwright, when the ambitions of the original idea outweigh the writer's ability to achieve the end goal. It will consider how this writer has responded to robust criticism from the examiners and made substantial revisions to the original thesis play. This has involved the introduction of significant new material and profound alterations to the themes and scope of the narrative, especially with reference to the crucial role of knowledge of the subject informing the text. The analysis will endeavour to demonstrate an awareness of the key components of story, plot and character and the dramatic techniques that have enabled the narrative to move from multifarious themes to a more focused and credible whole.

The decision to change the title to The Pact will be clarified in the following analysis. However, the resubmitted script, although profoundly different in many ways, is not presented as a new play but instead as a bold evolution from the original.

Critical Response to the Original Submitted Text

The critical response to the original submitted text, Field of Knives was considerably varied and ranged from two extremes.

There were those who, like playwright Steve Waters, praised the “elegance and concision of the writing” and the ambition of the play. For example, Pippa Ellis, literary manager at the RSC wrote: “The writing is deft and the demands of a large cast and a large time-scale are elegantly handled. The ambitions of the play are delivered with an impressive lightness of touch”.

In marked contrast, the thesis examiners Steve Bottoms and Russell Jackson decided the play fell far short of its ambitions. Instead of agreeing with Ellis that the characters are “well-rooted and clearly drawn,” Bottoms observed that “I found myself not really caring about any of the characters” since they were “sketched in so thinly.” Both examiners thought the play failed to engage convincingly with the political milieu, where certain situations “stretch credibility” (Jackson) and the multiplicity of themes meant the play was too stark and did not give “its elements the kind of detail and attention they need” (Bottoms).

It has therefore been my aim in the last few months to address as many of the examiners’ criticisms as possible and, whilst still retaining some connection with the original concept, move the play on to a radically revised work.

Ideas, Scope and Questions of Genre

In The Seven Basic Plots Christopher Booker identifies seven basic archetypes of story that pervade most narratives. One such archetype is “Overcoming the Monster”, a story dating from the ancient Greeks, “whose mythology was swarming with monsters of every kind” (23). The classic example of this archetype is the “David and Goliath story” where a shepherd boy overcomes a “seemingly invincible” opponent to become “his country’s greatest king” (Booker, 24). Yet, David’s catalogue of heroic, admirable and very public successes contrasted with the poignancy of his children’s lives. The rape of his daughter by his eldest son and the ensuing revenge fratricide by another son was the fall-out of David’s private failures: multiple marriages, a spectacular act of adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged murder of her husband. I argued, if stories continually draw on ancient parallels as a way of illuminating present crises, what would the equivalent of a modern-day David be like?

My original premise for the construction of Field of Knives was to explore this notion of overcoming monsters, both the external (public life) and those within ourselves (the life behind the mask). I envisaged David as an example of the hero that Aristotle favours in Poetics as “one of those people who are held in great esteem and enjoy great good fortune”, so that the subsequent “change to bad fortune which he undergoes is not due to any moral defect or depravity, but to an error of some kind” (21). My intention was therefore to explore what an acclaimed and popular leader might do if he set upon a project to fight some external monster facing the nation (for the great and common good), only to find a reversal of fortune when his own children suffer tragedy, due to the error of his emotional neglect.

Unfortunately, I chose to do this by making the protagonist of Field of Knives a newly-elected Prime Minister in England, who sweeps to sudden and glorious victory after the demise of a battle-weary government. This was, on reflection, an unwise choice and one of the most fundamental flaws in my original thesis play. Depicting a central protagonist as both Prime Minister and a credible “hero” in contemporary British culture was naïve. It became a perpetual stumbling block in the development of the narrative. Long before the scandal over MP’s expenses that dogged the Spring months of 2009, playwright Robin Soans observed at a Writer’s Guild Conference: “most people are wary of packaged up messages” and find it “offensive that some scandals [are] hushed up and the truth masked and covered”.

In spite of this perception, the feedback after initial drafts and a rehearsed workshop of Field of Knives was largely positive about the character of David, although more in his role as father than as politician. I had initially steered away from aligning David with any particular political party but, from a dramaturgical perspective, this was problematic. His open-minded liberality raised issues about the subsequent course of the character’s journey. In a tutorial, Waters suggested that David was “unduly idealistic” and that I needed to “sharpen up” his character. I therefore refashioned David as a tough hardliner, an ex-Army officer, advocating justice and hard policing: “then you can forget your hug-a-hoodie... presumptions of prosecution and...namby-pamby solutions” (Fourth Draft 1.1.23). This tied in far more with the source of his character, the Goliath-slaying David, and was reflected in his dialogue through a variety of references to battles, weapons, and the grit of the fighter:

DAVID: Ah. You see that's the difference between winning and losing.

Think of the eagle...soaring high, racing the winds, dancing the storms and then...one moment of lost concentration...of flying just that little bit too low and...

He collides his palms in a loud crunch.

GONE!

Struck to the ground by a single gunshot.

JONO: Wow! That's er...quite a metaphor.

TAMARA: Dad, did you ever shoot an eagle?

DAVID: Once.

ALISTAIR: Dad's a pretty good marksman.

DAVID: You learn some decent skills in the Army.

ADAM: Like shooting people.

DAVID: Yep. When you have to.

When your country needs you to.

(Field of Knives: Fourth Draft. 1.1.12)

In Field of Knives the external "monster" facing David was one based on real-life events in the winter of 2007; the soaring rate of teenagers stabbing each other in revenge killings on inner-city streets. After the twenty-fourth teenage murder in London, "senior police officers described 2007 as the worst in living memory" (Singh and Davenport). A cry of protest resounded from ordinary mothers around the country who had lost their sons in knife attacks and who petitioned the governing bodies, including the Prime Minister, against the escalating killings.

This informed my sub-plot involving a campaigning Afro-Caribbean mother, Tekita Grant, arriving at Downing Street to talk with David after her son's fratricide in a gang knife-ritual. This was based on knowledge of an existing campaigner, Pat Regan, founder of the Leeds division of national charity Mothers Against Violence. Referencing the M.A.V. website, mothers from the charity described how they first met with Prime Minister Tony Blair in a "closed meeting" at Downing Street in 2001. Due to her prominence as a campaigner, Regan was later invited to a discussion on knife crime with the Prime Minister and Home Secretary in 2007. It therefore did not seem to me too fanciful that Tekita could likewise visit the Prime Minister in my play, especially if, like Regan, she had met him before. However Bottoms thought the idea of her trying to negotiate a "deal" with "the Prime Minister (instead of justice officials) was "unbelievable". He further questioned how she could possibly have "withheld information pertinent to the very crime that sparked her campaigning" and believed this was "indicative" of my "failure to properly research" the subject.

In fact, I did research this topic fairly extensively and interviewed a police officer (herself a mother of two teenagers) and various mothers and social workers living in the gangland community of inner-city Birmingham. As David Hare wisely says in Asking Around, there is "nothing better for a writer than to go out and be rebuked by reality" (3). Those I spoke to claimed that it is a very strong part of the maternal instinct to try and protect your own child, even if they commit a crime that you vehemently oppose in your work. Tragically, Regan herself died at the hands of her own grandson, who stabbed her to death in June 2008, whilst she sheltered him in her home, even though the authorities had warned he was dangerous and "suffering from

paranoid schizophrenia at the time of the killing”(Norfolk). Her natural instincts as a grandmother cost Regan her life.

If the scenes between Tekita and David in Field of Knives lack credibility, I have to conclude that it is not due to inadequate research but rather to my inexperience as a writer. I am not from the urban black community and did not have sufficient first-hand experience of their every-day dialogue to create a credible voice for Tekita. Instead I based her patois on my study of plays by Roy Williams, especially The No Boys Cricket Club, where the character of Abi, like Tekita, was born and schooled in Jamaica before moving to London:

TEKITA: Oh, I know how it works. The police take him in and ‘cos he’s a minor he’ll go to a Y.O.I. ‘til he’s charged.

And when he’s doing Pen, then they’ll kill him.

DAVID: Who will kill him?

TEKITA: All those who hate the Burgers, who hate the Niley Park Crew. There’s so many who want revenge.

DAVID: But they could put Sy into a Youth Offending Institute on the other side of the country.

TEKITA: Prime Minister, where in this country do you think there is *any* young Yardie who doesn’t know about the Field of Knives?

Ask the police.

They know only too well.

(Field of Knives: Third Draft. 2.8.65)

In course seminars, David Edgar taught that conventionality of genre is part of the “verisimilitude” of a play as an audience seek to relate it to other dramas and

fictions they have seen. Each genre generates its own unique and different set of expectations from a prospective audience. It was not my original intention that Field of Knives should be an overtly political play, rather a backdrop to a play about fatherhood. However, by positioning David as Prime Minister, it was impossible to avoid engaging fully with the political milieu. Further, the public/private axis of family life was lost behind the play's other major themes. Therefore, after much reflection on the feedback from the examiners, I have made the radical decision to axe the political element of the play altogether.

In The Pact David is no longer Prime Minister but instead a businessman, heading up his own company. This is cultural territory far more familiar to me personally as, like my own father, David embarks on his third marriage in his early fifties. Away from the aspirations of political life, David can more legitimately struggle with the demands of serial marriage and absent fatherhood. Now that he is less puritanical and law-abiding, there is also room for some humour and self-parody:

DAVID: Look at those legs.

ALISTAIR: Where?

DAVID: Ye-es. I thought that might get your attention.

Look...see those rivulets gently clinging to the glass.

The stronger the legs, the richer the taste.

ALISTAIR: I prefer real ale.

TAMARA: Red wine gives me a headache.

DAVID: Nonsense. Cheapo supermarket plonk gives you a headache –

not this little baby. This is the French at their best.

Smooth, with exquisite texture.

He takes a gulp; sucks in air over the wine in his mouth; swallows.

Like liquid silk.

Go on – try it Tamara.

TAMARA: Do I really have to?

DAVID: For the money this cost me – absolutely.

(The Pact: Thesis Draft. 1. 43-44)

The revised character of David can now more credibly juggle the tensions of a father who has several children, from different marriages, who hardly know each other and only meet at social events like weddings and funerals. For example, the idea of David asking Adam to be Best Man at his wedding was inspired by my brother-in-law, who offered his eldest son that role when he married again for the third time.

With the removal of David as Prime Minister, it naturally followed that I should lose the sub-plot of the inner-city gang fight, dubbed ‘the field of knives’. There was no longer a need for this to be the inciting incident, since David was no longer in public office. Instead, I could now concentrate on the private family themes that I wanted most to explore, namely the secrecy surrounding incest and rape. It was at this point that I decided to change the name of the thesis play to one more appropriate to the new emphasis of the drama and The Pact is now the play’s new working title.

Story/ Plot and Emplotment Mechanisms

Structuralists in dramatic form distinguish between fabula (story) and sjuzet (plot) where “story is the basic narrative outline and plot the means by which the narrative events are structured, organised and presented” (Aston and Savona, 21). By this definition, the submitted script for Field of Knives was vast in the scope of its story and problematic in the structure of its plot.

In Act One the stasis of the play was interrupted by an action that constituted a legitimate call to David, as Prime Minister, to leave his private world behind and move into the chaos of the exterior world. The messenger of this call was Joe Abbott, a special advisor in the Prime Minister’s private court, who disrupts the family’s summer holiday by arriving suddenly with urgent news:

DAVID: What’s happened Joe?

Pause.

JO: In the early hours of this morning, in the Niley district, two rival gangs went out and stood face to face in a local playing field. They apparently planned a kind of tribal challenge and agreed to enter twelve members from each side into a one-on-one, hand-to-hand combat to see who had the strongest gang. It was a matter of honour. They were told to keep going till one side gave in...
And this is it, David. Here’s the thing.
No-one gave in. All of them...

DAVID: All?

JOE: Twenty-four bodies lying on the football pitch.

(Field of Knives - Second Draft. 1.1. 23)

Frustratingly, the plot involving David and Joe never really worked in the way I originally envisaged. Having read various web articles on “the engine room” of the “Number 10 machine” (Travers) it appeared the current Prime Minister had gathered around him at Downing Street a core of special advisors who previously worked, not as civil servants, but in the City. One in particular, an ex-public relations guru, was given the newly created title of Chief of Strategy and Principal Advisor with the remit of bolstering the public image of the Prime Minister. This was my model for the character of Joe:

JONO: Who’s Joe Abbott?

ALISTAIR: Dad’s other half. Politically speaking.

ADAM: More like Mr Control Freak!

ALISTAIR: They were in the same regiment together.

ADAM: He’s a bit of a big-wig in the city, apparently.

Communications.

Actually, he’d be a good contact for you Jono.

(Field of Knives – Fourth Draft. 1.1. 17)

Although I have some professional experience of working in Communications as a business journalist, I have never worked in a political environment with the codes of conduct pertinent to that milieu. Perhaps this is why their dialogue failed to convince the examiners. “They read more like children playing at being politicians than actual politicians” (Bottoms) and Jackson wrote “the premier’s relationship with his staff doesn’t ring true”.

Once removed from the political arena, I was able to focus the story away from David and onto the lives of his three children, especially his youngest daughter. The

choice to angle the story principally from Tamara's point of view then involved a significant revision to the structural strategy of the plot.

Edgar defines "emplotment mechanisms" as the ways in which time and space can be utilised to convey meaning in a play. He describes "time emplotment" as that which conveys meaning "by the order in which events of the story are revealed" and "space emplotment" as the way in which action operates "across space between people".

In Field of Knives I used the emplotment mechanism of "single cycle time with changed space", the form most common to the classic Three-Act structure. The action operated in a linear time frame (spanning three years) in a "space emplotment" that was limited to two principal locations (David's house in the country and Downing Street). I then had to find ways to move the characters from the action at the house in Act One, to that of Downing Street in Act Two, and then to the culmination of events back at the house in Act Three. This put impossible strains on the dialogue, especially in the latter half of the play, which could not contain all the elements of the story in such a limited time-frame and failed to convey credible meaning. "The revelations David has to absorb in the final scene become almost farcically extreme" (Bottoms).

In The Pact I decided to employ a strategy that would allow more freedom to experiment with time and space and so convey more satisfying meaning for the overall drama. I chose that of "stretched time in unlimited space" to demonstrate how circumstances in the past affected the lives of Tamara and her family in the present.

When examining the pattern common to most tragic plots, Booker observed that the central protagonist moves through five "key stages":

from the initial mood of ‘anticipation’, through a ‘dream stage’ when all seems to be going unbelievably well, to the ‘frustration stage’ when things begin to go mysteriously wrong, to the ‘nightmare stage’ where everything goes horrendously wrong, ending in that final moment of death and destruction (4).

With this in mind, the narrative of The Pact chronicles Tamara’s journey through the initial “anticipation” and “dream” stages of her early adolescence to the “nightmare” stage of her rape by her half-brother when she is fourteen. However, the order in which events are revealed is reversed. The plot begins with Tamara as a seventeen year old in the present day, already in the final stage of “death and destruction” after the murder of her abuser. It then weaves its way backwards and forwards through the previous stages of her journey and includes the “nightmare stage” of her addiction to self-harming.

Self-harming was a theme that was only obliquely referenced in Field of Knives, but was integral to Tamara’s story. It is also something I have experienced through living, on two separate occasions, with female flat-mates who self-harmed. Earlier this year, in her BBC documentary A World of Pain, actress and writer Meera Syal explored the current phenomenon of self-harming that is currently affecting “one in three school-girls”. Whether it be cutting with razor blades, or burning, or over-dosing it appears that for a growing number of female adolescents (the statistics are lower for boys) self-harm has become an acceptable coping strategy for battling problems they feel unable to talk about. As Syal says online in Mirror.co.uk: “It seems all kids nowadays have heard of a self-harmer somewhere in their circle of friends”.

Initially, Syal researched the problem among young Asian girls who were under enormous societal pressures to attain high qualifications for their families. Yet her search took her into the broader community where she discovered a correlation between self-harm and former sexual abuse. This was often linked to the victim's isolation when their abuser was a close family member, and there was no-one they could tell. The pain of self-inflicted wounds became far less painful than trying to confront memories of abuse and the feelings of shame that accompany it.

The sibling rape and its effect on Tamara's mental health was a theme that became swamped by the rest of the plot in Field of Knives and, when it did eventually emerge, appeared "melodramatic" (Jackson). Since the question of credibility was raised by the examiners, particularly Bottoms who found David's family "spectacularly dysfunctional", I have endeavoured to underpin every plot detail in the revised play with rigorous research. There is not enough scope within the boundaries of this analysis to give full reference to this research but I will offer a few relevant statistics. For example, current data on the Teens First for Health website at Great Ormond Street Hospital, based on research from University of Nottingham, indicates that at least ten per cent of children suffer sexual abuse, with two thirds of the victims being girls. The same website describes how "sexual abuse happens when one person uses the power they have over another person to take advantage of them sexually. These people are usually in a position of trust or influence".

This information is borne out, in much more complex analysis, by extensive research and case studies undertaken here and in the US over the past twenty years. Studies by Vernon J. Wiehe, Joseph E. Davis and Penny Parks indicate that only a small percentage of child sexual abuse is by strangers. In most cases it is by a relative or

someone known to the family. Sibling abuse most often occurs when an older sibling takes charge of the younger, and usually when the parent is out. As Wiehe observes in Perilous Rivalry: “sexual abuse usually happens in a shroud of secrecy. Like adult abusers, sibling perpetrators often approach their victims as friends...thus seducing the victim into going along with the abuse in silence” (63).

Act Two of The Pact is therefore devoted to a series of scenes that map the early stages of Tamara’s story when she first meets her older brother, Adam. The Act begins with the serendipity of their first awkward meeting at David’s flat, where they have no idea of their family connection. Later when David tries to broker relationship between all of the siblings, it causes conflicting emotions:

ALISTAIR: So what, are we supposed to *lurve* him – ‘cos he happens to be our brother?

TAMARA: Half-brother.

ALISTAIR: Whatever.

TAMARA: Do you know he’s like this...really cool artist?

ALISTAIR: Yeah. Dad said.

Royal Academy and all that bollocks.

TAMARA: I can’t believe I spoke to him like he was just some random decorator.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: So what did you talk about – after you both knew?

TAMARA: Nothing much.

He painted and I just stood there. Like *forever*.

He said we’d met before, but I don’t remember that.

Do you?

ALISTAIR: Sort of.

I think we were on the swings – some shit like that.

You were just a toddler.

(The Pact – Thesis Draft. 2. 73-4)

I wanted to portray the inner conflict that children, who have the same father but different mothers, can encounter when they have grown up hundreds of miles apart and only meet for the first time in later life. By plotting several scenes when the siblings interrelate in a family context (first with David, and afterwards alone) I was able to depict them in a series of interactions layered with undertones of sibling rivalry and latent sexual attraction. As Adam slowly wins Tamara's trust, their encounters build in intensity until the point when he finally rapes her and afterwards bullies her into secrecy and cover-up.

As Tamara tries to face the monster of her past, I wanted to create a character who could accompany her on that journey. It was important to ensure the character was credible and crucial to the plot, with an authentic voice that resonated more with my own experience of life. Having axed the political theme altogether, there was no longer any need for David's ally, Joe Abbott. In The Pact the forty-something male strategy advisor has metamorphosed into Jo, the forty-something female professional, with a personal interest in uncovering Tamara's secret.

In early drafts, Jo's role was slightly ambiguous. She operated as a rather shadowy figure, allowing Tamara to dominate the dialogue whilst she responded in a more passive role. I envisaged her as a therapist, allowing Tamara to revisit her memories, and guiding her to face the root cause of her neuroses. However, in

subsequent drafts, Jo's role became far more proactive when I decided to reposition her as a slightly down-at-heel, high-street solicitor working as part of the legal-aid defence team on behalf of Alistair. By constructing the format of a lawyer/witness interview, I was able to power the elements of the play more effectively as Jo persuades Tamara to reveal information needed for an understanding of the play's action.

From the opening of the play it is established that a stabbing has already taken place and the identity of the culprit is known. Jo states he is a nineteen year old "kid" who "goes ballistic with a knife, ends up on a murder charge" and rather wearily: "So, what's new? Round here knife crime is, frighteningly, routine" (37). This is the play's only overt reference to one of the themes that originally dominated Field of Knives. The emphasis of the revised play is not on the problem of knife crime from a generic perspective but more tightly focused on the reasons why Alistair has stabbed Adam and how Tamara might be able to help the case for his Defence.

For my research into the judicial procedures that inform the plot of The Pact, I am indebted to the input of Peter Blair, head of Guildhall Chambers in Bristol. As a criminal barrister and QC, Blair has considerable experience of defending clients in murder trials. In an interview at his chambers, he discussed with me the various ways in which the Defence team might approach a murder case based on the outline for my narrative. He advised that if it was evident that Alistair had stabbed Adam, his lawyers would pursue a charge of manslaughter, using the "plea of provocation". In the ensuing trial the Defence would then have to put forward "evidence of specific provoking conduct" that would raise reasonable doubt in the minds of the Jury about whether Alistair intended to kill Adam, or was provoked on the spur of the moment. The barrister would brief Jo, as Defence Solicitor, to interview any witness who could

support the case for provocation and glean information crucial for the case. Blair later wrote in an email that the Defence would be keen to establish “that the Defendant was especially sensitive about something which was one of the triggers that made him lose his self-control before he carried out the killing”.

When I put to Blair the scenario of Tamara’s rape by Adam, he agreed that if she could be persuaded to give Jo a “signed witness statement” about her ordeal, it would lend a very strong argument to Alistair’s case and make it difficult for the Prosecution to prove “absence of provocation”. If the plea was accepted then Alistair would face a far lesser sentence, perhaps three years, rather than a life sentence. This research was the backbone on which I plotted the interview scenes in The Pact and informs Jo’s overriding project, that of obtaining the witness statement from Tamara.

Much of the first and third Act is set in Jo’s office in Hammersmith. Since the structure of the revised work is not intended to be naturalistic, this office need only be signified by a simple desk and chair and there is scope to delineate other locations, evoked by lighting, within the same space. This enables Tamara to walk between locations whilst talking to Jo and, as her memory leads her, and relive crucial encounters from her past in a series of sub-scenes within each Act. However the focus of the play is less on location and more on the dynamics of the two female protagonists as they push against each other in a game of question and answer that forces Jo to constantly explore new tactics that shift her boundaries:

JO: Softly, softly the QC said.

Now, I was beginning to understand why.

She was scared, I could tell. I could see it in her eyes.

I knew I'd started to cross the line between professional Brief
and...amateur Shrink.

But what choice did I have? I was scrabbling for clues.

I had to do something to keep her on track.

(The Pact – Thesis Draft: 1.59)

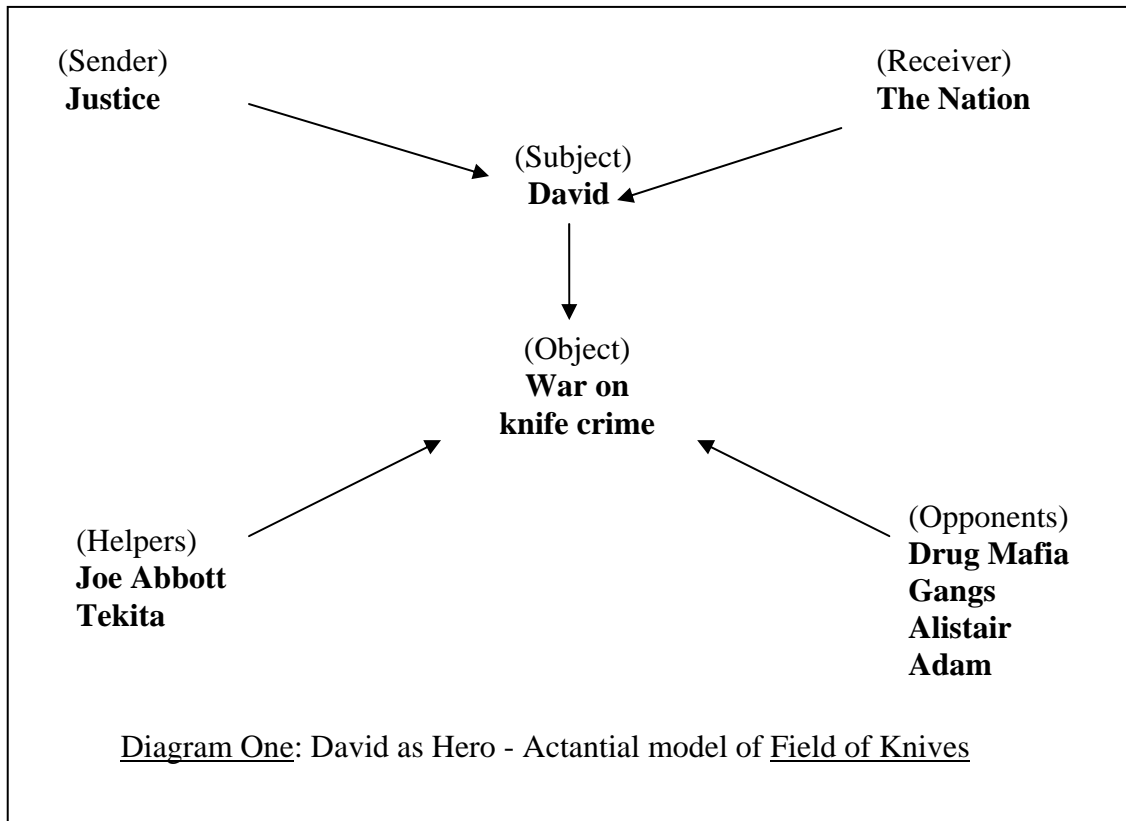
Jo's search for evidence to support Alistair's case follows an unwinding of events that gradually reveals clues about what happened to Tamara. In this way the plot is now more like the "knot" of the detective genre when a story ends "in a 'denouement', an unknotting" (Summerscale, 68). It is not until the end of Act Two that Jo discovers what actually happened between Tamara and Adam, and not until the middle of Act Three that she becomes aware of Tamara's self-harming and its effect on Alistair's state of mind. This, hopefully, allows more room for the audience/reader to engage with the discoveries of the drama as they occur, rather than having a barrage of events arrive in a way that in Field of Knives seemed "sensationalistic in a tabloid sense" (Bottoms).

Character Function and Levels of Conflict

In his course seminar on character Edgar referred to the Formalist work of Propp, who condensed the character functions common to most folk-story narratives into seven “spheres of action”. These included “villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher, hero and false hero.” A character could behave exactly according to its function or change its function if it became involved in more than one sphere of action.

In Field of Knives I originally hoped to create in David a complexity of texture that would result from his character changing its function and operating in opposing spheres of action. The aim was for David to initially function as a “hero”, fighting knife crime on a national scale, then become embroiled in the spheres of action, both of “villain” and “false hero” as he struggles to meet the expectations of his children and the conflicting interests of his public/private image.

In order to depict these shifting spheres of action I constructed an actantial model based upon the method first devised by A.J.Greimas which Aston and Savona describe as “an illuminating method of identifying the underlying grammar of a play’s structure”(38). This model attempts to illustrate the different forces acting upon character function. These forces are described as the “sender” exerting influence upon a “subject”, who goes on a quest for an “object” in the interests of the “receiver” (which can be a third party or the subject’s own self-interest), aided or hindered in this quest by various “helpers” and “opponents” (36-8).



In Diagram One above, the model shows David in his original role as aspirational hero, with the force of Justice sending him as premier on a quest for victory against gang crime (the object), acting on behalf of the voting nation (the receiver), aided by principal helpers Joe and Tekita. The many forces opposing him included his own sons (because of their conflict over Tamara).

Since, David is no longer the central protagonist of the revised play, his spheres of action are now less complex and, freed from the external forces of public accountability, his private flaws (as serial husband and absent father) are more sustainable.

Instead I have now constructed a new actantial model to depict the forces operating on Jo in the sphere of action of “hero” in The Pact:

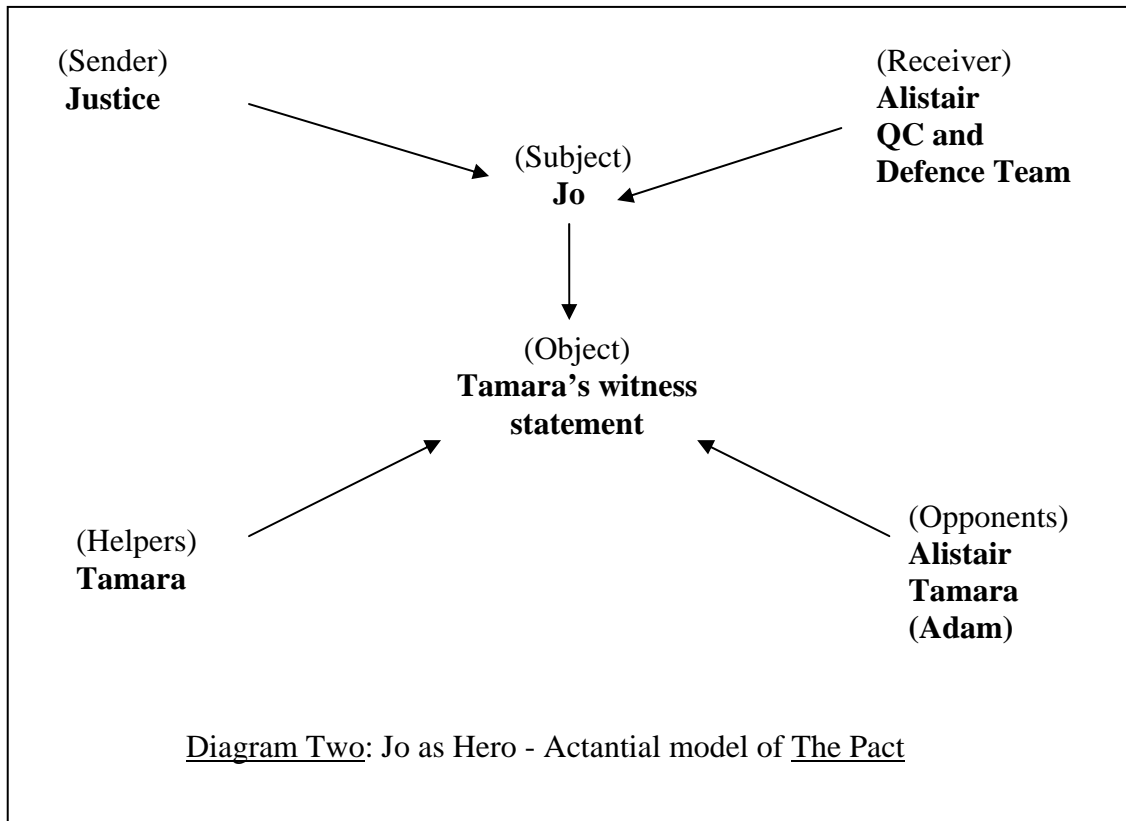


Diagram Two (above) illustrates how Jo is subject to the force of Justice that sends her on a quest for Tamara's witness statement (the object) to help Alistair and the Defence QC (the receivers). Ironically, Alistair also joins the oppositional forces acting against Jo because of his reluctance to co-operate with the legal team (due to the pact he has with Tamara). Further the diagram shows how Tamara operates in the binary roles of "helper" and "opponent" by consciously and unconsciously blocking Jo's access to vital information. Another oppositional force is that which comes from Adam, through his beyond-the-grave grip over Tamara that affects her ability to talk about the details of the rape. Tamara's subliminal opposition means Jo has to continually push against her diversionary smokescreens, often facing a barrage of seemingly irrelevant detail, metaphors and half-truths, until she can uncover the whole story.

In The Pact Alistair retains the same character function he had in Field of Knives of helper and confidante for Tamara. However his knowledge of the rape comes

two years after the event and is the indirect consequence of a game of show-and-tell in Act Three which culminates in his discovery that Tamara is self-harming. He then uses the notion of a pact as a bargaining tool to persuade Tamara to share her secret. It echoes the much weaker prototype of a pact that I briefly alluded to in Field of Knives when Jono goads Adam to pursue Tamara:

JONO: Look...remember our pact?

I'm the Surf God. You're the King of the Waves.

And we can...come on...say it...

JONO *reaches out his arm.* **ADAM** *a little reluctantly locks his right arm with JONO in a tight grip.*

ADAM/JONO: *(reciting together)* We can do anything

We can go anywhere

We can get what we want

And we WILL!

JONO: Whatever you want, Adam...

Go for it. Do it.

(Field of Knives: Third Draft. 1.2.27-8)

In The Pact the idea goes much further when Tamara takes control and Alistair finds himself coerced into a much darker vow than he originally intended:

TAMARA: Is a pact like a promise?

ALISTAIR: Yeah. A two-way promise.

AMARA: But people break promises, don't they?

ALISTAIR: Sometimes.

TAMARA: Often.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, well...that's why a pact is stronger.

TAMARA: How?

ALISTAIR: It's more official. You can put it in writing.

TAMARA: No. It's got to be even stronger than that.

ALISTAIR: How d'you mean?

TAMARA: We've got to swear.

ALISTAIR: Swear?

TAMARA: Like an oath.

Bonded with blood.

ALISTAIR: Blood?

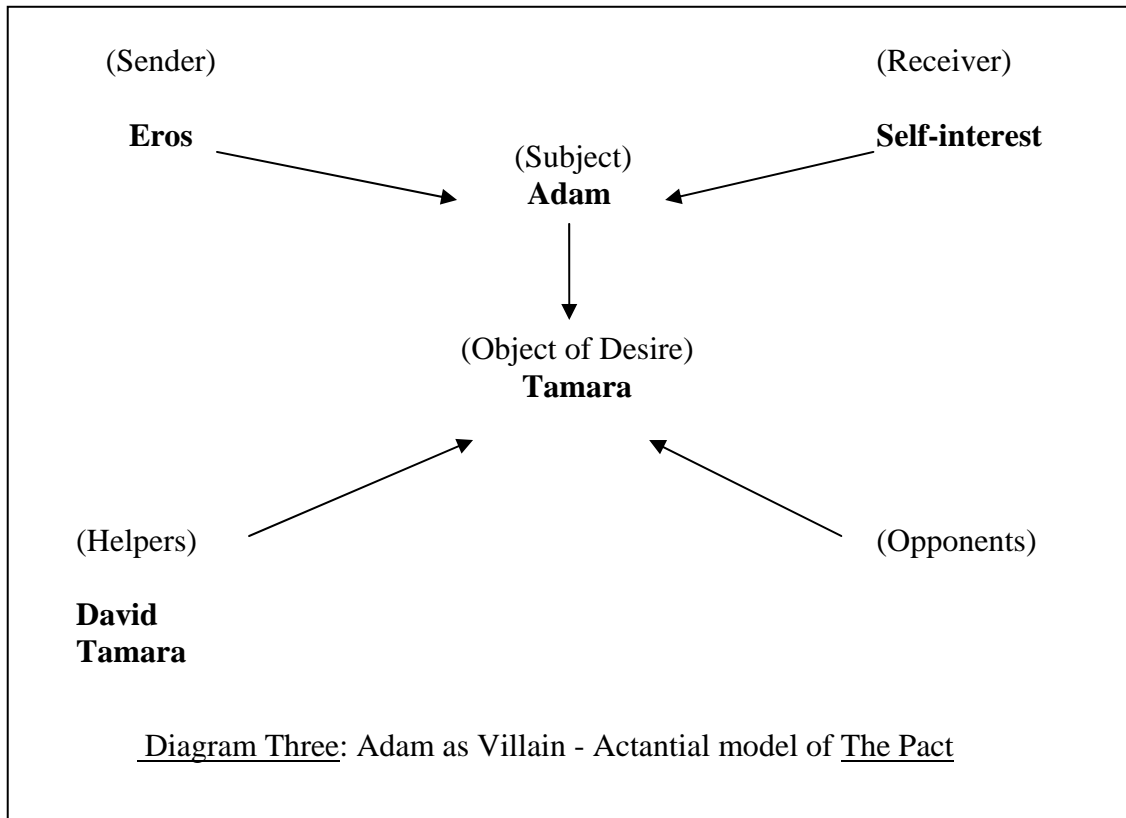
Whose blood?

TAMARA: Ours.

(The Pact: Fourth Draft. 3. 118-119)

Another major revision of the thesis play involved the character function of Adam as the main “villain” of the story. Instead of the son of a politician and recent graduate, he is now a free-spirited artist in his mid-twenties. His bohemian lifestyle allows him a social freedom that keeps him unaccountable and mysterious. He is like a magnet to Tamara who, due to her parents’ messy divorce and the fragility of her mother’s state of mind (an unseen character in the play), has an insecurity that makes her vulnerable. Adam’s charm and experience with women gives him the ability to intuit this vulnerability and Tamara’s sexual naivety. His status as half-brother also offers him access to her alone at their father’s flat at a time when he has won her trust.

The actantial model in Diagram Three (below) illustrates why Adam is able to fully yield to the forces operating on him to achieve his object. There is a complete absence of any oppositional forces acting against him.



Instead, inadvertently, Tamara and David both operate as helpers to facilitate his conquest. Tamara arrives to stay overnight at her father’s flat whilst David, diverted by his work, is inaccessible to her phone messages and physically absent.

In Field of Knives the events surrounding the rape were never dramatised and only it’s effect was seen when Tamara later appeared in a state of shock, unable to communicate in a coherent fashion. In order to increase the level of mystery about what happened to her, I gave Tamara an allegorical idiolect that alienated Jackson who found it “self-consciously literary”. In The Pact Tamara is far less literary, although she still has a tendency to be poetic and imaginative. However, she dismisses any questions about her feelings with a cursory “fine” and disassociates herself from her emotions:

TAMARA: Nobody seemed to care.

JO: What about you? How did you feel?

TAMARA: Feel?

JO: When you saw those men destroying that car?

TAMARA: I didn't feel anything.

JO: Nothing at all?

TAMARA: It was just so surreal.

Like it wasn't really happening.

(The Pact: Thesis Draft. 1. 60)

According to the website selfharm.net a self-help forum that offers strategies to support self-harmers: "The real feelings associated with the event you're avoiding get overridden by those of the situation you create to distract yourself" (Martinson). The same website suggests biting into a "hot pepper" or "ginger root" in order to "create a sharp physical sensation" when the self-harmer is "feeling depersonalized" and "dissociating". This is offered as a practical alternative to self-harm. This is why when Jo first guides the interview to the subject of the pact, I have given Tamara the action of taking out a piece of ginger and chewing on it. It is a device that belies the conviction with which she speaks:

TAMARA: The Pact? What's he said about that?

JO: Not a lot. I was hoping you'd tell me.

TAMARA: Oh, it's just, you know...private stuff.

Just between me and Al.

JO: Yes, that's why he won't talk about it.

Pity. We think it might help.

TAMARA *rummages in her bag; produces a small piece of root.*

Tamara, if you can tell us anything that might help your brother's case, we need to hear it.

TAMARA *bites the root hard and inhales sharply.*

TAMARA: It's got nothing to do with the Pact.

JO: Hasn't it?

TAMARA *chews on the root.*

What is that thing?

TAMARA: Raw ginger.

JO: Does it actually taste nice?

TAMARA: It's not about taste. It's about sensation.

(The Pact: Thesis Draft. 1.47)

As Esslin comments: "Drama is essentially mimetic action. If there is a contradiction between the words and the action, the action prevails" (83).

In The Pact the rape is dramatised towards the end of Act Two. Although I have chosen to depict Adam's preliminary sexual advances leading up to the rape, the actual event itself is not shown and the scene ends abruptly with pounding music and blackout. This is partly because this action is not the climax of Act Two. Instead the final scene depicts Adam's subsequent treatment of Tamara and the cruelty with which he forces her into secrecy.

Wiehe states that one of the reasons children do not report sibling abuse to their parents or any authoritative body is that "the perpetrator threatened the victim with retaliation if he or she told" (88). Adam goads Tamara into a place of submission by bullying her with vicious remarks and plays on Tamara's own fear that she might be

“mad” or “delusional” like her mother. He refuses to admit there has been any sexual activity between them, further taunting Tamara with allegations she is lying and questions whether she was ever a virgin in the first place. As the tension increases with the arrival of a taxi and her imminent departure, Adam then resorts to more violent action to frighten Tamara into keeping the abuse secret.

In Act Three, even after she now has the vital details about the rape, Jo is in a continual battle to stop Tamara from withdrawing her statement. This is in line with the complexities that surround testimonials about abuse and rape. It is not a straightforward process and there is often a mix of emotions involved, including the victim’s fear and shame that militates against the evidence being given. Research by Briere and Elliott in the mid-nineties found that abuse victims “feel both fear and anger in relation to authority figures” that can result in “passive-aggressive” behaviour to avoid “direct communication about their feelings” (qtd. in Angelica: 35).

Tamara’s reluctance to look at the witness statement forces Jo to have to read it out loud in order to secure her consent to the information being used in Court. It is here that the graphic details of the rape are reported in a factual way that would have been more difficult to show on stage without involving the actors in explicit acts. I made this choice based on Blair’s advice about the legal process involved in a rape case. It is important that the evidence shows that the sexual activity was unwanted and inappropriate – not a consensual act. The legal penalties for incest are often far less severe than rape, because in some cases it is conceded that incest may be desired by both parties involved. It is crucial to Jo’s case for provocation that there is evidence that Adam committed a serious crime against Tamara, to lend some understanding to Alistair’s subsequent actions.

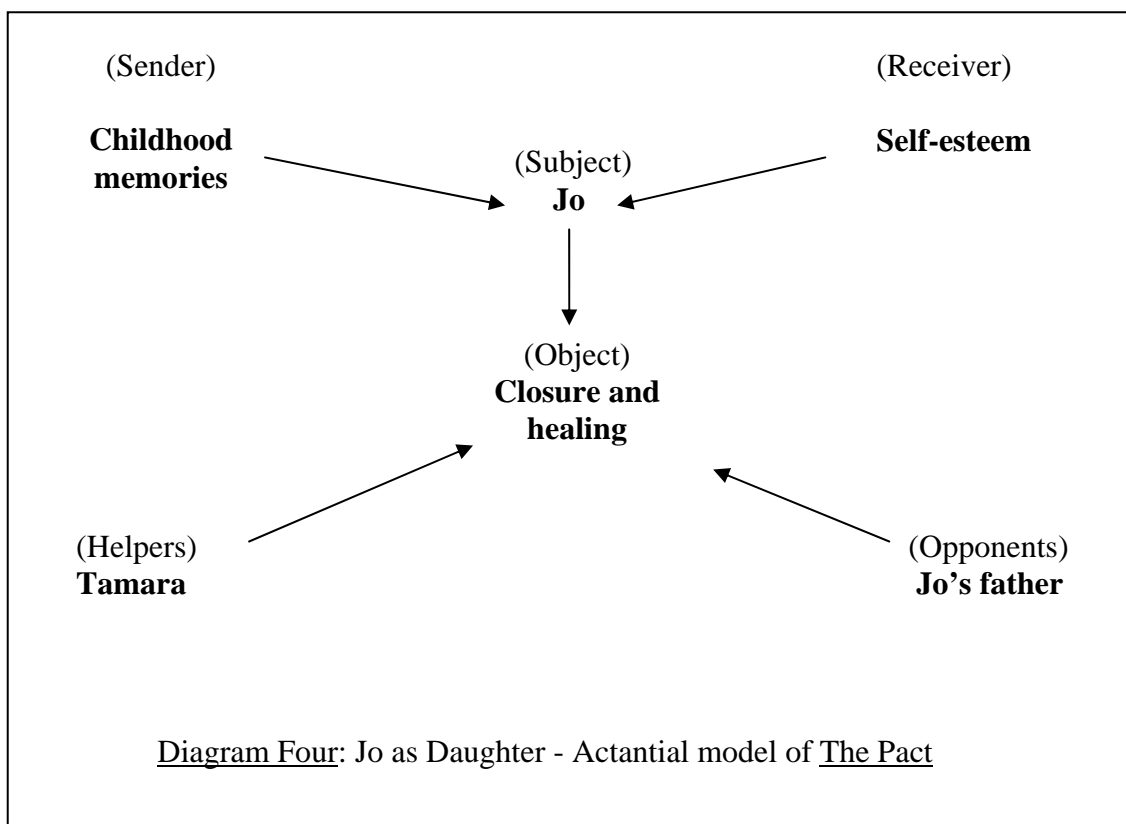
Character Progression and Sub-Plot

As The Pact progressed into its second draft, it became clear that Jo's character and function needed to be further established. Waters felt that the axis between Jo and Tamara worked very well but that the play would benefit from Jo being present in every Act, not just the first and last. He made reference to Miller's View from a Bridge where the lawyer Alfieri "watches and comments" throughout the entire play and so "draws out a wider meaning" for its context. This observation prompted me to consider what kind of background Jo might have and how sympathetic or not she might be towards Tamara's plight.

I decided that initially Jo should be sceptical about Tamara because of the apparent privilege of her social background, finding her mannerisms overblown and irritating: "Too much hyper-babble and public schoolgirl chat" (38). Yet it struck me that Jo might become intrigued by Tamara's story, way beyond the limits of her professional brief, when it starts to resonate with her own experience.

In terms of revealing Jo's personal story, there were new challenges to face. In the format of an interview the one asking the questions does not usually reveal their own history. That is something they keep private or share with a confidante. Who could Jo confide in about her response to Tamara? This raised the issue of "configuration", what Edgar describes as a consideration of "who's present and who's absent" on stage. I wanted to give Jo a way of staying in the scene but having a legitimate reason for breaking away from the action to comment upon it to the audience. I therefore decided to use what Edgar calls a "space versus time" device. One such device is "the letter", which operates "on the plane of time" to convey information across space between the characters present on stage and those absent from the action.

The Pact begins with Jo alone, trying to write a letter and there are hints that she has struggled to communicate with the addressee for some time. It later emerges that she is writing to her father and that she is trying to find some measure of closure for her own dark secret. Like David in Field of Knives, Jo's character functions on a public/private axis – the public function of advocate and the private function of daughter. The actantial model in Diagram Two (below) positions Jo in her function as daughter, subject to painful childhood memories and on a quest for closure and healing.



The oppositional force acting on Jo in this model is her father, a character who never appears in the play, and may even be dead, but who Jo still feels the need to address in endless letters as she tries to come to terms with her own, very private, sufferance of abuse.

The idea of Jo being an “adult survivor” of sexual abuse grew out of my research as it revealed the body of people who exist but, due to societal pressures and

lack of understanding on the subject, have “no collective story and thus no rationale for public disclosure” (Davis, 54). Parks states it more boldly: “one large body of people has not had its needs recognised or administered to. These people are the many adults who suffered sexual abuse as children” (13). As a child of the seventies, Jo would not have had the access to websites, forums and counsellors that are available to present day sufferers. The subject matter then was virtually taboo.

As the plot unravels Tamara’s story, I wanted in some measure to also unravel Jo’s story and suggest the parallels, but also the differences between them. The common denominator in the two different experiences is the legacy that sexual abuse leaves of poor self-esteem and addictive behaviour patterns that can be overt or covert, depending on the ability of the abused to recover and function in society on some level.

Much attention has been given recently in the press to the case of ex-lawyer Patrick Raggett who, at fifty, has won the right to claim damages against a Jesuit school for his sexual abuse by a former teacher. Although Raggett suffered the abuse in the early 1970’s “it was many years before he connected his experiences at school with years of underachievement at work, a failed marriage and binge drinking” (Gledhill). In the narrative of The Pact I indicate that Jo, too, may grapple with similar issues. At the beginning of Act Three she sneaks a quick measure of whiskey whilst she is still working:

JO: Did you know? They say in forensics, ‘every contact leaves a mark’.

You can examine anything for its DNA...blood stains on a trainer...fingerprints on a glass.

But what about the marks left on the mind?

What about...our little secrets?

She gulps the whiskey down in one.

Secrets don't surrender themselves to the microscope. They hide.

And that nagging little secret...the one that causes us the greatest shame...hides the deepest.

(The Pact: Thesis Draft. 3.95)

Jo is a self-deprecating loner who is never able to tell Tamara why she can empathise with her struggles at a deep level. Her own story is intensely private and she may only be able to cope because of the self-therapy she undertakes by writing to her abuser. It is certainly an exercise that therapist Parks recommends: "the victim needs to write letters to the aggressor – *but not ones to be posted*. These are just to get the words out of the mind and on to paper – a safe way to release some anger" (95).

The play finishes with Jo alone again but this time it appears that, in helping Tamara, she may have found a way to face her own demons.

Conclusion

Lin Coghlan teaches that playwriting is “the chaos of ideas” which needs to be joined with the “craft” of putting those ideas together in a coherent order. The resubmission process for this thesis play has challenged me to find a way to craft the “chaos of ideas” that informed the work of Field of Knives into a more contained and powerful form. This has involved a radical rethinking of the play’s narrative and structure which I have underpinned with intensive research. In creating the revised work, I have constantly reviewed the credibility of my characters and referenced their words and actions with real-life testimonies. It is my hope that The Pact has a future life and that others will agree with Waters that “it’s a much more moving and potent piece now” with “such a painful and well observed story at the heart of it.”

THE PACT

(formerly known as **FIELD OF KNIVES**)

a stage play

by

Jane Champion Hoye

Draft Four

August 2009

“Experience has shown, and a true philosophy will always show,
that a vast, perhaps the larger, portion of truth
arises from the seemingly irrelevant”.

(Edgar Allan Poe, The Mystery of Marie Roget)

Characters

JO, *solicitor, late-forties*

DAVID, *business man, early-fifties*

TAMARA, *his daughter, early-to-mid teens*

ALISTAIR, *her brother, mid-to-late teens*

ADAM, *an artist, mid twenties*

Setting

A series of rooms overlooking busy streets in West London:

ACT ONE

2009: Hammersmith: Jo's office

*Notting Hill: David's flat: a balcony and reception room;
a local restaurant; a café.*

ACT TWO

2009: Hammersmith: the office

2006: Notting Hill: the flat, an Art Gallery

ACT THREE

2009: Hammersmith: the office

2007: Richmond: Tamara's study-bedroom

Time

Between 2006 and 2009

ACT ONE

West London. 2009

JO's Office

Hammersmith. May.

JO *is at her desk: it has a lap-top, dicta-phone and a heavy workload of client folders.*

There's a vase of limp, artificial flowers that have seen better days.

JO's *in her late-forties with a trim figure, kind face and chaotic hair.*

She labours over writing a letter and appears tired.

JO: You'd think, wouldn't you – after all this time, all these trial runs – you'd think I'd know how to write you a letter.

But no, as always, the words run dry.

Well, it's hard enough to squeeze them out, let alone be direct with you, crank up the feelings, vent the anger – no holds barred.

Still. Has to be done. So I can face it.

So I can...move on.

And now, at last, I've got something to write about.

Something unexpected. Something you should know.

You see...I've been on this case. Regina versus Samuels.

Nineteen year old kid, goes ballistic with a knife, ends up on a murder charge.

So, what's new? Round here knife crime is, frighteningly, routine.

But this was not your usual urban thug and ASBO brigade – more your rich Young Socialite and... 'haute couture'.

That was clear, crystal, when I met my client's sister – Tamara Samuels.

Who, typical of her type, kept me waiting...

TAMARA *rushes in. She's an intense seventeen-year-old; long-limbed and pretty; dressed with quirky elegance in long-sleeved blouse and high-belted, full-length skirt. She carries a designer bag.*

TAMARA: Sorry. Am I late?

JO *looks at TAMARA.*

JO: Only half an hour.

TAMARA: It was the taxi. We got totally stuck on the Chiswick High Road.

JO *smiles, wearily; she returns to her letter.*

JO: It was a Wednesday – my aerobics night – I hate working late on Wednesdays.

Anyway...

My brief was to prime her for the QC on this case – take a softly-softly approach – find out what she knew.

Which, we all agreed, was far more than she was letting on.

TAMARA *is unable to settle; she glances round the room.*

I must admit, at first, I found her rather...irritating.

Too much hyper-babble and public schoolgirl chat.

So, I thought it best just to let her...talk for a while.

Get some nervous energy out of the way.

JO *swaps the letter for notepad and pen; TAMARA crosses to:*

DAVID's Flat

Free-standing French windows open onto the balcony of a first-floor flat.

TAMARA: I remember when Dad first bought this flat.

I loved its fusion of Notting Hill glam and Bayswater chic.

It was so cool...standing here on this balcony, watching the world go by.

JO: What else do you remember?

TAMARA: The smell of fresh bread. From the Patisserie.

JO: So near?

TAMARA: That was just it. Walk a few minutes from this flat and you could sample the food of...oh, at least a dozen different nationalities.

There was the Hungarian over there, next to the Moroccan...a snazzy Brazilian on the corner, opposite the Greek. There was the Grove, with every type of oriental food you'd ever want – from Lebanese shawarma to Chinese dim sung.

There was Malaysian...Spanish...Japanese and...oh, yeah, just down the road, Dad's favourite French...Chez Véronique.

There was always such a buzz about the place.

JO: You obviously enjoyed living there.

TAMARA: No.

JO: Oh. I thought...

TAMARA: I never lived there. I simply stayed.

JO: Ri-ight. I see.

She makes a note.

Did you – stay – in the flat on a regular basis?

TAMARA: Used to. Not for a while.

Pause.

The problem with the balcony was the Ape.

JO: Ape?

TAMARA: Up above. He was always doing it. It was sooooh grim.

JO: What was?

TAMARA: Using our balcony like some giant ashtray.

Hanging out of his window and flicking fag-ash all over us.

She shouts at a point above her head.

Dick-head!

JO: Who was this Ape?

TAMARA: Oh, just some ageing C-list rocker with a ridiculous name.

Zarko or Zvonko. Something like that.

Famous apparently – in some remote part of Europe.

You know I seriously considered collecting all his disgusting little butts and stuffing them in a box right outside his door.

See how he'd like that!

JO: What stopped you?

TAMARA: Dad. He said it would be 'antagonistic'.

JO: So what did he suggest you do?

TAMARA: Oh, just the usual.

JO: Usual?

TAMARA: Like...it's not a problem, forget about it. That sort of stuff.

JO: How did you feel about that?

TAMARA: About what?

JO: What your father said.

TAMARA: What's there to feel?

JO: Well, clearly there was this problem with the neighbour, and your father did nothing about it.

TAMARA: Yeah. But he was right.

I mean, you had to pity old Zvonk. He was just showing off.

We all had a good laugh about it.

JO: Is that what you usually did?

TAMARA: What?

JO: Laugh about things that upset you.

TAMARA: What's wrong with that?

JO: Nobody said anything was –

TAMARA: I just didn't want to cause any trouble for my Dad.

TAMARA *crosses back to:*

JO's Office

JO *looks at TAMARA; then returns to her letter.*

JO: Five minutes in the room and there we were – my favourite subject.

Families. And fathers. Or lack of.

Well, we see them all the time in here. Kids on the rampage. Mothers vainly trying to cope. Same old, same old.

So what was it that made me suddenly think of you?

TAMARA *sits opposite JO.*

TAMARA: It's like when you're little, and you say to yourself...if I'm good, if I'm really, really good...

JO: What?

TAMARA: Maybe he'll stay.

JO: How old were you when your parents got divorced?

TAMARA: Ten.

JO: And Alistair?

TAMARA: Twelve, I think...I always have to work it out.

There's only twenty months between us.

JO: You're close then?

TAMARA: People used to joke we were a bit like twins.

JO: It must have been tough for you both – when your Dad left.

TAMARA: It wasn't too bad. He took us out once a month.

Twice, if there was a birthday.

JO: Yes. Alistair told me.

JO *refers to her note-pad.*

In fact, he said it was at your last birthday that things began to – I quote – 'really kick off'.

TAMARA: Kick off? At my seventeenth?

Alistair said that?

JO: Do you know what he meant?

TAMARA: No. Not really.

JO: Tell me about that day.

TAMARA: What's there to tell?

JO: Do you remember any particular events, or conversations that Alistair –

TAMARA: I remember it was typical weather for February. Wet and nasty.

JO: How did you celebrate? Party?

TAMARA: I wish.

It was supposed to be *my* birthday, *my* choice, but Dad persuaded us, as usual, to do what he wanted.

JO: Which was?

TAMARA: Dinner for three. At Chez Véronique.

JO watches as **TAMARA** crosses to:

The French Restaurant

Notting Hill. Three months earlier.

A table is set for dinner. Soft lighting, dark wood, white linen.

TAMARA joins **DAVID** and **ALISTAIR** at the table.

DAVID (*fifty-two*) is a solid-set, bear of a character – handsome with raven hair.

ALISTAIR (*nineteen*) is wiry and edgier than his father; a slightly haunted look.

DAVID pours a small amount of red wine into a large glass.

DAVID: Now, guys, this is going to be a veritable treat. You've not truly tasted a fine wine until you sample this.

Look at those legs.

ALISTAIR: Where?

DAVID: Ye-es. I thought that might get your attention.

Look...see those rivulets gently clinging to the glass.

The stronger the legs, the richer the taste.

ALISTAIR: I prefer real ale.

TAMARA: Red wine gives me a headache.

DAVID: Nonsense. Cheapo supermarket plonk gives you a headache – not this little baby. This is the French at their best.

Smooth, with exquisite texture.

He takes a gulp; sucks in air over the wine in his mouth; swallows.

Like liquid silk.

Go on – try it Tamara.

TAMARA: Do I really have to?

DAVID: For the money this cost me – absolutely.

TAMARA takes a sip.

What do you think? Did you get the blackcurrant and vanilla notes?

TAMARA: I don't honestly think I got any notes at all.

DAVID: Such lack of appreciation.

Don't they teach you anything at that school?

TAMARA: We have to watch loads of stuff on drink-awareness.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, Dad. How many units have you had already?

DAVID: Balls. I'm not going to be dictated to by this Nanny-State mentality.

Since when did a few glasses of wine, with a meal, make anyone an alcoholic?

No, forget that...I want to propose a toast...

He raises his glass.

To my beautiful, clever, talented, hugely intelligent – all inherited from me of course – Tammy.

Happy Seventeenth, darling.

ALISTAIR: Happy Birthday, Tam.

They all drink.

TAMARA: Mmm. I think I'm getting just a hint of strawberries.

DAVID: I knew you'd come round.

TAMARA: But not snails.

DAVID: What?

TAMARA: I don't have to eat those, do I? I don't care how French they are.

DAVID: Don't tell me you've gone all Veggie on me.

TAMARA: No, I'll eat anything – as long as it's organically grown, ethically sourced and ecologically sound.

No genetically modified crops, thank-you.

DAVID: Okay, okay. You've made your point.

ALISTAIR: See? Tammy's also inherited your sheer bloody-mindedness.

DAVID: Oh, that's all right then. For a minute, I thought my daughter had left this planet and an Alien had invaded her body.

ALISTAIR and TAMARA *exchange a look.*

What?

Hey, it was just a joke. Not hilarious, I grant you, but –

ALISTAIR: (*To TAMARA*) Are you okay?

TAMARA: Shush. I'm fine.

DAVID: Well, of course she's fine.

What is this?

Are we speaking in code all of a sudden?

ALISTAIR: Something like that.

DAVID: Why? What have I said?

TAMARA: Nothing Dad. Everything's fine.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, right.

I need a piss.

DAVID: Charming.

ALISTAIR: Where is it?

DAVID: Left of the bar.

ALISTAIR *goes.*

TAMARA: Sorry about that.

DAVID: Why are you apologising? He's the one who's out of –

TAMARA: He just gets a bit...over-protective.

DAVID: I wish he'd lighten up.

Sometimes he's nineteen going on thirty.

TAMARA: He's only looking out for me.

DAVID: Yes, yes. I know.

It must be difficult at times – me not being around.

TAMARA: It's fine, Dad. Really.

Everything's fine.

She smiles.

The memory freezes.

JO's Office

JO *continues with her letter.*

JO: It was something about that mask she wore.

All grown up. Independent. Wanting control.

Yes, I recognised that one – straight from the off.

Even now, I can still hear your voice in my head... 'Don't tell anyone about this. No use crying to your Mum. You've got to be tough, you've got to cover things up'.

I learned very young how a mask hides the fear...hides the tell-tale signs you don't want anyone to see.

TAMARA *crosses back to JO.*

TAMARA: Can I check something out with you?

JO: Yes, sure. Go ahead.

TAMARA: Why do you want to know about this?

If Alistair's already told you.

JO: Because we need to hear your version of events.

TAMARA: I'm sure it's just the same as his.

JO: Well, that depends. It seems there are things he can't say.

Not outside the Pact.

TAMARA: The Pact? What's he said about that?

JO: Not a lot. I was hoping you'd tell me.

TAMARA: Oh, it's just, you know...private stuff.

Just between me and Al.

JO: Yes, that's why he won't talk about it.

Pity. We think it might help.

TAMARA *rummages in her bag; produces a small piece of root.*

Tamara, if you can tell us anything that might help your brother's case, we need to hear it.

TAMARA *bites the root hard and inhales sharply.*

TAMARA: It's got nothing to do with the Pact.

JO: Hasn't it?

TAMARA *chews on the root.*

What is that thing?

TAMARA: Raw ginger.

JO: Does it actually taste nice?

TAMARA: It's not about taste. It's about sensation.

JO: Ri-ight.

TAMARA: Helps me deal with stuff.

JO: I see.

I take it you do *want* to help your brother?

TAMARA: Yes. Yes, 'course I do. It's just...

JO: Well?

TAMARA: I just wish it would all go away. Why can't it go away?

JO: Sorry. That's not an option.

Pause.

Tell me more about that night at Chez Veronique.

I've heard the food's supposed to be good there. Four stars. Is it?

TAMARA: I s'pose it's okay.

TAMARA *walks reluctantly back to:*

The Restaurant

ALISTAIR *returns to the table.*

TAMARA *watches.*

TAMARA: That night we ate à la carte.

I chose the 'healthy' option of grilled cod from sustainable stocks. Dad and Al – loving their meat – plunged into rump of lamb, duck gizzards and goose-fat potatoes.

Utterly gross.

TAMARA *sits back at the table.*

After some male bonding over the crème brulee, that left me totally isolated with a lemon sorbet, we finally discovered the real reason for this, so-called, birthday treat.

DAVID *pours coffee from a cafetière.*

DAVID: Top up anyone?

TAMARA: Not for me, Dad

ALISTAIR: I'm totally stuffed.

TAMARA: It was wicked. Thanks.

DAVID: Glad you liked it.

Now listen, guys, I've got something I need to, er, come clean about.

ALISTAIR: Shit. You're not some kind of cross-dresser are you?

TAMARA: Like that's a possibility.

DAVID: Something far more ordinary, I'm afraid.

He takes a large slug of wine.

Look, I know the break-up with your mum was, frankly, a bit of a mess –

ALISTAIR: Slightly understated.

DAVID: Okay then. A complete bloody nightmare.

ALISTAIR: Finally. He admits it.

DAVID: Be that as it may, I vowed to myself that I wouldn't say anything negative

about her. Not until you were both grown-up.

Even though I know she's probably slagged me off – on a regular basis.

TAMARA: You know what, Dad?

I've like, really respected you for not saying anything nasty about Mum.

I thought it was rather noble.

DAVID: Noble? Not sure that's a word your mother's ever used.

ALISTAIR: Bastard and Shit-head are nearer the mark.

TAMARA: Shut up, Al.

DAVID: No, no, he's right.

I have no illusions whatsoever about your mother's opinion of me.

I'm just sorry she's become more and more...

ALISTAIR: Neurotic?

DAVID: Frankly, yes.

Look, the fact is – and I'm sorry to say this, but you're not kids anymore – the poor woman's totally lost touch with reality. You can't believe a word she says.

ALISTAIR: If Mum's gone a bit bonkers –

TAMARA: She's not bonkers.

ALISTAIR: – it's all your fault.

DAVID: Now don't dump that one on me.

ALISTAIR: You've never done anything to help her.

DAVID: You have no idea.

TAMARA: Stop it. Both of you. I don't want to hear it.

DAVID *pours more wine.*

DAVID: The thing about life is – everybody makes mistakes. As you grow older, you'll learn that. It's a complete and utter minefield.

We make decisions. We get things wrong.

I'm sorry, but I got it wrong when I married your mother. I know that's hard on you both, but there it is.

Shit happens.

TAMARA: Does anybody want more coffee?

ALISTAIR: No thanks.

DAVID: You can't always control things, however hard you try.

And believe me, I've tried.

ALISTAIR: Big deal. You tried.

What do you want from us? Absolution?

DAVID: No. Not that.

ALISTAIR: Good. 'Cos you won't get it.

DAVID: I can't change things, however much I'd like to.

All I can do is suggest that we draw a line across the past.

Begin our future together from here.

Tonight. A fresh start.

What do you say?

ALISTAIR: Define 'fresh start'.

DAVID: Okay. For my part, I don't want to hide things any more.

TAMARA: What do you mean, hide?

DAVID: I want to be more, if you like...transparent.

TAMARA: Why? What have you been hiding?

DAVID: It's been more a case of trying to protect you, really.

ALISTAIR: From what?

DAVID: The point is...erm, I mean, I think the time is right to, erm, tell you, erm ...

ALISTAIR: Cut to the chase, Dad.

DAVID: I've met someone.

ALISTAIR: Ye-ah. So?

DAVID: And she's very special.

TAMARA: How special?

DAVID: Pretty damn special.

You know I think she's the person I'm destined to be with – for the rest of my life.

ALISTAIR: Oh Dad. So cliché.

DAVID: Sorry, but it's true.

Melissa's my soul-mate.

TAMARA: Melissa?

DAVID: Yes.

TAMARA: As in...your P.A. Melissa?

ALISTAIR: The one with the legs and the big bazoo- ?

DAVID: Yes, yes. *That* Melissa.

ALISTAIR: She's got to be at least half your age.

DAVID: No. Actually.

Mel's older than she looks – pushing thirty.

TAMARA: She'll be so thrilled you told us that.

ALISTAIR: It's still a gap of two decades.

DAVID: Look, the age thing doesn't matter.

TAMARA: It did with Mum.

DAVID: Yes, well...

That was completely different.

ALISTAIR: Yeah. She was light years older than you.

Pause.

TAMARA: How long have you and Melissa been...an item?

DAVID: Six months.

ALISTAIR: What? And you've only just told us?

DAVID: It was a bit...tricky.

ALISTAIR: I bet.

DAVID: There were other people involved.

TAMARA: Like her husband.

ALISTAIR: This gets juicier and juicier.

DAVID: (*To TAMARA*) How do you know about John?

TAMARA: I met him. At your office party.

He seemed very doting.

DAVID: Oh, that ended a while ago.

ALISTAIR: Quickie divorce?

DAVID: It was all pretty clear cut - unanimous decision.

TAMARA: He reminded me of a hamster.

ALISTAIR: Poor fucker –

DAVID: Watch your language.

ALISTAIR: Didn't stand a chance in hell against you.

TAMARA: Do they have children?

DAVID: No.

ALISTAIR: Is that why we didn't meet up at the flat tonight.

'Cos you're shackled up with Melissa?

TAMARA: Al. Don't. Meeting here was my idea.

ALISTAIR: Sorry, Tam. I didn't mean –

He puts his hand on her arm; she pulls it away.

DAVID: Tam never comes to the old pad anymore. D'you, girl?

TAMARA: It's just that –

DAVID: Still allergic to our friend upstairs?

TAMARA: Err, yeah. Something like that.

TAMARA *becomes preoccupied with her coffee.*

ALISTAIR *sculpts his napkin.*

DAVID: Anyway, just so you know, you can still come and stay at weekends.

Mel's got a place in South Ken, so we generally sleep over there.

ALISTAIR: Way too much information, Dad.

TAMARA: Her own flat?

So she's not sponging off you. I'm impressed.

DAVID: That's the spirit.

I'm glad you approve because –

TAMARA: I didn't say that.

DAVID: Now we've all got our cards on the table, it's time for the big question.

Will you both come to the wedding?

TAMARA and ALISTAIR *appear uneasy.*

Lights fade.

JO's Office

TAMARA *returns.*

JO: Why did you stop going to your Dad's flat?

Silence.

Was it because of Zvank?

TAMARA: Zvonk.

JO: Was it because of him?

TAMARA: No. Not really.

JO: Why then?

TAMARA: I suppose it just...didn't feel the same any more.

JO: Same?

TAMARA: It's like...Dad decided to have the whole place redecorated.

This über-slick renovation.

JO: When?

TAMARA: About...three years ago.

JO *makes a note.*

JO: You didn't like it?

TAMARA: No. I preferred things the way – the way they used to be.

JO: Why's that?

TAMARA: Dunno.

I s'pose it was because...I mean, it used to be so cool staying there.

There was this quirky bathroom – electric pink – with all these glass panels at weird angles. Very bright.

Somehow, it always felt safe in that room.

JO: Safe?

TAMARA: But then nothing's really safe, is it?

JO: What do you mean?

TAMARA: Like...take the bathroom.

It had this pre-historic flat roof. You could actually hear the birds clawing at the decking above. There were these massive cracks, and I had to wear a shower cap in the bath, in case a worm fell through the ceiling – onto my head.

And, if you sat on the loo, you had to dodge the drops of rain that splattered through the light-bulbs – to avoid an electric shock.

JO: Ye-es. I can see that might have been...potentially dangerous.

TAMARA: It was still better than the renovation.

All that whitewashed veneer.

JO: Why better?

TAMARA: It was more real somehow. A crack was a crack.

JO: When you can see the cracks – you know what you're dealing with?

TAMARA: Absolutely.

JO: Is that why it felt safe?

TAMARA: Yeah. I s'pose.

JO: It's important to be able to trust what you see. Isn't it?

Silence.

What about Melissa?

TAMARA: Melissa?

JO: Did you trust her?

TAMARA: No way.

JO: Why not?

TAMARA: I knew that troll was a fake.

JO: How did you know?

TAMARA: I just know the type.

She was so taking Dad for a ride. Unbelievable.

But I was on to her.

Really on to her.

TAMARA *crosses to:*

The Café

Two months earlier. A sunny afternoon.

The upstairs room of a local Italian café; comfy armchairs in bold colours; magazines slung over small coffee tables.

DAVID and **ALISTAIR** cradle cappuccinos.

DAVID: Okay. So now you know. Melissa's pregnant.

But that's not the reason we're getting married.

ALISTAIR: It explains the rush.

DAVID: There's no rush.

We've always fancied an Easter wedding.

ALISTAIR: What's she going to do – walk up the aisle in a tent?

DAVID: Don't be an idiot. She hardly shows.

If it weren't for Miss Clever Clogs here, playing detective –

TAMARA: You told me to pal up with her.

DAVID: Pal up with her – not home in on her.

Like some Rottweiler on heat.

TAMARA: Then you shouldn't have made me stay at her flat.

DAVID: Then you shouldn't throw hissy-fits about staying at mine.

ALISTAIR: Cool it, Dad. That's not the point.

You should have told us.

Whatever happened to that fresh start you wanted? No more secrets, you said.

DAVID holds his hands up in mock surrender.

DAVID: Okay, I know. Fair play. Fair play.

The truth is – no, we didn't plan on having this baby, but – yes, now it's happened it's...it's absolutely marvellous. Makes me feel young again.

We're going to get married and have a family.

TAMARA: You've already got a family.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: How do you know it's going to work out?

Third time lucky?

DAVID: Actually, I think we stand a pretty good chance.

ALISTAIR: The stats are loaded against it though. If it didn't work with Helen, then

Mum, how – ?

DAVID: Now, I'm glad you've mentioned Helen.

ALISTAIR: Why?

DAVID: She's been a damn fine friend to me and I owe it to her.

TAMARA: Owe what?

ALISTAIR: Here we go.

DAVID: I want Adam at the wedding.

ALISTAIR: Knew it.

DAVID: Yes, I'm aware you don't like him very much, though I –

ALISTAIR: Shit, do we have to?

DAVID: – really don't know why.

TAMARA *appears agitated.*

TAMARA: Adam's coming to the wedding?

DAVID: Yep – before, during and after.

ALISTAIR: What are you saying, Dad?

DAVID: I'm saying – I've asked Adam to be my Best Man.

ALISTAIR *glares, angrily.*

TAMARA *gets up and crosses over to:*

DAVID's Flat

TAMARA *is on the balcony.*

She turns to address JO who watches from her office.

TAMARA: My heart wants to burst when I'm standing here.

It's weird – what you see from this balcony is never what you *think* you see.

JO *refers to her letter.*

JO: Softly, softly the QC said.

Now, I was beginning to understand why.

She was scared, I could tell. I could see it in her eyes.

I knew I'd started to cross the line between professional Brief and...amateur Shrink.

But what choice did I have? I was scrabbling for clues.

I had to do something to keep her on track.

Pause.

(To TAMARA) What's happening now Tamara?

TAMARA: I remember there was this one day...

JO: Yes?

What is it? What can you see?

Pause.

TAMARA: It's a sunny afternoon.

I'm just standing here, watching the Square...

Suddenly...I see this group of men – wearing overalls, yellow and black, like bees –
I see them leave the pub on the corner and slowly converge, like...yes, like a
swarm...they swarm all over this car – parked just across the road from here.
These men, they...they form a circle round the car and...like in some strange
ritual...they each make this slow, upward arc with their arms.
It's like synchronised waving – or dancing – suspended for a moment before down
they all plunge – mallet after mallet – pounding and pummelling the car.
Till it's wrecked.
Then after it's all done, they just wander back to the pub, sit in the sun, and...finish
their pints.

JO: Just like that?

TAMARA: Nobody stops them.

Nobody does anything to stop them.

JO: Somebody should have stopped them.

TAMARA: Why?

JO: They were breaking the law.

TAMARA: Nobody seemed to care.

JO: What about you? How did you feel?

TAMARA: Feel?

JO: When you saw those men destroying that car?

TAMARA: I didn't feel anything.

JO: Nothing at all?

TAMARA: It was just so surreal.

Like it wasn't really happening.

TAMARA *returns to:*

JO's Office

JO *finishes scribbling a note.*

JO: Did this event remind you of anything... anything in particular?

TAMARA: No, not at all.

Should it?

Pause.

JO: Why don't we go back to what was happening before?

TAMARA: Before?

JO: You mentioned Adam.

TAMARA: Did I?

JO: Yes.

TAMARA: When?

JO: You said your father chose him to be Best Man.

TAMARA: Oh, you mean the wedding?

JO: How did you feel about that?

TAMARA: The wedding was like a betrayal.

JO: Betrayal?

TAMARA: Of my mum.

JO: Yes, yes, I can understand that.

What I was wondering was...how did you feel about Adam being there?

TAMARA: Why do you keep asking me how I feel about things?

JO: I'm simply trying to get you to connect –

TAMARA: Connect?

JO: – with what’s going on inside you.

Pause.

TAMARA: Okay. I’d like to stop this now please –

JO: Tamara –

TAMARA: There’s no point in going on –

JO: We have to follow this through, or –

TAMARA: It’s not getting us anywhere at all and –

JO: Listen. Listen to me.

We need to talk about Adam.

TAMARA: What’s there to talk about? Adam’s dead.

JO: Yes. And I’m trying to find out why.

TAMARA: I don’t know why.

Ask Alistair.

JO: I did.

He claims he was trying to protect you.

TAMARA: But I didn’t ask him to do that.

JO: You didn’t want protection?

TAMARA: Not like that.

JO: So what did you ask him to do?

TAMARA: I – I didn’t mean that. I meant...

JO: What?

TAMARA: All I said was...I just, just told him I...didn’t want to see Adam.

JO: Why not?

Are you glad Adam’s dead?

TAMARA: I can't – I can't believe you just said that.

JO: Well, are you?

TAMARA: That's a terrible thing to say.

JO: Why?

You might have your reasons.

TAMARA: I don't understand why you're doing this

JO: I want to help Alistair.

TAMARA: So do I.

JO: Then, why don't you tell me everything you know?

Pause.

TAMARA: What's the point?

Nothing I say's going to make any difference.

JO: It might – if we can challenge the Prosecution's claim that it was murder.

TAMARA: It wasn't murder.

JO: How do you know?

TAMARA: I – I don't actually know that, but I don't...believe he meant to kill him.

JO: You see belief is a *very* tricky thing to prove. We need facts.

It's a fact that Alistair had a knife. It's a fact he attacked Adam.

And we've got a courtroom full of witnesses who will testify to those facts.

After all, your father's wedding was a very...high profile event.

TAMARA: That's what I mean. It's all hopeless.

JO: Not necessarily.

We want to put forward a plea of 'provocation'.

TAMARA: What's that?

JO: It's where we try to convince the Jury that Alistair was provoked ...either by something Adam said, or did, to lose his self-control, in a way that any – the legal term here is 'reasonable' – a way that any 'reasonable person' might have done. Given the same circumstances. That's why we have to find out exactly what those circumstances were. *All of them.*

TAMARA: But I've already told you loads.

JO: Yes, you've been doing really well.

TAMARA: Then what – ?

JO: We need to go back further.

TAMARA: How much further?

JO *refers to her notes.*

JO: About...three years.

TAMARA: Why?

Why do you want to do that? If Al hasn't said?

What's he said?

JO: Nothing. That detail came from you.

TAMARA *looks away.*

Look, you've already hinted that something happened around about then, something that made you want to...avoid your father's flat.

Something that made you feel it was no longer...safe.

JO *coaxes eye contact.*

Tamara, I really don't want to put words into your mouth. It's your story. You're the expert – you know it better than anyone else.

Why don't you tell me what happened?

TAMARA *looks at her.*

We can go at your pace.

You can stop whenever you like.

I'm not here to judge you.

I just want to listen.

Blackout.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

A solitary light shows JO at her office desk.

The rest of the action takes place in, or near, DAVID's flat. Three years earlier.

JO's Office

JO makes a few edits to her letter.

JO: A different generation, a different world, but...it's funny how our stories started to collide.

Like that day – I must have been about nine – when I ran home from school early, scooted round the kitchen – laid the tea-cups out on a tray, spoons in saucers, all nice and proper – ready for when you came home from work.

I wanted it to be a surprise.

Three years ago, Tamara Samuels likewise tried to surprise her Dad.

DAVID's Flat

May 2006. Notting Hill. Mid-morning.

The inner hallway. Sheets of newspapers cover the floor.

A MAN in his early-twenties is on a step-ladder, painting a ceiling rose moulding.

He's lean, tanned and athletic; immersed in the music of his iPod.

TAMARA (*off*): Hello? Anyone in?

TAMARA *enters.*

She's now fourteen; dressed casually in combats and T-shirt; carries a rucksack.

Oh. Um. 'Scuse me. Have you seen...?

The MAN continues painting, unaware of her.

Can you hear me?

TAMARA *circles the ladder, waving her arms.*

Hell-oh-oh.

MAN: What the...?

He removes his earplugs.

Woah! Where did you spring from?

He looks closely at TAMARA.

Or is this like one of those... cool, Japanese animations?

TAMARA: Sorry?

MAN: When a beautiful princess-warrior leaps from the mountain top...down into the valley of mortal men.

TAMARA: Actually, I came through the front door.

You left it wide open.

Um, is your boss here?

MAN: Boss?

Now, let me see.

He looks around.

Nope. Just me.

Why do you ask?

TAMARA: I don't think Mr Samuels will be very happy about you leaving the door of his flat wide open.

MAN: Oh, he's pretty cool about things like that.

TAMARA *moves across the floor.*

Hey, watch out, there's a load of crap down there – probably a Café Mocha lurking about somewhere.

TAMARA: Oh yuck, I've think I've stepped in something.

MAN: That'll be the Panini.

TAMARA *examines her shoe.*

TAMARA: Grim.

She wipes the shoe on some newspaper.

Sorry. Was that your lunch?

MAN: No worries. It wasn't very...tasty.

TAMARA: What are you doing up there?

MAN: It's an attempt to restore the flowers to their former glory – define their leaves, enhance the texture of the petals – like this. See?

TAMARA: Mmm. Looks interesting.

How long have you been, um, working for Mr Samuels?

MAN: You know, I had you pegged as one of those foxy, tomb-raider types, but I guess the nosey-neighbour impression could be a...brilliant cover for...I don't know – a would-be squatter?

TAMARA: I'm not a neighbour.

This is like my second home.

MAN: Oh. I get it.

You're one of those.

TAMARA: 'Scuse me?

MAN: One of the harem.

TAMARA: What?

MAN: I know David likes them young but –

TAMARA: You've got this so wrong –

MAN: How does the old devil do it?

TAMARA: I don't think you should talk like that about your employer.

It's disrespectful.

MAN: Woah, I stand corrected.

He makes a mock salute.

Anything you say, your Highness.

TAMARA: In fact, I'm pretty sure he won't appreciate the way you're trashing his property like this.

She scrabbles in her rucksack for her mobile.

I'm going to check it out with him.

Right now.

MAN: Yeah, yeah. You do that.

TAMARA *starts to dial.*

You know, you should never judge by appearances.

TAMARA:*(On mobile.)* Hello?

Hi. Can you hear me?

MAN: They can be so deceptive.

TAMARA: Dad. It's me.

MAN: Dad?

TAMARA: I'm at your flat.

MAN: Did you say Dad?

TAMARA: We finished early for Half Term.

I know. It was meant to be a surprise.

The MAN looks at her.

MAN: As I said...so deceptive.

TAMARA: Dad, there's this painter and decorator man in your flat – making quite a mess of the place.

I just wanted to check he's legit – not some cowboy.

Sorry?

Um, he didn't say.

I'll find out.

(To **ADAM**) What's your name?

MAN: Adam.

TAMARA: (*To mobile.*) Apparently, it's Adam.

Oh! Oh, cool.

That's okay then.

I mean, I was just checking because he seemed a bit –

He's who?

Say that again?

No.

Really?

She stares at ADAM.

ADAM: Say 'hi' from me.

TAMARA: Oh, My Go–

No. No I didn't.

Obviously.

Yes, Dad, of course.

I'll try but...

She whispers into the phone.

This is so...embarrassing.

Yeah. Okay. I'll wait here.

See you soon. 'Bye.

TAMARA *exits the call.*

Sorry about that.

ADAM: Yeah.

TAMARA: It's just so weird.

ADAM: Isn't it?

TAMARA: Mad.

ADAM: Absolutely barking.

TAMARA: Did you know?

ADAM: Hardly.

TAMARA: I still can't take it in. I mean, you're my –

ADAM: Brother. Yeah.

He grins.

Great to meet you at last – *Sis.*

JO's Office

JO *reads more of her letter.*

JO: When I was little, Mum always used to say, 'never take sweets from strangers in the street'.

How ironic that was. A real bloody hoot.

Shame she never realised, 'til it was much too late, it's not the strangers in the street you have to fear...

DAVID's Flat

Later that day.

Main reception room. Sofa; arm-chairs; low-slung extended coffee table.

DAVID (*now forty-nine*) sits centrally.

TAMARA and **ALISTAIR** (*now sixteen*) both sit, facing him.

DAVID: I swear I was going to tell you.

ALISTAIR: Did you forget it was Half Term?

DAVID: Look Adam's a free spirit.

I never know when he's going to pitch up.

ALISTAIR: You forgot, didn't you?

DAVID: He's only just got back from Indonesia.

ALISTAIR: Why does he have to stay here?

DAVID: We're talking a few weeks – if that – while he helps me renovate the place.

ALISTAIR: So where are we supposed to stay?

DAVID: How about with your mother – in that house I spend exorbitant amounts of money trying to maintain for you all?

Oh, don't pull that face, Alistair.

This is my home. I can do what I like with it.

TAMARA: Sorry, Dad. I should have let you know I was coming.

DAVID: Sweetheart, you're welcome here any time.

You both are.

But if the spare room's taken – it's the sofa-bed...or a sleeping bag on the floor.

ALISTAIR: I'm amazed you don't suggest we pitch a tent on the balcony.

DAVID: Now that's a thought.

Seriously, look, I know it's complicated – this family business – and I know you haven't seen much of Adam before, but now we're all here, why don't we just seize the moment and, er, take this opportunity to, I don't know...bond, a little.

What do you say?

Come on – he's beavering away in that kitchen right now to give us all a real treat.

ALISTAIR: Deep joy.

DAVID: Erm, perhaps I'd better go and, erm, see if he needs a hand.

DAVID *heads for the kitchen.*

You know, Adam's a terrific guy.

Try and cut him some slack.

DAVID *goes.*

ALISTAIR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Adam's *such* a terrific guy.

So what, are we supposed to *lurve* him – 'cos he happens to be our brother?

TAMARA: Half-brother.

ALISTAIR: Whatever.

TAMARA: Do you know he's like this...really cool artist?

ALISTAIR: Yeah. Dad said.

Royal Academy and all that bollocks.

TAMARA: I can't believe I spoke to him like he was just some random decorator.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: So what did you talk about – after you both knew?

TAMARA: Nothing much.

He painted and I just stood there. Like *forever*.

He said we'd met before, but I don't remember that.

Do you?

ALISTAIR: Sort of.

I think we were on the swings – some shit like that.

You were just a toddler.

TAMARA: Why didn't we see him again?

Was it because of Mum?

ALISTAIR: Too right.

She used to go borderline hysterical if Dad even mentioned Helen's name.

Bringing his first 'spawn' back for a visit was never going to happen.

TAMARA: Shush! Someone's coming.

ALISTAIR: About time. I'm starving.

DAVID: (*Off.*) I hope everybody's hungry.

DAVID and ADAM enter, carrying trays laden with platters.

ADAM: Viva la fiesta!

TAMARA: Oh, wow, look at that.

DAVID: Come on guys – give us a hand.

TAMARA and ALISTAIR take the platters. They all set the table.

TAMARA: What funky fruit – brilliant colours!

ADAM: Let's see...we've got bananas, strawberries, kiwi, watermelon, and pineapple.

Not as lush as the fruit you get in Asia, but wait 'til you taste it.

ALISTAIR: Sounds way too healthy for me. I bags the marshmallows.

ADAM: Grab a stick and plunge right in.

I tell you, it's obscenely delicious.

TAMARA: I've never tried chocolate and watermelon before.

ALISTAIR: Mmm. This really rocks.

ADAM: And don't forget the pièce de résistance – David's amazing coffee.

ALISTAIR: The only thing Dad can half-cook.

DAVID: Cheek. I'll have you know my micro-wave dinners are second to none.

TAMARA: Dad, do you remember when we were little –

She bursts into giggles

– and you thought Mum had left some custard out for you?

DAVID: Oh, that was truly horrible.

TAMARA: Tell Adam about it.

DAVID: Like some kind of penance.

ADAM: Penance?

DAVID: For missing dinner.

I got home late from work –

ALISTAIR: Again.

DAVID: There was a saucepan on the hob, sitting next to this perfectly decent slab of apple pie.

Seemed nice and easy – heat up the contents, pour it over, and dig right in.

Only, it wasn't custard at all...it was bloody chicken soup.

They all laugh.

Eugh, I can still taste it now.

ADAM: Never mind. Try this. Chocolate and kiwi – it'll blow you away.

DAVID *tastes.*

DAVID: Yup. Now that's what I call delicious.

Did you learn to do all this on the island?

ADAM: Yeah – when you’re hosting a pavilion for the elite traveller, you’ve got to give them the best.

Ideally, you should eat this soaking in a sensual flower-bath – served by a white-suited butler.

He winks at ALISTAIR.

Great way to meet beautiful women.

DAVID: I thought you were supposed to be helping out with the water sports – not dipping into the Spa.

ADAM: Well, I guess you could say the terms of my contract were...flexible.

ALISTAIR: Did you see any Slebs out there?

ADAM: Oh yeah. Hirst, Jagger, Moss...you name them.

DAVID: Did any of them hang out in your boat?

ADAM: Actually...there’s this wonderful man out there – absolutely ancient with a face full of magic – anyway, he’s a bit of legend, so the vintage A-listers always go with him.

But I had fun with the younger set.

ALISTAIR: What kind of fun?

ADAM: We’d catch the surf...scuba dive...swim with the turtles off a far-flung island.

TAMARA: Sounds exotic.

ADAM: Exotic and...dangerous.

ALISTAIR: What’s dangerous about it?

ADAM: There are journeys you can take which give you a total adrenalin rush.

Especially when you find yourself in uncharted territory.

He looks at TAMARA.

Suddenly you're in this untamed wilderness and anything could happen.

ALISTAIR: Like what?

ADAM: There was this one time – when I took a group out snorkelling in the northern part of the ocean. And as we started to swim around this island, I could feel the water pulsing with spasmodic charges – like mini-electric shocks.

I was pretty sure what that meant, but I kept quiet...

ALISTAIR: What? What did it mean?

ADAM: I told everyone to swim south of the island, whilst I pulled up to the shore.

Then I saw it. This mass of nebulous blubber with a bloody great inky nipple – spiralling blue threads across the sand.

ALISTAIR: A jellyfish?

ADAM: Much more deadly – Portuguese Man O' War.

DAVID: Nasty. Those things can cause a fair bit of damage if their stingers get you.

ADAM: Absolutely.

When I saw the mother-ship throbbing away on the beach, I knew there'd be more colonies, swarming in the neighbouring waters. They tend to congregate in their thousands.

TAMARA: What did you do?

ADAM: That's where you have to know the waters really well. I got everyone back safely but there were moments when I thought...shit, if I misjudge the direction of the current, and we get sucked into a mass of those little blue bastards – it could be a nightmare.

But, hey. The danger makes it fun.

TAMARA: It's intoxicating – just listening to you.

ADAM: Travelling is intoxicating. That's why I do it.

TAMARA: Is that what inspires your paintings?

Pause.

ADAM: Why don't you come and see for yourself?

DAVID: His first major exhibition.

ADAM: Yep. Next week.

TAMARA: Where?

ADAM: Round the corner. Gallery on the Grove.

DAVID: It's a prime site.

ADAM: That's why I'm here.

DAVID: A pedigree stable. One of the best.

ADAM: Yeah. Thanks for swinging that for me, David.

DAVID: Balls. You got there on your own merit.

Just don't screw it up!

No, seriously. I'm proud of you, son.

Very proud.

ALISTAIR *jabs at the fondue.*

TAMARA *gazes at ADAM.*

As the lights fade, TAMARA crosses to:

The Art Gallery

The following week.

Moody lighting pinpoints suspended artwork in a showroom.

The heady pulse of Indonesian gamelan percussion music plays in the background.

TAMARA *slowly examines the paintings, but what she sees is hidden from view; only the backs of the canvasses are visible.*

ADAM *enters. He watches her.*

ADAM: Thank you for coming.

TAMARA: I had to see it.

ADAM: What do you think?

TAMARA: Um, I'm...

ADAM: Yes?

TAMARA: It's not –

ADAM: Not?

TAMARA: – what I expected...imagined it would be like.

ADAM: What did you imagine?

TAMARA: Dunno. Landscapes. Boats. Islands, maybe.

ADAM: Swathes of sand and towering palms?

TAMARA: Yes. I s'pose.

I thought there'd be a lot more blue.

ADAM: You mean, the sea?

TAMARA: Different textures, but basically...blue.

ADAM: Not red?

TAMARA: Not so much.

ADAM: Not the colour of blood and fire – and passion?

TAMARA: I didn't expect to see so many...

ADAM: Women?

TAMARA: No. Not so many.

I mean, they're all...very... beautiful.

ADAM: Aren't they just?

TAMARA: And young. They all look really young.

ADAM *moves closer to TAMARA.*

ADAM: What else strikes you?

TAMARA: They look almost real – like photographs.

ADAM: Yes, that's meant to be the effect.

It's all in the way you apply the brush – intricate detail in the background, here, see
–.then broader strokes behind.

TAMARA *refers to her catalogue.*

TAMARA: Is that what they mean by 'figurative realism'?

ADAM: Galleries love labels but I prefer to be free-flowing. Not boxed in a genre.

TAMARA: It's clever, the way you paint the light falling – on a strand of hair, or fold
of a dress.

I like the way it glimmers.

ADAM: What else do you see?

TAMARA: Their eyes.

ADAM: Yes, the eyes. What about them?

TAMARA: It's the slant of the lids. They look so innocent, somehow. Like...

ADAM: Like?

TAMARA: A child – the eyes of a child.

ADAM: Does that surprise you?

TAMARA: Yes. It seems a bit odd.

ADAM: Why?

TAMARA: Um, I s'pose it doesn't match the way you paint their dresses.

ADAM: You mean – the falling strap...the glimpse of thigh?

TAMARA: Err, yes.

ADAM: That's what inspires me – that blend of innocence and sensuality.

TAMARA: I thought it was travelling.

I mean, I thought *that's* what inspired you.

ADAM: It's all part of the experience.

I find them everywhere I go...mountain villages, street markets, a balcony overlooking a piazza.

Whenever I see them, I want to paint them – young women...

He looks at TAMARA.

...on the brink of discovery.

TAMARA: Discovery?

ADAM: Waiting to be awakened.

Do you know what I mean by that?

Come on, Tamara, don't be shy.

He removes a strand of hair from her face.

I can see it – in your eyes.

I've painted so many, I can read their secret language.

TAMARA: What can you see?

ADAM: You're still waiting.

Am I right?

TAMARA: Waiting for what?

ADAM: That discovery.

Pause.

TAMARA: I...um, I'm waiting till I'm...a bit older. Sixteen, maybe.

ADAM: Oh, Tammy, it's not about age. It's about when it feels right.

TAMARA *breaks away.*

Hey. Do the boys at school pressure you? Ask you if you want to try?

TAMARA: No.

Yes. I mean, sometimes.

Actually, it's mostly the girls? They say things like: 'Oh, my God, I had such wild, amazing sex last night'. Stuff like that.

It can make you feel left out.

ADAM: They're probably just making it up – to sound cool.

TAMARA: Yeah. That's what my mate Vicky says.

Anyway, I don't want random sex.

I want the first time to be absolutely perfect.

ADAM: You want it to be special?

With someone you trust?

TAMARA: Yes.

ADAM: Someone who can gently coax the butterfly from its cocoon.

Pause.

TAMARA: What if I never find that person?

ADAM: You will.

It's going to happen.

He looks at her.

Trust me.

JO's Office

Back in the present.

JO reads her letter by the dim glow of her desk lamp.

JO: How many times did you tell me to trust you?

Joke of it is, I always did. Then.

In those days, you seemed to me like a mini-god...a kind of master puppeteer pulling all the strings.

I was this geeky, awkward kid, caught up in your world of misinformation – with no limits, no boundaries, none.

All I ever wanted was a hug.

DAVID's Flat

Three years earlier. June. Early evening.

Main reception room.

The mournful lyrics and bleak electric guitar of mid-nineties 'Radiohead' plays from a distant room.

TAMARA enters, carrying her rucksack.

TAMARA: Dad?

Dad?

She calls towards the sound of the music.

I'm here.

ADAM enters; fresh from the shower, wearing a bathrobe.

ADAM: Hi-ya.

TAMARA stares at him.

Surprised to see me?

TAMARA: I, er, I thought you were in the States.

ADAM: Nope. Still here.

Problem?

TAMARA: No, it's not that – it's just, Dad didn't say.

TAMARA *looks around.*

Where is he?

I thought it was him on the Inter-con.

ADAM: No, that was me.

TAMARA: Oh, sorry. I've interrupted your shower

ADAM: No problem.

TAMARA: So...where is Dad?

ADAM: Out.

One of his media black-tie jobbies.

TAMARA: Tonight?

ADAM: I think the company's won another award.

TAMARA: How odd.

ADAM: Not really. They're usually pretty hot.

TAMARA: No, I didn't mean...

I told him, I said – I was coming to stay tonight.

I left a message, actually. On the land-line? I couldn't get his mobile.

Oh, why didn't he say he was going out?

ADAM: No need. He knew I was here to look after you.

TAMARA: But does that mean you've got to stay in. 'Specially?

Oh, I wish he'd said.

ADAM: Hey Tammy. Chill. I'm really not phased by it.

TAMARA: Sorry.

ADAM: And stop apologising. You've got to chill-axe.

He guides her to the sofa.

Come on. Over here. Give me that.

He takes the rucksack.

I'll park it in the spare room.

TAMARA: But where are you going to sleep?

ADAM: Don't stress. I'll take the sofa-bed.

Have you eaten?

TAMARA *shakes her head.*

Thought not. I'll order a take-away.

And there's plenty of booze in the fridge.

TAMARA: Um, actually, I'm not supposed to drink.

Not till I'm sixteen.

I mean I can – but only on special occasions.

ADAM: Okay. So let's make this a special occasion.

Hey, I've sold a few paintings – we could drink to that.

What do you say?

TAMARA: Um, I –

ADAM: There's champagne.

TAMARA: Champagne?

ADAM: You're not going to turn down champagne?

TAMARA: Err...maybe just a little.

ADAM: That's the spirit.

As David would say.

ADAM *goes out.*

TAMARA *removes her shoes; settles back into the sofa.*

TAMARA: I like this music. It's cool.

ADAM *enters with two glasses and a bottle; still in his bathrobe.*

ADAM: I used to be really into this band in the mid-nineties.

Great for getting rid of lots of schoolboy angst.

TAMARA *searches in her bag; presents a bar of chocolate.*

TAMARA: I've bought a contribution.

Strawberry and paprika double-dark organic.

ADAM: Sounds delectable.

He pours them both champagne.

TAMARA: This stuff always makes me giggly.

ADAM: Nothing wrong with that. Enjoy.

They both drink.

TAMARA: I was thinking...

ADAM: Oh, no. Sounds dangerous.

TAMARA: Why do you call Dad...David?

ADAM: Just the way it is.

Don't see him very often.

TAMARA: So, do you call your step-dad, Dad?

ADAM: Quite the Little Miss Nosey, aren't you?

TAMARA: Don't be a Tossler. I'm not a kid.

ADAM: Woah! Language.

Thought you were a 'nice' girl.

TAMARA: Not that nice.

ADAM: Glad to hear it.

He downs his champagne.

Now where's that chocolate?

TAMARA: Oh no. Oh, yucky-yuck.

It's all gone mushy – must have melted in my bag.

ADAM: Let's see.

TAMARA *hands him the chocolate.*

Yum. Instant fondue. Superb.

He presses his hands into the wrapper.

Look. Chocolate covered fingers. Want to taste?

ADAM *waves his hand in front of TAMARA's mouth.*

She laughs.

TAMARA: Lick your fingers? No way.

ADAM: Could be fun.

TAMARA: Stop it. Don't be gross.

ADAM: It's not gross. It's sexy.

He takes TAMARA's hand.

You're a very sexy young lady.

TAMARA *stops laughing.*

TAMARA: What are you doing?

ADAM: I want your fingers in my mouth.

TAMARA: Um, I don't think –

ADAM: Come on. Don't be shy.

ADAM pulls her hand to his mouth.

TAMARA: I'm not really –

ADAM: Mmmm. You taste delicious.

How does that feel?

TAMARA: I'm not sure, sort of –

ADAM: Does it feel nice?

TAMARA: It, it feels –

ADAM: I know how to make you feel nice all over.

TAMARA: No, Adam. I don't want –

ADAM: You do. I know you do.

TAMARA: No, really. I'm not, not –

ADAM: What?

TAMARA: I'm not ready yet – I told you.

I want to wait.

ADAM: For somebody special. That's right.

TAMARA: So you understand, don't you? This isn't –

ADAM: Why can't this be special?

Pause.

TAMARA: You know why.

ADAM: Oh, come on. You know there's a vibe between us?

TAMARA: Ye-es, but –

ADAM: So why can't this be special?

TAMARA: ‘Cos we’re the same –

ADAM: Shut up, you little tease.

TAMARA struggles but ADAM forces her arm back.

TAMARA: Please. You’re hurting me.

ADAM: Then don’t play silly games.

TAMARA: I’m not.

ADAM yanks TAMARA’s arm, vicious now.

ADAM: Prick teaser.

TAMARA: Aaah, stop. Please. Don’t.

She tries to push ADAM away; he grabs her hand, pulling it onto his bare legs.

ADAM: And now we’re going on a journey.

TAMARA: No.

ADAM: I want you to feel how hard you’ve made me.

TAMARA: No. Please Adam, don’t –

ADAM: Oh pleeeee-ase Adam, don’t. Pretty pleeeee-ase.

ADAM pulls TAMARA’s hand under his dressing gown.

TAMARA: Oh God. Why are you doing this?

ADAM: Feel that. Feel what you’ve done to me.

TAMARA: Stop it, Adam. You mustn’t do this – you’re my –

ADAM: Shut up.

Shut. The Fuck. Up.

ADAM pushes TAMARA onto to the floor; he crouches over her.

TAMARA lets out a scream.

Darkness. The music crescendos for a long while. Fades to silence.

The same

Early morning light. The following morning.

TAMARA *sits hunched on the sofa.*

ADAM *enters. He is smartly dressed in a pale linen suit, open-necked shirt.*

He carries TAMARA's rucksack.

ADAM: I've ordered you a taxi.

He dumps the rucksack by the sofa.

It'll be here in ten minutes.

He throws a wad of bank notes onto the coffee table.

That should cover the journey back to Richmond.

TAMARA: I'm going to wait for Dad.

ADAM: Not a clever idea.

TAMARA: He's – he'll be back soon.

ADAM: I wouldn't bank on it.

By the way – were you looking for your mobile?

TAMARA: Where is it?

ADAM: Shame.

I must have accidentally trodden on it.

Pause.

TAMARA: Does, does Dad even know I'm here?

ADAM: Now, that's an interesting question.

TAMARA: You said he knew I was coming.

ADAM: No, actually.

You said he knew that you were coming.

TAMARA: I left a message on the ansa-phone.

ADAM: That's right. I heard it.

Pause.

TAMARA: You didn't tell him, did you?

ADAM: Hmm, let me think.

All things considered, could I really be arsed to get him to fly back from Milan, to
let –

TAMARA: Milan!

ADAM: – his precious little Tammy –

TAMARA: He's in Milan?

ADAM: For the whole weekend.

TAMARA: You knew he wouldn't be back last night?

ADAM: For fuck's sake.

If David can't be arsed to tell you his plans, why should I?

Now, I want you to go. You can wait outside for the cab.

Come on. Shift.

TAMARA *remains where she is.*

TAMARA: Why are you being like –

ADAM: Move it.

TAMARA: – like you hate me?

ADAM: I've got a meeting.

TAMARA: You were different before. I thought you –

ADAM: There's enough money to take you all the way home.

TAMARA: You can't just get rid of me.

Not after what happened last night.

ADAM: What happened last night?

TAMARA: You know what – we had...

ADAM: We had what?

TAMARA: We...you made me –

ADAM: Now listen. Nobody made you do anything. Get that?

If anything, you made me.

Throwing yourself at me like that.

TAMARA: I didn't.

ADAM: All over me like a rash.

TAMARA: That's not true –

ADAM: You're a fantasist. Just like your mother.

TAMARA: How can you say that? You haven't even met her.

ADAM: Of course I fucking well have.

I was only a kid but I remember her – vividly.

All swollen up, like a balloon.

TAMARA: She's lost weight now, she's –

ADAM: In a complete fantasy world.

TAMARA: No. She's just –

ADAM: Delusional, I think they call it.

TAMARA: She's bi-polar. It's a condition.

ADAM: I know what bi-polar means.

I'm not stupid, you little slag.

TAMARA: I'm not a slag. I'm a vir–

ADAM: You're a what?

TAMARA: I mean, I –

ADAM: Virgin?

Pause.

TAMARA: I...I was...

ADAM: Speak up. Can't hear you.

Ah. Poor little Tammy. You're not going to whinge all over me are you?

Why do losers always have to piss on someone else's parade?

TAMARA: I'm not.

ADAM: Just like your mother.

TAMARA: Stop that about my mother –

ADAM: No wonder David couldn't stand her.

TAMARA *flinches.*

And if he finds out what you're really like, he won't be able to stand you either.

Is that what you want, Tammy, when you play your pathetic little virgin card?

Or perhaps you just want to get us both locked up.

TAMARA: What? I don't under –

ADAM: Don't you know, incest is against the law?

TAMARA: Incest?

ADAM: Do you want to go to prison for it?

TAMARA: No. I don't, Adam, really I don't –

The door buzzer sounds.

ADAM: That'll be the taxi.

ADAM *picks up the wad of notes.*

Here, take this.

Go on. Take it.

ADAM *grabs TAMARA's arm; forces the money into her hand.*

And listen up – as far as David...or anyone else is concerned...nothing happened last night. Absolutely nothing.

D'you hear me?

ADAM *starts to twist TAMARA's wrist.*

I said – do you hear me?

TAMARA: Ow! Yes, I hear you.

ADAM: Fucking little bitch.

You've gotta keep your mouth shut. Get it?

TAMARA: Yes. Yes, I get it.

Ow! I really get it.

ADAM: That's the spirit.

He loosens his grip.

Best to keep it just between me and you. Yeah?

Our little secret.

TAMARA: I won't tell anybody, Adam. Ever.

I'll keep it a secret.

I promise.

Blackout.

End of Act Two.

ACT THREE

The action returns to the present day.

JO's Office

Early June 2009. Mid afternoon.

JO sits alone. Her desk is as before.

There is also a half-empty bottle of Scotch and a glass.

JO pours herself a measure of whisky; reaches for her letter.

JO: They say in forensics, 'every contact leaves a mark'. You can examine anything for its DNA – blood stains on a trainer – fingerprints on a glass.

But what about the marks left on the mind?

What about...our little secrets?

She gulps the whiskey down in one.

Secrets don't surrender themselves to the microscope. They hide.

And that nagging little secret...the one that causes us the greatest shame...hides the deepest.

She returns the whiskey bottle to a drawer in the desk; busies herself with paperwork.

TAMARA enters. *She's in an ankle-length summer dress with long sleeves.*

JO: Sorry to keep you waiting.

My previous meeting ran over.

TAMARA: That's okay.

JO: I hope someone's offered you a drink...a coffee or –

TAMARA: I've had water, thanks.

JO: Good.

So. How've you been over the last few days?

TAMARA: Fine.

JO: Really?

TAMARA: Yes. Totally.

JO: Has anyone...?

You should have had a.....call, by now, from, someone, erm...

She checks some papers.

Lisa... Lisa Morris. She's supposed to –

TAMARA: She left a message on my mobile.

From Social Services?

JO: That'll be it. Did you call her back?

TAMARA: No.

JO: Oh-kay. Well –

TAMARA: Why do I have to see a social worker?

JO: I think you need some support right now.

TAMARA: What for?

Pause.

JO: Tamara, what you told me last week – it was...brave of you.

TAMARA: It was private.

JO: I know.

TAMARA: I don't want it to go any further.

JO: Ye-es. About that ...

TAMARA *rubs her forehead.*

What's the matter?

TAMARA: Nothing. Just a headache.

I've been finding it hard to sleep.

JO: Did you ring that number I gave you?

TAMARA: What number?

JO: The help-line.

TAMARA: Oh, yeah. I tried it once. There was no-one there.

JO: It's supposed to be a twenty-four hour service.

TAMARA: Just a recorded message – said the lines were really busy, call back later...

that sort of stuff.

JO: Well, err, perhaps if you try again, you might get through to –

TAMARA: Yeah. Maybe.

Pause.

JO: Do you remember why I asked you to come in today?

TAMARA: Vaguely.

I mean, no, not really.

JO: I've prepared the witness statement for you.

TAMARA: What's that?

JO: It's...basically just a transcript of...what you told me last week.

She hands TAMARA two sheets of A4 typed paper.

I'd like you to confirm the content is accurate, and that you're willing to let us use that information in Court.

TAMARA *skims the pages quickly; gives it back.*

TAMARA: Yeah, that's fine.

JO: You've hardly looked at it.

TAMARA: Do I have to?

JO: Tamara, we need you to sign this statement – and I really don't advise you do that before you've read it all the way through.

JO *returns the statement to TAMARA.*

TAMARA *stares at it for a while.*

TAMARA: I'm sorry. I can't read this bit.

JO: What's the problem?

TAMARA: It's just...the words. They're sort of swimming around in front of my eyes.

Must be this headache.

Pause.

JO: Would it help if I read it out to you?

TAMARA: Maybe.

JO *takes the statement.*

JO: Right. Now, if you want me to stop at any point, or there are details we need to change, just say.

Yes?

TAMARA: Okay.

JO *reads aloud.*

JO: At first, I was happy that Adam was in Dad's flat. I thought it was nice that he was around –

TAMARA: Yeah-yeah, that's okay.

It's the next bit...

She shows JO the exact section.

JO: Ye-es. I see.

JO reads slowly, with measured tone.

He pushed me down onto the floor. I was very scared. I tried to scream but he put his fist in my face and said: 'if you scream, this is what you'll get'.

He pulled up my top and sucked my breasts.

Then he put his hands between my thighs and touched my clitoris through my pants.

I said I was –

TAMARA: Did I actually say that word?

JO: Which word?

TAMARA: Clitoris?

JO: Well, I think you originally used the short-form, but –

TAMARA: It sounds so horrible.

JO: Do you want me to change it?

TAMARA: No.

No – that's what he did.

JO resumes reading.

JO: I told Adam I was a virgin. I was scared I'd get pregnant but he said he wouldn't come inside me.

He made me put my hand on his penis.

He held it there and rubbed it up and down.

I wanted to stop but he told me to keep on rubbing.

Then he released himself all over my hand.

(To **TAMARA**) Are you alright?

TAMARA nods.

He told me to go to the spare bedroom for the night.

I tried to sleep but I couldn't.

Later, he came into the bedroom.

The lights were out, but I heard him.

I was scared, so I pretended to be asleep.

He came over to the bed and lay down next to me. He rolled me over and pulled open my legs...

TAMARA *sits, staring at the floor.*

Are you sure you're alright?

TAMARA *says something, almost inaudible..*

JO: Sorry? I couldn't hear that.

TAMARA: I said...Yes. I'm fine.

Pause.

JO: He said he wanted full sex with me now.

He said he had a condom and he was touching himself and he told me to help him put the condom on his penis.

Then he pushed his penis inside me.

I told my mind to go numb. I tried not to feel what was happening, but it hurt and I felt a horrible ache between my legs.

TAMARA *covers her face with her hands.*

Tamara?

We're nearly finished now.

Just one more paragraph?

TAMARA *nods.*

Adam was angry with me for being upset. He said I could have stopped it, so because I didn't, I must have enjoyed it.

I was confused. I don't remember much about it, except I felt numb and strange.

But I know I didn't enjoy it.

Pause.

How are you feeling?

TAMARA: Actually, I feel a bit tired.

JO: Would you like a glass of water?

TAMARA: No, thank-you.

Pause.

Is that it then, have you got what you need?

JO: Yes. I think we've got enough here to make it utterly clear that Adam committed a serious crime against you.

TAMARA: Crime?

JO: Yes. Rape is a crime.

TAMARA: I can't connect with that word. Rape. Sounds so remote.

JO: Well, I know it can seem like that –

TAMARA: He said it was incest.

He said we'd both go to prison.

JO: He was probably trying to frighten you into keeping quiet.

It's a tactic abusers often use –

TAMARA: Abusers?

JO: Yes. I'm sorry Tamara, but that's what it was.

He....he sexually abused you.

TAMARA: We learned about that at school.

I thought it's what Paed's did.

JO: Yes, well...paedophiles are not the only people who abuse children.

Pause.

TAMARA: I'm not a child.

JO: Not now, but you were.

TAMARA: I was fourteen.

JO: The point is, rape is against the law at any age.

TAMARA *stares at the floor.*

I'm sorry he did that to you, Tamara.

Pause.

So. What do you think about this statement?

Are you willing to sign it?

TAMARA: What happens if I do?

JO: We can use it as part of our defence for Alistair.

TAMARA: Can it really help him?

JO: I'm sure it can make a difference...yes.

TAMARA: Okay.

I'll sign.

JO *hands TAMARA a pen.*

TAMARA *signs.*

JO: Thank you.

Pause.

TAMARA: Can I go now?

JO: What?

Err, no. Not...just yet.

We need to discuss some procedures.

TAMARA: Procedures?

JO: About you taking the Witness Box.

TAMARA: What do you mean?

JO: We'd like you to give your testimony in Court –

TAMARA: No.

No, I'm not going to Court.

JO: What?

TAMARA: You said...I'm sure you said last week...if I gave you this statement, I wouldn't have to do anything else.

You said that would be it.

JO: No. No, what I think I said was ...

If our QC puts this statement in front of the Court, you won't have to say it all over again. The Jury can read the statement and you'll just be asked to confirm the contents are true...and it's your signature on the document.

That way it's more private.

TAMARA: And then that's it?

JO: Well, not quite.

The Prosecution may want to ask you some questions.

TAMARA: But I'm not on trial, am I?

JO: No. No, not at all –

TAMARA: Then why? Why are they going to question me?

JO: It's okay. It's just...the way the process works.

But it'll be alright. Really.

Stick to what you've said in your statement – just answer yes or no to verify the facts – and that'll be it.

Pause.

TAMARA: What if they say he was right?

JO: Who?

TAMARA: Adam.

JO: How could he be right?

TAMARA: He said, didn't he?

I should have stopped him, but I didn't.

JO: That's because you trusted him, and then –

TAMARA: Maybe I shouldn't have pretended to be asleep.

Maybe I should have kicked him or something –

JO: He'd already threatened to punch you in the face.

TAMARA: Maybe I should have been stronger, I don't know.

I don't understand why he did it, but I don't want anyone else to know about this.

TAMARA *starts tearing the statement up.*

JO: What the –

TAMARA: I'm not letting you have it. I –

JO: Tamara!

TAMARA: – don't want anything to do with –

JO: Stop it. Please. This is vital evidence.

TAMARA: No, it's not. It's dirty. It's disgusting.

I don't want anyone to hear about it, especially my parents – not on top of what Alistair's done. It'll destroy my Mum.

And Dad...he'll probably never want to see me again.

Pause.

JO: I'm afraid they're going to have to hear about this anyway.

Whether you go to Court or not.

TAMARA: Why?

JO: Tamara, I have a legal responsibility to inform your parents of what you told me.

TAMARA: You said you'd wait till I saw the Social Worker.

JO: Ye-es.

But you haven't spoken to her yet, have you?

TAMARA: That's 'cos I don't want this to go any further.

Pause.

JO: Tamara, I know this must seem very frightening and confusing at the moment, and that's understandable but...you can't give up.

Not now.

TAMARA: Seriously, I'm not doing it.

Silence.

JO: Alright.

What about Alistair?

Do you want him to get a life sentence?

TAMARA: He won't get that, will he?

JO: If he's convicted of murder, he will.

He's looking at fifteen years. Minimum.

TAMARA: I thought you said it would only be two or three.

JO: That's only if we can convince the Jury he was provoked.

She holds up a torn section of the statement.

This was our strongest argument.

TAMARA: I don't understand.

JO: You told Alistair about the rape.

Didn't you?

TAMARA: No.

JO: You wanted him to take revenge.

TAMARA: No.

No, it wasn't like that.

JO: Then what was it like?

TAMARA: You've got this all wrong.

I didn't want *anyone* to know. Ever.

I swore to Adam –

JO: You swore?

So the Pact was with Adam, not with Alistair?

TAMARA: No, no. The Pact was with Al –

JO: You just said you didn't tell him?

TAMARA: Did I?

JO: Look, you've got to stop doing this.

TAMARA: Doing what?

JO: There you go again – batting back every question to me.

TAMARA: I'm not.

JO: Did you, or did you not, tell Alistair about the rape?

TAMARA: I've already told you. No.

A tense silence.

JO: I'm sorry, I...I shouldn't have –

TAMARA: He found out.

JO: He...?

Right. Right, I see. Yes.

JO *grabs her notebook.*

How did Alistair find out?

TAMARA: It was...oh, it's all so complicated.

It's all mixed up with...I mean, I thought I was coping with all that stuff, you know?

I just wanted to put it behind me, do well at school, get really good grades.

For Mum.

Then there was this day...

JO: When?

TAMARA: It was the holidays and Al was at home. He was revising for his AS levels, so it must have been...end of May.

Two years ago.

TAMARA *crosses to:*

TAMARA's bedroom

Richmond. May 2007.

Mid-morning.

A bed covered with scatter cushions; chair and study-table.

Retro girl-band pun, in the mode of late 90's underground rock, pounds loudly.

TAMARA (*now fifteen*) goes to the table and starts surfing the web on her laptop.

ALISTAIR (*now seventeen*) enters.

Music fades.

ALISTAIR: Hi. How're you doing?

TAMARA: Yeah. I'm good.

TAMARA *shuts the laptop lid.*

You?

ALISTAIR: History's cool but Maths is definitely doing my head in.

I'm already stuck on simultaneous and quadratic equations, and if I have to solve another 'log' – I'm going to go mental.

TAMARA: You've lost me already.

ALISTAIR: I wish Dad was here.

TAMARA: Why?

He's a real dinosaur about things like that.

ALISTAIR: I know, but it's such a laugh when he pretends he can do it.

Anyway, he always knows a man who can.

That's what's so annoying about Dad, isn't it?

TAMARA: What is?

ALISTAIR: He's great, but he's never around when you need him.

I mean, it was his idea that I take poxy Maths in the first place – if I want to be taken seriously for Oxford, blah, blah, blah.

So now the exams are due, why does he bugger off on another work conference?

How crap is that?

TAMARA: Maybe he doesn't care about us any more.

ALISTAIR: What?

Don't be an idiot.

Why do you say that?

TAMARA: Just a feeling I get.

ALISTAIR: You've been listening too much to Mum.

That's just the kind of stupid lie she'd invent.

TAMARA: Shush! Keep your voice down.

ALISTAIR attempts a whisper.

ALISTAIR: Are you getting paranoid or something?

Is that why you've been hiding away all week?

TAMARA: Who says I'm hiding?

ALISTAIR: Mum.

TAMARA: I thought you didn't believe any of her 'stupid lies'.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, well, perhaps she's –

TAMARA: Actually, if you really want to know...I've been doing some research.

ALISTAIR: Tam, you're fifteen. You should be out having fun.

TAMARA: This is better.

ALISTAIR: What is?

TAMARA: I think I've found a way to make shedloads of money.

And help thousands of people at the same time.

TAMARA opens up her laptop.

I've read tons about it on the web, but it means working with non-surgical

technology, so I've got to get straight A's in science and biology –

ALISTAIR: Hang on!

What are you talking about?

TAMARA: Scar management.

ALISTAIR: You-what management?

TAMARA: Scar.

ALISTAIR: You know, you're sounding just a little bit strange.

TAMARA: They've already developed these silicone sheets and gels that can hide scars really well, and like –

ALISTAIR: They?

TAMARA: Scientists.

They can hide most types of scar without using surgery.

And you get to work with wicked ingredients like copper, and grape-seed, and...emu-oil.

ALISTAIR: Wow. Really? How amazing!

TAMARA: Don't be sarky.

Loads of people want this stuff.

ALISTAIR: Must be a girl thing.

TAMARA: Why?

ALISTAIR: Most of my mates would think it's cool to show off their scars.

Look at this...

He pulls up his jeans; points to his shin.

Got to be at least six inches long.

TAMARA: How did you get that?

ALISTAIR: Rugby.

Someone gouged it out of my leg in a match – but it's all part of the game.

I wear my scar with pride.

TAMARA: Not everyone feels like that.

ALISTAIR: How do you know?

TAMARA: Just do.

ALISTAIR: Come on, then. Where's yours?

TAMARA: What?

ALISTAIR: I showed you mine. So show me yours.

If you've got any.

TAMARA: Of course I've got some.

ALISTAIR: Then show me.

TAMARA: Um, they're really...really tiny.

ALISTAIR: C'mon.

TAMARA: They're so not a big deal.

ALISTAIR: Don't be square. Do a dare.

Pause.

TAMARA *rolls up her sleeve, reluctantly.*

ALISTAIR: Shit!

Shit, Tam.

How did you get all those?

TAMARA: The cat.

ALISTAIR: Whose cat?

TAMARA: Err...Sarah's.

ALISTAIR: Who's Sarah?

TAMARA: Someone in my year-group.

ALISTAIR: She let her cat do *that* to your arm?

Somebody should put that moggy down.

TAMARA: Don't be a prat.

Wish I hadn't shown you now.

She rolls down her sleeve.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: Did you ever meet Becky?

TAMARA: Was that the girl you...?

ALISTAIR: Dated for a few months. Yeah.

TAMARA: I vaguely remember her.

ALISTAIR: Her arms looked like that.

TAMARA: So?

ALISTAIR: She was always covering herself up. Even on a shit-hot day.

Just like you.

TAMARA: Must be a coincidence.

ALISTAIR: The first time she cut herself –

TAMARA: Who said anything about –?

ALISTAIR: – she said it was an accident – with a craft knife. She was just fooling around and it slipped.

Sliced her palm. Badly.

TAMARA: Ouch.

ALISTAIR: No. Not ouch. That was the point.

She said all she felt was this sense of release – when the blood trickled out.

Then she tried it again. Same thing – more release.

So it became a habit.

TAMARA: Why are you telling me all this?

ALISTAIR: How long have you been cutting?

TAMARA *becomes preoccupied with her books.*

I know you've got issues with Mum but –

TAMARA: Mum and me are fine, actually.

ALISTAIR: Tammy, listen –

TAMARA: Anyway, my issues are small compared with what's happening in the rest of the world...like, like global poverty, and climate change, and –

ALISTAIR: Look Tam, I know I'm just a dork of a brother – but if there's something worrying you –

TAMARA: Nothing's worrying me.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: I went through all of this with Becky.

There are web-sites you can access – blogs you can join.

I know people self-harm because –

TAMARA: I cut because it's my choice. Okay?

I've got everything under control.

ALISTAIR: That's exactly what Becky used to say.

TAMARA: Is that why she dumped you – 'cos you kept going on about it?

ALISTAIR: Tam. I care about you.

I know I'm not Dad but I want to – look out for you – protect you.

TAMARA: It's too late for that.

ALISTAIR: What d'you mean?

TAMARA: Err...I don't know why I said that.

ALISTAIR: What's too late?

TAMARA: Forget it.

ALISTAIR. Too late for what?

TAMARA: I don't want to talk about it.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: Okay. If you don't trust me – what about Adam?

TAMARA: Adam?

ALISTAIR: He's a bit older and –

TAMARA: No way!

I mean...he's not around.

ALISTAIR: Yes he is – he's on my Facebook.

TAMARA: You're in touch with Adam?

ALISTAIR: He's in America – not outer space.

TAMARA: Does he...does Adam actually write to you?

ALISTAIR: Sometimes.

TAMARA: What sort of things does he say?

ALISTAIR: To be honest, it's not that regular, but...you know. Stuff.

TAMARA: Al, listen. This is really important.

You mustn't mention me to Adam.

ALISTAIR: I don't as it happens, but –

TAMARA: Never. Do you get that?

ALISTAIR: Why? What's the big deal?

TAMARA: I don't want any contact with him.

ALISTAIR: But he's our brother.

TAMARA: I don't care.

ALISTAIR: What if he comes back to visit Dad?

TAMARA: I don't want to see him again.

ALISTAIR: That's a bit drastic.

TAMARA: I don't even want to hear his voice.

ALISTAIR: Why are you being so freaky about this?

TAMARA: As far as I'm concerned he doesn't exist.

ALISTAIR: Tam, you really are acting a bit...crazy.

TAMARA: Crazy?

You mean...like Mum?

ALISTAIR: Yeah, just a bit.

TAMARA: Are you saying I'm mad, like Mum?

Then, you know what? You know what?

You can just...Fuck Off.

ALISTAIR: Tam!

TAMARA: Get out of my room, you bastard.

ALISTAIR: What did you call me?

TAMARA: You heard. You bastard.

You fucking bastard.

She throws a book at ALISTAIR.

Get. Out.

ALISTAIR: Okay, okay. I'm going.

Shit!

ALISTAIR *leaves.*

Retro girl-punk blasts at maximum decibels.

TAMARA *attacks the cushions on the bed; she punches one violently. Repeatedly.*

Suddenly she stops, exhausted; sits taut and still.

Silence.

ALISTAIR *enters.*

He waves a long stick with a white handkerchief dangling from the tip.

ALISTAIR: Pax?

Pax vobiscum?

Sorry, Tam.

TAMARA: What for?

ALISTAIR: Sorry I called you crazy.

TAMARA: Sorry I called you a bastard.

ALISTAIR: S'alright.

I've been called worse.

TAMARA: Now you know why I cut.

It's better that way.

ALISTAIR: That's not true.

TAMARA: It keeps me calm – everything stays cool.

ALISTAIR: No. It just covers things up.

Pause.

I wish you'd tell me why you hate Adam so much.

TAMARA: It's not like that.

ALISTAIR: Then why do you want to avoid him?

TAMARA: I can't tell you.

ALISTAIR: Oh c'mon, Tammy.

TAMARA: I can't.

It's a secret.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: Is that why you cut?

TAMARA: What?

ALISTAIR: 'Cos of the secret you've got with Adam?

TAMARA: Stop fishing – I'm not going to tell you.

ALISTAIR: Okay. Don't.

I'll just tell Mum you're cutting. And Dad.

TAMARA: What? You wouldn't dare!

ALISTAIR: Wouldn't I?

TAMARA: Al, please. You mustn't. You mustn't do that.

ALISTAIR: I might have to, if that's the only way to help you.

TAMARA: I don't need any help.

ALISTAIR: Yes you do.

Pause.

Tam, it's obvious that whatever this is – it's really upsetting you.

TAMARA: It's not upsetting me.

ALISTAIR: Then why are you cutting?

Silence.

Okay. Okay, I've got an idea.

It could help us solve all this.

TAMARA: What?

ALISTAIR: We could make a Pact.

TAMARA: Pact?

ALISTAIR: Yeah. Like countries do after a war, when they want to...make peace.

We could work out terms and conditions.

TAMARA: What sort of conditions?

ALISTAIR: Like...I agree to keep Adam away from you.

TAMARA: How?

ALISTAIR: I can break off all contact with him...make excuses to Dad if he comes back to London...make sure we both vanish off the radar so we don't have to see him again...all of that...so long as you...

TAMARA: What?

ALISTAIR: Tell me your secret.

Pause.

TAMARA: Is a pact like a promise?

ALISTAIR: Yeah. A two-way promise.

TAMARA: But people break promises, don't they?

ALISTAIR: Sometimes.

TAMARA: Often.

ALISTAIR: Yeah, well...that's why a pact is stronger.

TAMARA: How?

ALISTAIR: It's more official. You can put it in writing.

TAMARA: No. It's got to be even stronger than that.

ALISTAIR: How d'you mean?

TAMARA: We've got to swear.

ALISTAIR: Swear?

TAMARA: Like an oath.

Bonded with blood.

ALISTAIR: Blood?

Whose blood?

TAMARA: Ours.

Pause.

ALISTAIR: Are you joking me?

TAMARA: No, I mean it.

Just a few drops.

ALISTAIR: Yeah. Right.

TAMARA: It's easy.

ALISTAIR: If you're a Vampire.

TAMARA: What?

ALISTAIR: Not everyone gets high on drawing blood.

TAMARA: That's it. Forget it.

There won't be any Pact.

ALISTAIR: Oh Tam, don't be –

TAMARA: I mean it.

We seal it with our blood, or I don't tell you anything.

ALISTAIR: You really are serious about this?

TAMARA: Totally.

ALISTAIR: It must be one hell of a secret.

Silence.

Okay. It's a deal.

How do we do it?

TAMARA: With this.

TAMARA removes the back of her mobile and produces a razor blade.

ALISTAIR: Cunning.

Do you always hide them in there?

TAMARA: Not always. It depends.

Now, you've got to nick your finger – like this.

She cuts her finger.

Then we press our hands together – and swear on each other's blood.

ALISTAIR: Do we really have to do this?

TAMARA: Absolutely.

ALISTAIR: It's so extreme.

TAMARA: It's the only way.

Are you In?

Pause.

ALISTAIR: Yep. I'm In.

TAMARA: Then do it.

ALISTAIR nicks his finger with the blade.

TAMARA: Good.

She clasps ALISTAIR's hand.

Now...this is our Pact.

I'll tell you my secret, but you've got to swear – on our shared blood – no matter what...you'll never tell anyone.

ALISTAIR: Never?

TAMARA: Not unless I say you can.

Do you swear? Do you absolutely swear?

Pause.

ALISTAIR: I swear.

TAMARA: By our shared blood?

ALISTAIR: By our shared blood...

TAMARA *turns to face JO who is watching.*

TAMARA: Then...after he swore that oath...that's when I told him.

ALISTAIR *continues the ritual as the lights fade on the bedroom.*

TAMARA *returns to:*

JO's Office

JO *finishes some notes.*

She looks at TAMARA.

JO: So, Alistair's known about the rape for two years?

TAMARA: Yes.

JO: Did you tell him what you told me?

TAMARA: Not all the details, no.

JO: How was he, after you told him?

TAMARA: What do you mean?

JO: Well...did he seem upset?

TAMARA: Um. He went very quiet. He sort of stared a lot.

JO: But he still agreed to keep it a secret?

TAMARA: Oh, definitely. He had to.

He swore on our blood.

Pause.

JO: And what did you agree to do for him?

TAMARA: Stop cutting.

JO: Did you?

TAMARA: Yes. Totally.

JO: That can't have been easy.

TAMARA: No, it was fine, actually.

I was doing really fine until...

JO: Yes?

TAMARA: I mean...

JO: What, Tamara?

TAMARA: It was the only way I could, you know...get some release.

JO: Release?

TAMARA: Free what was going on in my head.

I was trying to cope but there was all this pressure...school and exams and –

JO: You started cutting again?

TAMARA: Yes.

JO: When?

TAMARA: Just after Dad told us about the wedding.

JO: Was this because you were going to see Adam?

TAMARA: There was no choice. He was going to be Best Man.

JO: Yes. That must have been very confusing for you.

TAMARA: It felt like this horrible trap.

JO: I can understand that.

Did Alistair know you were cutting again?

TAMARA: No. Not at first, but then...

JO: What?

TAMARA: I mean I didn't even know he was...I turned and he was just standing there
– watching.

JO: He saw you cutting?

TAMARA: No. Not that.

I s'pose I'd gone really mad and it – there was, there was a lot of – I mean I didn't
plan there to be, but – I didn't have time to clean it all up, and he, he saw...

JO: What did he see?

TAMARA: Some blood.

JO: On your arms?

TAMARA: No – the wall.

JO: The wall?

TAMARA: Of my room. I'd written some words.

JO: In your own blood?

TAMARA: Yes.

Pause.

JO: What did you write, Tamara?

TAMARA: I just wrote... 'Help. Help me'.

Pause.

I didn't mean to. It just came out of me –

JO: You were in pain.

TAMARA: Yes.

JO: You wanted the pain to stop.

TAMARA: Yes.

JO: But it wouldn't go away.

TAMARA: That's right.

How do you know?

Did Alistair tell you?

JO: No.

TAMARA: He must have done.

JO: Believe me, he didn't.

Pause.

TAMARA: I wish it had never happened.

JO: What did Alistair say when he saw those words?

TAMARA: Nothing. I mean I thought he'd be angry but he just looked at me
and...went downstairs.

JO: Did he mention it later?

TAMARA: No. It was like it never happened.

JO: Sorry...when, exactly, was this?

TAMARA: The day before the wedding.

Pause.

JO *makes some detailed notes.*

It's my fault he killed Adam, isn't it?

JO: Why do you say that?

TAMARA: I shouldn't have let him find out – about the cutting – about Adam, about anything.

JO: No, it's not –

TAMARA: But I never thought he'd do something like that.

JO: It's not your fault.

TAMARA: I shouldn't have told him. I should've made something up.

JO: That wasn't the problem.

TAMARA: Then what was?

JO: Making him keep it a secret.

Pause.

TAMARA: So it *is* all my fault.

JO: Listen to me.

TAMARA: Everything's my fault, I know it is. I know it.

I'm just like my Mum – a complete waste of space.

JO: Tamara, don't do this to yourself. Please.

TAMARA: Now it's too late.

JO: No, it's not.

TAMARA: It *is*.

JO: Listen. Adam started this, this secrecy game – not you.

But you can end it.

TAMARA: How?

JO: Let Alistair talk.

Pause.

TAMARA: You mean...about what I've told you?

JO: Yes.

He's trying to stay loyal to you, but Tamara, he's got to be free to talk.

He needs to know he can break the Pact.

Pause.

TAMARA: Won't it just make things worse?

JO: No, I think it'll make his defence a lot stronger.

We need him to talk about what was going on in his head – how he was coping – the wedding – seeing Adam.

All the triggers.

And we need this to back him up.

She holds up the statement.

What do you say Tamara?

TAMARA *stares at the document.*

Can I print off another copy?

Blackout.

The same

Early September. Late afternoon.

JO *is tidying up her desk: she gathers the files and puts them in a neat pile.*

She rearranges the tired-looking artificial flowers in the vase.

She retrieves her letter.

JO: So, as I wrote earlier, I've been on this case.

It's pressed all my buttons, but we got there in the end.

When that girl stood up in Court last week and gave her testimony, it felt like we'd won a small victory.

For all those lost voices, for those who can never tell, for those silenced by the wall of denial – we tore that wall down.

For just one day.

The desk-phone buzzes.

JO answers.

Yes?

Who?

No, I wasn't.

No, no, it's not a problem. Send her in.

TAMARA enters with an extravagant bunch of red and orange gladioli.

TAMARA: Hi, Miss Abbot.

JO: Jo.

TAMARA: Yeah, I mean...Jo.

JO: This is a surprise.

TAMARA: It's just a quickie – Mum's got a taxi outside.

I wanted to give you these.

She thrusts the flowers at JO.

JO: Oh, they're...they're lovely.

Such – such vivid colours.

TAMARA: I thought they might, you know, liven the place up a bit.

JO looks at the tired flowers on her desk.

JO: Hmm. Yes. That's, er, very –

TAMARA: I chose them 'specially.

JO *bins the old flowers.*

'Cos of the name.

JO: Name?

JO *arranges the gladioli in the vase.*

TAMARA: Gladioli. It's from the Latin. Means sword.

It's like it symbolises strength.

JO: Ri-ight.

TAMARA: It reminded me of you.

JO *looks at TAMARA.*

Pause.

Anyway, I'd better go.

TAMARA *starts to leave.*

JO: Er...wait...erm... how's Alistair?

TAMARA: Oh, Al's...yeah...he's cool.

I mean it's great – having him home for a few weeks.

JO: The Judge doesn't usually grant bail at this stage so...hopefully...it's a good sign.

TAMARA: Yeah, that's what the barrister said.

Pause.

Are you going to be there?

At the Sentencing?

JO: Oh, yes. Yes of course.

TAMARA: What do you think he'll get?

JO: Well, that's up to the Judge of course...but the Court accepted his plea, so hopefully...not too long.

Pause.

TAMARA: Thank you, Jo.

JO: Well, I didn't really do –

TAMARA: For believing me.

It meant a lot.

JO *nods, unable to find the words.*

They stand for a moment in silence.

Gotta go.

'Bye.

TAMARA *goes, quickly.*

JO: Yes.

JO *watches her leave.*

'Bye.

Pause.

JO *crosses to her desk.*

She takes out a small bowl from a drawer and picks up her letter.

JO: So. Here we are.

Rather a strange place to be, really.

No more visits to the therapist – writing all those letters, getting in touch with all that rage, wanting revenge for what you did to me, you bastard.

Yes, Dad, you're still a bastard.

But here's the thing...

I went back there – the other day. Back to my old room.

I could still see it...the psychedelic swirl of seventies décor, Donny Osmond posters, single bed – all still there.

Only one thing was missing. You. The memory of you.

Coming into my room – in the middle of the night, the afternoon, whenever.

Smelling of brylcreem and onions, your face hot and sweaty, your body like a huge blancmange – crouching over me, spread-eagling me on the bed.

Just because you could.

But this time it was different. You weren't there.

Instead, I saw the window was slightly open and a breeze made the curtains flutter.

And streaming through – flooding all the walls, the bed, the carpet – was this dazzling white light.

Utterly brilliant, really.

It was as if the sun was...washing the room – clean.

JO *takes out a lighter from her jacket pocket.*

That's when I knew. It's come to an end.

She ignites a corner of the letter.

No more secrets.

As the letter burns, she lets it drop into the bowl.

Your power over me...has gone.

JO *smiles as the flame flickers in the fading light.*

Darkness.

The End.

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