

# ANTHONY NEILSON

**PLAYS: 3**

RELOCATED • GET SANTA! • NARRATIVE

UNREACHABLE • THE PRUDES



Introduced by the author



# Anthony Neilson

## Plays: 3

**Relocated; Get Santa!; Narrative;  
Unreachable; The Prudes**

*Relocated:* A sinister mystery. 'Not an experience for the faint-hearted . . . morally challenging and riveting . . . leaves an indelible stain on the memory.' (*The Times*)

*Get Santa!:* It's Christmas Eve but Holly isn't happy. All she's ever wanted from Santa is to meet her real dad for the first time. And every time, Santa's failed to deliver, bringing lots of useless presents instead. Well, Holly's had enough. This year she has a plan. 'A hilariously inventive and unconventional extravaganza. A hoot . . . vivid, stylish . . . witty. Warmly recommended.' (*Independent*)

*Narrative:* Devised throughout rehearsal with a seven-strong cast it's a play about storytelling and the narratives of our everyday lives. 'A drama for an age of stories and friendships stored in the cloud . . . It's a sharply written, coolly constructed and laudably ambitious piece of theatre.' (*Exeunt*)

*Unreachable:* 'Intoxicatingly chaotic comedy' (*Time Out*) following a film director on an obsessive quest to capture the perfect light.

*The Prudes:* A comedy about relationships in the current sexual climate, and a vicious satire on the male response to it. 'It's a damning, riotous and occasionally raw glimpse of the upheaving dynamics of men and women today.' (*WhatsOnStage*)

**Anthony Neilson** (b. 1967, Edinburgh) is a playwright and director. His breakthrough play *Normal: The Dusseldorf Ripper* was produced at the Edinburgh Theatre Festival in 1991. Other plays include *The Censor* (1997), *Stitching* (2002), *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (2004), *Realism* (2006), *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness* (2009) and an adaptation of Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* (2018).



**Anthony Neilson**

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**Relocated**

**Get Santa!**

**Narrative**

**Unreachable**

**The Prudes**

*With an introduction by the author*

*methuen* | drama

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*This volume of plays is dedicated to my father,  
Sandy Neilson, who read to me as a child.  
His love of stories, and of the theatre, lives on in me.*



# Contents

Introduction ix

*Relocated* 1

*Get Santa!* 67

*Narrative* 163

*Unreachable* 253

*The Prudes* 359



## Introduction

As I write this, in 2018, I feel there are two great challenges ahead for all storytellers.

The first is a matter of responsibility. In this fractured and divisive time, I believe it is vital that we position ourselves as guardians of empathy. Journalists can document lives but we have the unique ability to allow audiences to experience those lives from an emotional perspective. If we can do this, truthfully and without judgement, there seems to me no better antidote to the increasingly cruel and dangerous culture of tribalism now sweeping the globe.

There is currently a huge demand for escapism. There's nothing wrong with that, per se – we all need to forget reality sometimes – but that cannot be the bulk of our diet. I'm not suggesting that we should all be writing grittily realistic stories about the refugee experience; but I do believe we have a duty to represent those whose stories are so seldom told: the weak, the sick, the dispossessed. Sport is the celebration of success: art is the celebration of frailty. We must address that frailty with clear eyes and compassion; even if the form of that frailty repels us morally.

If we shirk that responsibility – if we abandon the voiceless – they will be forced to turn elsewhere: to unscrupulous players who will exploit their fears to nefarious ends. Artists are not the solution to the problem; but we are not bystanders either. It is not good enough, in days like these, to hide behind the fig-leaf of false humility. We have a duty to truth and we must honour it.

Our second challenge is more esoteric but in some ways more challenging: we need to find a new way to tell stories.

The shape of life has changed dramatically in recent decades but the shape, or structure, of stories has not. The 'hermetically sealed' narrative – one that begins and ends neatly – no longer corresponds to our increasingly episodic

lives; and I suspect this may partly explain the cultural shift towards serialized cinema and television.

In the twenty-first century, we can expect to have multiple careers and several significant relationships in our ever-longer lives. Our partners may be of various sexes and we may have children with more than one of them, achieved by various means. The post-war models of narrative structure no longer make sense. Even death is not as final as it was: generations of the future will live on in a digital afterlife so detailed that only those closest to them will feel their loss in any real sense. Even the concept of 'end' is in flux.

We are also undergoing, as a species, a dizzyingly rapid cognitive evolution. Audiences are now so sophisticated that they can switch back and forwards between layers of reality and artifice without dropping a narrative stitch. They can switch tonally from the banal to the profound, from the deeply silly to the deeply serious, with the same ease they skip between tabs on a browser. Even five-year-old children can process meta-narrative.

The ubiquity of the internet – itself modelled on our neurology – is rewiring our brains by the day. A browsing session has no structure; instead, it operates as our brains do – forging new connections and pathways with every click. I recently adapted *Alice in Wonderland* for the stage and was amazed by how modern its free-associative structure feels, even if its content hasn't dated so well. It left me wondering if perhaps Carroll is a better template for future narratives than Shakespeare will ever be.

I suggest then, for discussion at least, that the stories of the future will have no discernible beginning or end, except in their duration; that they will be more collage than story; that they will have no need for tonal or structural coherence; that they will employ multiple forms and techniques; and that plays – whilst they cannot logistically embrace the episodic – are well-placed to push the envelope of story if they embrace their 'liveness'. The proverbial 'well-made play' of

the future might look more like cabaret or circus than a Rattigan or a Miller.

My play *Narrative*, included in this volume, was my first baby-step towards testing these ideas. Though it struck some critics as an inconsequential piece, it is in some ways the play I am most proud of, in that – despite its deeply odd structure – the general audience seemed to have no difficulty assimilating it.

I stress that because the challenge is not to be ‘experimental’ for the sake of it: we already have ‘anti-narratives’. The challenge is to find a new structure that is easily accessible to all – a new *mainstream*, if you will – and it was both gratifying and liberating to feel that audiences might be ready for that. To some extent, *Unreachable* continued in that vein, albeit in a way that will be less obvious on the page than in performance, where the actors really played with different levels of reality, breaking not only the fourth wall but also the fifth and sixth occasionally. Even I was slightly concerned we would run the risk of losing the audience, but no; they were with us all the way and generally delighted to be let in. The important thing, in retrospect, is that all of the ad-libs and asides were real and spontaneous and truthful on some level. Audiences can smell it when they’re not. It’s well-known that I suggested the greatest theatrical sin was boring an audience; but lying to them is a close second.

All the plays in this volume are, to some extent, adventures in form: *Get Santa!* was my first play written specifically for children, particularly for those in dysfunctional families; *Relocated* uses the horror genre to convey the emotional state of long-term trauma (the ‘condition of horror’); *The Prudes* is a two-hander about impotence, both sexual and political, in which the audience is a third character. To paraphrase The Dude, that’s the best I can do to really tie this collection together. My analyst could probably do a better job but her hourly rate is considerably higher.

In closing, I should also mention that every one of these five plays was commissioned and produced, sight unseen, by the Royal Court Theatre in London. It is one of the very few theatres that will allow me to work as I prefer, creating the play from scratch in rehearsals, and it is no understatement to say that I would not exist as the artist I am without their patronage. My deepest thanks go to Dominic Cooke and Vicky Featherstone, the artistic directors of the Court during this period, and to all the staff that worked on and supported these shows.

As ever, I must also thank all the actors and design teams credited, without whom these plays would be entirely different and very possibly much worse. Many of the best ideas in here are theirs but I have deliberately forgotten which ones they were.

Finally, I should also thank my family – my mother, Beth; my dear brother Ranald; my nephew Nicholas – and my partner, Lucy, all of whom bear the brunt of my strange working methods and get their personal lives plundered as a reward; my agent, Julia Tyrell, and everyone at Methuen Drama; and lastly, all of you out there that pay to see and read and occasionally perform these plays. Without you, I could never afford the therapy.

*Anthony Neilson, 2018*

**Relocated**



*Relocated* was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 6 June 2008 with the following cast and creative team:

<b>Connie</b>	Frances Grey
<b>John/Schinkel</b>	Phil McKee
<b>Man/Liam</b>	Stuart McQuarrie
<b>Molly</b>	Katie Novak
<b>Marjorie</b>	Jan Pearson
<b>Kerry</b>	Nicola Walker

*Director* Anthony Neilson

*Designer* Miriam Buether

*Lighting Designer* Chahine Yavroyan

*Sound Designer* Nick Powell

## **Characters**

**Marjorie**

**Man**

**Kerry**

**John**

**Liam**

**Connie**

**Schinkel**

**Molly**

## Notes

As ever, what follows is a transcript of the show as performed. Though details of the production are included, they are only intended to provide an impression of the atmosphere created for a play in which sound, lighting and set design are as important as the text.

In the set design, our aim was to create as complete a black-out as possible in the auditorium. To this end, the playing area was painted black and black carpet was laid. The audience was separated from the stage by a gauze screen which imposed strict parameters on the lighting used. Single sources were used where possible.

The gauze had the further effect of 'sealing' the audience into a box. The gauze screen would become opaque during scene changes.

The ceiling was lowered, at a skewed angle, for the full length of the auditorium to achieve a feeling of claustrophobia. The audience 'box' was set at an angle to the stage so as to create further disorientation.

Speakers were placed in the audience enclosure and at the far end of the stage. No speakers were deployed at the front of the stage or at mid-distance. Speakers were also placed directly above the audience, behind the ceiling piece.

*Relocated* is, by design, one of my more opaque plays. To gain a more detailed understanding of the piece, research the Soham murders of 2002, with particular emphasis on Maxine Carr's involvement, and the 2008 case of Josef Fritzl, which was just breaking as the play was being written.

*Relocated* is a work of fiction and metaphor and not based specifically on these crimes; but they informed the premise.



*As the audience enters the auditorium, the radio news of the day is playing. There is a strong smell of disinfectant. **Marjorie** is vacuuming, oblivious to the audience filing in.*

*When the audience is seated, she rubs her arm, puzzled by the feeling. Suddenly, she clutches her chest and falls to her knees, then pitches forward face-down onto the floor. All sound ceases.*

*The lights fade to black and the play begins.*

## **Prologue**

*In the thick darkness, the audience hear the names repeatedly, as if whispered in their ears:*

Kerry. Marjorie. Connie.

*The sound collage fades. And then, suddenly, there is a deafening, ugly buzz. The buzz travels from the audience area to the stage where the source is revealed as an intercom system.*

*In one fluid movement, as if her collapse had not occurred, **Marjorie** gets to her feet, and walks to the intercom system.*

**Marjorie** Yes?

*Pause.*

**Intercom** Miss Charles?

**Marjorie** Yes?

*Pause.*

**Intercom** Could you come downstairs, please?

**Marjorie** Why?

*Pause.*

**Intercom** It's time to move on.

*Pause. She looks at the vacuum cleaner, then at her watch. She brings the watch up to her ear, listens to it. It seems to have broken. She presses the intercom again.*

**Marjorie** Will I need my coat?

*But she can only hear whispering.*

*Pause. She walks over to the vacuum cleaner, looks down at it. Behind a door, a dog whimpers and scrapes to be let in.*

Mummy will be back for you. Be a good girl.

*She remains still. The lights fade to pitch black. The sound of rain.*

### Scene One

**Marjorie** Hello?

*Smoke curls out of the darkness. A man appears, holding an umbrella in one hand, a cigarette in the other.*

What's going on?

*The man exhales a plume of smoke.*

It's past midnight.

**Man** Were you doing something?

**Marjorie** No, I was just . . . cleaning.

*In retrospect, this puzzles her. Pause.*

**Man** What's wrong?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** I don't think I left the dog any water.

**Man** The German Shepherd?

*She nods.*

What's she called these days?

**Marjorie** Still Priscilla.

**Man** Nice dogs. Obedient. Blindly faithful.

**Marjorie** Yes, she's good as gold.

*Pause.*

She gets anxious when I leave her.

**Man** Isn't your boyfriend with her?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** No, he's at home.

*Pause.*

**Man** How's all that going for you?

**Marjorie** It's fine; it's not . . . serious.

*Pause.*

I know you don't approve. But I get lonely.

**Man** Does it help?

**Marjorie** Sometimes.

*Pause.*

Is it over then?

**Man** Oh yes.

*She drops her head.*

**Marjorie** What's happened?

**Man** This.

*He takes an A4 envelope from his pocket.*

**Marjorie** What's that?

**Man** Photographs.

**Marjorie** Of what?

**Man** Of you.

**Marjorie** Of me? Who took them?

**Man** Your boyfriend. I hope.

**Marjorie** I don't understand . . .

**Man** They're what we in the trade call dirty. Dirty photographs.

**Marjorie** Oh no . . .

*She smirks involuntarily. Her hand covers her mouth.*

**Man** I'm glad you find it funny.

**Marjorie** I'm embarrassed, aren't I?

*Pause.*

Where did you get them? Did you steal them from my house?

*Pause.*

Look – I know. It was just a silly thing. We were drunk. He wanted some photographs.

**Man** How romantic.

**Marjorie** You wouldn't understand.

**Man** Try me.

**Marjorie** It didn't feel dirty. It was nice – to be wanted. To be fancied. I felt . . . normal.

**Man** Normal.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** You've got no right to be searching my house.

**Man** We didn't.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Then where . . .?

**Man** We found them. On a charming little site called fuckmywife.com

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** What?

**Man** He posted them. On the internet.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Oh no . . .

**Man** Did you agree to that?

**Marjorie** No, of course not!

*Pause.*

He said he'd keep them private! He swore he would!

**Man** Sorry – what's your name again?

**Marjorie** My – ?

**Man** Simple question, isn't it?

**Marjorie** You know my name.

**Man** Remind me.

*Pause.*

What's your fucking name?!

**Marjorie** Marj – Marjorie.

**Man** Marj-Marjorie?

**Marjorie** Marjorie.

**Man** Marjorie what?

*Pause.*

What are you smirking at?

**Marjorie** You're scaring me!

**Man** What's your fucking name?!

**Marjorie** Marjorie Charles! My name is Marjorie Charles!

**Man** And who can you *trust*, Marjorie Charles?!

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** You.

**Man** Me. And who else?

**Marjorie** No one.

**Man** *Who else?!*

**Marjorie** Nobody, no one! Just you. Only you.

*Long pause.*

**Man** Who's the other man? We need to know.

**Marjorie** The other man?

**Man** Your boyfriend took the photographs –

**Marjorie** Yes . . . ?

**Man** So who's the other man?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** I don't know what you're talking about – what man?

**Man** The *man* with his *dick* inside you! The *man* you are fucking. Is it coming *back* to you now?

**Marjorie** Please, just stop it – there was me and there was Ben, there was no one else there –

**Man** Don't believe my lying eyes?

**Marjorie** You've made a mistake.

*She takes the envelope, slides out the photographs. Pause. What she sees stuns her.*

This is impossible.

*Pause.*

No. These are not the photographs. That is not Ben's house – I don't know this man – that's not me.

**Man** The resemblance is remarkable, wouldn't you say?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Well, then, they're fake. These have been made by someone. They've cut my head out and stuck it on. They can do that; you know fine well they can.

**Man** They've been authenticated. They're not fakes.

**Marjorie** You're wrong.

*She pushes the photographs back to him.*

**Marjorie** Test them again.

*Pause.*

**Man** Look – what's done is done –

**Marjorie** No! It's not. I would not do these things – with anyone – and I swear to you – I have never seen or met the man in these photographs *ever*. You need to test them again.

*Pause.*

That *thing* in the photographs is not me, I swear. On my mother's life. I swear.

*Pause.*

**Man** Pack your things.

*He exits.*

**Marjorie** Where am I going? Where are you going to send me?

*Snap to black. The audience is 'sealed' into their box. The sound of the rain intensifies.*

## **Scene Two**

*Darkness.*

**Marjorie** (*V/O*) I don't know this place. The shadows fall in different ways. Make different shapes. I don't know where the switches are.

## 14 Relocated

*A candle lights, illuminating **Marjorie**, now in a dressing gown. Faintly, we hear the sound of children playing in a playground. She looks at her watch.*

*A faint illumination of the window pane, as if her eyes have adjusted to the darkness. The sound of the children playing builds.*

*Slowly, she walks to the window and looks out, the moonlight on her face. She inhales sharply.*

*Pause.*

*She tries to open the window but to no avail.*

**Marjorie** What are you doing? It's four in the morning!

*She taps at the window. The sound continues.*

Hello, can you hear me?! What are you doing in school?!

*The sound of the children playing stops.*

*Pause. Now she looks scared – she backs away from the window.*

*Slowly, she turns to look at the audience.*

*She walks towards them, shaking with fear. She walks right up to the gauze, stares at them.*

*Then she screams, a nerve-shredding scream, terrifying, dragged up from the depths of her soul.*

### Scene Three

**Kerry** Hello?

*The lights change.*

**Marjorie** Hello?

**Kerry** Is it all right to come in? I just wanted to say hello.

**Kerry** *is a frightfully posh-sounding woman. She carries a black plastic bag and a small orange cake box. Her lipstick is too red.*

**Marjorie** Hello?

**Kerry** Hello! I couldn't help noticing you'd moved in. I'm from downstairs. My name's Kerry.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** I'm – Marjorie.

**Kerry** Oops – you don't seem too sure?

**Marjorie** No, I'm Marjorie.

**Kerry** Pleased to meet you. I brought you something.

*She gives Marjorie a box, tied with a ribbon.*

**Kerry** Just to say hello.

**Marjorie** Oh that's very nice of you, thank you. Come in.

**Kerry** It's just a piece of cake.

**Marjorie** Oh, lovely.

**Kerry** Just a sponge I'm afraid. They do a lovely Black Forest but they were all out of that.

**Marjorie** No, actually sponge is my favourite.

**Kerry** Oh that's lucky.

**Marjorie** Yes, it is, it's perfect.

**Kerry** How are you settling in?

**Marjorie** Oh, fine. Just unpacking, you know.

**Kerry** Have you got a lot of stuff?

**Marjorie** No, not really – I travel light.

**Kerry** Do you do a lot of travelling?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** No – well – I'm a classroom assistant so, you know – I go where the work takes me.

**Kerry** Oh I see. So where did you come from?

*Pause. The voice on the intercom (the Man's voice):*

**Intercom** Petersgate Infant School.

**Marjorie** Petersgate Infant School.

**Intercom** It's in Hampshire.

**Marjorie** It's in Hampshire.

**Intercom** You were there for eighteen months.

**Marjorie** I was there for a year and a bit.

**Kerry** Oh, I see – Well, you're handy enough, aren't you?

*She indicates the window.*

For the school.

**Marjorie** Oh – yes, I know – I won't be getting much exercise, will I?

**Kerry** You could just about do the job from here, couldn't you?

**Marjorie** Yes, I suppose – I could shout over the roll-call.

**Kerry** In your nightie!

**Marjorie** Yes, imagine!

*They laugh.*

**Kerry** The girl that lived here before was a teacher.

**Marjorie** Yes, so I'm told.

**Kerry** That was all very strange.

**Marjorie** What do you mean?

**Kerry** Didn't you hear?

**Marjorie** No?

**Kerry** Well, she just disappeared one day.

**Marjorie** Did she?

**Kerry** Upped and left, middle of term, without a by-your-leave.

**Marjorie** Goodness . . .

**Kerry** They even called in the police at one point; that's how worried they were. But then I think they got some letter from her, saying she was in, I don't know – Ibiza or Goa or somewhere, you know; wherever it is people go to 'find' themselves.

**Marjorie** Oh, well . . .

**Kerry** Course, as I said at the time, that letter could have come from anyone. But nobody seemed much bothered about that.

**Marjorie** Oh . . . well . . .

**Kerry** I know. I'm such an armchair detective. Actually, that's one of the reasons I'm here; to give you this.

*She passes the carrier bag to Marjorie.*

**Marjorie** What's this?

**Kerry** It's just some stuff she left at my house. She'd forgotten her keys one day and I meant to bring them back but then she . . .

**Marjorie** *lifts out a rolled-up piece of paper.*

**Kerry** I don't really know what's there. A notebook, I think. Some underwear. Some you-know-whats.

**Marjorie** *looks at her. Kerry mouths 'tampons'.*

**Marjorie** Oh . . .

**Kerry** And this is a painting, look.

*She takes the paper and unfurls it.*

I think it's by one of the children at the school. I thought maybe you could take it back.

*The painting, obviously by a child, shows children playing in a playground.*

**Marjorie's** hand goes to her mouth.

**Kerry** It's quite sweet, isn't it?

*Pause.*

Marjorie?

**Marjorie** Oh – sorry.

**Kerry** What's wrong?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Nothing, it's just – it reminds me of a dream I had.

**Kerry** What dream?

**Marjorie** Oh really, it was nothing.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** Did this dream involve . . . children?

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Yes.

**Kerry** In a playground?

**Marjorie** Yes. How did you know that?

**Kerry** Well – it's a picture of children in a playground.

**Marjorie** Oh – yes.

**Kerry** I told you I was a detective!

**Marjorie** Yes, you did.

**Kerry** So what were they doing, these children?

**Marjorie** Oh really . . . I don't want to bore you.

**Kerry** You wouldn't be boring me at all. I'm very good on dreams.

**Marjorie** Well . . . they were all in the playground, running around and laughing.

*She retraces her steps, as in Scene Two.*

**Kerry** Like they do.

**Marjorie** Yes, except it was the middle of the night. And they looked . . . pale. Their hands and faces were . . . chalk white, like they'd never seen a day of sun in their lives.

So I tried to shout over to them, you know – find out what was going on – and then they just stopped . . .

**Kerry** Stopped?

**Marjorie** Yes. Stopped running, stopped shouting. And then slowly . . . they all turned to look at me. All these little white faces, just . . . staring at me.

*Pause.*

That's all I remember.

**Kerry** Goodness. How marvellously creepy. And then I give you this painting?

**Marjorie** I'm sure it's just coincidence. I mean, I work in a school and I've got a school across the road. What else am I going to dream about?

**Kerry** Well, exactly. Except for one thing – and I always thought this was a bit odd, look –

*She holds up the painting again and points to a crescent shape.*

It's the moon!

*Pause.*

*The sound of the dog scraping and whining outside the door.*

**Marjorie** Oh that's the dog. It's all right, Priscilla – Mummy'll take you out soon.

**Kerry** *is staring intensely at her. Pause.*

**Marjorie** Well – I'll see all that stuff gets to its . . . respective owners.

**Kerry** Thank you so much.

*The dog.*

**Marjorie** I should take her out, I think.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** You know, I hope you don't mind me saying; but there's something very familiar about you.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** Really?

**Kerry** I'm sure I recognise you from somewhere, or that we've met or something.

*Slowly, Marjorie's face darkens to invisibility.*

**Marjorie** I don't think so . . .

**Kerry** No, I'm not sure.

**Marjorie** I think I've just got one of those faces. Nondescript, I suppose.

*Pause.*

Anyway . . . I really should take the dog out.

**Kerry** Oh, try some of the cake first!

**Marjorie** Oh I will, I'm looking forward to it; but I better take her out first, the poor thing's –

**Kerry** Oh go on. It's from the most wonderful little cake stall, down at the market. That's me, you see – if I find something I like, I have to convert everyone. It's a good job I'm not religious.

*Pause.*

Go on. Just a mouthful.

*Pause.*

**Marjorie** All right . . .

*She opens the box, looks inside. Kerry is still staring at her.*

**Marjorie** Mmm, it does look lovely.

*She takes the cake out. Kerry obligingly takes the box.*

*Pause. Marjorie takes a bite, catching the crumbs with her hand. Whilst she does so, Kerry – still fixedly staring at her – softly sings:*

**Kerry**

Hush, little baby, don't say a word,  
Mummy's going to buy you a mockingbird.

**Marjorie** *nods, humouring her.*

**Kerry**

And if that mockingbird don't sing  
Mummy's going to buy you a diamond ring.

*The lights begin to fade.*

And if that diamond turns to brass,

*Dark now, and Marjorie joins in.*

**Both**

Mummy's going to buy you a looking glass.  
And if that looking glass gets broke,  
Mummy's going to buy you a billy goat.  
And if that billy goat won't pull,

*And now just Marjorie:*

**Marjorie**

Mummy's going to buy you a cart and bull.  
And if that cart and bull fall down,  
You'll still be the sweetest little baby in town.

*Now fully lit again, it is Kerry who holds the cake. Pause.*

*When Kerry speaks, she is no longer posh-sounding, but softly accented, like Marjorie.*

**Kerry** You're right, it's delicious. Very moist.

**Marjorie** It is, isn't it?

**Kerry** I should really take the dog out now.

**Marjorie** Yes, I've got to be going too. But listen – it was lovely to meet you. And remember, I'm downstairs if you need me. Anything at all, I'll always be in. Just ask for Marjorie.

**Kerry** Thank you, I will. That's very kind.

**Marjorie** Oh – just one more thing – the dog: you should call her Sasha from now on.

**Kerry** Why?

**Marjorie** You know why: it's time to move on.

*Pause. Kerry nods. Marjorie hugs her, then disappears into the dark.*

*Kerry crams the rest of the cake into her mouth, crumbs spilling everywhere. She stares at the painting.*

#### Scene Four

*At the school:*

**John** Hey . . . no eating in class.

**Kerry** *turns to him.*

**John** I don't remember giving you detention, young lady. What was the name again?

*She blushes at his patter.*

**Kerry** Balfour. Kerry Balfour. I'm the new classroom assistant.

**John** Yes, I've seen you around.

*He extends his hand.*

I'm John Hickleson, the very old art teacher.

*She shakes his hand.*

You don't want to model for the life class, do you?

**Kerry** Oh – is there a life class on?

**John** No. But I'm game if you are.

*She shakes her head, laughing. John's a joker – the kind of man who has a revolving bow tie in a bottom drawer somewhere.*

You walked into that one.

**Kerry** I did.

**John** Right – enough of that, Hickleson! How can I assist the assistant?

**Kerry** Oh – well . . . it's about this –

*She gives him the rolled-up painting.*

**John** Ah – my diploma's come through at last!

**Kerry** No, I believe it's by a girl here . . .

**John** Really?

*He unfurls it.*

**Kerry** I can't make out the name. I think it's Molly someone. Molly Cams?

*He stares at the painting, his mood changing. Pause.*

**John** Cairns.

**Kerry** Do you know her?

*Pause.*

**John** Where did you get this?

**Kerry** Um, it was . . . in the flat that I moved into.

**John** Are you across the street?

**Kerry** Yes.

*Pause.*

**John** Thank you.

**Kerry** I thought she should have it back.

*He nods.*

**Kerry** I think it's quite good actually. What year is she in?

**John** She would be in . . . Year Five now.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** Year Five?

*Pause.*

**John** I'm afraid . . . that Molly Cairns died; two years ago.

**Kerry** Oh my God.

*He nods.*

I'm so sorry.

**John** Yes, it was very sad. She was a sweet little girl.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** What happened?

*Pause.*

I'm sorry – that's none of my business.

**John** No, it's all right. She was murdered, as it happens.

*She smirks.*

Is that amusing to you?

**Kerry** No, please – not at all – I've got this weird thing where I look like I'm smirking when I get upset, I can't help it. Please don't think that. It's terrible – it's a terrible thing.

*Pause.*

Do they know who . . . ?

**John** (*shakes head*) A couple of people were questioned but no one was charged. I don't think there was enough evidence. They didn't find the body.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** But if they didn't find the body . . . ?

**John** They found some . . . of the body.

**Kerry** Oh my God. That's awful.

**John** Yes, it is.

*Pause.*

But look – thanks for this. I might run it by the police . . . see if it's of any interest.

*Pause.*

**Kerry** Do you have other paintings by her?

**John** A few, yes. Why?

**Kerry** I don't suppose I could see them . . . could I?

**John** Um . . .

*Pause.*

I'm actually not that comfortable with that. Do you mind?

**Kerry** No, not at all –

**John** I know it's silly, it's just . . . people can be a bit ghoulish about these things.

**Kerry** I understand, totally . . .

**John** I'm sure not you, but . . . we had a lot of reporters snooping around.

*She nods.*

Maybe when I know you a little better . . .

**Kerry** I really understand, believe me. I was just . . . interested.

*Pause.*

**John** Well, that's not got us off to a very good start, has it?

**Kerry** No, listen – you're right. I could be anybody.

**John** It's the small-town mentality. It creeps up on you. Don't stay here too long, that's my advice.

**Kerry** Oh – speaking of advice, I don't suppose you know of a good car mechanic, do you?

**John** A what?

**Kerry** A car mechanic.

*Pause.*

**John** What's that?

*Pause.*

**Kerry** A car mechanic?

*Pause.*

**John** I'm sorry, I don't know what you're saying . . .

**Kerry** A car mechanic – someone who fixes cars.

**John** Oh – a *car* mechanic?!

**Kerry** Yes.

**John** Sorry – I thought you'd got all New Age on me. A car mechanic – well, there's a garage I use that's reasonable.

**Kerry** You don't have a number for it, do you?

**John** Uh well . . . to be honest . . . I'm not that comfortable with that either.

**Kerry** Oh. Ok . . .

**John** I'm pulling your leg!

*He laughs. She joins in with the joke.*

It's written on my manual. Walk me to my car and I'll get it.

*They walk into the darkness.*

*The audience is sealed in again. Above them, they can hear this, muffled (it is not important that they can make out the words):*

**John** So do you know your way around yet?

**Kerry** Not really. I went down to the market on Saturday.

**John** Yeah, that's nice; it gets a bit samey though. There's a farmers' market every month. That's a bit better. Do you cook?

**Kerry** Not much. I'm a bit dependent on ready meals, I'm afraid.

**John** Oh that's not good. You need some home cooking once in a while.

**Kerry** Why, do you cook?

**John** Why do I cook? Good question.

**Kerry** You know what I mean.

**John** I do cook. I try. I'm not Heston Blumenthal but I'm not rock-bottom. I'll cook for you one day and you can give me your opinion. Are you a veggie?

**Kerry** Not full-blown but – chicken mostly.

**John** Chicken is good. Chicken is the prawn of the land. Did you know that?

## Scene Five

*A smoke alarm sounds, horribly shrill.*

**Liam** enters, wearing a towelling robe. He is wet from the shower and steaming slightly. He carries a sodden newspaper and leaves wet footprints as he walks.

*He reaches up to the smoke alarm and turns it off.*

*He sits down at the table – the tablecloth is a deep red colour – and attempts to open his soaked newspaper.*

**Kerry** enters, eating a stick of celery.

*The paper is coming to pieces in his hands.*

**Liam** Fucking hell.

**Kerry** What happened?

**Liam** It fell in the bath.

*Pause.*

*Suddenly, **Liam**'s face changes (achieved using ultraviolet light) and **Kerry** screams, just as **Marjorie** had done, over and over – a horrifying sound.*

*Lights snap to black. The audience is sealed in again. They hear this, muffled, from directly above:*

**Schinkel** (V/O) Shut the fuck up, down there! No one can hear you! You make that noise again, I'll come down there and pull your fucking teeth out, do you understand? Now shut the fuck up!

## Scene Six

*Lights fade up. **Liam** is still sitting there, in his bathrobe. **Connie** enters, eating a stick of celery.*

*She notices the sodden paper.*

**Connie** Oh, what happened to the paper? I was in the middle of the crossword.

**Liam** You'd given up.

**Connie** I hadn't given up. I was stuck on an anagram. What happened to it?

**Liam** It fell in the bath.

**Connie** *It* fell in the bath? You mean you *dropped* it in the bath.

**Liam** If I meant that I'd have said it, wouldn't I?

**Connie** It just magically fell into the bath?

**Liam** No, maybe not. But I didn't 'drop' it into the bath. That sounds deliberate. I didn't think 'Oh, I'll just drop this paper into the bath'. It was an accident. It fell in.

**Connie** Right. So when something's an accident, *it* did it?

**Liam** Well, what would you say? If I said 'what happened to the paper?', you'd say –

**Connie** 'I dropped it in the bath.'

**Liam** *You* dropped it in the bath? Well, that was stupid of you.

**Connie** *You* dropped it in the bath.

**Liam** No, you said *you* dropped it in the bath.

**Connie** No, I said –

**Liam** You can't take it back.

**Connie** I was saying what / I would say –

**Liam** No, no, can't take it back. You dropped it in, you said so.

*Pause.*

**Connie** What age are you?

**Liam** What age are you?

**Connie** Well, I'm a good bit younger than you –

**Liam** And that's why –

**Connie** – but I still don't –

**Liam** And that's why you think –

**Connie** – but I still don't think –

**Liam** – that it's all right –

**Connie** – that that's the way to win –

**Liam** – that it's all right to cop off –

**Connie** – that's the way to win an –

**Liam** – to *cop off* with a teenager!

**Connie** – that that's the way to win an argument!

**Liam** With a fucking *teenager*, in a *fucking disco*!

**Connie** Fuck off, Liam.

*Pause.*

I had one anagram to finish.

**Liam** So what do you want? Do you want me to put my clothes on and miss the start of (*name of TV show*) so I can drive down to the village and get you a paper so you can finish one shitty anagram?

**Connie** What I'd like is an apology.

**Liam** For what?

**Connie** For ruining my crossword.

**Liam** Connie – you're on dangerous ground.

**Connie** Why? Because I want an apology?

*Pause.*

Oh, I see – because I've given up my right to any kind of an apology ever again, is that it?

*Pause.*

I was pissed, I snogged some kid. I know it hurt you but it's not the worst sin in the world, is it?

*Pause.*