

Kettling

by Felix Levinson



Cast

Max

Celine

Ash

Lilly

Shona

Simon

Tom

All early 20s except Shona who is later 20s.

(Probably:) Max, Celine, Si, Tom are white; Ash, Shona are black; Lilly is mixed race.

Note: the **human microphone** was used in the early days of the Occupy protest for addressing large crowds before they had audio equipment. It works by the speaker pausing in between sentences so the audience who are close to him/her can repeat it for the benefit of people who were too far away to hear it the first time. The speaker usually starts off by testing the set-up by shouting "mic-check". During the play the theatre audience will participate in the human microphone.



ACT ONE

A flat in Westbourne Park, W11 – currently a sparse squat. There is a small, square, bulbous old-style CRT tv on the floor with an old Playstation connected to it. A few chairs, a bookcase with some bruised tomes. Newspaper innards scattered about the place. A battered football.

The walls mostly bare. A dartboard with a picture of George Osborne pinned to it. Big poster-sized crib sheets stuck up for a Question Time drinking game, e.g. “Audience member blames ethnic minority – 1 shot”... “DD mistakes woman in audience for man – down drink”...

A chest at the front of the stage with a V for Vendetta Guy Fawkes mask lying on it.

Front door back right; kitchenette back left; window left. Door to bedrooms right; door to toilet back.

Max and Celine talking as they come in through the front door.

Celine appears agitated.

Max has is a kettle tied round his neck.

Max: You’ve never even heard of him?

Celine: No.

Max: You’re seriously saying you’ve never even *heard* of Gilles Deleuze? Or schizoanalysis?

Celine: No.

Max: Fuck me. I better start from the beginning then.

Celine: Actually, before you do –

Max: So schizoanalysis was born out of a reaction to *psycho*-analysis – at least, that’s the sort of *paradigm* for it –

Celine: Sorry, Max, which one’s the – ?

Max: Because with psychoanalysis you had this *system*, right, where – Are you listening?

Celine: Sorry, I really need the loo.

Max: One second. Because with psychoanalysis, you have –

Celine: Sorry, but I’ve been holding it in for like six hours now.

Max: Six hours?!

Celine: There weren’t any toilets, were there.

Max: Why didn’t you just go in the street like a normal person?

Celine: Sorry, Max, I’m literally bursting...

He points to the toilet door.

She runs to it.

Max: Hold on!

She turns, quite violently juggling now.

You don't need a shit do you?

Celine: No.

Max: You sure?

Celine: Just a pee. That okay?!

Max looks at her suspiciously... then nods for her to proceed.

She's in like a shot.

Max gets out his mobile.

Max: *(Without looking up from the screen.)* You can't shit in that toilet. It blocks it. Comes up in the sink. And sometimes in the bath in the flat below. We had a guy in but apparently it's a major job and he'd have to speak to the landlord – which might have led said landlord to wonder exactly how shit is being generated in the first place in a flat which is supposedly empty. *Cunts!* Six people arrested...

He makes a call on his mobile, glancing slyly at the toilet.

Alright, Ash? Look mate, I've just seen there's gonna be a viewing of the flat in about ten minutes, so you better let the others know to keep away for a bit, alright? Cheers, fella.

He goes to the fridge, takes out a carton of orange juice, drains it, puts the empty carton back.

He goes and checks his reflection in the window... styles his hair a bit, clicks his tongue approvingly.

The toilet flushes.

He dashes over to the V mask, puts it on, stands in wait by the toilet door.

Celine comes out.

Shrieks.

Celine: Bloody hell...! You look like a serial killer.

An eerie frozen silence, the mask staring at her...

Max...?

Max: *(Suddenly launches into his explanation again, speaking far too fast to be taken in.)* The psychoanalyst sees the world one way – I mean literally *one* way – through this *grid* – this one, rigid,

axiomatic *grid* – the *psychoanalytic* grid – and it's this grid that gives him authority – *total* authority – over his patient, over her desires – over all her subconscious desires. But on the other hand the *madman* – or *-woman* – *she* sees the world in *incorrect* ways, *unexpected* ways, *strange* ways, *new* ways, *different* ways, *changing* ways, *impossible* ways. Her desires are all wrong. That's what the analyst *means* by mad – I mean literally, that's the *very definition* of insanity. *The wrong desires*. And what Deleuze is saying is that it's basically just the same with capitalism. You see?

Celine: Um...

Max: (*Walking around her.*) Because here's the capitalist way of thinking, right – the capitalist *grid* – and a minority of people use it to exert their authority over everybody else, squeezing them through it like garlic through a garlic press. So the capitalists are just like the psychoanalysts, and most people out there they're just *patients*, having their desires dictated to them, passive to the point of paralysis. And us lot here – people like us, who see things *differently*, who desire things *differently* – what are we?

He stops, his masked face up close next to hers, as if he's actually asking her the question.

Cuck-oo, cuck-oooooooo.....

Celine: Can you take it off.

Max: I think they're cool.

Celine: They're creepy.

He takes off the mask.

Max: You seen it?

Celine: What?

Max: *V for Vendetta*.

Celine: No.

Max: Don't bother. It's shit. Well of course except for – Oh my God!

Celine: What?

Max: It's been bugging me all fucking – like *déjà vu*! Like a fucking sneeze it's not let me do for six hours, and it's just – *ah-fucking-choo*! I knew you fucking looked familiar!

Beat – Celine waiting.

(Like it's obvious.) Natalie Portman! Do you get that all the time? You must get that all the time.

Celine: No.

Max: You know who I mean, right? Natalie Portman.

Celine: I don't look anything like her.

Max: Yeah you do.

Celine: Trust me, I've asked people.

Max: Why would you ask people unless you thought so yourself? *A-ha! Natalie Portman...*
Nothing wrong with it. Opposite. Fucking compliment. The things I wouldn't do to Natalie Portman...

Pause... looking at her with intent.

You do chems?

Celine: Sorry?

Max: You do chems? Drugs?

Celine: No.

Max: Wanna do some meph?

Celine: No.

Max: MDMA?

Celine: I don't do drugs.

Max: Never? You've never done – You'll like it. Trust me. You can't not like it. It's like sugar. No-one doesn't like sugar. MDMA's like a sugar cube dissolving slowly in your brain...

Celine: I had a bad experience...

Max: My guy's just down the road. Literally, like five minutes. He's got good stuff. Good experiences guaranteed.

Celine: I'm alright. Honestly.

Max: Come on. Been a long day. Lil' bumpa Mandy, take the edge off. Ha! Did I just say that? Fuck. 'Swat my mum used to say. To my dad. Not about mephodrone, obviously. He wasn't like a tweaker or anything. Though he probably should be, might cheer the bastard up a bit. But he'd come in from work and you could see when someone'd rubbed him up the wrong way – which was fairly often because he's a cantankerous old cunt –and my mum'd go get him a massive glass of red wine and say, "There you go. Take the edge off". I used to think – that's gonna be me one day. Come home from work, glass of red wine, take the edge off. You sure? Just a little bump? I've probably got enough here now actually if you just wanna do a little one.

Celine: It's a Monday afternoon.

Max: And have you got anything better to do?

Silence.

Fuck it. I'll have a cigarette then. *Fun times...*

He starts rolling a cigarette, Celine taking in the flat.

Celine: How did you say you found this place?

Max: Si used to work at this estate agent's off behind Notting Hill Gate. Copied the key the day they sacked him. A little leaving present to himself.

Celine: Doesn't anyone ever come for a viewing?

Max: Diary's online. You hardly need GCHQ skills when their idea of internet security is to increase the last digit on their password by 1 every month. If someone's booked in we just pack everything into the trunk there and fuck off for a bit. Not a trace. Not even a shit stain on the toilet...

Celine: Quite small though, isn't it... for five of you?

Max: We get on. Famously. The Famous Five.

Celine: So what do you do when you – you know, you need to have...

Max: Sex?

Celine: A poo.

Max: Ah, well... there's a surprisingly good choice of venues in the local vicinity. Café Nero, pub just there on the corner there... There's a little Italian place 'bout five minutes up there – beautiful facilities. Smells of apples. Then sometimes we collect it for protest purposes... in which case you just shit in a Tesco bag.

Celine: Please tell me you're joking.

Max: Come on, who do you think we are? As if we'd shop at Tesco's. And as for sex – if you're interested – *logistically*, I mean... Well, usually I just tell the others there's going to be a viewing...

He fixes that intent look on her again – to which she averts her eyes – then goes back to finishing his rollie.

She takes the opportunity to look at him, a look with some of the vulnerability of longing but that isn't quite longing...

(Without looking up.) What?

Celine: I didn't say anything.

Max: *(Still not looking up.)* You know I saw you. Right at the beginning. Before we even left St Pauls. Looking at me. Just like that.

Celine: I wasn't looking at you.

Max: Just now or at the protest?

Celine: Both.

Max: Oh. Perhaps it was Natalie Portman.

Celine: You came up to *me*, remember.

Max: Only to see why some random yet pretty girl was following me.

Celine: Um, it was a protest. We were kind of all following each other.

Max: You sure you don't want just a tiny little bump? Shame for the day to be a *total* waste of time...

Celine: It wasn't a total waste.

Max snorts.

We made a point, didn't we.

Snorts again.

We were protesting against police tactics, right. And what do they do? They kettle us! I mean, surely that has to show people just how –

Max: God, do you feel that rumbling...?!

Celine: Um yeah, actually...

Max: That's the wave of furious indignation sweeping the country! Or it might just be the Hammersmith and City line. You got a –

Mimes "lighter".

Fact it started at St Paul's just made it even more fucking depressing...

She digs in her pocket and pulls out a lighter with a Soviet hammer, sickle and star crest.

Max takes it.

Max: You a communist?

Celine: I found it.

Max: Today?

He lights up, then pockets the lighter.

Celine: I quite like it though.

Max: A communist isn't supposed to believe in possessions.

Grudgingly he returns it.

He goes and opens the window to smoke.

Celine flames the lighter, stares at it.

You know, I hadn't even planned to come today. I got up early – you know, feeling all start-of-a-new-week, today-it's-gonna-happen, world's-my-oyster. I had a really optimistic breakfast. Three whole *Weetabixes*. And then sitting at my computer staring at my CV again... I went sort of fuzzy-brained... Then I started to feel all these hands on my head *squeezing*... here (*her temples*). I could literally feel my skull about to crack. I had to leave the house. So I did. I walked. I carried on. And on. When you've got nowhere to go you've got no reason to stop, have you. I found myself going down into the Tube. I think I was just going to sit and let it go all the way back round. But then I heard these two guys opposite talking about this protest today starting at St Paul's and I suddenly felt... something ... a tiny *spark*...

Max: You said you studied English, right?

Celine: Yeah. English with history.

Max: You can be pretty much anything you like with an English degree, can't you? Or is it nothing? I forget...

Celine: Nothing, apparently.

Max: Well you've still got the history. What is it they say? Two things people will always need – hairdressers and historians. (*Looking out the window.*) God look. There's only one thing worse than police, and that's Community Support Officers. Just, look at them. Like slugs. Pass the fucking salt...

Celine: The plan is – *was* – to do TV. You know, history documentaries... One of the *many* things I applied for was this internship with a production company as a researcher – proper internship, fully paid. I got a meeting. It went scarily well. I totally lucked out – they were about to do a programme on Emily Pankhurst and probably one of my best essays I'd written at uni was about the Suffragist movement.

Max: (*Still looking out window.*) They'll be coming right under here in a second. I could just gob on them. They'd never see me...

Celine: At the end they said, "We'll be in touch", and the way she said it – I'm pretty sure she even winked at me – well, you know how you just get a feeling. And it stayed with me. I walked down to Waterloo Bridge, and the whole city had changed. I was part of it now. It was like when you finally get the meaning of a poem because you see yourself in it. I could see myself reflected in the river. I hadn't even realised till then I had this massive smile... That was three months ago. I still hope, every time I open up my email, but... My mum reckons hundreds of people must've applied...

Max: Right, here they come...

Celine: I'm doing some bar work. Just a few days a week – all they need. You know, I remember saying to my mum at my graduation, I've just had the best three years of my life – how is the real world going to compare to *that*?! God that was nearly two years ago now. *Two years*...

Max leans out and spits.

He leans back in, wiping his face.

Max: They'll be back past in a minute. I'll get them then... Fuck! Just sitting here doing jack fucking shit. It's going to do my head in!

Pause, Max smoking, looking out the window.

Fuck a duck! I've just had an idea. An *excellent* idea. For a little response. To our ordeal today. A little *kettling* of our own. What you say? You up for it?

Celine: Um, depends... I'm not doing anything violent or illegal or involving gobbing on people...

Max picks up the V mask, walks up close behind Celine and puts it on her as he talks, and the kettle from round his neck in her hands...

Max: Come on. You said you wanted to know what we do here. You said there were hands around you, crushing that pretty little skull. Right? So, here's what we're going to do. First off, you're gonna take the kettle and fill it up. Just with water, plain water. Then you boil it, I mean proper boiling, hundred degree, scalding water. *Steam*. Hot enough to flake your skin off like a slab of smoked haddock. Then you get a big like proper fuck off mug, yeah. Big as you like. Then a tea-bag. Then add the water. Then just a drop of milk. Sugar too, three teaspoons...

Celine takes off the mask.

Celine: You want me to make you a cup of tea?

Max: Feel free to make yourself one too.

Celine: Since you asked so nicely...

Max: Maybe leave like a 20p contribution for costs...

She gives him a look then takes the kettle into the kitchen to make tea.

Max goes back to smoke out the window.

Oh and there's some nice little posh biscuits in a tin on top of the fridge...

She gets it down.

Celine: There's a thing on it saying "Fuck off Max, these are mine".

Max: That's the one.

Celine hesitates.

It's okay. I told you – we're communists. We don't believe in possessions.

Celine puts the tin down dubiously, continues making the tea.

Celine: So, what are you guys planning next?

Max: Planning?

Celine: Well you said you planned actions and things...

He looks at her suspiciously.

What?

Max: Just there's a lot of them about...

Celine: Lot of what?

Max: Moles.

Celine: You mean police? Don't worry, I'm not a mole.

Max: Lot of them about.

Celine: Really, I'm really not a mole.

Max: Know what? If I was a mole that's exactly what I'd say...

Celine: Well unfortunately there's not really any way for me to prove I'm not is there, so...

Max: There is one way, actually. One definite, surefire way. You see, after all the Mark Kennedy fuckeries, the first thing they tell you at mole school now – the one absolute golden unbreakable rule – is under no circumstances whatsoever are you to *shag* the person you're spying on. You have the most incredible eyes.

She gives an unimpressed sigh.

You do. Just saying. Most moles don't even have eyes.

Celine: I think maybe I should get going now actually...

Max: Come on, you were practically dragging me through the streets just now to get back here!

Celine: Because I was desperate for the loo!

Max: God, this would be so much easier if we just took some drugs...

Celine: Bye, Max.

She makes to leave.

Max: What? You're not *actually* – Oh, come on! I know I can come across as a bit of a twat, but –

Celine: You don't come across as a bit of a twat, Max.

Max: Good to know.

Celine: You come across as a *total* twat.

Max: Charming! Fucking charming! You do realise moles are supposed to be ingratiating, friendly? You're supposed to be wheedling your way into my affections!

Celine: You were right about one thing though, I'll give you that. What a waste of a day. Yet another total waste of a day and I'm sick of it. I'm sick of the smell of gone-off hope. My life's like one of those high streets where all the shops have closed up or turned into pawn shops and Poundlands. I might as well be eating my three Weetabixes on the Mary Celeste. What's the fucking point?

She starts to cry – tears that burst out, like a guffaw.

Max: Oi, oi... Come on...

Celine: *(Pulling herself together.)* Shit. I'm not usually – Really. I'm just – I've not eaten, I've been on my feet all day, I didn't sleep well. Really, I should ["go"] –

Max: *(Like he's just noticed them.)* Fuck, your eyes...

Celine: Do you never give up!

Max: No, no, no, I'm fucking serious. I don't – it's that *sparkle* it's like – I recognise it. Fuck! Look at them! Maybe it's the tears – making them sparkle like that, but – I swear I've seen them before! I've been here before. That first night – the first week –

A slight dimming of the lights around Max.

A drumbeat... very soft/ distant at first...

– in the sky – the same sheen, *sparkle*. The stars. Little pin pricks in the darkness. Air holes to let in fresh hope – hope waiting for a spark! Those early days – anything was possible! You should've been there! *Everyone* should have been there! Then they'd have felt it. *You'd* have felt it! The purpose, the unity, the *possibility*! Everywhere, everyone – dazzling, floodlit possibility! I can see it now. In your eyes. And it's still out there. Just. Faint but you can feel it, hear it...

He slowly reaches into her pocket – she doesn't stop him... takes out the lighter...

Slowly, in time with the drum, flicks the flint, making sparks but no flame...

A little drumbeat, a pulse, a lighter trying to spark. You can feel it. *(Putting his other hand on her chest.)* A heartbeat, out there...

Drum getting louder/closer...

They kiss.

The front door opens.

Celine quickly steps back from Mark.

Max looks at the new arrivals.

"Great."

*Enter **Shona, Lilly, Ash.***

Lilly is banging on a drum; Ash carries a water pistol and blows on a whistle.

Like I said, we try our best not to attract attention to ourselves...

Ash blows his whistle in Max's face.

When did today turn into gay pride?

Ash: *(Putting his arm round Max.)* Ah, every day's gay pride in this flat, Maxi!

Ash smacks a kiss on Max's head, blows his whistle at him again.

Max: I'd shove that up your arse if I didn't think you might enjoy it.

Shona goes to the kitchen, takes out the carton of juice, realises it's empty, shoots a look at Max, chucks the carton into a recycling bin.

Lilly slumps down onto a chair.

Lilly: Uff!

She notices Celine.

(Intrigued/suggestive.) Hi there...

Celine: *(Shy/self-conscious.)* Hi.

Lilly picks up the carcass of an Evening Standard and reads.

Max: Didn't you get my voicemail? Ash? Batty boy?

Ash: Voicemail? Nah, man. What it say?

Shona: He's been fucking smoking in here again!

Lilly rubs her eyes like "here we go again..."

Max: *Me?!*

Shona yanks open the window.

She takes out an asthma pump, inhales, holds her breath.

Oh for God's sake...

Lilly: Max, you know how easily things set her off.

Max: Yes, I do.

Lilly: Her *asthma*, Max.

Max: *(To Celine.)* Have I? Have I been smoking in here? At all?

Celine: ...

Ash: So Maxi, you going to introduce your friend?

Max: This is Natalie.

Lilly: Welcome to the nuthouse, Natalie.

Celine: Celine, actually.

Max: Lilly, Ash, Shona.

Shona: Selene... like the moon goddess. Pretty.

Max: Isn't she.

Shona: Pretty *name*.

Ash starts to do kick-ups with the football.

Max: Shone's very spiritual. She believes the world is full of little fairies...

Shona: Not fairies. *Goddesses*. (*Celine*.) Each of us has a guardian goddess following us around everywhere, trying to grant us our wishes.

Max: Ash, you follow me around everywhere. Are you my guardian fairy?

Ash: (*Still doing kick-ups*.) I'm not a fairy, Max. I'm a *goddess*.

Shona: (*To Max*.) Yours probably died of lung cancer.

Max: And what about you, Shone? I see yours as *male* for some reason... a sort of *fertility* god... young, handsome, virile... *enormous* penis...

Lilly: Is anyone else absolutely starving?

Ash: Hell yes!

Lilly: I'm gonna put some pasta on.

Max: Can you try not to overcook it this time.

Shona: It's alright, baby, I'll do it. You take it easy.

Shona gives Lilly a little kiss... which turns into a full kiss.

Max: To think Lilly there used to like boys...

Shona goes to the kitchen and boils the kettle.

Here, Ash.

Max joins in the keepie-uppies.

Lilly: Ash – you seen this?

Ash: What?

Lilly: *(Holding up the paper.)* There's been some trouble in Sudan.

Ash: Oh right, yeah.

Lilly: Is Tom all right?!

Ash: Yeah, yeah. It's in a like a totally different part to where he is. He called this morning. He's fine.

Max: Oh, so you're speaking again?

Lilly: You weren't speaking?

Ash shoots a reproachful glance at Max.

Ash: It's nothing. Just silly little argument and that.

Lilly: It's tough, hun. I hated it when Shone was out in Palestine... But in the end it makes you appreciate each other more, I think... *(To Celine.)* Ash's boyfriend's out in Sudan working in a refugee camp. He's like a complete saint. I don't know how he does it day in, day out. He's been there for like what, two years now, Ash?

Ash: Yeah. Hey, it was a laugh today with the water pistols and that. You missed out, Maxi.

Lilly: *(To Celine.)* Boys and their toys...

Ash: *(Stopping the kick-ups and picking up the water pistol.)* Lil, this ain't a toy. This is a serious protest against the proposed deployment of water cannon by an increasingly oppressive, violent and reactionary state. Innit.

He fires it making a machinegun noise.

Some hits Celine – and the audience.

Sorry...! *(To Max.)* You shoulda seen when we started getting the police though!

Max: Wait, is that what they did people for? A bit of water?

Lilly: Technically it's assault.

Max: Cunts.

Shona: Oi!

Max: Sorry... *(To Celine.)* Major house rule. I suppose to them it's like taking the Lord's name in vain...

Ash: *(Grinning.)* Anyway – it wasn't water, man...

Lilly: What?

Ash: Well after a while people started needing to piss and that, so...

Celine looks down at the wet patch on her, appalled.

Oh no no – I never – that’s just water. *(To audience.)* I swear.

Max: Where’s Si? He didn’t get arrested did he?

Ash starts doing kick-ups again.

Ash: Nah, man. He left us on the way back. Said he had something to do...

Max: That’s ominous. When’s Si ever had something to do? What station are they being held at?

Ash: Who?

Max: The people who got arrested.

Ash: Dunno. Why?

Max: This is a protest against police tactics! We should fucking go there, shouldn’t we!

Lilly: I’ve had enough for one day, thanks.

Max: So that’s it? Given up? Come home. Kettle on. Eat your Tesco Value pasta with Tesco Value pasta sauce and Tesco Value cheese. Back to your Tesco Value life!

Lilly: Thank you, Max, for that oh so poetic summary of my existence.

Max: Oh it’s not just you, is it. It’s – I just don’t get it. There’s supposed to be this great groundswell of discontent out there. So where the fuck is everyone?

Ash: This is Britain, man. People don’t revolt. They grumble.

Max: But why do people desire their own subjugation?!

Lilly: *(To Celine.)* He’s started on the Nietzsche quotes. It’s going to be a long night...

Max: Sitting at home in front of their flat TVs with their flat lives, passive to the point of paralysis!

Ash: Peter piper picked a piece of pickled pepper!

Max runs to the window, shouts out of it:

Max: *Why do you desire your own subjugation?!*

Ash: That was a party political broadcast on behalf of the Monster Raving Looney Party.

Max: Come on guys! Seven hours in a fucking kettle! We should be fucking livid! We should be –

Ash: At boiling point!

Max: Exactly!

Realises.

Oh very fucking funny. Seriously, don't you feel the need to *do* something?!

Lilly: Actually Max, I feel exhausted and hungry.

Max: Ash?!

Ash: Like do what though, man?

Max: I don't fucking know! Something! Something big. For once.

Shona: Okay go on, Max – you lead the storming of the Palace. We'll be right behind you.

Max: Come on, guys! Shooting a bit of piss at a few policemen – what did it do? What's it *ever* going to do? We need to start thinking big. Schizoanalyse on the grand scale. *Resistance, liberation, deterritorialisation* on the grand scale! From now on, big thinking only. *Big fucking thinking only!*

Shona: (*Holding up two jars of pasta sauce.*) *Mushroom or Spicy With Pepper?*

Max: Jesus fucking Christ!

Lilly: You choose, hun.

Max: We're gonna look back and say, we had a chance, we never had a better chance and we fucked it up! Five years of recession, austerity, Indignados, Occupation, activism – and what's changed? For the first time in our lives people have seriously been asking, is there an alternative to capitalism? The feeling *is* out there, we just need to spark it! That's all we need. The fucking spark. From a spark a fire shall spread!

Ash: Have you been on the chems today, Max?

Max: If fucking only!

Ash: Just, you're usually on the chems when you bring girls back...

Ash looks up at Max.

It breaks his concentration and mishits the ball (or did he kick it in anger?).

*It **thwacks** the wall just above Lilly's head.*

Shit, my bad!

Shona: Fucking hell, Ash! I'm taking that ball away.

Ash: Sorry, mum.

Shona takes the ball, puts it in a cupboard.

Max: What about Trafalgar Square?!

Ash: What about it?

Max: Didn't you see? They're changing the thing tomorrow. The statue. The fourth plinth.

Ash: Okay...

Max: Imagine! If they unveiled it and – **(Claps!)** the spark!

Ash: But what's the spark?

Max: The message!

Ash: What's the message?

Max: The spark *is* the message! From a spark a fire shall spread!

Shona: He's chasing his own tail around. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

Mark huffs like "Why aren't they getting this?!"

He takes out Celine's lighter.

Max: It might take a few goes but... if you just hit on the right image, the right moment, the right injustice, the right *something*... we could turn the tide against the fat bastards jerking the puppet strings then jerking all over us. We could really hit them. We could really lick those *cunts*!

Max flicks the lighter but it doesn't light.

Don't you want to, Shone? Don't you just really want to go out there and *lick some cunts*...?

Flicks it again; still doesn't light.

Shona: Don't worry, I'm not rising to it.

Max: Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I'm just a bit strung out after that dud fucking protest. Let's all just chill a bit, okay. Have a nice cup of tea.

Lilly: Now *that's* a fucking great idea, Max. *(Getting up.)* Who else wants?

Ash: Yeah go on Lils.

Lilly: Celine?

She smiles, shakes her head.

Max: Oh and another one of those delicious little biscuits...

Shona freezes.

Max flicks the lighter again.

And now it lights.

She looks for the biscuit tin on the fridge...

Shona: Max, if you've eaten so much as a *crumb*, I fucking swear – !

... then sees it on the side.

Fine, Max! You want them? Take them! Take them all you little shit!

She opens the tin, throws the contents at him.

Lilly: Shona!

Shona: I'm sick of him! Sick of him eating his way into other people's –

Max: Biscuits?

Shona: *Lives*, Max! *Lives*! Because you haven't got one of your own. So you get into other people's, literally inside them, and you feed on them ! You're a nasty little tapeworm, Max!

Max: Lil, you remember Sarah, from uni? You know how she's been out in Uganda for a year volunteering at a school?

Lilly: Max –

Max: Apparently people had been coming down with tapeworms left right and centre, but luckily she'd escaped. Then the day she came home – literally the day she got back – she started getting these bouts of sickness. And although she was still eating pretty much normally, she was getting really skinny. Classic tapeworm symptoms. She went to the hospital with her boyfriend, who she hadn't seen in like four months, they'd been doing the long distance thing. Did I tell about this, Ash?

Ash: Nah.

Max: They x-rayed her to find where the wee little beastie was. And so they were standing there – her, her boyfriend, holding hands, and the doctor with the x-ray. You know what they saw? Not a tapeworm. Oh no. She was seven weeks pregnant.

Shona: You're a fucking prick, Max.

Max: How come she can say prick, but I can't say cunt?

Shona walks to the door.

Lilly: Shona –

Shona: Just leave me alone for a bit okay.

She leaves.

Max: Do you think she'll think to pick up some more biscuits, or should we send her a text?

Lilly: Fucking hell, Max! What's gotten into you?

Max: *Me? (In Shona's direction.)* Um...!

Lilly: You're stressing me out, Max. You and her. But especially you. It's not fair!

Beat.

He starts to pick up the biscuits and put them back in the tin.

Max: Look, I'm sorry... just... calm down... I'll make you some tea, yeah? Nice cuppa. Ash –

He indicates for Ash to go and make the tea.

Lilly: I don't want tea. I want you two to get along. You're supposed to be making an effort!

Max: Sorry, Lils, it's just there's bigger concerns than – We could be out there now, doing something – and she's in here counting biscuits!

Lilly: How can we do this? How can we do this if you two are at each other's throats all the time? It's suffocating in here, Max!

Max: Then let's go, now, to Trafalgar! Ash, are you coming or not?

Ash: But you still haven't said what we gonna actually do there, man. I mean like, what – you wanna like graffiti the statue with a slogan or something, or –

Max: It doesn't have to be words. Mohammed Abousazi wasn't words, was he! Okay, if that's what you – if words is all you want, *Ash*, I can do that – I can give you words, you know I can. (*Walking up to Ash.*) Magic words... Words to set things alight... Fucking fire-conjuring incantation words! Come on, Ash! This is gonna be big, the start of something big. I want you there with me, man. Ash...?!

Apparently from nowhere, the first notes of Also Sprach Zarathustra by Strauss (the Space Odyssey 2001 theme.)

The door edges open... a very large, thin cardboard box slowly emerges through the door... followed by the rest of the box – a flat screen TV – and the person carrying it:

Si.

The music is coming from his phone.

Ash: Oh, shit, no! Si, is that for here?!

Si opens the box and – as the music swells to its rousing climax – raises aloft the at once enormous, sleek and thin TV.

Si: Tuck in your hard on and give us a hand.

Ash: Don't shit me, Si! This really for here? How many inches, man?

Si: First question from the gay man – “How many inches”.

Ash: (*Looking at the box*) 47?! Si, you are blatantly my guardian goddess because you have literally just made my wish come true! Where'd you get it, dude?

Si smiles, taps his nose.

Si and Ash set to work unpacking the TV/setting it up.

Si: What you reckon, Max?

Max: Ash, I thought we were about to go?

Si: Go where?

Ash: Max had this idea – doing something to the statue on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar. You know, before they unveil it.

Max: So put that down and let's go!

Si: What *now*? (*Indicating the TV.*) Are you taking the piss, bruv?!

Ash: Seriously, Si, where'd you get it, man?

Max: Doesn't matter where he got it from. Let's go.

Si: They was giving them out, innit. Free samples.

Ash: Did you loot it? This is to make up for the riots, right. (*To Celine.*) You know people were nicking like Armani jeans, digital cameras, TVs and that – you know what Si came out with? A toasted sandwich maker.

Si: Yeah, man likes toasted sandwiches, innit.

Ash: Seriously though, is it like kicking off somewhere? There's nothing on Twitter.

Si: I never looted it, man. Tell you the honest, yeah... it fell off the back of a lorry.

Max: You just walked down the street with it in broad daylight? Smart, Si.

Si slides on a David Cameron mask lying round his neck – the kind you'd get in a party shop.

Ash: Si man, you are literally insane!

Si picks up phone.

Si: Hello? Police please. I just witnessed some suspicious behaviour. Someone walking down the street handling what appeared to be stolen goods. A very nice 47-inch flat screen TV. Cane Street. Westbourne Grove. I recognised him, actually. David Cameron. Yes *the* David Cameron. Yeah, I was shocked myself...

Ash: (*Ear to the phone.*) Shit, he's actually calling them!

Max: Not even Si would be stupid enough to nick a 47 inch TV and then ring the police and tell them about it from his own fucking phone.

Ash: Em... don't think it's *his* phone ...

Max runs and snatches his mobile from Si.

Max: You fucking – They can fucking trace that, you know!

Ash: Ah! I love the smell of freshly unwrapped technology!

Max: Come on, Ash, we can go do something real in the world, out there!

Si: Or we can play Black Ops on this bad boy.

Max: Maybe it *was* a free sample. Like your first hit of crack. Kick-start the addiction. The addiction of *stuff*.

Si: Nothing wrong with stuff, bruv... just hording stuff... just having more stuff than next mans...

Max: Look at you two! Sucked into the same amoral vacuum as the bankers and their ilk.

Si: (*Amused by the word.*) "Ilk"! You crack me up, Max!

Max: Fuck everything else and *everyone* else as long as I've got my *stuff*!

Si: You know that mate of mine Drew at the protest today. He was telling me 'bout some boys of his live on an estate out east. They'd met this random white posh boy in a suit in some bar down West End. Polar opposites, yeah, born on different sides of the rails – you'd think they'd have jack in common, right? Turned out they had a mutual friend...

Ash: Who?

Si: Charlie.

Ash: Coke? Who does *coke* anymore?

Si: Bankers, apparently. Cos that's what he was. And they ended up in his flat in Canary Wharf somewhere to do a few more lines. And it's a nice yard yeah... you could see his bonuses been well spent. Probably had a TV just like this one. Don't you reckon, Max? Banker'd most probably bought himself a nice 47 inch plasma HD 3D TV just like this little baby here. So they're all sitting there, in this banker's kitchen... one of the guys cutting up the next lines of coke using the banker's platinum credit card. All getting on fine like they've been mates all their lives. And then the banker reaches out to get his card back – and the guy yeah he puts his hand over it and goes, *What's your pin, fam?* There's a little silence. Then they all laugh. Jokes, man. Just jokes. They're all mates. The banker, Charlie, and the boys from the estate. "Nah, seriously though, blud – what's your pin?" Now the banker starts to get a little hot under the collar. He's suddenly thinking, who the fuck are these people I let in to my house? And the guy who's got his card is saying, "Listen, bruv, it's only fair. You're a banker, right. We bailed you out. So you owe us, innit." Silence. Banker sitting there, looking at these four guys, sweat patches starting to grow under the arms... Then they all laugh again. Just jokes. They're all mates. It reminds one of the guys about this film they saw where these breres wanted to get someone to give the combination to a safe and they held his hand over a boiling kettle till he talked. The guy with the card stands up, goes over to the kettle and (*Clicks his tongue – the switch*). "What's your pin, blud?" Laughing again. But it's just the banker this time. And suddenly they've grabbed him, and they're fucking doing it, holding his hand over this kettle... and this definitely ain't a joke now cos the kettle's started to boil and they ain't letting go. But the banker yeah – he ain't saying anything – even though the steam's getting thicker, faster, hotter. He's proper struggling, obviously, but they're holding him, and his hand is going proper red and shit. But all he's telling them is "Fuck you!" Because this guy, yeah, this *banker* – he *believes* that's *his* money, and he'll be fucked if these little fuckers are gonna have even one little nugget of it. Bankers are amoral?

Nah, mate. They got morals. And they're very simple. The market is God. The market, the system is good and it's fair and it's fucking *God*. Everyone's out there, together, in the same market. And this geezer, he *earned* that fucking money. He ain't gonna betray his God. Even though it would be nothing for him to let them have the pin and take out, what... three hundred? Fucking peanuts to him. But he's got his morals still. So these guys are looking at each other... coke dropping from their faces like their nosehairs got dandruff... and now *they're* sweating... now they're looking at each other thinking... how far... how far do *we* go? And this guy is *screaming* now and they're thinking *how far do our morals go...?*

Ash: So what happened?

Si: Dunno. My mate was just gonna say when they fucking kettled us, innit. Came down right between us. Didn't seem an appropriate story to tell across a line of policemen...

Lilly: You think that really happened?

Si: You calling my mate a *liar*?! Well yeah, to be honest, Drew's a notorious fucking bullshitter. But then again, there's usually a little grain of truth in the stories. What you reckon, Max...?

Max: I reckon we should go to Trafalgar right now.

Ash: Right... here we go!

They've finished hooking up the TV to the Playstation.

Max: We have a perfectly good TV already.

Ash: What, *that*? We got it out a skip. It's from like 1995 and makes everything green. Have you tried watching football on it?

Si puts on another party mask – a gorilla, this one.

He plays the Space Odyssey music again from his phone, pastiching the ape scene, the TV the obelisk, approaching it with simian awe and wonder...

With the final swell of the music, Si reaches in slowmotion for the on-switch.

Ash: I think I'm gonna cum!

Si turns on the TV.

That is beautiful! (*To Max.*) Come on man, you have to admit...

Si and Ash grab the controllers to play.

Si: Black Ops on *forty seven* inches. This is going to be *sick*, bluuuud!

Max: Here we have the revolutionary avant-garde. Fuck me.

Si holds out a control pad for Max.

Si: I know you want to.

Max: Fuck off.

Si: Come on, Max. Give in. Give in to the Dark Side...!

Max: Pathetic.

Si turns back to the game.

Si: You'll miss us when we're gone...

Shona comes back in the front door, goes into the kitchen to continue making the pasta.

Lilly: (To Shona.) You alright?

Shona: I've made up my mind, Lil.

Lilly: Shone, not now...

Shona: (Noticing the TV.) Where did that come from?!

Si: A present from David Cameron.

Shona: (To Lilly.) Why not now? Sooner the better.

Lilly: Shona, that's – !

Shona: What? That's what? It's nothing. Because I've made up my mind.

Lilly: Well it's not your choice, is it!

Shona: Sorry?

Lilly: I mean it's not *just* your choice.

Shona: No. It's *our* choice. *Yours and mine*. So we need to talk about it. The two of us.

Max: Talk about what?

Shona: None of your business, Max.

Max: Are you sure?

Shona: Yes.

Beat.

Max: Come on, Si. Come on Ash. Let's give the lesbos some time to not talk about me in private...

Ash: We're playing now, man...

Max walks in front of the TV.

Si: Fucking hell, Max! What do you want?!

Max: I want you to come with me tonight! Instead of playing toy soldiers.

Si: Come on, man. Let's just chill, we'll get some drinks in, have a nice night of it...

Shona looking for matches to light the cooker, finds an empty box.

Shona: He's used up all the matches again. Celine, can I please borrow your lighter?

Celine: I think Max still has it...

Ash/Si/Shona: *Max!*

Ash's phone rings/vibrates.

Lilly picks it up.

Lilly: It's Tom.

Ash: Leave it. I'll call him later.

Lilly: It might be important...

Ash: Lils, trust me, he's completely fine.

Max grabs the phone from Lilly.

Lilly: Max... Ash.

Max: "Fuck off". Not you. I'm just quoting your last text to your boyfriend.

Ash: Give it back, man.

Max: Which was your response to... "I want to take you away from that cult". Cult? Does he mean us?! Ash's saintly boyfriend thinks we're a cult!

Ash: Give it, man. You can't do that.

Ash tries to get his phone back.

Just give it back man.

Max pulls him into the bathroom.

Max: I'm sorry.

Ash: You're not fucking sorry. You're a fucking dick. You can't do that.

Max puts his hand on Ash's chest, kisses his neck.

Max: I want you to come. With me. Tonight...

His hand wondered to Ash's crotch but Ash pushes him away.

Ash: You can't do that, Max.

A beat, looking at each other, as...

Shona: *(Walking over to bathroom.)* Max, if you want to eat tonight, can you please give me the –
Max starts to kiss Ash's neck again, his hand on his crotch again.

Ash goes to pull Max's hand away but Max resists.

Ash: How did the viewing go, Max?

Max's resistance falls away and Ash pushes him off.

But Shona saw.

Shona: What the fuck?

Ash: Shone –

Max was just trying it on with Ash!

Si: Oi oi!

Ash: No he wasn't.

Shona: His hand was on your dick, Ash!

Si: Ha ha! Go Ash with the straight boy!

Shona: It's not funny, Si. The guy's got a boyfriend, out in Africa helping refugees, and this little weasel moves in to – I don't even know what – he's not even gay – to scrape up a bit of attention – to wreck more fucking lives! See – he's not even denying it because he fucking loves it! You're sick, Max! Mentally, sick!

Ash: He was just fooling around.

Shona: Don't defend him! Why does everyone always defend him?!

Celine makes to leave.

You've done well, darling. Most people don't see through him till it's too late. Some people still haven't...

Si: Yeah, watch out Ash. He'll just shag ya and leave ya.

Shona: No, it's worse. He shags and leaves something behind!

Si: Chlamydia.

Celine: You think it's hope but it's not.

Shona: It's a little maggot. A little version of him. A little live maggot.

Celine: And you can feel it.

Shona: Right in the middle of you.

Celine: Writhing.

Shona: This horrible little maggot and you don't know how to get it out before it hatches!

Lilly: Shona, shut the fuck up with this, okay?!

Max: Yeah! What the fuck is this tag team?! This is your fault, Si.

Si: What? Nuttin' to do with me, fam! Fucking hell! I'm not the one touching Ash's ding-dong.

Max: It's that. That thing you've brought in here. See what happens! You let it into the place... and it's there. There's your fly. There's the fucking maggot in the apple. And she's right. It will hatch inside you. You've all bitten into it! Fucking flakes all of you!

Si: I don't think they were talking about the TV, bruv.

Max: *(To Celine.)* Okay. Go. Go. But where are you going? Back home? To just sit there. Petrified. Literally. Turning into stone. A statue. Actually, you're not even a statue. You're a plinth. A cold stone fucking *plinth*. Oh yeah, they've got you. *(To Ash.)* And they'll have you before you can say fifty grand student fucking debt. *(To Lil, Shona.)* And as for you two... I wonder what stomach-churning hypocrisies you'll commit? And you'll tell yourselves it's okay – it's noble even. Because it won't be selfish. You won't be doing it for yourselves. You'll be doing it for another human being...

Shona: Listening to this, are you, Lils?

Max: *(Si's turn.)* And as for you. You and your fucking TV!

Max grabs the TV, ripping out the leads/plug.

Si: Max, you fucking dick! Ash, tell your new boyfriend to put back the TV.

Ash: Max, come on, don't be an idiot, man.

Shona: He doesn't know how to be anything else!

Max rests the TV on the window ledge.

Max: Why can't you get this angry about what's happening out there?!

Si: I swear to God, Max, if that TV goes out that window you're going with it.

Lilly: Max, darling, be careful. There might be someone down there.

Max: Thank you! At least one person here is concerned about *people* instead of *stuff*.

Si: Ash man, you better go down there. Get ready to catch it.

Lilly: Si, this isn't funny. *(To Max.)* What does it prove, darling? Smashing up a TV?

Max: *(Sings from the TV theme tune.)* *Why don't you? Why don't you? Just switch off your TV set and do something less boring instead!*

Si: He's actually cracked up.

Shona: Have you only just realised? He's mad! He's literally fucking mad!

Max: See! Suddenly I'm the mad one. Because they're caught up in the capitalist grid. The cattle grid! So they can be milked like battery cows!

Si: Yeah. Moo moo fucking moo, Max. Put the TV down.

Max: Remember those first nights at St Paul's – that feeling – *infinite possibility*! But it turned into a bubble. Just a pretty little soap bubble that didn't even pop, it just floated away. It needs to be fiercer, bigger – like boiling water. Bubbles of steam everywhere – random, spontaneous, nucleating, exploding – a spontaneous transition from one state to another!

Lilly: (*Going to the door.*) Somebody needs to tell people not to walk under the window!

Shona: Wait, Lils! Max, I swear, if you drop it whilst she's down there!

Si: He ain't gonna drop it, trust.

Ash: I think he might, man.

Si: Nah, he won't. He's gonna put it back like a good boy. Aren't you, Max. Otherwise I'm gonna tell them where it came from.

Ash: Where did it come from?

Si: Max. I'm serious.

Beat.

Then Max relaxes, pulls in the TV slightly from the edge.

I don't know what you think you would've been proving anyway, bruv, by –

Max drops the TV, followed a moment later by an almighty CRASH!

Max: Whoops.

They all run to the window.

Si: Fuck me!

Lilly: Jesus, Max!

Max: Now doesn't that feel better?

Si: I think you might've just invalidated the warrantee...

Shona: He isn't just crazy. He's dangerous. He's fucking dangerous!

Max: That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me.

Si: (*Laughing.*) Fucking look at that! Brand new fucking TV!

Ash: I knew it was too good to be true.

Lilly: You didn't look. You didn't check to see if there was anyone there. You could have killed someone, Max!

Si: Brand new fucking TV! Boof! Just like that! You are one crazy fuck, Max. It was him you stole it, you know. That stuff with the banker yeah... it was us, Me and Max. When we went out last Tuesday. Innit, Max.

Lilly: You mean – the kettle?!

Si: Nah. I saw that in a shitty Danny Dyer film. But you shoulda seen Max lusting after that banker's life, boy! His flat, his drugs... his *stuff*. He'd got this brand new TV delivered. Still crisp and fresh waiting in its box. *That* box. And Max couldn't stop looking at it. Proper *lustiiing*. Dick dripping wet. Max goes to the toilet – to have a wank over the TV, I'm thinking. I'm left chatting with the banker – who's alright by the way. I mean a total twat, but – generous with his coke. Fucking good Charlie as well. Then I get a text saying "Come outside. I got the TV". Personally I had my eye on his sandwich maker – nice curvy little chrome number– but I told the banker I had to make a call, I went out, and there it was. We dropped it off at his mate Josh's, the one down near Bayswater so the cabbie wouldn't know where we lived. We were gonna go pick it up the other day but then Max suddenly says he changed his mind. It's stuff worship. He gave it to this 83 year old geezer he knows who's got bad eyes and needs a big TV. Well mate, Josh looks good for his age, cos I just came from his yard just now. And guess what I found there.

Max doesn't say anything... just goes off into the kitchen.

Come on, admit it, fam. You loved up that TV and you was gonna keep it all for yourself for when we leave this place. Cos you know full well Max, we ain't gonna be here forever, are we. All good things must. Basically yeah, fact is, Max here loves up stuff just like everyone else...

Max switches on the kettle.

Holding his hand over it as it boils, he brings the portable kettle over to the trunk.

Stands on the trunk.

It takes the others a little while to realise what he's doing; Si speaks over this:

And you might've though Maxi would've taken the opportunity to argue with the banker, convert him. Nah, man. More like the other way round. It was like a fucking fan club. He was asking him all these questions about how he started out, were they looking for new recruits. You were angling for a job man! A job to get you *stuff*! It's alright, Max. We're all human. I forgive you. But just admit it! You were holding your hands on that kettle and you couldn't take it, so you went and put it on a nice cool flat TV screen...

Lilly: Max, what are you doing?

Si: (*Laughing.*) You're nuts, man!

Lilly: Max, darling, that's not proving anything.

Max: Get back or I'll fucking chuck it on you, I swear!

Ash: Come on, Max, mate, this is stupid.

Max: Ask yourself. What kind of a society do I want to live in? Start from there. Find your voice!
Resist! Liberate! Destratify! Deterritorise! Reterritorise!

Lilly: (To Si.) Si! Fucking do something! He's going to hurt himself!

Si: Later! I ain't having man dash that at me!

Snap lighting change: Max in a bright spotlight/floodlight.

Max: I meant to come earlier, but I was out the night before. I remember saying to everyone through gurning teeth, "No!" – gurn gurn – "I've got to be up in a few hours. No more!" – gurn gurn – Okay, okay, just one more... just one more bump..." When I wake up it's like six in the evening already and I feel like shit. I'm crumpled on the floor, the stale smell of carpet in my face. And suddenly I remember where I'm meant to be. I leap up. I'm still fully dressed, even my shoes. I almost throw up on the pretty Spanish girl sitting opposite me on the Tube. Fresh cool air feels good up the steps. And suddenly there it is – like God crouching, gently luminous, towering. A million metric tonnes of limestone. I've never seen it before. In real life. It's magnificent. And to think it was dreamed up by a man. That it was built by men's hands. It gives me a shudder of pride. The pounding in my head has been replaced by a new sound... a drum... a group of drums... and there's people dancing round it. The air is warm. There's a carnival feeling in the guitars, the drinking, the placards rested on the ground... an incongruous invasion of frivolity like those old paintings of people skating over a frozen Thames. But over there, look, the first tents are going up... people trying to work out what to tie them to to stop them just blowing away. And over there a crowd within the crowd... someone in the middle, I think, speaking. I can't hear what they're saying. There's cheering. A young guy next to me with a rainbow flag painted on his cheek leans over smiling and says, "This is just the beginning." Someone else clasps me round the shoulder... a total stranger and we look at each other with total familiarity. And for the first time I hear the whisper. From the past, or the future, or the present – or all three – they seem to coexist here, now, in the glowing shadow of the cathedral and I hear the whisper that says, *This can happen. This is the beginning and this can really happen.* People can seize the future! We can steer it. I'd always felt – no, *known* – I'd always known that we'd find a way, eventually... a hundred years... a thousand years... we'd crawl towards it, scratching each other, biting each other, trampling each other along the way... but eventually we'd look at ourselves and say, *no more.* For now we're marching together. We're going to *choose* our direction and *march together*... one heartbeat...one stride... Those first few days... The bloom of tents grows with every hour... *possibility* grows every hour. Speaking to people, so many people... they can see it too... they believe it too... we don't know how yet... but it's not about *how* right now. It's about belief that we can make something better happen. Still the camp grows, evolution in timelapse. By the end of the week it's doubled, tripled in size. And you can talk to anyone, and they listen, and argue, and agree, and disagree. I mean, don't get me wrong, there's some fucking loony tunes here. And a fair few cunts. Like look, that bloke there with the sandwich board. *Repent and save your mortal soul.* Probably the vicar from in there gone a bit (*Whistles –*

“cuck-ooo”). He reckons all this means Jesus is about to be born again. Well I don’t know about Jesus, but by the way one or two of those tents are shaking there could be some not-so-immaculate conceptions taking place. Or that white guy there with the dreadlocks and military boots. He reckons it’s all going to kick off. The riots were just the beginning. The workers are about to rise! Well, not those men over there, walking past and shouting “Get fucking jobs!” We give the standard reaction to the hecklers. “We love you!” And then there’s the philosophy students. You never seem to be more than three feet away from a fucking philosophy student. Like this fucking guy. I mean, I’m a pacifist, yeah, but God, I want to fucking punch him. “Have you read Deleuze?” Um, no. “Well you won’t understand what I’m saying until you’ve read Deleuze”. Deleuze? I haven’t even heard of the cunt. I Wikipedia it. French philosophy bollocks. Trying to get my head round rhizomes and desiring machines and schizoanalysis and – a pretty blonde walking past. My desire machine perks up. “Hey. Do you know what’s going on in the lecture tent?” I don’t hear her answer, I’m looking at her lips, light pink and kissable in the cold. But then it hits me. The smell. Five days and counting without a shower. I walk away. Then what about the girl who says that the energy that’s here, it’s because St Paul’s was built on ancient leylines. She believes in goddesses. The world’s full of them, she says. Guardian goddesses. Granting our wishes. She builds shrines to them. She says something about there’s a lot of weirdos here, isn’t there. I don’t say anything. I roll a cigarette, but I don’t have a lighter. Someone’s passing, I tap her on the shoulder. She’s beautiful. Skin the colour of moonlight, of floodlit limestone. And those eyes...the shock and enormity of stained glass suddenly glimpsed, and like stained glass there is a story contained within them. Suddenly, without ever passing through those Goliath panelled doors, I have been inside. I brace myself... but no, she doesn’t smell. I mean, she does. But it’s like... an image I can’t quite locate in time or place... *gardenias in moonlight*... “Sorry, do you by any chance have a lighter?” She does. She takes it out from her bag. It’s burnished red like a jewel... a Soviet hammer and sickle emblem. I see it in slow motion – the thumb striking the flint... the spark first, then the flame... And I start to think... this is it – *the spark* – this! And suddenly I have the urge to speak. Up till now I’ve just been listening really, talking, floating – sleeping in random tents next to stinking feet and fetid unwashed hair. I’m starting to realise that not just the past few days, but my whole life has been building up to this. And it’s an urge now – a burning urge to get to the centre of this thing, to stand at the point where these leylines are converging. I think she was fucking right. I can almost see them now... stretching off across the country, across the world, rhizomes, rootstalks... maybe it’s the roads, or the fiberoptic cables... but I am at a node, a conjunction, and I am going to say my words, *the words*... and they will flow down, through the leylines... across... across....

He steps up onto the trunk.

The other actors, all in V masks now, begin to surround him: a crowd listening.

Mic check! They don’t have an actual microphone yet. We make do with the “human microphone”. I say and you repeat. “Mic check!”. Louder please, they can’t hear you at the back, up there. “Mic check!”

*He continues shouting “mic check” until the **theatre audience** reciprocate along with the masked characters and shout “mic check” back.*

*He then pauses after each sentence to allow the characters/audience to repeat: the **human microphone**.*

We have to ask ourselves. //I have to ask *myself*. // What kind of a society do I want to live in? // Start from there. // What kind of world do I *want* to live in?!

Voice in audience: Get a fucking job you lazy cunts!

Max/Crowd/Audience: We love you!

Max: But the mic breaks down. People shouting amongst themselves. The mood, the crowd fracturing into chaos.

Ad-lib Crowd *spitting out viewpoints/words/phrases, sometimes interacting. E.g: Revolution! Reform! Goddesses! Deleuze! Radical Reform! Oxymoron! Moron! Marx! Luxembourg! Trotsky! Lenin! Stalin! Stalin? Hitler! Fuck off you idiot! Process! Schizoanalysis! Jesus loves you! David Cameron loves you! Get a job you cunts!*

A hint of something in the air – like flecks of spitting rain – rain laced with the acid that’s slowly, inexorably dissolving away the stone, making the eternal fragile. I stick my tongue out and I can taste its tang like fine drops of blood.

The noise from the crowd grows...

Suddenly silence.

And then, through the crowd, I see those eyes. The moonshine through stained glass. And the air tastes sweet again, like JD and Coke. I smile at her. I leave the chaos. I go down to her. She says she liked my speech. It wasn’t a fucking speech... it was a spark! It was meant to be a spark. I tell about it – the spark – and she listens, those eyes shining on me. She says maybe it’s less like a spark, more like rubbing two sticks together, kindling an ember. Slow. Patient. Nurtured. Fuck me, I want to shag her. She says, “Isn’t it beautiful”? I go, *What the cathedral?* “Well, yeah. But I meant – “ She means, this. All this. Looking into those eyes I start to think the crazy girl was right about goddesses too. I want to kiss her. I kiss her. I kiss the goddess. And now we’re in a tent – Fuck knows whose – and I’m fucking the goddess. Fucking the fucking moon goddess, Selene the fucking moon goddess! And she’s beautiful. And I’m about to fucking come... And it lasts forever... that moment... And then it’s over. And for a second I’ve fallen off of existence. “The little death” the Frogs call it. And the despair is sudden and fleeting and black – like the opposite of a flash. The space between frames in a film. And then calm. Full, warm calm, not the empty calm of death. I roll a cigarette. I have a sudden disconcerting feeling of time rushing backwards... urge for a cigarette, then the calm, then the little death, then sex, then asking her for a drink. She says “Sorry?” But it sounds funny, a tape played backwards. I say nothing. And time starts moving forwards again. I open up the tent just a tiny bit to let some air in and some smell out. A glorious slither of the cathedral comes in with all the cool freshness of a breeze. Look what humans can achieve. That *cathedral*. We can build this, we can put man on the moon! Ha! My gran used to say that. She laughs. She thinks it’s funny. Laying naked like that, my hand on her tit, talking about my gran. But it’s true. Man conquered the moon – for fucked up reasons maybe, but we still fucking conquered it... because people made a decision... that this is what humanity is going to do now. Man conquered the moon. And now so have I. She says,

Celine: I could equally argue I conquered you.

Max: *Fair point.* I get an idea.

Celine: What?

Max: *Come on. I'll show you.* I run out the tent, out the camp. She follows shouting,

Celine: Hold on!

Max: *Keep up!* I run down the road that big road – all the shops – Cheapside, is it? Anyway, I'm looking for a bank.

Celine: What are you going to do?

Max: She seems a bit frightened I'm about to smash in the glass or something. And then I feel the rage swell and there's nothing more I want to do than – Actually no. I don't really fancy putting my foot through that. I take out money from the cash machine. £300. That's pretty much all the money I have in the world. I run down to the river, the bridge. London Bridge is it? Or Blackfriar's? My dad'd be mad I don't know. I climb up onto the parapet.

Celine: What are you doing?! Get down!

Max: *Pass me your lighter!*

Celine: What?

Max: *Your lighter.* I hold up the flame.

Celine: Are you trying to kill yourself?!

Max: I put the flame to the money. It rushes up into the air like a flock of startled firebirds. "Mohammed Abousazi!" Fiery scraps of paper fall down on me. I get down, brush off the smouldering ash from my clothes.

Celine: You could have given it to charity or something! To the camp! There wasn't even any one around to see!

Max: She seems angry. Why doesn't she see? The beauty of it. The sheer *beauty* of it! And suddenly I realise. I see it so clearly, as clear as a physical image in the embers and stars and skyscraper lights and waning crescent cathedral dome and her eyes. I take her hand. We're going back to the camp. I'm going to speak again. Tell them what I've realised. Because I've found it! I have it! In my hand, my mind, my mouth! *The spark!*

The crowd lift him up.

Crowd: "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."

Max: I climb up onto the dome of St Paul's, holding on with one hand, the lighter in the other. The cathedral is as cold as lunar rock, searing my palm, but it's all right. The pain is purifying. The same pain the martyrs felt on burning pyres. I'm ready now, glowing with angelic light, ethereal, a body

without organs. The statues of the Apostles and the Evangelists turn to face me, to listen, to join the human microphone. And in the centre of them, St Paul himself looks up at me and goes like this –

Does a double thumbs-up.

I'm ready, ready to speak, and the world's ready to listen! I shout "Mic check!"

Waits for the reply.

Silence.

I try again – and this time no words come out. (*Trying to light Celine's lighter.*) I try again. And again. I'm trying but – the cold, the pain – my tongue and thumbs are thickened with half-frozen blood, a slush of smashed glass running through my veins – and still no words come out. I'm trying so hard but still no fucking words – Shit!

He's dropped the lighter, watches it fall.

The dome suddenly gets steeper and the tighter I hold on, the longer I hold on, the fiercer the pain becomes. The stinking brown light that hovers over the city like mist from a swamp surrounds me, engulfs me, rushes upwards, roaring, scalding. (*Growing sound of water boiling, magnified, echoing – like we're inside a kettle...*) I see something. I see it from way up here. Among a thousand plateaus, I see it. A man takes money from his pocket – a tenner – a twenty – a fifty is it? He's setting fire to it. Like I did on the bridge. But it's a single note and *his* face is scorn – gargoyle – grotesque. The note flies up and hovers above me and the Queen looks down at me and laughs. Something terrible is happening. I need more pain. One by one the Saints turn their backs on me until just St Paul is left. He looks at me and he goes like this –

Snarls and does a "wanker" gesture, mouthing the word.

I need more pain! This isn't enough to cleanse me! I need more pain! (*White lights shine onto the audience, growing brighter... uncomfortably bright...*) I'm holding on but it's near vertical now and my grip is slipping and the pain is too much and I need more and I grip tighter and the pain becomes the stars scintillating in my eyes, a meteor shower slashing apart my retinas, thicker and faster to a blinding white till suddenly –

Sudden blackout.

Act Two

Lilly and Shona sitting on the sofa. Celine standing, still, almost statuesque.

Shona: *(Getting up.)* I'm going to make tea.

She picks up the kettle.

Celine: In that?!

Shona: That is the traditional method. *(Walking to the kitchen.)* The whole world doesn't revolve around Max, you know.

Lilly: *(To Celine.)* You did a really good job.

Celine: It said on the website that if the skin's charred white then that's a deep-tissue burn and any deep-tissue burn you should go to hospital. And on his hands too. They say *any* burn on the hands...

Lilly: We can't make him go.

Pause.

Celine: Max said you all met at St Paul's...

Shona: Not us. We'd been together over a year. And Lilly already knew Max.

Lilly: From uni.

Shona: The first time I met him though was at St Pauls, without knowing he was Max, if you see what I mean.

Lilly: When the occupation ended we all sort of stuck together...

Shona: Or got stuck together.

Lilly: It's not always been like *(“this”)*... Recently things have got...

Shona: Haven't they just. And it doesn't help when he takes drugs. *(To Celine.)* What was it? K?

Celine: I honestly didn't see him take anything...

Shona: He was obviously on something! K's the worst. Turns him into Max times ten.

Celine: But normally, is he...

Shona: Such a colossal arsehole? Look don't feel bad. You're not the first to fall for Max's *charms*, chemical or otherwise, believe me. And *you'd* only known him for a few hours... Look, if I were you love I'd walk out that door before he starts fucking up your life as well. Because trust me, he'll find a way. I reckon he gets a kick out of it.

Lilly: That's not fair.

Shona: What about Ash?! How else do you explain that?!

Lilly: We don't know what the story is there.

Shona: It's the same story as that TV. Stealing and smashing. He's like those kids back in the riots. He sees something he wants, that he hasn't earned – or worse, something he doesn't even want, he's just jealous of – so he steals or smashes or both. What he did to that TV, he's been trying to do with us. And now Ash. (*To Celine.*) What do you have, I wonder? That he wants to smash...

Lilly: He's more delicate than you might think.

Shona: "Delicate"! What have *you* taken?

Lilly: That thing with the kettle. It was –

Shona: Exhibitionism. Attention seeking. Dick-waving. (*To Celine.*) *Listen*, I know about energies and auras. Cut Max open and you won't find a cello weeping the woes of the human race. You'll find another Max, and inside that – another Max. Like Russian dolls... Max, Max, Max, Max...

Lilly: Okay. Shona. Let's have some peace. You've made your point.

Shona: In fact I think I he made it for me. Because surely there's no question now, Lils...

Lilly: Please, Shone, I'm too tired for more of this tonight...

Shona: Might even be good for him. Take down that ego a peg or two.

Lilly: Is that what this is about?!

Shona: Partly.

Lilly: That's horrible, Shona. That's downright fucking vicious!

Shona: Vicious? You want to talk about vicious? You heard him. *Fertility gods. Tapeworms.* That's fucking vicious!

Lilly: He shouldn't have done that. I'll speak to him.

Shona: Look what it's doing to us, Lils, already. This is what he wants!

Lilly: This isn't even about him. Why do you always make it about him?

Shona: I think that was your doing, don't you?

Beat.

Lilly: Maybe we should ask Celine – a neutral observer...

Shona: Sorry, but somehow I don't quite think she's entirely neutral...

Beat.

Can we take a walk? I could do with escaping the smell of boiled Max for a while...

Lilly: Will you be all right?

Celine nods.

Lilly and Shona exit.

Celine sits.

Celine: What are you doing here?

She goes over to the bedroom door, peers inside.

Closes it.

What the fuck are you doing?

Gets out her lighter.

Stares at it, standing there...

Then lights it.

Holds her hand above the flame... closer... closer...

Her phone rings.

She lets it ring a long time before answering.

Hi, mum. Sorry, I meant to call you. I've been in the library all day. No, I'm at Lauren's house now. Yeah, I'll let you know. (*Spoken as an ennuied sigh.*) What email...? Now? I haven't got internet reception here. Can't you just ask Aunty Helen to send it direct to you...? Okay. You'll have to log into my email. You at the computer? It's *Buttercup3*, capital B. Open the email from Aunty Helen and just click on the photo and save it to the desktop or something. (*Suddenly piqued.*) What? Really?! When did that come in? Yeah, it's them! It's been like three months, I thought they just hadn't bothered replying...

A knock on the door.

Yeah, of course, open it! God, my heart's really beating. Well, go on!

A knock again – more insistent.

Yes, obviously, you do trust this sender. It's not gonna have a bloody virus is it, mum! Sorry, I didn't mean to – Yes, I know, I'm sorry. Yes, you were, you were very patient with me when teaching me how to speak... and walk... and wipe my own bum.

Knock again – more a bash in fact.

Wait, just one second... I'll call you back.

She opens the door.

Tom, wearing a suit and tie, holding a box of chocolates.

Tom: Is Ashley there?

Celine: Um, he's just popped out for a moment actually...

Tom: Do you mind if I wait?

Celine: Sorry, you are – ?

Tom: Tom.

Beat as if he expects this to be enough.

Ashley's boyfriend.

Celine: Oh. Right. Come in.

Tom walks into the room...looks around at it with distaste, as if he might catch something from it.

How come you're back in London?

Tom: To see Ashley.

Celine: I thought maybe something had happened out there.

Tom: No.

Celine: Does he know you're –

Tom: It's a surprise.

Celine: How long are you here for?

Tom: Just tonight.

Celine: You've come all this way for one night?!

Tom: It's hard to take time off at the moment. Look, please don't feel like you have to make small talk.

Beat.

Sorry. I'm tired. Long journey...

Celine: I'd just like to say I really admire anyone who devotes themselves to a worthy cause like that. I was thinking of actually maybe trying something like that myself but –

Tom: Just fuck off, okay.

Celine: ...

Tom: God, you think you're so morally superior don't you. But if you tried to spend *three minutes* in the real world... What do you think pays for your "worthy causes"? *Worthiness* being a subjective concept by the way. Some people have to make money, okay. Making money is not a fucking sin.

Celine: ...

Tom: Sorry. I usually don't come into other people's houses and start swearing at them – but if I'm going to be attacked, then –

Celine: I wasn't attacking you for getting paid – of course you should get paid. I was just saying it was admirable to work in a refugee camp, whether you get paid or – Look, sorry, forget it.

Tom: Refugee camp?

Celine: You work in a refugee camp, right? In Sudan?

Tom: Are you taking the piss?

Celine: I'm sure that's what –

Tom: I work at a law firm. In Brussels. I'm a lawyer. Does Ashley tell people I work in a refugee camp?

Celine: I've obviously got completely the wrong end of the –

Tom: And what is it he does here that's so wonderful, so worthy? What do they actually *do* here?

Celine: I've only known them a couple of hours...

Tom: He says he *needs* to be here. Why does he think he *needs* to be here?

Celine: I think you have to ask him that...

Tom: Apparently, I wouldn't understand.

Beat.

Maybe you could help me...

A chink of vulnerability – he's actually asking her.

Celine: Well... I suppose they're here partly because they've got nowhere else to go and partly because... well, I think they're likeminded people trying to make the world a better place.

Tom laughs ironically.

(Defensive.) Okay, it sounds naïve when I say it like that, "the world a better place", but –

Tom: Sorry, it's not that. It's what you said before...

Beat.

Have you ever been in a long distance relationship?

Shakes her head.

Even the smallest little arguments seem to fester. It's like they're prolonged by some factor proportional to distance and time spent apart. Ironically, before, when I lived here, when we hardly

every needed to, I actually quite enjoyed it. Making up. I could turn up at his door and surprise him... drive him down to Brighton, picnic on the beach... or just turn up and just *hold him*....

Beat.

Anyway. Where did you say he was?

Celine: Just gone out to the shops. He'll be back soon.

Tom: Who's he gone with?

Celine: Si.

Tom: Not Max?

Celine: No.

Tom: He mentions a Max...

Celine: Actually, Max is in there, sleeping. He had a bit of an accident with the kettle...

Tom: What's he like?

Celine: Max? Hm. Well...

Tom: Ash seems fond of him...

Celine: ...

Tom: Sorry to say it, but he sounds to me like a bit of a...

Max enters from bedroom.

Celine: Max!

Max: Where is everyone? Have they gone to Trafalgar without me?

Celine: No. They'll be back in a minute. How's your hand?

Max: This one's fine... I'm a bit concerned as to why this one's been wrapped up in a hand-sized condom... Where's Ash?

Celine: No no no, don't take it off! It's clingfilm. It's what NHS Direct said to do. Max, you should really see a doctor...

Max: Is he a doctor?

Celine: No. This is Tom. Ash's boyfriend.

Tom: How do you do?

Tom puts out his hand to shake.

Max holds up his clingfilmed right hand.

Tom offers his left hand instead.

Max: Isn't that one considered unclean where you've just come from? Nice to meet you, finally. Can't believe you've never come to visit before. We've heard a lot about you. Ash is very proud. Forever bragging about you. Funny, I would've thought you'd be more tanned. I suppose you spend all your time locked away in tents helping those poor refugees...

Tom: Yes, I think there's been some misinformation...

Max: "Misinformation"? Do real people actually use that word? Sounds like something a lawyer would say.

Tom: I am a lawyer.

Max: Really? What branch of law do you specialise in? Immigration... asylum... human rights?

Tom: Corporate litigation and dispute resolution.

Max: Much call for that, is there, in a Sudanese refugee camp?

Tom: I work for Clifford Chance. It's a law firm.

Max: I know. It's a very good law firm. One of the best. Bit surprised though they got a branch in a Sudanese –

Tom: I'm currently on secondment to their Luxembourg office.

Max: From the Sudanese branch?

Tom: I don't nor have I ever worked in a fucking refugee camp in Sudan or anywhere else!

Beat.

Sorry. I'm tired. Long journey.

Max: We're all on a long journey, Tom. So, you come to join us then? We could do with a lawyer. And some dispute resolution.

Tom: *(Smiles.)* I'm not a communist, I'm afraid.

Max: Well that doesn't matter. Celine isn't a communist, are you. Si probably couldn't even spell communist. Shona calls herself a communist, although her convictions aren't even strong enough to penetrate a biscuit tin. Actually, I'd say the only real out-and-out communist is Ash. What about you?

Tom: Politically? I suppose... centre, centre-right...

Max: Sorry, forgive my curiosity, but – how does it work?

Tom: How does what work?

Max: You and Ash. [*Accompanying with an (in)appropriate hand gesture, the middle fingers of his two open palms knocking together.*] I mean, the bits – they don't exactly dovetail.

Tom: Excuse me?

Max: Your political views – they don't exactly dovetail.

Tom: We just avoid politics.

Max: Avoid politics?

Tom: Yes. It's really not that hard.

Max: No? Oh. I always find politics is one of those tricky little things that keep popping up at the most inconvenient moments. You know, like erections ... or police... or lawyers...

Beat.

Tom: What happened?

Max: I held my hand over a kettle.

Tom: Deliberately?

Max: You can't even begin to comprehend it, can you? You can't even begin to comprehend why someone would hold their hand over a kettle...

Tom: Um, no, actually...

Beat.

Max: So. Clifford Chance.

Tom: Yes.

Max: Very impressive.

Tom: Thank you.

Max: Enjoy it?

Tom: Yeah. Hours are pretty merciless, but you know... What do you do?

Max: Me? Philosopher. Social Commentator. Revolutionary. Schizoanalyst. Hours are *fantastic*.

Tom: Yeah, well, it's tough out there at the moment, isn't it...

Beat.

But you're still young.

Max: How old are you?

Tom: Twenty-four. You?

Max: Twenty-four.

Tom: Snap.

Beat

Max: Come on, man! Twenty-four! You should be up in arms with us! This is about freeing you just as much as anyone else!

Tom: Thanks, but I don't need to be freed.

Max: See! Straight from the horse's mouth. Neighing fondly up at the jockey whipping him on his back. Why do you desire your own subjugation?!

Tom: Look, sorry, I've had to work all the way through the weekend – and today – and I'm really tired, and I just don't have the energy to start a pub debate on politics.

Max: Why bother, anyway. What's there to debate? You're doing okay, right – so fuck everyone else.

Tom: *(To Celine.)* When did you say Ashley would be back?

Max: Well there you go. Just look at Ash. He can't even afford to go to university.

Tom: Yeah, well I'm going to help him with that.

Slight beat.

Max: That's nice of you.

Tom: Well I can. So...

Max: So he's like your charity case? Your bit of pro bono.

Tom: No. He's my boyfriend.

Tom's blackberry pings.

Oh for fuck's sake! Sorry. Work. *(Starts typing.)* Stupid bloody – I already told her I'd do it tomorrow. Why can't she ever just listen?

Max starts to roll a cigarette.

Sorry, I don't suppose you could possibly roll one for me?

Max: Course. Sharing's caring.

Beams a big smile at Tom, maybe a little nose-wrinkle as well for good measure.

Still with the unnaturally big smile.

Does money make you happy, Tom?

Tom: Yes, every morning I dive into my money like Scrooge McDuck.

Max: Seriously. Does money make you happy?

Tom: It adds to our happiness, yes.

Max: Is that the royal we, or the collective we of humanity?

Tom: It's Ashley and I.

Max: Cute.

Max walks to the window.

Tom's blackberry goes again.

Tom: Jesus!

Max: Come here, Tom. Look.

Tom: One second.

He types for a bit then, eyes still on his Blackberry, comes over to the window.

Max stands behind him, close. His breath on Tom's neck.

Max: What do you see? Look. Really look. What do you see?

Tom looks up from his phone, looks out the window.

Shrugs.

Tom: London.

Max: Clearly, Tom, you are a perceptive man. Maybe you'll permit me to point out a few of the details. Things we see. Ash and I.

He takes Tom's hand, away from his phone, points his finger on the glass at the various things he mentions.

Like that doorway there. There's a homeless guy sleeps there sometimes. On the warmer nights. And some of the colder ones too. And there – that flat with a Superman toy on the windowsill. A woman lives there. Single mum. Two kids. She works for one of the major supermarkets who I can't name for legal reasons. They pay her less than the living wage and yet will make £4 billion in profit this year. And that spire there – that's a church that gives out food parcels once a week and the queue comes as far as down there. And now look at *that* spire there. Poking up through the cloud. That's the very tip top of The Shard. The penthouse. Set you back a cool *half a billion pounds*. Look at it. A one thousand foot high *up yours* to that mum, her kids, all those people in that queue and everyone else who's fucked over on a daily basis. But that's not the worst. Can you see it, Tom? The very worst part of it all...? Your hand. Half-reflected. A ghost. A spectre. Hovering over the city. The imponderable, inexorable unassailable, blind, impartial, bountiful, benevolent, merciless, all-powerful hand of the market...!

Slight beat.

You're fucking smiling.

Tom: I'm smiling because I know you have no alternative. If you offered me a serious alternative to market economics – I mean fair market economics with reasoned checks and balances, I'm no Ayn Rand-worshipping neo-liberal – but give me a *concrete alternative* and –

Max: Why does an alternative have to be concrete? Why can't it be fluid. Organic.

Tom laughing – "Exactly what I mean!"

You're laughing at the wrong thing!

Tom: Am I? That's one of the problems with totalitarianism – it tells you what you can and can't laugh at.

Max: The same way people used to think that the sun went round the earth and we laugh at them now, one day people will look back and laugh that people used to think that people were fundamentally selfish.

Tom: I don't believe people are fundamentally selfish. I think they're fundamentally lazy. Without a profit motive things grind to a halt. The market is the best solution given man's natural tendencies.

Max: "Natural"?! "Natural" is the most artificial concept ever invented! Have you never heard of the *naturalistic fallacy*? You can't get an *ought* from an *is*? You of all people, Tom, shouldn't start on "natural".

Tom: Me of all people?

Max goes into the kitchen, holds up a jar of peanut butter, dips his finger in.

Max: Suck my finger.

Tom: I'd rather not, thanks.

Max: Why?

Tom: A few reasons, believe it or not. But the one I think you're subtly alluding to is that I'm allergic to peanuts. Ash really must talk a lot about me. So yes, peanuts are my Kryptonite. Your point?

Max licks his own finger.

Max: (*"Delicious!"*) Mmm! Ash loves his peanut butter, goes through a family jar a week. But I guess it's just another thing he has to avoid with you. But that's not my point. My point is, you eat one little peanut and you could die, Tom. That is your *natural*. Horrible, isn't it.

Tom: I carry insulin.

Max: Exactly! You *transcend* the natural! And *if* people "naturally" would tear each other apart and slit each other's throats for the sake of personal gain, then we should transcend that as well.

We should say, "Let's *decide* how we ought to be, how we *want* to be!" And then we should fucking be it!

Tom sighs.

Tom: If only someone had carried out some kind of test. You know, like if the largest country in the world had renounced capitalism and replaced it with communism for about sixty years so we could know whether it had been a resounding utopian success or an utter failure resulting in the collapse of the economy and their running back to market economics with open arms.

Max smiles.

Max: But then you're your own proof, aren't you. You don't want an alternative. Why would you? You've got a good job. Nice flat in Brussels, too?

Tom: Yes, as it happens.

Max: And to top it all off, you're a good looking lad.

Tom: Thank you.

Max: Very good looking. Don't you think, Celine?

Max slaps an arm on Tom's shoulder.

Leaves it there.

Feels good, huh...? *Life feels good.*

Tom: Yeah.

We hear Ash and Si talking behind the front door.

Max: And yet... and yet...

Ash and Si enter

Carrier bags with clinking bottles of alcohol.

Ash: How's the hand, Maxi?

Max: The doctor said I might never wank again.

Ash: Maxi, you are, and will forever be, a wanker.

He sees Tom.

Tom! What the fuck?!

Tom: Nice to see you too, darling.

Ash: Sorry. Hi.

Tom goes and kisses Ash.

Something ostentatiously proprietorial in the way he does it.

What are you doing here?

Tom: I wanted to surprise you.

Tom kisses Ash again.

Ash: Guys, this is Tom.

Lilly: Hi.

Si: What you saying?

Ash: How long are you here for?

Tom: Just the night. I couldn't take any more time off work. I've got us a hotel.

Si: You've flown in all the way from Sudan for just one night?! Ash, you must have the good stuff, boy!

Ash: *(To Tom.)* Listen, I sort of...

Tom: So I gather.

Ash: It was just easier and that. You know, cos –

Tom: Look it doesn't matter.

Ash: Nah, nah, let me explain.

Max: I'd quite like to know, actually.

Tom: It doesn't matter.

Max: Turns out Tom doesn't help poor little fugees in Sudan. He helps rich companies sue people.

Ash: Rather than getting into a whole like conversation about *Oh you've got a boyfriend working for a big multinational who pays for shit and stuff...* and I'm trying be a socialist and that...

Max: *(Holding his ears.)* Ahhh! Politics! We don't talk about politics!

Ash: It just makes me sound a bit...

Si: Like Max.

Tom: Look, can we talk about this over dinner? All I've had is a packet of crisps on the train – four bloody Euros can you believe it. I'd thought we'd do a late sitting somewhere nice but not *too...* *The Wolseley* maybe. You liked that last time, didn't you.

Max: Did you?

Tom: Come on, we can jump in the cab.

Ash seems to hesitate.

Max: I'll come if Ash isn't up for it. I'm quite peckish myself.

Ash: What time are you going back tomorrow?

Tom: I've got to catch the train in the morning.

Ash: The morning?!

Tom: Darling, I can't take any more time off at the moment. Look, can we just go and then we can talk.

Ash: I just – Why do you even bother coming?

A beat, Tom thinking whether he's going to go into all this now, here.

Tom: Because I wanted to see you. I was hoping you'd want to see me. I was hoping it might even seem romantic. But obviously –

Ash: Course I want to see you, but – Seven hours. In a month, Tom.

Tom: I know.

Ash: It just gets to the point where you think –

Tom: Ashley, I know. Really.

Sighs – "Okay I'm going to do it here."

I've come to ask you to come back with me. So we can actually spend some time together.

Max: Spend some money together.

Ash: Max, shut up a minute!

Tom: Some *time* together. Before you start university. Have the summer together.

Ash: What am I gonna do all day in Brussels whilst you're at work?

Tom: So what, you're just dismissing the idea? Like that?

Ash: I didn't say that, man.

Tom: Come for a month at least. Try it out.

Ash: You'll be working all day.

Tom: We'll have the evenings. And weekends.

Ash: Cos you never work weekends. Anyway, I've got stuff I'm doing here.

Tom: Of course. Starting the revolution. (*Either holding himself back, or looking up and realising he's outnumbered.*) Sorry... But six people arrested today. It's hard enough to get a job as it is. What do you think they do when they get four hundred CVs for one job and yours has a CR on it!

Ash: The *law* isn't always right, Tom. What about gay rights and that a few years ago?

Tom: For God's sake Ashley, it's not the same!

Max: Ash, if you're in need of some dispute resolution I know a guy who –

Tom: I'm not saying what you're doing here is a waste of time. I'm really not. But the world isn't going to change in the next few months... or quite frankly in the next few years. That's with or without you. So come back to Brussels with me.

Max: Yeah. Let him take you away from this cult.

Tom: I'm not calling you guys a cult, I'm just –

Ash: Actually you did, Tom.

Tom: No I didn't.

Ash: In your text... "I can't wait to get you away from that *cult*."

Tom: I didn't mean *cult*. That must've been a predictive text error.

He looks at Max.

Max: You know what? I see Tom's point. No, I do. I can sympathise. Must be hard. You two living in different cities. With phones and Skype and shit you can feel so close... like you're in the same room... like you're standing there in the same room, right next to each other, looking into each other's eyes... but you're not allowed to touch... Talking, describing, caressing each other with words. But there's no nerve-endings in words. Not being able to touch... that's excruciating. I imagine. Not being able to touch beautiful Ash here. Except with words...

Ash: Lils, I thought you said you were going to take him to hospital when he wakes up.

Max: Tom, sitting alone in his lovely flat in Brussels, untouched, putting on a film on your massive TV to reassure yourself... because you've got a better TV than most people... and you can eat better food than most people... and a little fear that you'll join the heap... that you'll get made redundant... and all that stuff around you will vanish... and you'll become one of them... but most of all... it will niggle because despite everything you have, everything you've earned, Ash would prefer to stay here, play a bit of football, eat peanut butter on Tesco value bread, and fight for what he believes in...

Ash: Shut the fuck up, Max, I mean it, man.

Max: I think you'll feel it.

Tom: You know what / think? I think you were unlucky in life. Missed out on Oxford by half a grade. Had an off-day on that all-important job interview. Or maybe that's too generous. Maybe you

just weren't good enough. But either way, you think the system owes you more. So you want to punish it. You want to show it – and by *it*, I mean everyone that's making more of a success of themselves than you – and that's a lot of people – you want to show them – *us* – that actually yeah, you're smarter than we are. You want the last laugh all the way to the burning bank. Come to Brussels. No, I'm serious. Spend a weekend in Brussels. With me.

Max: (*Campily coquettish.*) Tom, your boyfriend's right next to you!

Tom: Sit in a warm flat. Watch my big TV. We'll go and eat nice food. Ride around in a cab. Burn some money. Yeah, I think you'll feel it.

Si: Make sure you nail down that TV, mate...

Enter Lilly and Shona.

Max: Ah, the lesbians. Not a moment too soon. Tom here – Ash's boyfriend – was just about to *seduce* me. Ideologically speaking. I think...

Ash: Guys, this is Tom.

Shona: Hi.

Lilly: Are you alright? Did something happen in Sudan?!

Tom: Ashley, sweetheart, I've come up to see you. Maybe we could go and actually spend some – (*Pre-empting Max.*) *be alone* together for a bit...

Max: We're going to Trafalgar, right, Ash.

Tom: What? Look, come on, darling.

Max: Ash .

Tom: Ashley.

Ash: Fucking hell, stop! Please! Both of you! Jesus!

Si: You should make them mud wrestle for you. Not that I'm saying I want to see that...

Ash: Tom – I need to talk to you a minute. Come in here.

Tom: Can't we do it over dinner?

Ash: Tom, please.

Max: Maybe you're right. Maybe I should come with you to Brussels. We can try it. The three of us. Like I say, you're a good looking guy. I've got no problem with that. This is what I'm talking about! Deterritorising the social norms. There's no right way, no "natural".

They go into the bedroom.

(*Calling after them.*) I'll book us three seats next to each other on the Eurostar then!

Shona: God, how do you manage it?

Lilly tugs on Shona – gives her a look: "You promised".

Well go on – tell him then. Si, come with me.

Si: What?! This is just getting interesting! What other entertainment is there in this place now he's smashed the TV?

Shona pulls Si towards the front door.

Alright, alright! You can buy me a burger though. A proper burger. No horse.

Shona: Celine love, sorry, could you...

Celine: Yeah. I've got to call my mum, actually...

Shona, Si, Celine exit.

Max goes to try and listen in at the bedroom door.

Lilly: Max.

He comes and sits down next to her.

Pause.

You and Ash?

He shrugs.

Max, his boyfriend's in there. The boyfriend who spends his days in the desert helping –

Max: In *Clifford Chance's Brussels office* helping *multinational corporations* fuck each other.

Lilly: What?

Max nods.

Really? So why did Ash –

Max raises his eyebrows – "You tell me"...

Anyway. It's still his boyfriend. Look, I've noticed how Ash looks at you sometimes. And it's always flattering when someone likes you in that way. We all like it.

Max: Do we, Lilly?

Lilly: But when you start physically *touching* people, Max, it crosses a line. It changes from harmless banter to –

Max: That's just some artificial boundary that's been –

Lilly: Come on, hun, just – not everything has to be part of a fucking revolution. Proving a point.

Max: So you're saying it's okay as long as I don't touch him? What about through cling film?

Lilly: I'm saying, don't offer him something you can't give him. It's not fair.

Max: Why do you always assume the worst of me? That is, why do you always take Shona's version?

Lilly: Oh Max, come on!

Max: I don't touch him. I never touch him.

Lilly: Max, Shona – She *said* she saw you touch him.

Max: He doesn't let me touch him.

Lilly: Good.

Max: I just talk to him while we... you know.

Lilly: (*A little taken aback / not sure to believe.*) Max, are you being serious?

Max: Probably picked I tup from Tom. Kind of thing they get up to in private school, isn't it?

Beat.

Lilly: How long...?

Max: Seven inches?

Lilly: Max.

Max: Sorry, I thought you were after proof.

Shrugs.

Couple of weeks.

Lilly: Why?

Max: *Why?*

Lilly: I mean... if you don't actually touch him... Are you just doing it to –

Max: You of all people should get it, Lil. No, actually what the fuck's it got to do with you? Or *her*?

Lilly: Max, he's got a boyfriend.

Max: So? You just said, we don't cross "the line".

Lilly: Oh come on, Max.

Max: I was serious. About going to Brussels. With them. You don't believe me?

Lilly: You probably were. But Max, you can't really expect to just walk into a relationship and turn it into...

Max: It's better than ripping it apart, isn't it?

Lilly: Maybe you should just leave it alone. Walk away.

Max: Are we still talking about *them*?

Beat.

 Come on, Lils, you've been instructed to tell me something, haven't you? I don't think it's about Ash.

Lilly: No.

Beat.

 Look, Max darling. The situation. Here. Us three. It's just been getting worse. You know that. When this should be a happy time. The happiest time for us.

Max: You're going to get rid of it.

Lilly: What?

Max: (*Nonchalant.*) Okay.

Lilly: No! Of course not!

Max: Well why not? You're not prissy about a foetus are you? Funny how people get so worked up about lives that haven't been born and don't give a fuck about the miserable ones that have.

Lilly: I don't want –! No-one wants – !

Max: Well you should.

Lilly: We want the baby. We're having the baby. But Max, darling, we're moving out.

Max: When?

Lilly: Soon. By the end of the week. We're going to stay with her parents. It's not just about you and Shone. This is no place for a baby, is it. I mean, we could be chucked out any minute.

Silence.

 Well?

Max: Sorry, are you expecting some big reaction?

Lilly: *Some* reaction.

Max: It won't help. She'll still see it as me in there. Me occupying your womb. She probably thinks I only did it to spite her. She's right.

Lilly: I know that's not true.

Max: Listen, I don't blame her. I'd be pissed too. Wanting a baby with you and then ending up with me in the equation. It's like voting Lib Dem and then ending up with the Tory coalition. She must just look at me thinking *God, I wonder what parts of him have been inflicted on my baby. What nasty, worthless shards of humanity... what pernicious spores of blight am I going to have cut out from lovely, perfect Lilly...*

Lilly: Of course she doesn't...

Max: If she had her way I'd never see you again.

Lilly: That's not true. I think she has this hang up about bisexuality. She doesn't trust it. I don't think most people do... especially gay people. It makes them feel insecure. It's unfair – it's just them thinking that in the end you're bound to run off into a straight relationship. It's kind of insulting. I mean, she asked if we'd had sex for Christ's sake.

Max: We have.

Lilly: You know what I mean. Recently. For this.

Max: It was amazing.

Lilly: You were completely off your face.

Beat.

She takes his hand.

For a moment it looks like it might be some kind of sexual advance – or at least that Max interrupts it this way.

But it's not.

She places his hand on her belly.

What's happening in here... it's fucking mad . When you talk about what you think could happen out there – that thing you feel that could sweep people up – Well, I feel it in here too. Now. So strongly. It's the things you're always banging on about, Max. Hope, possibility, love. Right here, in a person! The little heartbeat in there, a little drum of hope. I can already feel... him or her... I love them more than anything.

Max: Bit of soapy water'll do the trick.

Lilly: Max, that's not funny.

Beat.

Max, darling, don't take this the wrong way. But the way you've been acting... and the TV... and *that (She means his hand) –*

Max: Just stop, yeah. I know where you're going.

Lilly: Max, hun, do you even *remember* last time?

Max: Maybe that's what I need. What we all need. Cut ourselves off from reality. From this construct that has become sanity, reality, normality.

Lilly: You should go to hospital, Max. Not just for your hand. I'll come with you. We can call a cab.

Max: I haven't got time. We've got to get started.

Lilly: This is what I mean, Max. Listen to yourself. This isn't drugs is it.

Max: No, fuck off, because this is what *I* mean! Things are coming to a head out there. You know they talked about Jesus being born in that camp. The second coming.

Lilly: You don't think...?

Max: Yes! Yes, Lils, that's what I'm trying to tell you! I am he! Jesus Christ! Come again!

Beat.

Of course I fucking don't think it's me. But I can be something. The spark, Lils. That's *real*. I tried, back then, back at St Paul's, and it almost... Why don't they realise? Why don't they realise how powerful they could be if they all came together?

Lilly: Maybe that's the second coming. It's not a person, a prophet, a son of god... it's everyone. It's people. The internet maybe. Facebook.

Max: You think Facebook is the second coming of Jesus? Max *likes* that. And you think *I'm* mad...

Lilly: You know what I mean.

Max: Maybe I should just go and get a fucking job at Clifford Chance.

Lilly: Maybe we all should.

Max: Should we?

Lilly: Not that easy at the moment though, is it. Even if we wanted to. But we don't. Do we?

Beat.

Max: I was going to give it to him.

Lilly: What? Who.

Max: The TV. I was going to give it to him. To have at uni. Until Si fucked it up. It was a stupid idea anyway. I shouldn't have sunk to that level.

Lilly looking at him... a question on her lips...

Jealous?

Beat.

He's in there now, dangling it front of him... the lure of money, Mammon. What if it's inside there? Our baby.

Lilly: It's not *our* baby, Max. It's mine and Shona's.

Max: You should get rid of it. Start again. Adopt. Go down the sperm bank.

Lilly: Lucky dip sperm? At least I know what I'm getting with you.

Max: Do you?

Lilly: Yeah.

Max: Damaged goods.

Lilly: No!

Max: A little bit though, hey.

Lilly: Most importantly, you're not bad looking. Nobody wants an ugly baby.

Max: Anyway, I don't just mean me. The whole idea. You're only doing it because you can't get a job. It's not fair to dump all your hope onto a baby.

Lilly: Me and Shona love each other. We *want* a baby. I think I'll be a good mum. That's why we're doing it. Yeah I'm not finding work – proper work – so yeah, that's part of it. But Shona's new job is decent and looks fairly safe.

Max: But dragging someone – literally dragging someone with forceps kicking and screaming into *this*. This world. Tom's world.

Lilly: Maybe I am doing it to live vicariously through him or her. But that's a bit what they're for, aren't they? And it's okay because you try and make things a better for them than they were for you.

Max: I don't know if it works like that anymore. Am I doing better than my dad?

Lilly: We're playing a different game. They played Monopoly. We're playing... I don't know...

Max: Snakes and Ladders and one by one the ladders are all turning into snakes. Snakes and Snakes.

Lilly: There's a few ladders left, Max.

Max: You could ask someone else. Someone like Tom. *Ask Tom*. Someone that actually belongs to life. That thinks this world is good. Someone that can give the kid something...

Lilly: Well hopefully you've already given it your eyes... Not the ears though. Please God.

Max: You know it's not your hope you're passing on. It's your fear.

Lilly: Come on Max, what kind of a thing is that to say?

Max: Oh, let's hope it's good-looking and intelligent and gifted and talented... let's hope it's clever enough and pretty enough to fuck over other people. Because that's the world. That's the world we've all chosen. Fear that person in China and Brazil and two blocks down, and sitting right there next to you... that that person is going to trample on you if you don't trample on them first. Fear those little slitty eyes fixed on you in the dark. It's good you're passing on your fear. That there's terror and dread in your amniotic fluid. Because that's what it needs to succeed in this world!

Lilly: (*Hands on her belly, as if protecting it.*) Stop it!

Max looks like he's about to punch her in the belly – but he punches himself instead.

Max, this is bad. This isn't normal.

Max: I see what you're saying. Only someone like me. A mentalist like me. Someone who *hates* themselves to the point of wanting to tear out his own eyeballs. Only that insane person could overcome the innate natural selfishness of humanity!

Lilly: Max, hun, I'd really feel better if just for safety's sake we went to the –

Max: Ah, don't worry, Lils. It'll be alright. Things will be get better. It's all cycles, isn't it. You'll see. By its first birthday we'll be booming again. Up it goes, woosh woosh woosh! Anything is possible! The saviour of mankind! The whole world a big blue green expanding bubble! The face in the moon smiling. Up, up, up and away! Woohoooo! And you won't fucking see it coming!

Sudden blackout.

At first I think the moon's gone out. But it's just the lights on the Cathedral – they turn them off at night. There's a recession on, after all. I still feel the pain. But it's slower, more deliberate. Pulsing now, like I've been stretched out, pinned over the towers of the city, a living drum skin, and some huge invisible figure is hitting me, making my heart beat to *its* rhythm. The camp looks so small from up here. And you can see the rest of the city, the world – the same as always. Untouched. Those idiots in the camp wanking over themselves and never touching anyone else! The tents just a fungus, so much cum. People talking about attacking *one* company. One man in one company even. Not a spark – a *whimper*. I can't stay still – the pain growing again, pulsing, stabbing, taser-gun contorting. I try to outrun it –

Max trying to run, but he's lifted up by people in V masks, so he's "running" in thin air...

People's hearts beating at different times. Walking out of step. A city with ten million people all walking in ten million different directions. That's what happens in a cardiac arrest – the cells of the heart stop beating together, and my gran writhes on her kitchen floor and is brain-dead in eight minutes. I start to feel the leylines, like a bird navigating to magnetic fields. They feel like slopes. Funnels. And I think, *Imagine*. Imagine if in a thousand years, after some catastrophe, archaeologists examine the remains of our civilisation. Someone will say, *I think I've discovered something! Patterns! Between totems! Look! Mystical leylines!* And they'd be looking at the flows of gold, of goods, of wealth, of money, of joy... and they converge *here*, right here, the City of London! And the people would say, *It must have been a god. This thing. Money. It must have been a god the ancients worshipped!* In front of a shop, silhouette against its glowing window, a homeless man, grey and

stinking. This is the world we live in. Where people walk past this man and say nothing. Do nothing. Feel nothing. I say nothing. I do nothing. I feel – What do I feel? Would it be kinder to kill him? And I imagine smashing the bottle in his hands and cutting his throat and declaring a sacrifice. I don't love this man. I don't love any of these people walking past. I can't even see St Paul's anymore, not even the dome. But I see truth. The bubble tried to expand, pushing – but it's closing in under the pressure of reality. And all those bright colours – that infinitely thin film of myriad colours – the reds and golds and whites of fire – any minute now it will burst. My skin is agony. I hear a cry and I know the camp has been cut, its guts slushed out into the streets. The funeral service in the cathedral is turned inside out over the city, everywhere beautiful immaculate lilies. I pick one up and it turns grey in my hand, dead, dust, like the ash of burned promissory notes. Of burned promise. And it's so clear now. It's not enough. Loving one human being. Loving all human beings. It can't save you. Look at them! Walking past. And they give me the same look as they give the homeless man, which is no look at all. And I hate them. I hate these people. I hate all people. I hate them, streaming past me into Topshop. The pain is still raging and suddenly I don't fight it. I want to be them. I want to run into Topshop and buy, buy, buy! Forty days and forty nights in the camp and now I'm hurtling towards middle-range highstreet fashion like Jesus turning stone into chocolate cake and stuffing his face. Thank God for that little rectangle of plastic, thin and transubstantiated like a Eucharist wafer, my membership card back into the human race! Joy and relief of surrender because I know that inside there, in the warm and light and clothes racks, the pain will stop! The security guard won't let me in. And the full scale and horror of my betrayal is someone hammering nails into my eyes, real solid nails into the jelly of my eyes – and the pain is so much – and I turn to the road and the bus is advertising the bank on my card and moving fast – fast enough – and I run towards it but I stumble and trip into the gutter, an estuary of mud and spit and overflowed drain – and from the dirt, the semi-sewage I see the bus flash past and suddenly he's there! Looking down at me, smiling, made of flesh, and scorn and concrete and glass and air and land and greed and apathy and hate and hunger!

Loud drumbeat – louder than the ones before.

And now I see, I recognise – *his hand, his heart, his beat, his face!* All along, *his!* And I'm clawing and I'm trying to scratch it out, but I can't get at it! (*Pulling, scratching at the skin on his face, drawing lines of blood.*) And finally I know what I am and what I have to do! Because I've seen him! I've seen his face!

The people around him take off their V masks.

Underneath, they're all wearing cheap party masks of Max's face.

Mammon!

Lights suddenly back to normal.

Max's face still scratched with blood; though no-one seems to notice.

Lilly: We won't be going too far. I still want you to be part of this. You'll still be Uncle Max... If you could *just try and get along...* I mean both of you. I don't know why it's so difficult...

Max: Don't you? Really, Lils? Really?

Beat.

Fuck this. This isn't – I need to get to fucking Trafalgar Square!

Lilly: You need to get to A&E. Please, Max. For me.

But Max is heading to the door.

Max, darling, please!

Max opens the door.

Celine.

She's just standing there in the corridor.

She doesn't move, blink.

Statuesque.

Max: Ha! Look! It's happened! Like I said! Total ossification! (*To Lils.*) Keep an eye on the news.

Si and Shona come in.

Tom and Ash come out of the bedroom.

Celine just stays there in the doorway.

Si: Fuck it's cold in here! Colder than outside!

Shona: Did you tell him?

Lilly: Shone, we need to get him to the hospital *now*. Maybe we should call an ambulance.

Shona: His hand?

Lilly: No. Shone, I've seen him like this before...

Shona: How much has he taken?

Lilly: No, Shone it's not drugs. He's ill. It's – He's –

Max: There! You see! I told you! It's in here! It's in everyone! I'm the mad one! Because I can see the world differently! In incorrect ways, unexpected ways, strange ways, new ways, different ways, changing ways, impossible ways! Tom, give Simon your coat.

Tom: Sorry?

Max: Look at that jumper – Cashmere is it? Very warm. Si needs a coat. He's cold.

Lilly: Shone, what do I do?!

Max: I'm going to show Tom how the warmth of human kindness can be a hundred thousand times stronger than the warmth of a material possession. It can get so hot it burns!

Tom gives Si his coat.

What are you doing?

Tom: Giving him the coat. He can have it.

Si: Actually, I do kinda need a coat.

Max: Don't fucking give it to him!

Tom: You just asked me to.

Si: Oi, if the man wants to give me his coat – !

Max: You bought that jacket. You earned it.

Tom: I can buy another one.

Max: Come on! Where's the incentive for him to go out and work if you give him your jacket?!

Tom: What can I say? You caught me in a good mood. I'm feeling generous.

Si's put the coat on.

It looks good on him.

Si: Cheers, bruv!

Max: Do you want him to be a lazy little scrounger his whole life?

Si: What was the last job *you* had?

Max: Well if a bit of Tory paternalism helps you sleep at night. My concern for human welfare extends a little bit beyond Si's wardrobe. And so, I think you'll find, does Ash's. Ash, come on, let's go.

Beat.

Tom motions Ash to go on, speak.

Ash: Max, I'm going to stay with Tom for a few weeks, see how it goes and that.

Max: Fine. Come to Trafalgar, catch the train in the morning.

Ash: We've got tickets for tonight.

Max: Two tickets.

Ash: Yeah, Max.

Ash goes to put an arm on Max's shoulder.

Max steps back.

Max: *No touching, Ash.*

He looks at Tom.

But Tom looks back defiantly at Max.

He knows.

And you still want to take him away with you?

Tom puts his arm round Ash.

Beat.

Ash: I'll come back and visit you guys here.

Si: Um, no you won't.

Ash: I will man, I promise.

Si: Yeah... I was kinda trying to find a good time to bring it up... I was gonna wait till we all got pissed, actually, but... They sold it.

Max: What?

Si: The flat. I saw online. They sold it. I thought you knew, man. Ain't that why you stashed the tv?

Max: Fuck that! We we're not going anywhere. Squatters' fucking rights! Actually, no, fuck it. It doesn't matter. Everything's going to change. It's all going to change after tonight. The spark! Just you fucking wait. Switch on the news and watch!

Si: Max, bruv... a spark can set things alight. Yeah. Sure. Or it can just *-psht*. Nuttin'. And if a lighter ain't lighting you just throw it away, yeah. Move on to next one, you get me... Unless it's like a Zippo. Then obviously you refill it. Actually, don't listen to me, I'm chatting shit. What I mean is...

Thinks.

The problem yeah is... that toasted sandwich maker is the best fucking toasted sandwich maker on the market and I wanted it. I wanted it ...

Beat.

(The jacket.) Mm. Smells good as well. What perfume you use?

Max: Where we gonna go?

Si: There's that protest up in that forest near Durham. I might go check that out for a bit, innit. Fancy a bit of old school stuff. Chaining myself to trees by the neck. A bit of auto-erotic tree-hugging.

Max: Maybe you should find yourself a man like Uncle Tom here.

Si: Hey, don't cuss Uncle Tom. Man just gave me his jacket.

Max: I didn't mean Tom. Wikipedia it, Si.

Silence.

If Tom understood that, he ignored it.

Tom gets a text.

Tom: Taxi...

Ash goes to hug goodbye to Lilly, Shona.

Ash: Where are you guys gonna go?

Lilly: We'll be fine. Take care, hun. Call us.

He goes to give Si a handshake.

Si: I'll come visit you in fresher's week.

Ash: Yeah? You'll come?

Si: A pure week of eighteen year-old girls that've just left home getting completely off their faces? Yeah, I'll come. (*To Tom.*) And mate, if you got any other garms going spare...

Ash approaches Max, but he goes off into the kitchen, turns his back to them.

Ash hovers... then Tom starts to lead him out.

Max: Oi, wait.

Max walks over to them.

Shakes Ash's hand.

He looks at Tom, offers his hand.

Tom shakes it.

Suddenly Max kisses Tom.

Ash: Max! What the fuck you doing?

Shona: He literally can't help himself!

Lilly: Shona, please, I'm trying to tell you, he's – it's – he's got –

She whispers into Shona's ear.

Shona look softens, turns to concern.

Ash: Tom?!

Tom has started gasping, clutching his throat.

Lilly: What's wrong?

Ash: Must be peanuts. He's allergic to peanuts but –

Max smacks his lips then licks them slowly.

Lilly picks up the open jar of peanut butter Max has left in the kitchen.

Ash reaches for Tom's bag.

But Max swipes it up, goes and holds it out the window like he did the TV.

Ash: Max, his EpiPen!

Max: How much?

Ash: Max, he's in anaphylactic shock!

Max: How much?

Si: Come man, you ain't fucking serious?!

Lilly: Max, sweetheart, you need to give that to us.

Max: Why? This is how the market works! This is the world! *His* world! Don't come a step closer, or I'll fucking drop it out I swear!

Ash: Max, please. That ain't a TV man, he could fucking die!

Max: *How... much...?*

Ash: Anything! I'll give you anything!

Tom gasping...

Max: Come here!

Ash come up to Max.

The EpiPen aloft in one hand, he grabs Ash's crotch in the other.

A beat like this, then he drops the EpiPen on the floor.

Ash scoops it up, who rushes to administer it to Tom.

He hesitates.

Ash: I've never done it before...

Lilly: Do you know what to do though?

Ash: Yeah, yeah, I think . He's shown me. You just...

Max: Everything is part of the revolution, Lils. Everything is proving a point. Otherwise, what is the point?) Right. I'm off to Trafalgar. Now, who's coming?

Silence.

Who's coming?!

Lilly holds her head in her hand; Shona holding her – a look of pity?

Si literally too wrapped up in his coat.

Ash administers the EpiPen.

Tom starts to stabilise.

Celine: I'll come.

Max looks round at her.

She walks up to him.

Lilly: Celine, hun, this isn't real, it's –

Celine: It is. It has to be. It's all I've got! I'll come.

Max looks at her.

Pulls out the lighter from his pocket.

Looks from it to her...

Suddenly pushes her to the floor.

Si: Easy, man!

Max: (To Celine.) I don't exist! I'm a flushed out foetus, dead, never fully formed into a proper human being but somehow grown large. Whatever you're trying to grasp from me, or cling onto, you'll burn yourself because I am pure symbol. It's in me and I'm in it. Up and down, down and up, dust to dust, boom to bust, boom to bust to boom to bust to boom to bust!

He grabs the kettle, stands up on Celine's back, pours liquid from the kettle over himself.

He takes out the lighter, lights it, holds it up.

Lilly: Max!

Blackout.