

The Living Dead

Episode 1

By

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FADE IN:

1 INT. ESTHER'S CAR - MORNING

1

Esther, forty; smart, ready to attack the day, drives in rush hour traffic.

ESTHER  
(practicing)  
I'm all over the new  
syllabus...spec...I'm fully  
acquainted with the new spec. Am  
fully up to date with the  
comparative texts.

She stops at a junction, watching the school children cross. Driving on.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
(practicing)  
I'm in a position where I can  
support my colleagues in  
selecting appropriate texts.  
Whilst at the same time being  
inclusive. Responsive! Responsive  
to those students...

She stops at the traffic lights. A car pulls up next to her. A YOUNG MAN is having an animated conversation on his mobile. Distracted, she stares at him. She catches his eye and looks away.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
Whilst being responsive to those  
students who...

She looks at him again.

Still on his mobile, he smiles at her.

She looks away, agitated. She turns off the engine, unbuckles her seat belt and climbs out.

2 EXT. MAIN ROAD - MORNING

2

She walks over to the car and gently TAPS on his window.

He smiles, surprised. He is about to open his window when she BANGS on it. He is frozen. She BANGS harder and repeatedly.

ESTHER  
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

BANG. BANG. BANG. The window CRACKS.

She tries the door. It opens. The car suddenly accelerates, door open, SCREECHING and BEEPING past the traffic coming from the junction.

The lights turn GREEN. BEEPS from angry motorists.

DRIVER (O.S.)  
Ya fuckin' Prick!

Cars swerve past her.

She looks at her hand; cut and bleeding.

3

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

3

Esther's bleeding hand writes on the whiteboard; 'Great Expectations'; 'Themes', 'Motifs' 'Symbols'.

The Year Ten class stare indifferently at her back.

At the front MO and CHRISTOPHER, whisper, conspire and play on Christopher's mobile.

She faces the class.

ESTHER  
So. Who can remind me of the themes? Come on my Lovelies! I know you're only pretending not to like Dickens.

Blank faces. RALPH's hand goes up.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
Ralph?

RALPH  
Is it a novel, Miss?

ESTHER  
Yes it is a novel, Ralph. But that's not the theme, is it?

LIN's hand goes up.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
Lin?

LIN  
Is it the Human Condition?

ESTHER  
Most novels are about the Human Condition, Lin. Society? Class? Criminality? Deceit? Ring a bell? 'Oh yeah! Now I remember, Miss!'

LAUGHTER from the class.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
Phone please, Christopher!

CHRISTOPHER  
Ahh, Esther!

ESTHER  
That's Mrs. Keener to you,  
Christopher. Phone?

CHRISTOPHER  
Are you still married if your  
husband walks out, Miss? I mean,  
Missus.

Silence.

ESTHER  
Phone!

CHRISTOPHER  
But I need it.

ESTHER  
You can have it back at the end  
of the day.

Esther holds out her hand.

CHRISTOPHER  
But my Ma, Miss. She needs to  
call me.

ESTHER  
Phone! Now!

CHRISTOPHER  
She's in hospital, Miss.

Esther's hand remains outstretched.

Christopher offers the phone. As Esther goes to take it, he  
withdraws it.

NERVOUS LAUGHTER from the class.

Again Christopher offers the phone, again he withdraws his  
hand.

More NERVOUS LAUGHTER.

Esther stares at him. He meets her stare, smirking.

The door opens. STEVE DALTON walks in, his authority  
bringing silence to the room.

STEVE DALTON  
Mrs. Keener. I'm here as your relief.

ESTHER  
Thank you, Mr Dalton.

Agitated, Esther walks to the door.

STEVE DALTON  
(whispers)  
Your jacket, Esther?

She returns to the chair for her jacket. She marches to the door.

STEVE DALTON (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Break a leg.

4 INT. CORRIDOR - MORNING

4

Outside the classroom. Eyes closed, her hand on her stomach, Esther breathes deeply, in and out.

STEVE DALTON (O.S.)  
Mobile device please,  
Christopher. Thank you.

ESTHER  
'I am eternally loved by the universe and everything is working in my favour. I am eternally loved...'Oh shut the fuck up, Esther.

5 INT. RECEPTION - MORNING

5

Esther sits outside the Principal's office. LAUGHTER from inside.

The door opens.

Esther stands.

ADRIENNE, mid twenties, walks out, shaking hands with MR. TAYLOR who is still laughing.

MR. TAYLOR  
Thank you so much Adrienne.

She smiles at Esther.

MR. TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
With you in a moment, Mrs. Keener.

ADRIENNE  
Good luck, Esther.

Esther smiles. Adrienne glides away. Esther's smile disappears.

6

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

6

Spacious.

Mr. Taylor, MRS. WRIGHT and TREVOR WARREN, a middle aged Jim Morrison, sit behind a large polished table. Esther sits confidently on the opposite side.

ESTHER  
...whilst at the same time being responsive to those students/

TREVOR  
/Clients.

ESTHER  
Excuse me?

TREVOR  
Clients. Not students.

ESTHER  
I'm old fashioned, Trevor. I still think of them as students.

MR TAYLOR  
Let's address the Principal as 'Mr Warren' please, Esther.

TREVOR  
Me and Esther are old friends. We won't penalise her for informality.

ESTHER  
To those clients whose academic ambitions may be more modest.

TREVOR  
And you've been with us for seven and half years, Esther.

ESTHER  
Eight. We arrived at the same time, Mr Warren.

MRS. WRIGHT  
With a six month hiatus.

ESTHER  
Hiatus?

MRS. WRIGHT

Leave.

ESTHER

Yes. I had a six month hiatus.

MR. TAYLOR

What happened to your hand?

ESTHER

DIY accident.

MR. TAYLOR

Looks fresh.

ESTHER

I'm fully versed in the new assessment objectives/

TREVOR

/What's your favourite book, Esther? Sorry going off script slightly. Like to keep my prospective Heads of Department on their toes.

ESTHER

'The Pickwick Papers' or something.

TREVOR

Or something.

ESTHER

'The Pickwick Papers'.

TREVOR

And you feel that you can commit one hundred per cent to the challenge?

MRS. WRIGHT

Your difficulties are behind you?

ESTHER

Difficulties?

Silence.

She closes her eyes and puts her hand on her stomach, breathing deeply. She opens her eyes. The panel stare in bemusement.

TREVOR

You were talking about Assessment Objectives?

ESTHER

Yes. I'm fully versed in the new assessment objectives; one to four.

She struggles to regain her flow as the panel take notes.

7 INT. ESTHER'S CAR - AFTERNOON 7

Car. Radio on, Esther drives. She glances to her left.

Esther's POV. The street sign says 'Hilda's Junction'.

Car. Turning the radio off, she brings the car to a stop at a zebra crossing.

8 EXT. STREET - HILDA'S JUNCTION - AFTERNOON 8

Her car is stopped by the zebra. No one is crossing.

9 INT. ESTHER'S CAR - AFTERNOON 9

She stares. Lost.

Behind her, a BEEP.

She drives on.

10 INT. CAFE - AFTERNOON 10

Esther sits opposite JOE, thirties. They nurse their coffees, occasionally making eye contact.

JOE

...My first role was to oversee the restructuring. Which translated as 'fire lots of people'. So having spent three months firing everyone, they now want to move me to another department. And you know what they want me to do?

ESTHER

Restructure?

They laugh.

JOE

I'm like the Donald Trump of the charity sector.

She laughs.

ESTHER

You're talking a lot, Joe. That normally means you want to say something.

JOE  
Can't I just tell my...

ESTHER  
Wife? Ex wife?

JOE  
Not every conversation needs to  
be decoded, Esther. Can't I just  
tell you what I'm up to?

Silence.

JOE (CONT'D)  
And what are you up to?

ESTHER  
Nothing really.

JOE  
Did you interview for Head of  
English?  
(She nods.)  
And?

ESTHER  
Find out tomorrow.

JOE  
You deserve a break.

ESTHER  
We both do.

He touches her battered hand. She moves it away.

JOE  
How's your anger management these  
days?

ESTHER  
You normally talk about third  
world sustainability before  
breaking any news.

JOE  
Have I mentioned third world  
sustainability?

ESTHER  
I'm sure it's on the tip of your  
tongue.

He takes a letter from inside his jacket and passes it  
across the table.

JOE  
It's from the solicitor.

ESTHER  
Are you divorcing me?

JOE  
No.

ESTHER  
Everything I have is yours, Joe.

JOE  
You don't have anything, Es.

The letter remains untouched on the table.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Aren't you going to read it?

She picks it up and reads.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Well?

ESTHER  
You want another coffee?

She puts the letter on the table.

JOE  
Aren't you going to say something?

ESTHER  
Such as?

JOE  
I don't know.

He picks up the letter.

JOE (CONT'D)  
For fuck's sake, Esther!

ESTHER  
The letter's six weeks old.

JOE  
I wasn't going to show you. I didn't know how you'd react. I should have guessed you'd say what you always do. Fuck all! Do you even care?

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Say Something!

Looking around the cafe at the watching eyes.



16 INT. MIA'S CAR - MORNING

16

In the distance stands HMP Kirkham. She turns down the music.

MIA

'My current situation is not my permanent destination. My current situation is not my permanent destination. My current situation is not my permanent destination. I believe in myself and the decisions I make.'

17 EXT. HMP KIRKHAM - MORNING

17

ROBERT WILKIE, forties, stands alone, shivering, holding a back pack.

A Kia stops. Mia climbs out. They stare at each other.

ROBERT

Free at last. Free at last. Free at last.

MIA

Hello Rob.

ROBERT

Have to get used to being called Rob again. I got quite fond of Prisoner C S Six Eight Zero Eight.

MIA

I had to drop Michael off.

ROBERT

You'd think after four years my wife might be on time.

MIA

Some things never change.

ROBERT

Hello.

They stare, not embracing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

How is Michael?

MIA

He's excited.

ROBERT

How's Nat?

MIA  
Tall.

ROBERT  
And you?

MIA  
Cold.

ROBERT  
It's all starts here, Mia. Re-starts.

MIA  
Well, put your bag in the back, let's restart the car and go home.

18      INT. MIA'S CAR - MORNING

18

Robert climbs in. He turns on the de-mister. Cold air BLASTS OUT. She turns it off.

MIA  
You won't find any warmth in here. Cold air in the winter. Warm air in the summer.

She drives. He looks back at the prison.

ROBERT  
What happened to the Merc?

MIA  
They took it back.

ROBERT  
You never said.

MIA  
You had enough to worry about.

ROBERT  
Thought Bryan would have let you keep it.

MIA  
It's a company car. You didn't work for the company. So...

ROBERT  
But it's my company.

MIA  
Was.

ROBERT

Is. I don't care what the share certificates say. It's still my company. Okay? I'll talk to Bryan. Can't have you riding around in a Kia.

MIA

Hey! It's Mia's Kia.

ROBERT

You bought it cause it rhymes?

She laughs.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It'll be back to normal soon.

MIA

Things are normal. It's just a different 'normal', that's all.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, Mia.

She brakes suddenly.

MIA

I don't want to hear you say that anymore. You've said enough 'sorrys'. I'm sick of hearing that word.

(pointing to Kirkham)

How many of them are sorry?

ROBERT

Most of them.

MIA

Not as sorry as you. Anyway it was a rhetorical question. No more 'S' word. You hear me, Rob?

(No response)

I'm serious. Do you understand me, Robert Wilkie?

(He nods.)

Let's go home.

She drives.

The car pulls into the drive of a semi detached. Mia climbs out of the car and walks towards the front door.

MIA  
 ...You know what Dad's like?  
 Always believed hanging was too  
 moderate.

Robert climbs out of the car and stares at the house.

Mia unlocks the front door. Robert slowly follows her. She turns around and faces him; not sure what to say.

MIA (CONT'D)  
 You're home.

The door swings open.

ROBERT  
 Christ!

20

INT. MIA AND ROBERT'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

20

Hall. They walk in. Robert stares at the wall.

A mural stretches across the wall. Vibrant colours exploding across the hall. It's 'far-out'.

ROBERT  
 You've redecorated.

MIA  
 If you don't like it, blame Nat.  
 You want a cup of tea?

He walks through the hall transfixed. Mia walks into the kitchen.

ROBERT  
 What is it?

Kitchen. Mia fills the kettle and sorts the mugs, teabags etc.

MIA  
 I have no idea. She said she wanted to bring light into the house, challenge the status quo or some such.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
 And you let her?

MIA  
 She certainly challenged the status quo.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
 She was drawing pictures of Lady Gaga last time I saw her.

MIA  
Well, it's fair to say, she's  
expanded her repertoire.

She walks back into the hall.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Do you like it?

ROBERT  
No.

MIA  
In which case, I wouldn't go  
upstairs if I were you.

ROBERT  
If she wanted light why didn't  
she just flip a switch?

MIA  
She needed some light, Rob.

ROBERT  
I pictured this moment so many  
times.

MIA  
And?

ROBERT  
The walls were darker.

MIA  
I'm sorry it's a disappointment.

ROBERT  
Its not a disappointment. It's  
just different.

He looks at a photo; Mia, Michael and Natalie.

MIA  
That was taken at Alton Towers.  
That's not a smile by the way.  
That's terror. Michael's idea,  
naturally.

ROBERT  
Happy family. I missed them, Mia.  
I missed you.

MIA  
It's been hard. Things will get  
better. Stop being so serious.

She returns to the kitchen.

Kitchen. She pours the hot water into the mugs.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
The house is different somehow.

MIA  
Messier?

ROBERT (O.S.)  
Tidier.

MIA  
I think it's safe to say that  
your children have contributed  
nothing to that state of affairs.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
Would have been nice to have seen  
them.

Mia squeezes the teabag a little too hard. She walks to the hallway.

Hallway.

MIA  
Let's not go there, Rob. Not  
today. We weren't bringing our  
children to prison. We agreed.

ROBERT  
(beat)  
It's so quiet.

She returns to the kitchen.

Kitchen.

MIA  
It won't be when Mike and Nat get  
back.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
I haven't had quiet for a long  
time.

Mia walks back into the hall, armed with two mugs of tea.

Hall.

MIA  
Are you planning on camping in  
the hallway?

She hands him his tea.

ROBERT  
I'm just feeling my way back.

MIA  
Terrified of finding more of  
Nat's artistic horrors?

They CLINK their cups.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Back from the war, Rob.

He stares at his tea.

ROBERT  
I take it black. Sorry.

MIA  
Since when? Silly question. I'll  
make another.

ROBERT  
It's fine. Really.

She takes his cup and goes into the kitchen.

Kitchen.

MIA  
Take advantage. Today I'm your  
Butler. Tomorrow, you're on your  
own.

Rob creeps in.

ROBERT  
She hasn't touched the kitchen  
then?

Mia pours a fresh cup of tea.

MIA  
The kitchen, the living room and  
my bedroom were out of bounds. It  
wasn't total anarchy.

ROBERT  
Your bedroom?

MIA  
Let's not rush things, Rob.

ROBERT  
How is Nat? Really?

MIA  
She's okay.

ROBERT  
And Mike?

She hands him his tea.

MIA

It's hard to get a word out of Mike. I think he's rehearsing for adolescence. But they're okay. They're resilient. You'll see them soon. We'll go out tomorrow night and celebrate. Today's a happy day, remember?

She goes to leave the kitchen. He grabs her hand.

ROBERT

Shouldn't we talk or something, Mia?

MIA

No. Why don't you collect Michael from school? I've got some work to do.

ROBERT

Feels weird.

She toasts him with her mug.

21

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

21

Esther takes a drink from a mug of coffee designed with flowers in a childish drawing. She examines it quizzically, sat next to Trevor on the sofa.

TREVOR

Bethan made me promise.

ESTHER

And you can't break a promise.

TREVOR

She may be six but she knows how to manipulate her father. Plus she's doing Karate.

ESTHER

More of a threat than a promise?

They laugh.

He stands and meanders through his office.

TREVOR

The Board were very impressed by Adrienne, Esther.

Silence.

ESTHER

She's been here six months.

TREVOR

She's been here eighteen months.

ESTHER

I've been here eight years.

(beat)

With a six month hiatus.

TREVOR

You're angry.

ESTHER

You're very observant, Trevor.

TREVOR

I sometimes have the impression that you've fallen out of love with teaching, Es.

ESTHER

Intuitive too. I can see why they made you Head.

TREVOR

Have you ever considered making changes?

ESTHER

Are you firing me?

TREVOR

No. I'm just thinking of your welfare.

ESTHER

I'm grateful for your concern.

TREVOR

I am concerned.

ESTHER

If you're back to calling me 'Es, can I revert to calling you 'Trev'?

He sits behind his desk.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

When I returned, I became invisible and you became Deputy Head.

TREVOR

You're not invisible, Esther.

ESTHER

At first everyone avoided me. These days they just look right through me. And now you're Head and I'm still invisible. I guess you can't really have an invisible Head of Department, can you?

TREVOR

You got the job, Esther.

ESTHER

What?

TREVOR

Her potential versus your experience. I had the casting vote.

A moment between them.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'm sure Adrienne will give you her full support.

Esther smiles.

22     INT. RECEPTION - MORNING     22

Closing Trevor's office door, Esther closes her eyes and places her hand on her stomach, breathing in deeply.

23     EXT. PRIMARY SCHOOL - AFTERNOON     23

Robert's stands nervously, slightly apart from the other PARENTS, who stare at him when he isn't looking.

MICHAEL, eleven, walks towards the gate. He smiles when he sees Robert.

Robert clocks him and a smile breaks out.

Other kids are clocking glances at Michael. He stops smiling and puts his head down and walks towards Robert. Stopping abruptly in front of him.

MICHAEL

Hi.

ROBERT

Hi Mike. How are you?

MICHAEL

Alright.

ROBERT

You've grown. A lot.

Michael shrugs.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Wasn't sure if I'd recognise you.  
Wasn't sure if you'd recognise  
me.

MICHAEL

Weren't expecting you to collect  
me.

ROBERT

Was your mum's idea. Back in the  
house five minutes and she wants  
me out already.

MICHAEL

I normally go home on my own.

ROBERT

Not cramping your style, am I,  
mate?

MICHAEL

It's a bit weird.

They walk. Robert struggles to keep up with Michael.

ROBERT

Have you missed me?

Michael shrugs.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Have I changed much?

MICHAEL

Lost weight.

ROBERT

Needed to lose a few pounds.  
How's the football?

MICHAEL

Don't play.

ROBERT

Your letters said you were in the  
school team.

MICHAEL

Mum said I should try and keep  
you happy.

ROBERT

And piano? You given that up too?

Michael shrugs.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
 Sorry. Hassling you already.  
 You're so tall. I can't believe  
 it. We can go Liverpool on  
 Saturday. If you want.

MICHAEL  
 You haven't got a season ticket  
 anymore.

ROBERT  
 I'll get us tickets.

MICHAEL  
 They're expensive.

ROBERT  
 We'll go watch Tranmere then.

MICHAEL  
 You're alright.

Robert takes his arm. They stop.

ROBERT  
 Do you want a hug? I mean I've  
 not seen you for four years,  
 Mike.

MICHAEL  
 There's people around.

Michael walks on, followed by Robert.

24

INT. MIA AND ROBERT'S HOUSE

24

Kitchen. Mia is consulting with NATALIE, seventeen. Her  
 boyfriend, NIALL struggles to hide his boredom.

NATALIE  
 Mum, he's not going to affect the  
 Fen Shui.

MIA  
 It's a family occasion.

The front door OPENS and SLAMS shut. Natalie freezes.  
 Michael's footsteps POUND up the stairs.

Robert creeps in.

Everyone stares at him.

ROBERT  
 Nat! You're...grown up.

NATALIE  
 I am eighteen, Dad/

MIA  
/Seventeen.

They stare at each other.

NATALIE  
No tears, Nat! No tears, Nat! You  
look really well, Dad.

ROBERT  
You're a terrible liar.

Trying not to cry but failing.

NATALIE  
I said I wouldn't cry.

MIA  
He's been admiring your art work.

NATALIE  
What do you think?

ROBERT  
Speechless.

She laughs through her tears.

MIA  
Oh. This is Niall.

Niall and Robert shakes hands.

NATALIE  
He's my...friend/

MIA  
/Boy friend.

ROBERT  
Hello Niall.

NIALL  
Alright, Mr. Wilkie? What was it  
like inside? You meet any 'G's?

ROBERT  
There were plenty of 'G's.

NIALL  
Far out. You look different to  
the pictures Nat showed me.

ROBERT  
Thinner?

NIALL  
Older.

MIA

Thank you, Niall. We were mid discussion, Rob. We were discussing our celebration tomorrow night. And Niall is/

NATALIE

/coming/

MIA

/Not coming. Nothing personal, Niall. You're just not family/

NATALIE

/He's my family/

MIA

/He's your boyfriend, not husband/

NATALIE

/Family is whoever you love/

MIA

/Family is whoever you marry/

ROBERT

/He can come!

Silence.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Sorry.

NATALIE

Mum doesn't like Niall.

ROBERT

I think she doesn't like you having a boyfriend just yet.

MIA

I've grown used to speaking for myself thank you, Robert.

Mia rubs Rob's arm.

MIA (CONT'D)

Try and be happy when you see everyone, Rob. It's supposed to be a celebration.

ROBERT

Is a celebration appropriate Mia?

MIA

Yes.

Feeling more in control, Natalie embraces Robert. Mia watches.

MIA (CONT'D)

It's nice to have you back, Rob.

Feeling excluded, she walks out.

25     INT. ESTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT     25

Esther sleeps. TALK comes from her radio. She wakes suddenly.

26     INT. ESTHER'S BATHROOM - NIGHT     26

She PEES. From downstairs there is TALKING.

27     INT. ESTHER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT     27

She walks in.

Still detritus litters the room. In the midst, sitting crossed legged on the floor in his Everton pyjamas is ASHLEY, seven years old (the boy in the photo on the mug), bathed in the TV light, watching the news on the television.

Esther stares in shock.

ESTHER

Ashley?

Nothing.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

Ash?

ASHLEY

Hi Mum. What's poppin'?

ESTHER

What you doing, love?

ASHLEY

Watching telly.

ESTHER

But it's the news.

ASHLEY

I like the news.

ESTHER

Shouldn't you be in bed?

ASHLEY

Shouldn't you be in bed?

ESTHER  
I couldn't sleep

ASHLEY  
*I* couldn't sleep.

ESTHER  
You'll be tired in the morning,  
love.

ASHLEY  
*You'll* be tired in the morning.

ESTHER  
Are you just going to repeat  
everything I say?

ASHLEY  
Are *you* just going to repeat  
everything *I* say?

Silence, but for TV.

ESTHER  
Would you like some tea?

ASHLEY  
I don't drink tea.

ESTHER  
Yes. I know. Orange or something?

ASHLEY  
Nah.

ESTHER  
You want something else on?

ASHLEY  
Nah.

ESTHER  
You mind if I sit here?

ASHLEY  
Cool.

Esther moves some crap from the floor and sits cross legged next to Ashley. Her eyes constantly fixed on him.

Esther wakes up on the floor. Alone. She looks around the room for Ashley. She drags herself up.

29        INT. ESTHER'S HALLWAY - MORNING

29

ESTHER  
Ashley? Ash?

Nothing.

30        INT. STAFF ROOM - MORNING

30

Esther pulls letters and magazines from her pigeonhole and throws them into the bin, unopened.

Adrienne strolls in and is greeted with hugs from her COLLEAGUES. She walks over to Esther.

ADRIENNE  
Congratulations, Honey.

She offers her hand to Esther. They shake.

ADRIENNE (CONT'D)  
They offered me Deputy Head of Department. Trevor wants me on the ticket in case you mess up. Joke! But seriously, Es, I am your Number Two. We have a Departmental Heads meeting tomorrow morning. Don't worry I'm all over the calendar. A celebration this evening? Fizz and chips. It would be lovely if you would come. I can pretend to be happy for you, Esther. I'm joking! See you later, Boss.

She scurries off.

Armed with books, documents and bags, Steve Dalton approaches.

STEVE DALTON  
Don't know how you did it, Esther. Everyone's money was on Adrienne.

ESTHER  
Is that a 'congratulations', Steve?

STEVE DALTON  
Probably.

ESTHER  
You got five minutes?

STEVE DALTON  
For you Esther. I got three.

He hands her his books.

STEVE DALTON (CONT'D)  
I was en route to my classroom  
before I got all congratulatory.

He walks. She follows.

31 INT. CORRIDOR - MORNING

31

Esther and Mr. Dalton slalom past the pupils.

ESTHER  
As Head of Theology, I thought  
you might be the best person to  
talk to. You've studied about  
souls and spirits. Different  
religions have different  
theories, I guess?

STEVE DALTON  
I guess.

ESTHER  
What are the theories?

STEVE DALTON  
The bell's going to go in five  
minutes.

ESTHER  
Do you believe?

STEVE DALTON  
You know what I believe? I  
believe I have to improve the  
Year Eleven's mock results. I  
believe the Ofsted Report gave  
the Theology Department a good  
caning. I believe Trevor will  
strike without mercy if I don't  
improve our grade average for  
Year Nine.

ESTHER  
People see ghosts and apparitions  
though?

STEVE DALTON  
For that you need to speak to  
Miss Williams in Psychology.

ESTHER  
Thanks for your insight, Steve.

STEVE DALTON  
I'm not the Dalai Lama, Esther.

She thrusts the books at him.

STEVE DALTON (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I'm being insensitive.

ESTHER  
He's been released.

STEVE DALTON  
Who? Oh! They weren't going to lock him up for ever.

ESTHER  
It was supposed to be ten years. Not four. Four years! It took me four years to get a teaching degree.

STEVE DALTON  
But that was four years well spent. Wasn't it?

ESTHER  
Why didn't they just give him a fuckin' gap year and be done with it.

STEVE DALTON  
You should talk to someone.

ESTHER  
I'm talking to you, Steve.

STEVE DALTON  
You know, someone professional, like Victim Support.

ESTHER  
I wasn't the victim.

STEVE DALTON  
Do you need some time off?

ESTHER  
(shouting)  
I've had time off!

PUPILS in the corridor stare at her.

STEVE DALTON  
If you do need to talk...

ESTHER  
You know anyone?

She turns and walk back through the corridor.

STEVE DALTON  
 You want to know what I believe?  
 There's nothing. It's a cold  
 world out there.

ESTHER  
 I gathered.

32 EXT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

32

A freezing Robert in an ill fitting suit practices his happy poses. Natalie, holding hands with Niall, laughs. Michael is bored.

Mia pays the cab and walks towards them. She takes a moment; exhales, smiles, holds her hand out for Robert. He takes it. She looks at the assembled family.

MIA  
 We're happy.

NATALIE  
 Is that an order, Mum?

MIA  
 Yes!

33 INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

33

APPLAUSE. Led by Mia.

A few FRIENDS and FAMILY stand around a table 'beaming' at Robert . Some sincerely. He is horrified.

NATALIE  
 (whispers)  
 I think you have to make a  
 speech, Dad.

MICHAEL  
 Can I go home?

ROBERT  
 I've not prepared anything. Thank  
 you for welcoming me and  
 forgiving me and/

MIA  
 /And there's lots of wine and no  
 one is leaving until the last  
 bottle is drunk. And, welcome  
 home, Rob!

Robert and Mia embrace and the small crowd CLAP.

34      INT. THE WHITE HART - EVENING

34

LAUGHTER. Adrienne, armed with a selfie stick, in the middle of her colleagues, poses for the world's biggest selfie. Esther on the edge of the crowd, smiles

Esther, laughing, returns to the bar, replacing her empty glass. She watches the selfies continue.

35      INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

35

CHARLIE, seventies, pours wine for Robert and Mia.

CHARLIE

Welcome back to the land of the living, Robert.

ROBERT

Thanks Charlie.

CHARLIE

It's wonderful to see you.

He shakes his hand.

ROBERT

Thank you Charlie.

CHARLIE

Now. The first thing you'll do if you have any sense, is seek forgiveness.

MIA

(whispers)

Dad!

ROBERT

What's done can't be undone, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I meant from your wife.

MIA

(whispers)

Dad!

CHARLIE

She's been through hell.

MIA

I managed.

CHARLIE

Heroically.

BRYAN

That's because she's a Superhero.

BRYAN, fifty, tall and confident, pulls up a seat between Mia and Robert.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Welcome back, partner.

He embraces Robert, then squeezes Mia's hand. Natalie glares at her mum who pretends not to notice.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

I wanted to take you to the pub.  
But you know what Mia would have  
done to my bollocks, lad.

CHARLIE

Language please, Bryan.

BRYAN

Sorry Charlie.

MIA

He's right though.

They laugh.

CHARLIE

So what are you going to do with  
yourself, Robert?

MIA

He's going to say hello to all  
our friends and generally be a  
fabulous host.

CHARLIE

I mean is he going to get a job?

BRYAN

He's just got out of 'nick',  
Charlie, give him a minute.

MIA

Dad! Tonight we're going to enjoy  
ourselves even if it kills me.  
Has everyone ordered starters?

CHARLIE

Why doesn't he work for you,  
Bryan?

BRYAN

He's going to be swamped with  
offers, Charles.

Niall pours Michael a wine.

MIA

Niall! Please don't give Michael any wine.

CHARLIE

He can work as a Security Guard or something.

MIA

Dad! It was his company. Natalie, why don't you get the waiter?

NATALIE

I'm busy.

CHARLIE

Not anymore. He sold his shares, didn't he? Maybe he can buy them back. Can you be a company director if you have a criminal record?

MIA

Dad, will you go and find the waiter and take Michael with you?

MICHAEL

Why do I have to go?

MIA

Life skills, Michael.

NATALIE

First he has to get a life.

MICHAEL

Fuck off! Sorry Grandad.

Charlie and Michael go off in search of a waiter. Mia downs her glass of wine.

ROBERT

Not sure what's the least pleasant; Charlie or prison? Sorry, Mia.

Bryan pours half his wine into Mia's glass. Robert watches this gesture, perplexed.

BRYAN

Bet you've not see Chardonnay for a while.

ROBERT

The wine list in Kirkham was criminal.

BRYAN

We never forgot you, lad.

MIA

You're the 'Carey', he's the  
'Wilkie'. Without him 'Wilkie and  
Carey' would just be/

NATALIE

/A C-word.

Niall laughs.

BRYAN

Natalie's been attending charm  
school whilst you were inside,  
Rob.

MIA

Maybe Natalie should go easy on  
the wine.

NATALIE

It's a celebration, Mum.

MIA

Let's not embarrass your father,  
Nat.

NATALIE

I think Dad was embarrassed the  
moment he arrived.

ROBERT

What I did/

MIA

/We know what you did, Rob.

NATALIE

Why don't you let him talk/

MIA

/There's been enough talking,  
Natalie.

BRYAN

Come and see me tomorrow, Rob.  
I'll tell Harvey you're coming.  
He's our receptionist.

ROBERT

We have a receptionist?

NATALIE

A lot's been happening whilst you  
were away, Dad.

The Waiter arrives with Charlie and Michael.

MIA

So! Whose having a starter?

36 INT. THE WHITE HART - EVENING

36

Alone at the bar Esther watches.

Esther's POV. Adrienne laughs and flirts with her colleagues.

White Hart. En route to the bathroom, Steve Dalton bumps into SAMI, forties and pissed. He spills most his pint on Steve, then stumbles to the bar.

37 EXT. RESTAURANT CAR PARK - EVENING

37

Robert smokes a ciggie.

Mia, slightly pissed, pops her head around the door.

MIA

Been looking for you, Rob. I see you've taken up smoking at the age of forty eight.

ROBERT

I took up smoking at the age of forty five. One year after going to prison at the age of forty four.

She takes the cigarette from him and takes a drag.

MIA

Any other habits I should be aware of?

ROBERT

I thought about you. A lot.

MIA

And what did you think?

ROBERT

Remember how sexy we used to be? Christ! I fancied you. Still fancy you.

MIA

After four years in prison I suspect your standards have dropped a little.

ROBERT  
No. Have yours?  
(beat)  
I love you, Mia.

MIA  
I think you should go easy on the  
wine. See you in there.

She walks to the door. He doesn't follow.

ROBERT  
Is it okay if you don't?

She stops.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
I don't want to go back.

MIA  
Won't it look slightly odd if  
you're not there?

ROBERT  
It's just a bit intense, Mia.  
Sorry. I've been surrounded by  
people for four years. I'd just  
like not to be crowded for a  
while.

MIA  
Okay, Rob. Okay.

She returns to him and takes the ciggie from him and takes  
another drag. And another.

MIA (CONT'D)  
No, not okay. Not okay at all. I  
know this is hard for you, Rob.  
But this isn't for you. It's for  
me. I refuse to be a victim. I  
will not be ashamed. Not anymore.  
Not over something you did.

He's stunned. She returns the ciggie to him.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Oh. Have I hurt your pride? And  
what about my pride? Michael's  
pride? Natalie's pride? Her  
boyfriend, who you said who could  
come tonight, is only with her  
'cause he thinks you're some sort  
of 'G'. He'll probably dump her  
now you're out. And Michael? Top  
to bottom in four years.  
(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

And whilst you've spent four years thinking about your pride, I've not had the time. So I'm sorry you feel a little 'crowded'. But I suggest you get back in there, plaster on a smile, not too big, mind you, on account of what you've done and tell them everything's getting back to normal. Just like you promised.

She marches back. Stops. Without looking at him, she holds her hand out. Not sure whether to leave, Michael trudges towards her, takes her hand. They go back in.

38 INT. WHITE HART - EVENING

38

Sami bumps into Esther, whilst lurching for the door.

ESTHER

Mr Khan?

He looks at her. No recognition. He heads for the door.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

Mr Khan? Are you okay?

Stumbling out of the doors, he doesn't hear her.

39 EXT. WHITE HART - EVENING

39

Esther walks out. Mo (Christopher's friend) is standing over Sami who lies bleeding on the pavement.

ESTHER

Mo! What have you done?

MO

I haven't done nothing!

ESTHER

What's wrong with him?

MO

He's pissed. My dad's always pissed. Don't know why he just doesn't go down the Asda and gets some cans.

ESTHER

I'll call an ambulance.

MO

There's no need. My Ma said I should have got him an hour ago. But all you lot were in there getting bevied.

Mo tries to pull Sami up. Esther helps.

MO (CONT'D)  
I don't need your help.

An arm around each shoulder, Esther and Mo drag him up.

ESTHER  
You could have asked for help,  
Mo. We're not your enemies.

MO  
Yeah. Cause Sweaty Steve would've  
helped.

ESTHER  
Sweaty Steve?

MO  
Mr. Dalton.

ESTHER  
Why's he called Sweaty Steve?

MO  
Why do you think?

They slowly start to walk, with Sami in between.

ESTHER  
Is this a regular thing? Hardly a  
positive role model.

MO  
And you lot getting twatted in  
there over Gargamel's promotion  
are?

ESTHER  
Adrienne is Gargamel?

MO  
You haven't seen the Smurfs.

ESTHER  
I've seen the Smurfs. A thousand  
times.  
(beat)  
What's my nickname?

MO  
You're just 'Miss'.

ESTHER  
I believe you.

SAMI  
I can walk!

MO  
You're pissed, Dad.

SAMI  
I'm alright!

ESTHER  
We're just giving you a little support, Mr Khan.

SAMI  
Where my phone? I've lost my phone!

MO  
Take it easy. I've got it.

They continue to walk.

ESTHER  
(To Mo)  
What's Mr. Warren's?

MO  
'Leather Trevor'.

She laughs.

MO (CONT'D)  
I don't think I've seen you laugh before, Miss.

Sami throws up. They jump out of the way.

SAMI  
I'm alright! I'm alright! I don't need no help.

MO  
Fuckin' rank. We're taking you home, Dad. Just try not to hurl on my trabs.

Avoiding the vomit, Esther and Mo carefully take Sami's arms and sit him on the wall. They sit either side of him.

ESTHER  
He's heavy, your dad. And you have to do this on your own?

MO  
Saves on gym membership.

ESTHER  
Is this why you never do your homework?

Sami wretches.

MO  
'Volturi'.

ESTHER  
Excuse me?

MO  
That's your nickname. From  
'Twilight'.

ESTHER  
What's 'Volturi'?

MO  
The vampires.

ESTHER  
I'm a vampire?

MO  
You're the living dead.

ESTHER  
I'm the living dead?

MO  
It's just a stupid name, Miss.

ESTHER  
We should get your father home.

They drag Sami to his feet and slowly walk in silence.

40

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

40

Mia is putting Michel's uniform on the radiator. Michael lies in bed. Headphones on.

Robert looks out of the window. Mia joins him

Robert and Mia's POV. A minicab arrives whilst Natalie and Niall kiss.

Bedroom. Mia puts Michael's underwear with his uniform.

ROBERT  
Natalie has a boyfriend, eh?

MIA  
Natalie's had lots of boyfriends.  
Niall's just a new low.

ROBERT  
He likes me.

MIA  
What's not to like?

A moment. Mia takes a blanket from a drawer.

Robert examines the posters stuck over Natalie's mural. They're old.

ROBERT

You've not changed your posters.

Michael listens to his headphones.

MIA

Michael, it's considered polite for young men to remove their headphones when talking to their fathers.

Michael reluctantly removes them.

Robert points at a 'Top Gear' poster.

ROBERT

I got you this.

MICHAEL

Clarkson's not in it anymore.

Studying the other posters.

ROBERT

You got a girlfriend, Mike?

MIA

He's eleven, Rob.

ROBERT

You want me to take you to school in the morning?

MICHAEL

I'm eleven, Dad

ROBERT

Okay, we've established you're eleven. I'll make breakfast tomorrow.

MIA

Michael makes his own breakfast.

MICHAEL

I can speak for myself, Mum. I'll make my own.

She smiles and walks out of the room. Just Robert and Michael.

Michael puts his headphones on.



ASHLEY  
And you were really angry.

ESTHER  
I kept telling you it was  
expensive, love.

ASHLEY  
You shouted at me.

ESTHER  
Sorry.

ASHLEY  
Dad didn't shout at me.

ESTHER  
I know.

ASHLEY  
Dad never shouted at me.

ESTHER  
He was a very good daddy. Is a  
very good daddy.

ASHLEY  
Did you tell Mr Wilkie off?

ESTHER  
No.

ASHLEY  
Did Dad?

ESTHER  
That was the police's job,  
Ashley.

ASHLEY  
Did they tell him off?

ESTHER  
Sort of.

ASHLEY  
If he'd broke the PS would you  
tell him off?

ESTHER  
Probably.

ASHLEY  
Did you love the PS, Mum?

ESTHER  
No, love.

ASHLEY  
Did you shout at Mr Wilkie?

ESTHER  
No.

ASHLEY  
Did you do anything?

ESTHER  
No.

They both stare at the TV.

On the TV news there's footage of a funeral.

ASHLEY  
Why don't you kill him?

Esther struggles for an answer.

ESTHER  
I can't do that, love.

They both stare at the TV.

43

INT. SPARE ROOM - NIGHT

43

Mia puts the blanket on the bed.

Robert walks in.

MIA  
You'll need an extra blanket.

ROBERT  
Thank you.

MIA  
Don't want you getting cold.

ROBERT  
I mean for tonight.

MIA  
You hated it, Rob.

ROBERT  
So did you.

MIA  
So did everyone.

ROBERT  
It's about time we spread the  
pain.

She smiles.

MIA  
Things will improve, Rob.

ROBERT  
Is that a question?

MIA  
No.

ROBERT  
This room reminds me of Kirkham.

MIA  
I'm doing my best.

She kisses him on the cheek and walks out closing the door behind her. He looks around his 'cell'. He traces a line on the mural with his finger.

44 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

44

Esther writes 'Role Models' on the whiteboard.

She turns around and catches Mo's eye. Next to him, Christopher slouches, bored.

ESTHER  
Books out please, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER  
I forget them, Miss.

ESTHER  
All of them?

CHRISTOPHER  
Sorry Miss.

Looking at the class.

ESTHER  
Today, my Lovelies, we're going to look at Role Models. 'Mother and Father Figures'. Hurrah!

CHRISTOPHER  
You're my mother figure, Miss.

LAUGHTER.

ESTHER  
Thank you, Christopher. Though I'm sure your mum may have something to say on the subject. Can anyone name me a mother figure from books or TV?

RUBY  
Marge Simpson, Miss.

LAUGHTER.

ESTHER  
Thank you, Ruby.

Esther returns to the whiteboard. She writes 'Marge Simpson'.

MERVYN  
Widow Twanky?

LAUGHTER.

ESTHER  
Someone went to Panto this  
Christmas, Mervyn.

She writes 'Widow Twanky'.

CHRISTOPHER  
Medea!

ESTHER  
Mobile phone away, Christopher.  
And who's a mother figure in  
'Great Expectations'?

CHRISTOPHER  
Are you a mother figure, Miss?

ESTHER  
You just told me that I was your  
mother figure, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER  
Can I call you, 'Mum', Miss?

LAUGHTER.

ESTHER  
Mrs. Keener works just dandy,  
Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER  
What's the difference between a  
mother figure and a mother, Miss?

ESTHER  
A mother is a biological fact. A  
mother figure is a role that a  
female adopts to a child or  
younger adult.

CHRISTOPHER  
So you can be a 'mother' but not  
'mother figure'?

ESTHER  
(ignoring Christopher)  
Mother Figure. 'Great  
Expectations'. Any ideas?

CHRISTOPHER  
And you can be a 'mother figure'  
but not a 'mother'?

ESTHER  
Yes.

RALPH  
Is it Mrs. Joe?

Esther's writes 'Mrs. Joe' on the whiteboard.

ESTHER  
Everyone! Ralph is now your Role  
Model.

Christopher plays with his mobile.

ESTHER (CONT'D)  
Put the phone away, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER  
Dickens had ten kids, Miss. Ahh  
he was busy, lad.

LAUGHTER.

ESTHER  
Put the phone away please.

CHRISTOPHER  
Are you still a mother if your  
child dies, Miss?

Silence.

ESTHER  
Put it away.

CHRISTOPHER  
But my ma, Miss.

ESTHER  
What do we know about Mrs. Joe?

Esther returns to the whiteboard and writes 'Attributes'.  
Her hand is shaking.

CHRISTOPHER  
 Queen Victoria had nine kids!  
 What's going on! And you've just  
 got the one. Ahh sorry, Miss.  
 Meant none.

Silence.

Esther turns around and marches towards Christopher. He  
 stares. Christopher isn't backing down.

ESTHER  
 Give me the phone!

Christopher holds it out. Esther's shaking hand takes it.  
 Then drops it.

CHRISTOPHER  
 That's an iPhone Eleven! Ahh you  
 wrecked it.

Esther picks it up and puts in the drawer in her desk.  
 Trying not to shake, she faces the class.

45 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

45

The class are packing up. Esther is turning off her laptop.

CHRISTOPHER  
 I need my phone back.

The pupils are leaving the class. Christopher and Mo wait.  
 Ignoring him. Esther returns her laptop to its case.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)  
 I need my phone.

Esther collates her books.

Christopher marches to the desk and opens the drawer.

Esther slams it shut trapping his hand. He screams.

ESTHER  
 You ever talk about my son again  
 and it'll be the end of you. You  
 get me?  
 (no response)  
 You understand me?

CHRISTOPHER  
 Yes! Yes!

Esther releases the drawer. Christopher backs away, falling  
 to the floor, clutching his hand.

Shocked, Mo helps him up. Christopher hobbles away.

ESTHER  
Christopher.

Christopher turns and nervously faces her.

Esther holds out the phone. Cautiously he approaches her and takes the phone.

Esther watches him leave.

46

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MORNING

46

Esther sits across the table from Trevor. Next to him sits Adrienne.

TREVOR  
The boy claims you assaulted him. He's being treated by the Nurse. His hand is the size of a balloon, Esther. I've called his parents. I may have to call the police. Mohammed corroborates what he says. Well? Say something. If the media get hold of this.

ESTHER  
Whose hurt the most? The Academy or the student? I mean the client.

ADRIENNE  
This department has supported you, Esther.

ESTHER  
(to Trevor)  
Is she now Acting Head of Department?

TREVOR  
It's my fault. You've been struggling since...I should have done something.

ESTHER  
Since the death of my son, you mean?

TREVOR  
I'm going to suspend you pending an investigation. Would you like someone present? A solicitor? Trade Union Rep? A colleague?

ESTHER  
Is Sweaty Steve around?

TREVOR  
Excuse me?

Esther laughs. She can't stop laughing.

47 EXT. W&C CAR PARK - MORNING 47

Robert walks through the car park and stops outside the main entrance.

Robert's POV. In the reserved bays are; BMWs, Land Rovers, Audis etc. In the bay marked 'Bryan Carey' is an 'S-Class' Mercedes.

Car Park. He looks through the window.

Robert's POV. HARVEY, The Receptionist is assisting a CLIENT. Behind them, the logo; 'W&C'.

Car park. Robert walks away.

48 EXT. STREET - HILDA'S JUNCTION - AFTERNOON 48

Preoccupied Robert walks, almost sleepwalking, till he arrives at the zebra crossing.

49 EXT. ZEBRA CROSSING - HILDA'S JUNCTION - AFTERNOON 49

He suddenly clocks where he is. Frozen, he stares at it like he's at the edge of a precipice. A car stop at the crossing.

Nervously he takes one step after another.

Car. Driver's POV. Robert walks across the zebra looking straight ahead.

Street. Robert walks to the end of the zebra. Stops. He looks back. Carries on walking.

50 INT. CAR - AFTERNOON 50

Esther's eyes follows Robert. Her car stopped by the zebra crossing.

BEEP from behind.

She looks behind. Then turns off the ignition and climbs out of the car.

51 EXT. ZEBRA CROSSING (HILDA'S JUNCTION) - AFTERNOON 51

Leaving the car door open, Esther walks on the zebra crossing and stands. Cars wait either side.



MIA

Not in this kitchen! Thank you for trying. We have a system. Natalie! Michael! I don't want to come back from work and have to clear up after you. Natalie! Michael!

ROBERT

It was going to be a surprise.

MIA

It certainly was.

Natalie and Michael amble in.

NATALIE

Dad! What have you done?

MICHAEL

Nice one, Dad.

MIA

You cook dinner on a Thursday, Natalie.

NATALIE

But Dad's back now.

MIA

So that means you let him do everything?

NATALIE

It means if he wants to cook dinner, he can cook dinner.

MIA

It's my house and I make the rules, not you.

NATALIE

And what about Dad?

MIA

Just because he's back it doesn't mean we embrace anarchy.

NATALIE

He's making dinner, Mum. Not storming the Bastille.

MIA

Okay. New rota. Natalie makes dinner all week.

MICHAEL

Her dinners are shit.

NATALIE

Fuck off you! I'm going out tomorrow.

MIA

New rota means Friday; Natalie cooks dinner. Natalie is not going out.

NATALIE

You can't stop me!

ROBERT

It's fine. Someone else can cook.

MIA

(to Natalie)

Actually I can! No more handouts.

NATALIE

I'll just borrow money from Niall.

MIA

And who's he going to borrow it from?

Silence. All eyes on Mia.

MIA (CONT'D)

Everyone looks at me like I'm the baddie.

NATALIE

You're not the baddie, Mum. You're just a bitch!

Natalie storms out.

MIA

You hear that, Rob?

ROBERT

I'm going to the pub.

MIA

I'll just deal with it on my own, shall I?

ROBERT

I don't need to hear anymore shouting.

MIA

And I do?



Pub. She looks around. No Robert. The Barman hands her the wine. She pays him.

Esther's POV. Through the window in the smoking area outside she sees him.

Pub. Esther picks up her wine, her hand shaking. She drops her glass. SMASH. It breaks.

She closes her eyes, puts her hand on her stomach and breathes deeply. She opens her eyes. No one is looking at her.

She picks up the broken wine glass. She cuts her hand and winces.

Esther's POV. Robert is talking and smoking.

Pub. She marches to the smoking area, broken glass in her hand.

61 EXT. THE CROWN - SMOKING AREA - NIGHT

61

Esther opens the door and walks out. Under the makeshift roof, Robert is smoking a ciggie. A woman is in front of him, also smoking.

She marches towards Robert, the broken glass in her hand.

The woman turns around. It's Mia.

Esther is lost for words.

Robert stares at her. Esther looks at him. He looks away.

Silence.

MIA

Would you like a cigarette?

Esther nods.

Mia takes the pack from the table, takes one out and hands it to her. Esther takes it, broken glass in her other hand.

MIA (CONT'D)

You've cut your hand.

ESTHER

Yes.

Esther places the broken glass on the table. Mia clocks the glass. She lights Esther's cigarette.

MIA

We've become social smokers in our forties.

ESTHER

If it was social we'd be inside.

MIA

Always found it social when I was at university.

ESTHER

My husband objected.

MIA

He doesn't anymore?

ESTHER

He doesn't care anymore.

MIA

That can happen in a marriage.

ESTHER

Things okay with you?

MIA

Everything's fine.

ESTHER

You look like you're doing well.

MIA

We're okay.

ESTHER

Family happy to see him back?

MIA

Of course.

ESTHER

Big transition.

MIA

Yes.

ESTHER

It can't be easy.

MIA

For any of us.

(beat)

We're the guardians.

ESTHER

Excuse me?

MIA

Men say they're the Hunter Gatherers. But what do they do?

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

They go off into the forest and leave the cave unprotected. So we're the ones left to protect the family.

ESTHER

How old are your kids now?

MIA

Nat's seventeen and Mike's...eleven.

ESTER

Ashley's eleven this year. Would have been.

MIA

I know.

Silence.

MIA (CONT'D)

He wrote you a letter.

ESTHER

Yes.

MIA

Did you read it?

She shakes her head.

ESTHER

When Ashley was little he broke the Play Station. I screamed at him. He was only five. Why did I do that?

No response.

She looks at Robert. He looks up. They stare at each other.

ESTHER (CONT'D)

(to Mia)

Thanks for the cigarette.

She stubs out the cigarette, stares at the broken glass, and walks back into the pub.

Mia turns to Robert. He puts his head on her shoulder and starts to cry.

Esther is sitting next to Ashley on the floor. On the TV, a Woman reads the news.

ASHLEY

How does she remember all her lines?

ESTHER

She's just reading them.

ASHLEY

Like a book?

ESTHER

She's very good at reading.

ASHLEY

Isn't she tired?

ESTHER

She's probably had a little nap.

ASHLEY

I want to be either a Teacher or a News Reader.

ESTHER

I'm sure you'd be great at both, love.

ASHLEY

Did you want to be a teacher when you were a child?

ESTHER

I can't remember.

ASHLEY

Or a vet. I want to be a vet.

ESTHER

I saw Mr. Wilkie today.

ASHLEY

Did you tell him off?

ESTHER

No.

ASHLEY

Are you going to kill him?

ESTHER

Yes.

ASHLEY

Poor Mr. Wilkie.

They watch TV.

Fade out.